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VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.*

PERTH—LAUNCESTON—GEORGE TOWN.

When the writer of these sketches commenced his descriptive tour, his primary contemplation was to present the reader with a general picture of the superficial aspect of Tasmanian scenery, occasionally relieving the monotony of mere description by local and personal anecdote, but determining to leave the moral and political reflections, necessarily suggesting themselves, until the colony had been traversed in its length and breadth. This predetermined intention has not been kept. Like the voyage through real life, our Tasmanian guide has wandered deviously from his onward track—it may be, to have gathered a thistle where he may have hoped to cull a rose—or to pick up a counterfeit, where he had calculated upon a gem. If so, our illustrator is himself but an illustration of the futility of human design; however faulty the execution, the honesty of his motive, it is hoped, may in part plead his apology—that aim being to show Tasmania and the Tasmanians in their *true* light, and to render justice to a portion of Her Majesty's subjects not less loyal, not less enterprising, and, assuredly, *not less moral*, than any of their fellow-Britons, be they located where they may.

The narrative has greatly exceeded the writer's imagined limit; but having heretofore experienced so much consideration, he trusts his readers will do him the favour to accompany him in his rapid journey to its goal.

The close of the ninth chapter brought the descriptive portion of the tour town to the period of incendiarism at Hunterston, at which hospitable mansion we left the travellers refreshing. Quitting that charming locality, the fading light of an autumnal day barely sufficed to carry the equestrians across the fine pastoral mead called Weasel Plains. The glorious moon, however, poured her brilliant beams upon the open forest-landscape that succeeded, wooing the nimble and inoffensive oppossum to disport amid the ramified limbs of the giant gum-trees; his discordant screech, and the tinkling of some unsettled bell-wether, being the only sounds that broke upon the ear of night. By the time that Bark-hut plains were passed, the moon had veiled her face, and a thick drizzling rain set in. Dashing onwards, the riders

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* Continued from p. 240.

crossed the Clyde at the upper ford, making the best of their way towards Dennistoun. Forward, forward they spurred, Dennistoun, like Kippletringan, seemingly eluding their pursuit. They had been above two hours in endeavouring to compass what ought have been easily attained in less than one. They had lost their way—hopelessly—helplessly—straying hither and thither, like drunken men, unconscious of their whereabout. At length, thoroughly drenched, and nearly rigid from the intense cold, a twinkling light was descried; but in their hurry to reach it, they had nearly precipitated themselves and their steeds into one of the dangerous bends of the Clyde. That difficulty successfully mastered, they gained the welcome portals of Ratho House; its hospitable proprietor, Mr. A. Reid, rendering his half-drowned guests the kindly courtesy and warm-hearted welcome they stood so much in need of.

The main road from Bothwell to Hobart Town (distant forty-six miles) is across the ridge of a long and almost impracticable mountain, named the Den Hill, whose ascent and descent at the point known as the Black Marsh, is frequently fatal both to conveyances and cattle; in fact, the *elite* of English "whips" would be apt to stare at the course our Tasmanian *Jehus* unhesitatingly pursued, dashing their tandems full-tilt over pathless tracts encumbered with fallen trees, giant limbs, ponderous surface-stones, and trying inequalities, whose heights and hollows are graphically styled "black fellows' graves." The river Jordan winds its slender streamlet through the fertile basin of the Black Marsh—in winter a circumscribed, but dangerous torrent; in summer a wasted channel, unconscious of the limpid element, save where occasional ponds give evidence of its existence. At a distance of eleven miles from the Clyde, the Bothwell road merges in that from Launceston; but as that is not the path we intend, at present, to traverse, we shall quit Ratho, threading our way towards Oatlands through the mountain defile of Miles' opening. This, like the Den Hill, is another arduous pass, and, being infinitely less frequented, is, of course, so much the more puzzling, if not almost terrific. As at Dennistoun, it was the writer's hap to become involved with a friend amid its difficult mazes. The rain streamed in torrents—the wind blew a hurricane—the forests groaned and quivered, whilst the pair of travellers, then but in their *bush* novitiate, became at every step the more and more involved. Nearly impracticable mountains surrounded them, and ever and anon they were compelled to dismount, forcing their way through tangled underwood, whose copious distributions could scarcely increase the humid condition of their flowing garments.

Onwards they toiled, ofttimes leading their jaded but willing horses across stock and stone to the summit of one hard-won acclivity, but to commence an instant and seemingly hopeless descent on the other side. For one moment the sun, hastening to its set, broke forth. Such was the doubtful light it cast upon the misty scene, that a far-off plain presented to the o'ertired travellers the appearance of a cultivated field. With a cheering shout they spurred in the direction, only to be disappointed. A sound like that of human voices fell upon their ear—at all events they thought so. The savage locality—its frequent resort by the hostile blacks—struck chill upon their hearts. True, they carried pistols, but they were *flint* pistols, and, upon examining the pan, the priming was found to be nearly as liquid as Warren's jet. The sole alternative was to push on haphazard. This they did at a rapid pace. Fortunately their random course proved the right one, and the day closed much more auspiciously than it had promised.

Two officers of the Bengal army, relying upon their *locality bump*, became entangled in this manner. They had neither haversack nor *pocket-pistol* (alias spirit-flask), nor had they any means of striking a light. Day closed, and they found themselves two very pretty "babes in the wood." In their benighted wanderings, they stumbled upon a deserted stock-hut. Here they and their steeds took shelter; the gentlemen taking advantage of such heat as two or three old sheep-skins imparted.

In one of the early chapters it was alleged that the most direct route betwixt Hobart and Launceston lay through New Norfolk, Hollow Tree, and Bothwell. By the road now in use, the distance is computed to be about 120 miles. They who profess to have a knowledge of the other, aver that by passing Sorrel Lake, Regent's Plains, and debouching upon the Macquarie by the gorge called Lake River Opening, at least twenty miles would be saved. Possibly the first cause which called colonial attention to the subject was the Turpin-like ride of a ticket-of-leave, or time-expired convict, named Richardson; to whom every Tasmanian highway and by-way was intimately known.

Richardson, as appears, had committed a felony upon a given day, in or near Launceston. Having been *almost immediately* apprised that there was conclusive evidence to fix the crime upon him, he forthwith caparisoned a very fine white mare he had. Giving her the rein, he made a straight course across the unenclosed country, passing through the Lake River Opening, and with his high-mettled, uninjured courser reaching Hobart Town at an early hour of the following morning. Here he rendered himself as conspicuous as possible,

making pretence of business with some of the most respectable inhabitants, upon whom he ingeniously yet naturally fixed hour, day, and date. Ere long he was apprehended, tried, and acquitted; the most unquestionable evidence, deposing to have seen him at Hobart Town early in the morning of the afternoon succeeding that on which he was charged with the offence at Launceston. An *alibi* was thus established; it being deemed impossible that he could have been at both places within so short a space; more especially as he had used no inn, either for his own or Arab's refreshment.

To return to Miles' Opening:—Emerging eastwards from that devious pass, the traveller finds himself among the fertile meads which skirt the Jordan and its dangerous fords. Bearing slightly north-east, the lands of Anstey Barton lie before him. This estate is alike picturesque and profitable, comprising a large area of fine pastoral downs, with a goodly proportion of rich arable soil. Its proprietor, Mr. Anstey, long and ably held the office of police-magistrate at Oatlands, with a seat in that shadow of a shade of representative *right*—the legislative council! After Mr. Anstey's resignation, Mr. Murdoch, an old and proved public servant, and subsequently Mr. Whitefoord, filled the Oatlands magisterial chair. That chair, it is said, was vacated by Mr. Murdoch, because he was expected to render a subservience which, as a man of spirit, he did not feel disposed to brook. Oatlands is a thriving, but not prettily situated town; it is placed nearly midway between the southern and northern capitals.

A few miles north of Oatlands we enter St. Peter's Pass, a stern mountain defile, through which an excellent road has long been cut; at its northern end the Salt-Pan Plains may be said to commence. These are extensive flats of choice sheep-pasturage—their name being derived from the salt which is gathered upon a certain part of them. Quitting the most direct path to Launceston, let us diverge a little to the left hand, or westwards. By that means a glance will be attained of Ellinthorpe Hall, and whilst our steeds—thanks to the liberality of its proprietor, Mr. Clarke—are grinding their corn, we shall inspect the spacious and delightful premises. Ellinthorpe is a charming and extensive property, upon which the owner has effected very striking improvements. Every thing there is on a large scale; the mansion, under the able superintendence of Mrs. Clarke, being, or having been —for we treat of some years since—devoted to the reception of the Tasmanian fair, who, to the amount of sixty or seventy, are instructed in the prevalent studies and accomplishments of the parent-land; education in all its diversified branches being imparted by resident

teachers, to procure the best of whom neither pains nor expense are spared. Mrs. Clarke was long domiciled in Hobart Town, until the perfection of arrangements at Ellinthorpe enabled her and her pupils to remove to that healthy spot.

Ellinthorpe is a little town of itself. There they are their own butchers, bakers, brewers, millers, farmers, graziers, blacksmiths, shoemakers, upholsterers, milliners, and so forth. The establishment is well worth viewing, and Mr. and Mrs. Clarke are remarkable for their courtesy to strangers.

Bidding adieu to Ellinthorpe, we pass through a pleasing pastoral country, crossing the Macquarie River, and wending our way through the possessions of Messrs. Robert Taylor, (the scene of Crawford, the bush-ranger's discomfiture and capture,) Alston, Archer, Bonney, &c., until, embarking in the punt, we are wafted across the South Esk, and safely landed in the pretty and flourishing town of Perth. At the date when this "fair town" was visited by the writer and a friend, its hostelries were poor affairs to brag of, although upon being questioned as to the contents of the larder, the waiter boldly averred he could supply whatever the gentlemen should choose. "Well, then, let's have a rasher and eggs, without delay." The man of accommodation stroked his chin. "I'm afraid, gentlemen," he softly insinuated—"I'm afraid our bacon is not the very primest."

"Well, well, never mind; ham will do equally well."

"Did you say ham, sir? O—h—it is late in the season, sir, and our last curing turned out very queer."

"Well, then, boil the eggs, and let us have a nice tender beef-steak!" Poor *Yessir* looked unutterable things. "Why, what's amiss now, man—why don't you get the eggs and steak?"

"Very unfortunate, gentlemen, that you should have hit upon the only articles I really cannot supply. Our hens—hang them—have left off laying, and I don't think an egg could be had in Perth, for love or money."

"Let us have the steak, then."

"Would'nt you prefer a cold boiled shoulder of mutton?"

"Detestable!" exclaimed both, but the anything of the Perth hostelry resolved itself into this alone; and hunger, that admirable sauce, caused the very bones of the "detestable" to be exquisitely polished. Perth *then* was the exception to colonial inns, where good cheer, and plenty of it, is rarely wanting. Appetite appeased, we reached the hospitable door of Major M'Leod, at the same moment as Mr. Henry Arthur and several officers (in full fig) of H. M. 4th regiment. The M'Leods

were totally unprepared for such a visit, which was caused by a hoaxing note written in their name. However, a hearty welcome, lots of music, and abundance of good spirits, made the evening pass delightfully.

The situation of Perth, perched as it is, upon the northern bank of the Esk, is as picturesque as it is healthy, and, being the centre of a very charming country, must speedily become a place of consequence. After its issue from Arthur's Lakes, Lake River fertilizes a rich tract of country, losing its distinctive title by an union with the far less constant waters of the Macquarie, which shortly afterwards become merged in the South Esk, at a point a few miles below Perth. At no great distance from Perth lies the town and district of Westbury, said to be one of the finest cattle countries in the island; and at a still shorter distance, the beautiful and much-prized Norfolk Plains—by which appellation, however, the entire district is known. Beyond that district, and in the north-west angle of Tasmania, lie Circular Head, Emu Bay, Middlesex Plains, Surrey and Hampshire Hills, together with the entire principality, comprising the 350,000 acres appertaining to the Van Diemen's Land Company. With a large capital, and every available advantage consequent upon their position in Britain, this company has achieved less than nothing, their culture and amount of stock being vastly inferior to many second-rate private settlers. They appear at length to have *felt* their inferior position, and seem determined to awake from the lethargic stupor that has so long possessed them. A new and most intelligent agent (Mr. James Gibson) has been appointed, and as he has had ample colonial experience to direct his ability, it may reasonably be inferred, that the Van Diemen's Land Company will yet yield a noble remuneration to its shareholders, and effect much towards the advancement of a colony of whose soil they hold so large a slice. Liberal returns, nevertheless, are but the fruits of liberal outlay; and the company would do well to bear in mind, that every Tasmanian settler has achieved his position at a cost of harassing difficulty and sore privation. The Broad-street establishment is still in its nonage, and upon their fostering care, quite as much as upon their agent's assiduity, depends the healthiness or converse of the bantling. Patience and perseverance, and ere long *it walks alone*.

Bidding adieu to Perth, a delightful ride of about thirteen miles brings us to the Northern Capital—the land in whose environs, is infinitely superior to that of its southern competitor. The character of the country, too, widely differs. On the south side, the predominating features are huge mountains—their base rising precipitously from out the waters, which they girdle with an adamantine band; the

diminutive valleys appearing to be but the ground-work or stand for another gigantic uprearing. On the northern shores, the mountains (not less lofty) are more remote, the intermediate space being gracefully moulded into gently undulating knolls or meads, of the most productive richness. The glance from the descending point of Cocked-Hat Hill gives ample evidence of this.

Like every Tasmanian town or village, the streets of Launceston are wide, airy, and regularly laid off at right angles. It possesses numerous excellent houses, warehouses, shops, and public buildings, although the latter are by no means equal in importance to those of Hobart Town, with which it never can hope to contest the palm of beauty, because not a single stone-quarry is to be found in the vicinity of the northern, whilst the southern *city* abounds with free-stone of various hues and the finest grain—the quarries of New Town being fully equal to those of the far-famed Craig-Leith.* Launceston, therefore, is essentially a town of bricks. As a port it was long neglected, the intricate and tedious navigation of the Tamar causing it to be too much overlooked; added to which, ships of burden were unable to lie alongside the wharf, those that did so taking the ground at low water —for (as the Launcestonians boast) the Tamar is unlike the tideless Derwent, which rarely exceeds between three and four feet of rise and fall, whilst the Tamar achieves some fourteen or fifteen.

The admirable trading-position of Launceston, and the spirit of its enterprising merchants, led ere long to the developement of its great capabilities. In 1827, the Admiral Cockburn, a ship of 350 or 400 tons, ascended the Tamar, and commenced loading for London. This being the first vessel of magnitude to lay on in the northern waters, the event was duly and joyously celebrated. Many and larger vessels have since succeeded, and although some idea of the importance of Launceston may be inferred by consulting the daily shipping-advertisements of the *Times*, still it *is* but an idea, conveying no adequate notion of the large amount of coasting and intercolonial trade.

In 1831 or 32, a beautiful steamer (The Tamar) was built on the (Scotch) Clyde, for the purpose of navigating and towing ships between Launceston and George Town. From some cause or other the proprietors sold her to a Sydney company, and Tasmania was deprived of her services ere she had well anchored within her waters. Steam-tugs, however, *must* speedily enrich their proprietors, and facilitate the advent and departure of the Launceston shipping.

* The writer has been told that a stone quarry *has* been discovered near Cocked-Hat Hill.

The Tamar, like its English name-sake, is greatly a salt-water estuary, Launceston being placed upon the bends of the South and North Esk rivers, which lose their individuality in the Tamar. The South Esk precipitates itself, at its point of junction, over a considerable ledge of rocks to the westward of the town. This spot is called the Cataract, and when the river is in full volume, it presents a torrent of no little grandeur. Ships are said to have their copper well scoured by hauling as near as possible to the Cataract.

Launceston boasts a fair proportion of schools, both public and private. There are also several churches—Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Wesleyan, and others. The chief of these is St. John's, situated in the centre of the town. The barracks are much smaller, and not near so delightfully placed as those of Hobart Town. The garrison-duty devolves upon three or four companies of a regiment detached from their head-quarters in New South Wales. The disposition of troops in Australasia appears to be singular; for instance, detachments are furnished to Launceston by a corps serving in the sister-colony, whilst the regiment stationed at Hobart Town sends one of its companies to Swan River. Would it not be preferable to keep one regiment intact in Tasmania, supplying the surplus required from a corps which might send out detachments to Launceston, Port Philip, and the Swan? Or rather, would not marines prove the more legitimate garrison, affording, as they might easily be made to do, reliefs for our Indian and Pacific cruisers?

Since the establishment at Port Philip and South Australia, the traffic of Launceston has mightily increased. This should be an unanswerable argument with those little-minded cavillers, who seek to fan the flame of jealous rivalry. The more colonies that are planted along the extensive shores of New Holland and New Zealand, the more advantage will every Austral Briton derive; and if the parent-land will only imitate the anxiety evinced by France and America, and throw her protecting banner around her offspring, they will well reward her care.

Launceston possesses many excellent hotels—of these, the most frequented used to be the Cornwall, kept by a very singular character, called *Black* Dick *White*. There is a court-house, hospital, penitentiary, and government-house. Here his Excellency resides during his northern tours, which are said to be not quite so frequent as the inhabitants desire.

The Tamar is by no means the splendid counterpart of the Derwent; in fact, there are few such superb estuaries as the latter to be found. The distance between Launceston and the heads below George Town

is computed to be between forty and fifty miles. George Town, of late years, has been acquiring great repute for the mildness and salubrity of its air—circumstances likely to render it a chosen resort—a species of Tasmanian spa. A few miles westwards lies Port Sorell, at the mouth of a tolerably extensive basin, into which the waters of the river Rubicon empty themselves. It was here that Captain Thomas (brother of the member for Kinsale), fell a victim to the fury of the hostile aborigines. Captain Thomas, unhappily for himself, was prepossessed with an opinion, that the murders inflicted by the savages were a consequence of want of confidence on the part of the sufferers. He was not the only one who entertained a belief, whose fallacy he was doomed to illustrate with his life.

The writer has more than once heard Captain Thomas express his determination to advance frankly and unarmed towards the blacks, whenever he should chance to meet them. Upon this principle he acted, followed by Mr. Parker, the latter bearing a double-barrelled gun under his arm. This was speedily snatched by a woman, and as the unfortunate Parker turned round to look after her, he was knocked on the head by a waddie, and speared in the back. Perceiving the fate of his friend, Captain Thomas attempted to fly, but was speedily slain. In a fortnight afterwards the bodies were discovered by the aid of a half-civilized black woman, from whom the particulars of this melancholy transaction were elicited. Parker had received ten, the Captain twelve spear-wounds, and when found his remains had partially been destroyed by crows and other vermin. The three men who committed the murders were taken, but not executed—being removed, with the rest of their sable brethren, to Flinder's Island.

The Van Diemen's Land Establishment, projected by Col. Latour and others, of which Captain Thomas was the original manager, has greatly benefited both the proprietors and the colony;—Tasmania, by the superior description of horses, cattle, sheep, &c., which they imported; themselves, by the profit they acquired, and by the judicious selection of Cressy—an estate comprising twenty thousand acres of the finest land.

The writer of these sketches entreats pardon of his more northern fellow-colonists, if he has not sufficiently dwelt upon the beauties and capabilities of their portion of the island. It proceeds from no desire to offer slight; but the truth is, that, being of the opposite coast, he is not so intimately versant of the features which characterize the Cornwall division. It may, however, at no distant date, be in his power to make the *amende;* meanwhile, wishing them health and prosperity, he once more begs the reader to turn his face southwards,

remarking the supremely fertile and highly-cultivated farms, which so thickly stud Patterson's Plains.

Recrossing the Esk at Perth, let us vary the route, by making a direct course for Campbell Town, wending our way through the thickly-settled district of Bathurst, well adapted both for pastoral and agrestial purposes.

Here lies the Tasmanian nameson of a spot well beloved of the Cockney huntsman—Epping Forest; not far from whose boundaries the prosperous Campbell Town rears its flourishing head—itself the centre of one of the finest districts of the colony. A few miles further south, the Macquarie river is crossed by a long and narrow wooden structure, known as Ross Bridge. This, too, is a rising town, and the spot where horse-racing was first fairly established in Tasmania. In this vicinity the government, which erewhile indulged in farming speculations, had a reserve of 32,000 acres, familiarly styled "the Ross Reserves." These were considered to be the most available in the island, and when brought to the hammer in 1831 or 1832, the competitors were both keen and numerous. Land then currently sold at the minimum value of 5s. per acre, or a little more. This sale, however, opened people's eyes; one of the sections of 4,000 acres having realized upwards of 29s. per acre. It was purchased by a neighbouring proprietor, Mr. Benjamin Horne, who, in consequence of the price given, was deemed by his brother-colonists well fitted to become an inmate of Bedlam. Mr. Horne, however, well knew his own affairs, and has had no reason to regret his bargain. The residue, or at least the larger part thereof, was obtained by Mr. Philip Smith, who had many difficulties to encounter in perfecting the purchase.

Crossing York, we again fall upon Salt Pan Plains, and journey a road already traversed, until, passing Oatlands, we reach Jericho upon the Jordan. Jericho can scarcely be called a village; and yet possessing as it does a small school-house or chapel, an excellent inn, and the dwellings of several most respectable settlers, converging towards it as a central point, it showed, at an early date, much more of the town than other incipient spots especially marked out for such an honour.

A good deal of confusion sometimes arises from the same name being given to different places; for instance, one Spring Hill has already been passed in review—we are now approaching another, upon whose brow a beautiful and spacious inn, built of free-stone in dressed courses, has been opened by Mr. Vincent. We shall not, however, pause here, but descending the hill, survey the Lovely Banks as we ride leisurely by their sheep-covered downs, until, checking our career, we stop to con-

template that much-admired and garden-like spot—the Cross Marsh. This has always been a favoured and favourite locality; the beauty of its situation—the fertility of its soil—the proximity to water-carriage, all combine to render it a highly desirable neighbourhood; and from its position, on the highways to Launceston and Bothwell, an admirable site for a thriving market-town. The estates are of moderate extent; the most striking being Mount Vernon, the property of Anthony Fenn Kemp, Esq., THE MAN OF THE PEOPLE. Here also there is a very comfortable inn, with cattle-yards, sheep-pens, and every accommodation for the sale of stock, which, owing to its central advantages, are frequently driven there. A little beyond this inn the Green Ponds commence. Here there is a church, and, as the farms are small, the population is correspondingly numerous. A few miles from Green Ponds, we reach the crown of Constitution Hill, the roadway of which (at the writer's last visit) was undergoing extensive and beneficial changes—the ascent being rendered much less arduous, and the carriage-road much more solid. After a winding descent, we find ourselves before the door of the Swan Inn, situated at the mouth of the upper valley of fertile Bagdad. The external appearance of the house promised little, but prompt civility met our travellers at its threshold. Unlike the Perth hostelry, the host (late Mr. Butcher, brother of the well-known Gravesend confectioner) did *not promise* every thing, but table and sideboard assured the keen-edged mountain-appetite of ample and savoury solacement—ham, tongue, ducks, fowls, beef, mutton, and cold pasties were ranged in goodly order, whilst an unexceptionable bill of fare, of sundry varieties of food, ready for spit or saucepan, was immediately presented. An admirable meal was the natural consequence. At its termination the host presented himself.

"Excuse me, gentlemen," said he, "your horses have already been well fed—perhaps you would like to visit them yourselves. My orders are *not to stint*—I know how much a man has to depend upon his horse in this country; but you are aware, gentlemen, the eye of the master maketh the fat ox."

We thanked our worthy Boniface, and forthwith proceeded to the stable. It was needless—rack and manger were both full, and the beds nicely littered. Our four-footed friends had regaled as amply as we, and were lazily masticating an occasional rip of hay. We, therefore, returned to our cheerful log-fire, and soothed our inner man with a stiff glass of veritable Jamaica—one of those docile creatures, the white magpie, perching beside us, and amusing us with his merry tricks and incessant garrulity.

[To be concluded next month.]