THE "GIRL'S OWN" TOUR OF THE COLONIES.

By EMMA BREWER.

TASMANIA.

HELL'S GATES.

Sydney, April, 1886.

It is some two years since we, the passengers on board the "Girl's Own," parted company at Sydney, after visiting many of the colonies of Great Britain together. Our engagements made it necessary for us to part company without having visited either Tasmania or New Zealand.

The vessel, however, was left in Sydney Harbour, with the hope that we should all meet again in a few months to continue our voyage.

Most of those who were our fellow voyagers on the former occasion are here in Sydney once again, together with a large addition of bright, happy-looking girls, who bring letters of introduction to our captain, with a desire that they also may visit with us the remaining colonies.

Although so much has happened within the last two years, the very fact of our all meeting here in this beautiful city once again, and with the same purpose, makes us forget the time that has intervened, so laden with joys and sorrows; and it seems but yesterday since we wished each other good-bye.

A happy, noisy party we are on board, asserting our hopes and wishes; but we all bow to the decision of the captain to steam at once out of Sydney Harbour and make our way to the island of Tasmania, formerly known to us as Van Diemen's Land. It is separated from Australia by Bass's Straits, which are crossed by steamers from Melbourne to Launceston in about twenty-four hours. Ours will be a longer voyage, as we are going to Hobart Town from Sydney. We have heard much about Tasmania, and are looking forward with pleasure to a personal view of it. Formerly it was a prison-house of crime, and its early history so sorrowful that its natural beauties were lost sight of, or looked upon as hiding-places for criminals. Now the whole aspect is changed, and Tasmania is one of the most beautiful, healthful, and peaceful of all our colonies.

As the "Girl's Own" sails into the harbour crowded with shipping of various nations, we get a good view of the town. It stands on the beautiful Derwent, about twenty miles from its estuary, and occupies a commanding and picturesque position. It is built on about two square miles of gently rising ground, backed by lofty and thickly wooded hills, the grand old Wellington towering above all with "its head in the clouds and its feet in the sea."

After selecting our hotel, we set off to look about. Our impression is that Hobart, as it is now called, possesses every advantage that position and surroundings can bestow.

It is within easy reach of mountain, wood, and sea. The houses are mostly built of a dark-coloured freestone, of which there is an abundance in the neighbourhood. The streets are wide, and well laid out, for which advantage the town is indebted to General Macquarie, a former governor. We are astonished at the number of good educational institutions, to many of which scholarships are attached of the value of £16 a year for four years, awarded to girls and boys alike, to enable them to attend high schools; and two scholarships annually are given to successful students from public or private schools of the value of £200, for four years, to enable young men to attend an English University.

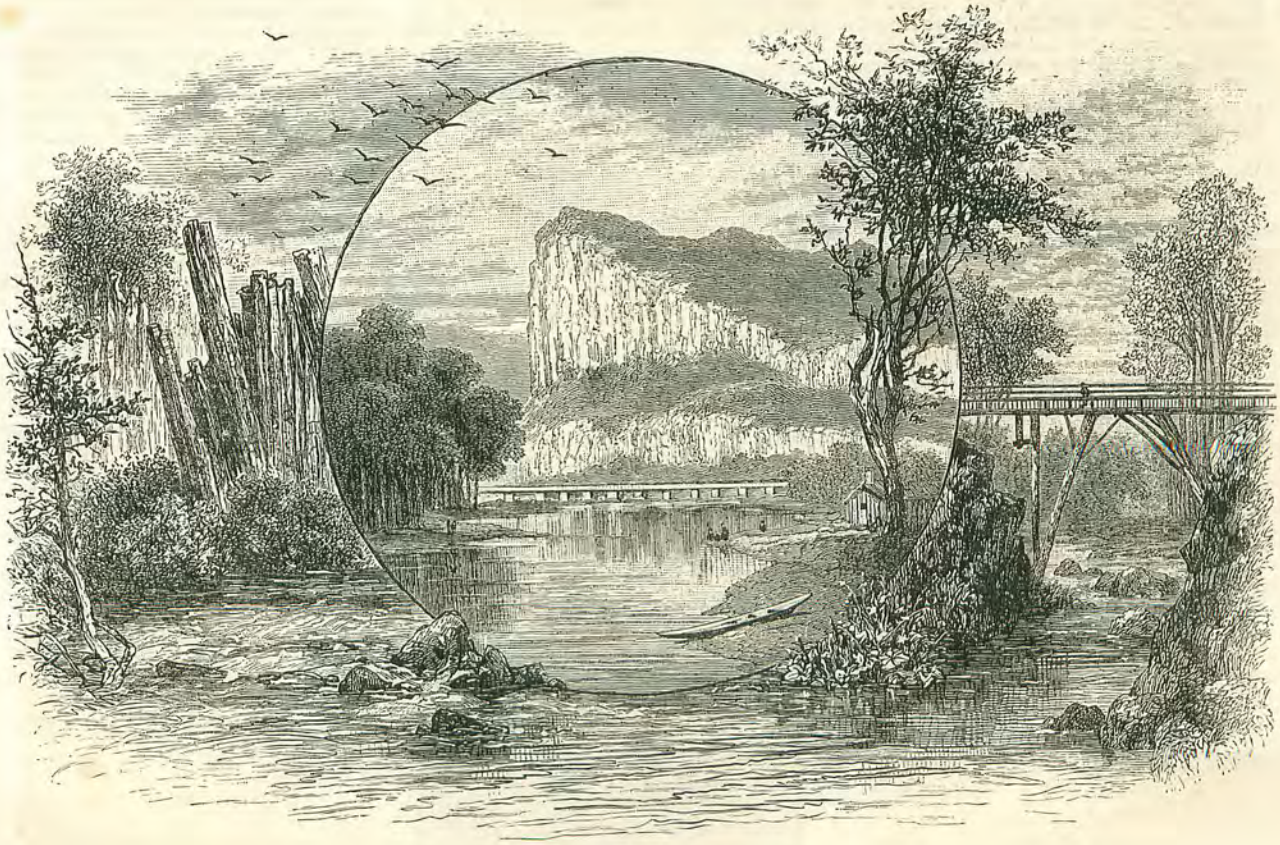
There is no neglect of education here. Churches and chapels of every denomination exist in Hobart, and Sunday schools are greatly valued and well attended, not only here but throughout the island. Such is the town we walk through to-day. What was its origin? Nearly eighty years ago the first house was built, in what is now called Macquarie-street, not of brick or stone, but of mud and wattle.

Scarcely any progress was made until 1811, when Major-General Macquarie became governor, and set himself resolutely to work to form some regular plan for buildings and streets. To the principal thoroughfares he gave names. One he called after Lord Liverpool, a second after his wife, Elizabeth, a third after his predecessor, Murray, a fourth after himself—Macquarie, a fifth after his native county, Argyle, and so on. The next step forward was the arrival of the first emigrant ship, in 1816, since which time its progress has been slow and steady.

The Wellington, 4,000 feet high, is naturally a great attraction to us; its base commences about four miles from the harbour, from which to the summit is nine miles. We set off by a very good road, which extends from Macquarie-street till we come to a

finger-post which directs us to a waterfall half way up the mountain, called the Springs, which supplies Hobart abundantly with water. It is a lovely spot, 2,000 feet high. We are desperately tired with our long walk, and rest for half-an-hour in the cottage of the guide, who is called sometimes the "old man of the mountain." Beyond this there are huge rugged rocks, separated by ravines and gullies, and its oval-shaped summit is but tressed by fluted columns of basaltic rock. Eight months in the year it is capped with snow; but the slopes towards Hobart are thickly studded with fern trees, wattle, and eucalypti, and an undergrowth of the castor oil plant, and many flowering shrubs. The land all round Hobart is hilly, and thickly wooded; and the forests, as a rule, are far more dense here than in the mainland. Some of the trees are supposed to be 1,000 years old, and attain a wonderful height and circumference.

A traveller giving a description of one says it was 250 feet high, and its girth, which he measured, was 55½ feet, and that the voices of his companions who spoke together on the other side of the tree sounded so distant that he concluded they had left him, and immediately called out to them, and that they in answer remarked the distant sound of his voice, and inquired if he were behind the tree.



VIEWS IN TASMANIA.

Many is the tale told of the loss of life among the workmen engaged in making roads through the forests. One man who had only to go two hundred yards from one company of workmen to another lost himself; he called, and was repeatedly answered, but getting further astray, his voice became more indistinct, till it ceased to be heard, and he perished.

With such difficulties of rock, scrub, and dense forests, it is easy to understand that communication between the north and south of the island was for many years almost impossible, and that the two conducted their trade wholly independent of each other, each having its own capital—Launceston in the north and Hobart in the south. Now all is altered; there are good roads throughout the island, and railways run between the two capitals and through all the principal agricultural districts in the north. We thought we should like to go to Launceston by rail, a distance of 133 miles, which is done in about seven hours, and took tickets accordingly. It is true we have arrived at our journey's end with whole bones, but not with unshaken nerves. We are not cowards, but we were frequently compelled to shut our eyes that we might not see the dangerous twistings of the train in and out and over precipices. The people tell us that the line is a marvel of engineering skill. So it may be, but none of us care to use it a second time. Launceston, which is on the Tamar, about forty miles from its estuary, is not so imposing in appearance as its southern rival, although its church-towers, public buildings, streets running up the hill, and the shipping in the river at its feet, give it a beauty of its own; but it is quite equal in places of worship, schools, and charitable institutions. The shops are not rude stores, such as we expected to see, but well stocked and well appointed; and in Brisbane street, which is its chief thoroughfare, they are scarcely a whit behind the fashions of London and Paris. There is really nothing to remind us that we are in a colonial town, except it be the many wooden houses which still exist, and even these are being superseded in the chief thoroughfares by brick buildings.

It is in the country round about Launceston that the rich arable land lies, and where the agriculturist may purchase it at £1 per acre. By the little sketches we give, it is easy to see how very charming much of this rich land is in the north and north-west. Farming is not so prosperous as formerly, when Tasmania exported largely to the neighbouring colonies, neither are the sheep-runs so extensive as on the mainland; those who do possess sheep have to be unwearied in their attention, to prevent the destruction of their flocks by the tiger-wolf and a savage, disgusting animal called the "devil," both of which find shelter in the scrub. We have seen some wool-growers in this northern part of the island, however, who seem to be very prosperous. Mining is the most attractive and successful occupation just now, the leasing of land for such purpose being rendered quite easy. The many recent discoveries of gold reefs and tin lodes have given quite an excitement to this otherwise very quiet island.

Notwithstanding the many advantages which Tasmania offers, we doubt if it would prove attractive to every class of emigrant; it seems more adapted to the tired and the weary of the middle-class of society who, having a little capital and a love of farming, could do very well here. To those who can pay their own passage to the colony a free grant of land is made: thirty acres to the man, twenty to the wife, and ten to each of the children. To parents with delicate children we would say that the climate has a high reputation for its salubrity, and that the death-rate among infants is lower than anywhere in the world. So many of the Indian army have settled here that it is called the "Sanatorium for the invalided members of the Imperial army." Wherever we go in the island we find, so far as we can see, solid peace and happiness, but no pressing forward or making haste to be rich. This accounts for so many of the vigorous "go-a-head" people emigrating to other colonies.

Taking Tasmania as a whole, it is bold and mountainous, and the gorges and defiles are often of a savage grandeur; it is well watered, and the current of the rivers is rapid. There are many wonderful and beautiful spots, some of which we are hoping to see. Among these is a defile near to Davey Port, called "Hell's Gates," a name given to it in the early days of convict settlement. We sail round the coast till we come to Port Davey, where we get into the boats belonging to our ship, and row up the river till we find ourselves between two savagely grand and almost perpendicular walls. It seems that by some convulsion of nature in past ages the mountain range must have been rent asunder, leaving a narrow, irregular passage through which the "Davey" now flows. No words of ours can describe it, or its effect upon us. It shut out the world and all its vanities, and brought us face to face with the omnipotence of God; and this was so vividly impressed on our hearts, that even here, in this awful and lonely spot, we had no fear, but, on the contrary, a sense of perfect security as His children.

On returning to our hotel we pondered as to the origin of the name by which the defile is known, and questioned the landlady, who, to use her own words, "was sure she did not know; there were a lot of queer names in the colony, such as Bagdad, Jerusalem, Troy, Jericho, Jordan, and St. Peter, but she had never thought about why they were so called." In a short time she returned with a young man, saying—

"If anybody can tell you all about it, he can."

He smiled at the unceremonious introduction, but expressed himself willing to help us if it were in his power. We give his opinion as to the origin of the peculiar names in his own words.

"My grandfather was one of the early settlers in the island, not a convict; and, being strong and courageous, had taken part in many a wild and daring expedition. It was my delight when a boy to listen to his tales, which he told so well as to make me live the scenes over again in imagination. There was one man whom my grandfather specially delighted to talk about; his name was Hugh Germaine. It appears that in the first years of the settlement animal food was very scarce, and it often occurred that soldiers, colonists, or convicts were told off, under a sort of captain, to go into the bush in search of it. The favourite leader in these expeditions was the bold, daring Hugh Germaine, who knew no fear, cared for no hardship, and kept up a certain amount of good order and intelligence among those under him. This man, with a little band, pursued this kind of life for many years, returning to his master, a Marine officer, on an average 1,000 lbs. of animal food weekly, which was sold to the Government at 1s. 6d. per lb. For five years Germaine never slept in his bed, but lived entirely in the bush with his companions. Only one of the party could read, and the two books in their possession were the Bible and the 'Arabian Nights Entertainment.' These were read over and over again till the hunters became perfectly familiar with them; it was, therefore, quite natural that, when they were in want of a name to distinguish a river, mountain, or pass, they should select it from one or other of the books they knew so well; and that they did so is quite true, for my grandfather was often with them when such a selection was made."

We thanked him much for his explanation, and asked him for information on several other points; one as to the aborigines. He said, as far as he knew, there was not one on the island, the last, an old woman, having died a few months ago; but that there were a few half-castes on the islands in the Straits. Again, we asked if the Tasmanians were great travellers, to which he replies, laughingly, "Oh no; they love the island and the quiet enjoyment of their daily life too much; but," he continued, "many visitors from the more vigorous colonies come to us when they want rest for mind and body." On asking if communication is easy, we learn that steamers go to and from Melbourne every week at £4 and £2 15s., and to Sydney and back three times a month, £6 6s. and £3 10s. Tasmania is by no means, therefore, cut off from the rest of the world. We must not forget to say that in all parts of the island we have been asked to send women servants over; good, respectable girls, who would get good wages, kind employers, and opportunities of serving and worshipping God quite equal to any part of the home country.

There is no absolutely free passage; a girl is expected to pay five pounds towards it. A sailing vessel from London to Hobart takes about ninety days, the fares £50 and £26. The question may arise among 'our girls" at home, what does Tasmania contribute to the mother country? We answer, very much, although a large portion is exported to the surrounding colonies—wool, tin, gold, fruit, and jams; timber, grain, and wool being some of the chief articles of her exports.

We have spent a very happy time in this beautiful island, and begin with regret to pack up for our next visit. Our captain asks if we should like to telegraph to New Zealand of our coming; if so it is quite possible, as a submarine cable unites Tasmania with Australia and New Zealand with which there is almost daily communication.