height of the ground tempers the climate, which is genial and salubrious. Between the parallels of 34° and 27°, there is a vast area of depressed country, the course of the rivers being to north-north-west and north-west ; which agrees with the opinion and the report of the natives, that there is a great lake in the interior, discharging its waters on the north-west coast. To the west and south-west of Sydney, the plains extend for 130 miles, destitute of trees, and not having a greater elevation of surface than 250 feet above the level of the sea. To the southward of the colo­ny there are also vast plains, discovered in 1823, and called the Brisbane Downs. These fine pasture-lands extend up­wards of forty miles south of the parallel of 36° 15', which is their southern limit. They are enclosed on the east by the coast-range of hills, and on the west, towards the in­terior, by the lofty chain of the Australian Alps, known by the name of the Warragong chain, whose peaks are covered with snow all the year round. The table-land thus enclosed by mountains cannot be less than 2000 feet above the level of the sea ; and possessing abundant pasturage, and a tem­perate climate, it affords an unlimited scope to the breed of fine-woolled sheep.@@1

To the westward of that portion of the country that has been settled or explored, various ranges of mountains are visible, down whose western declivities the streams descend, and afterwards taking a southerly course, fall into the ocean on the southern shore. The first discoveries of travellers in this direction were extremely imperfect. The Lachlan and the Macquarrie, both rising on the western side of the Blue Mountains, were, the first in 1817, and the latter in 1818, traced by Mr Oxley, the surveyor-general of the colony, to what he considered a swamp, spreading far and wide over a flat, where there was no outlet for the collected waters, and the whole country beyond he concluded to be an un­inhabitable marsh. But in 1824, a journey westward was undertaken by Messrs Howell and Hume, which terminated in the discovery of several large rivers, the tributaries of another larger river, the Morrumbidgee, flowing in a di­rection nearly west. In 1830, Captain Sturt embarked on this river, which had been named after himself by Hume, and which he named the Murray, and descending the swelling stream, found that it joined the Murray river, which has its estuary by the shallow lake of Alexandrina in Encounter Bay, on the southern coast. In 1831 Major Mitchell, on the report of a bush-ranger, of a river which he had followed in a north-western direction from Liver­pool Plains to the sea-coast, being sent by the governor on an expedition westward from that point, discovered a fresh-water river, the Karaula or Darling, in latitude 29°, flowing first westward and afterwards in a southern direc­tion, and joining, along with the Morrumbidgee, the Murray river in Encounter Bay. As the structure of the country is gradually brought to light by these discoveries, we ob­serve the broken fragments of its geography gradually pieced together, and at last united into one great whole. Mr Oxley traced the course of the Lachlan and Macquar­rie westward a certain length. Other streams that take their rise north of the colony, namely, the Peel and the Namoy rivers, which flow down the western declivity of the coast-range, with a westerly or southerly course, were also traced a certain distance, and were then lost. The descent of the Morrumbidgee, and finally of the Murray, by Captain Sturt, was a valuable discovery, as it threw light on the interior structure of the country, and afford­ed data for geographical inferences of great importance ; and, finally, the journey of Major Mitchell, in which he discovered the great stream of the Darling running almost southward, converted inference into fact, and would seem to point out the river Murray in Encounter Bay as the centre to which, from the nature of the ground, all the waters flow that rise in the great basin formed by the coast-range or the Blue Mountains on the east, and farther north by the Australian Alps, or Warragong range, and in­terior mountains not yet discovered, on the west ; and that the Peel, the Namoy, the Macquarrie, the Lachlan, the Darling, with the Oxley, the Hume, the Goulburn, &c*.* which descend westward from the Warragong chain, what­ever might be the direction of their upper streams, must finally terminate in the common embouchure at Encounter Bay.

This hypothesis, however, though it seems plausible, is not quite certain, and it is open in some points to objections. From the direction of the river Darling, which was disco­vered by Captain Sturt in 1829, and traced for forty miles through a level country to the south-west as far as 30° 16' south latitude, 144° 50' cast longitude, it would seem to have no other outlet but in the Murray in Encounter Bay ; and the fact of a large river falling into the Murray from the south, exactly the course the Darling would take in its progress to the sea, appears a further confirmation of this conjecture. Between the point however to which the Dar­ling has been traced by Captain Sturt in its upper course, and that portion of the river which has been explored by the same traveller, there are 400 miles of unknown coun­try. But the greatest objection is, that the Darling was found by Captain Sturt to be perfectly salt, especially as it was farther traced ; while the river that he found to fall into the Murray was quite sweet to the taste. This fact seems sufficient to disprove the identity of the two rivers, though it seems certain that the Darling river must find its way to the southern shore ; on which, however, though it has been carefully explored, no large river has been found, except where the Murray joins the sea at Encounter Bay.

The valley which is watered by these streams, is of great extent. Its declivities, according to the course of the streams, is to the south ; and it is diversified throughout by ridges of mountains, diverging westward, some of them of great height. All this extensive country southward from the river Murray to the coast, Major Mitchell denominated, from its agreeable aspect and its fertility, Australia Felix. It is well watered ; and the Snowy Mountains not only temper the climate, but they afford a supply of moisture throughout the summer to the large rivers to which they give birth ; while the great Southern Ocean on three sides throws up clouds of moisture, which descend in abundant rains. Extensive downs occur, which are covered with the best kind of grass, or are gracefully wooded. From Mount Macedon Major Mitchell says he reconnoitred Port Philip at the distance of sixty miles. “ In this region,” he adds, “ the party crossed ranges of granite, others of trap-rock, the woods forming open forests, which only partially cover­ed the country. This, even in its present state, seems nearly all available for the purposes of agriculture and grazing; and being almost without any aboriginal inhabi­tants, it is consequently in the best state for the reception of British emigrants.”@@2

The Blue Mountains, which run along the shore of New Holland at the distance of from thirty to ninety miles, and rise to a perpendicular elevation of from 3000 to 4000 feet, and farther south the Warragong range, or Australian Alps, which are covered with perpetual snow, and extend without interruption to Wilson’s Promontory, the southern extremity of New Holland, form each, in the country which

@@@, History of Australasia, by Montgomery Martin, chap. iii.

@@@2 See Account of Major Mitchell’s Expedition into the Interior of Australia. Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London, vol. vii, 1837.