

A PEEP AT MELBOURNE IN 1881.

OF course there are very few Englishmen nowadays who retain that old and exploded idea that any Australian town is but a collection of shanties, situated in a remote corner of the world, only fitted for producing unknown quantities of gold to enrich the shoals of ne'er-do-wells who, among others, once went out—nay, even now emigrate in hundreds every year—to that golden land: that land of blighted hopes in some cases, of honest toil and industry rewarded in others.

Modern Melbourne—if such a term can be applied to a city barely fifty years old—is one of the cleanest, as it certainly is one of the best laid-out cities in the world. With a rapidly increasing population, at present estimated at 190,000, it bids fair in years to come to attain nearly the proportions of New York. The first peculiarity which strikes a stranger is the absence of beer-shops, gin-palaces, or taverns. It must not be inferred from this that the city is conducted on strictly teetotal principles; far from it. The simple solution is, that the veriest little beer-shop is called in Melbourne, and, indeed, throughout Australia, an *hotel*, and there are dozens of them, though not more, perhaps, than will be found in an English city of the same size; and it must be confessed that more intoxication is seen in one night among the newly-arrived passengers from a large vessel from London, than in a week among the ordinary population of the city.

From the shipping advertisements it might be imagined that Melbourne is actually by the sea; but such is not the case. All ships from England land their passengers and cargo either at Williamstown or Sandridge, both situated in Hobson's Bay, respectively five and two-and-a-half miles from the city: the one noted for its dulness, the other for its dust. Sandridge, however, is the most convenient port of the two, as it has a station, with a good service of trains close to the landing or railway pier; and omnibuses and buggies, a sort of light covered waggon to seat five, ply continuously between it and all parts of Melbourne.

Whilst alluding to the railways it may not be out of place to say that there are only two classes of carriages, first and second, and that the fares, though reasonable on the whole, vary much, in accordance with the line you patronise.

If the visitor to Melbourne cares for boating, he can indulge his proclivities to the utmost on the river Yarra, which slowly meanders through the city from east to west, ultimately falling into Hobson's Bay midway between Williamstown and Sandridge. This river does not supply the Melbournites with water for drinking purposes; for this last, by a clever piece of engineering, is brought from springs at

Yan-Yean, seventeen miles away, in a state of absolute purity: thus offering a great contrast to certain English water companies, who are not particular as to the water they provide—their chief consideration being that all rates shall be paid with punctuality, and that the so-called water shall contain as much solid vegetable or animal matter as is consistent with its flowing through the pipes laid down for it.

But to return to Melbourne. Another peculiarity is the drainage system. It is all on the surface; and the street gutters, into which a good deal of the surplus water falls, or rather runs, fed by pipes just underneath the pavement, look, especially after a heavy rainfall, like dissipated brooks hurrying, like other vagrants, off to sea.

In the larger streets, these gutters are crossed by a small, sideless bridge from the pavement well into the road, which is very necessary, seeing that at times, after a heavy, semi-tropical rainfall, the streets are quite impassable.

The number of dining-rooms and restaurants in Melbourne is prodigious, considering the size of the place. In Bourke Street, which may be said to correspond with the Strand in London, though a good deal longer and about double the width, the dining-rooms may be seen in their greatest variety. In most of them, as in nearly all Australian towns, you can get a good dinner, fairly well served—soup, meat, pudding, bread, cup of tea or coffee, and attendance—for sixpence. Fish, which is scarce and bad, and poultry, are, of course, very much dearer. But at any first-class hotel a good dinner, served in first-rate style, after the manner of the London high-class table-d'hôte, can be had for a couple of shillings, including attendance, but not, of course, ale or wine.

The cheapness of meat is probably too well known to need recapitulation, but it may interest a few to hear that on Saturday night the whole side of sheep can be bought for one-and-sixpence or one-and-eightpence; that the average price of mutton per pound throughout the year is twopence-halfpenny, and beef a penny dearer.

Fruit is both good and cheap, grapes and apples more especially, while the greater part of the trade in vegetables is in the hands of the industrious Chinese, whose quarter of the city is Little Bourke Street. In this street may be found genuine Chinese tea merchants, on whose doors and windows quaint and mysterious devices are painted, the dragon figuring largely among them; opium dens, and also a joss house, or temple, dedicated to Buddha. In fact, it is, in miniature, a perfect reflex of the streets of Peking or Canton.

The Australians, as is well known, have shown their fondness for the old country, as they call England, by naming many of their towns and cities after places dear to them at home. Thus, in or adjoining Melbourne, we have Richmond, Camberwell, Kensington, Brighton, and many other familiar names too numerous to mention. The last of these, and also St. Kilda, are fashionable suburban watering-places, each with a good pier and parade. But the stranger, or "new

chum," fresh from England, misses one thing, and that is bathing-machines. Woe be to the venturesome swimmer who, in defiance of all advice, strikes out from the shore, for he is as likely as not to get an arm or a leg snatched off by a hungry shark. These dangerous fish swarm in Hobson's Bay, and, indeed, on nearly all the coast of Australia, so that to bathe in the open sea is a very venturesome, not to say dangerous pastime. It is to make up for this great want that baths have been formed at several places, consisting of a piece of water fenced in with strong wire, connected with the beach by a pier, on which are dressing-rooms, &c., so that people can bathe at their ease without any fear of encountering the "tiger" of the seas when they are least prepared for him.

The two leading thoroughfares in Melbourne are Collins Street and Bourke Street. The former is for the most part occupied by crowds of business and professional men, engaged in the various banks, offices, and the Exchange. The magnificent blocks of buildings which adorn this handsome street from end to end prove conclusively that the Australians can hold their own with any nation as regards that much neglected art, street architecture. But from about four to six, the crowds on the broad pavement undergo an extraordinary change in their composition; for now, in front of a magnificent row of shops, among which are the finest linen-draperies and milliners in the city, may be seen all the beauty and fashion of Melbourne and its far-stretching suburbs, the *crème de la crème* of Victorian fashionable life. Collins Street puts off its business aspect, and, as if by magic, is transformed into the colonial Rotten Row. If any English lady doubts that the women of Victoria can look well and dress fashionably, let her go to Melbourne, wait until the above-mentioned hour, and see the mothers and daughters of the "upper ten" doing—to use the colonial phrase—"the block." By six the promenaders are gone, there is a scamper and rush of city men hurrying off to catch their trains or omnibuses, and by eight, Collins Street, which is one third broader than the Broadway of New York, is comparatively speaking deserted.

Not so its companion street, Bourke Street. In that busy thoroughfare the stream of life, which has been flowing all day long, now becomes busier than ever as night draws on. Theatres, concert-halls, waxworks, shooting galleries, all open their doors to receive large numbers of the seething crowd, ever eager to be amused; for Melbourne is wonderfully like New York in its love for amusements, as also it is for the possession of that peculiar quality known to the Americans as "go-aheadism." It is safe to say that every place of amusement in Melbourne is to be found only in Bourke Street. One of the theatres, the Royal, is peculiar as having for its manager a veteran actor, Mr. George Coppin, who is also an M.P.!

For those who do not care for theatrical amusements there is, among other entertainments, the waxworks to go to. This is not quite up to the standard of Madame Tussaud's famous exhibition in

Baker Street ; but at the same time it is very entertaining to those who are fond of riddles. The inquiring "new chum" may stand for hours guessing wildly as to whom certain effigies represent. After which, if his strength will permit, he can either buy a catalogue or take a cab from the door to a large stone building, standing in its own grounds, about a mile and a half distant, styled by the vulgar and uncouth, The Yarra Bend Lunatic Asylum.

In Russell Street there is a handsome building known as the Temperance Hall and Reading Room, also Library. The building belongs to the Melbourne Temperance Society, a body who have done, and are doing, an immense amount of sterling good work, which in time no doubt will bring forth good fruit. The reading-room, in which are all the colonial dailies and weeklies, contains a first-rate library, the books from which, in common with the papers, may be freely read by any person who pays a penny at the door.

As regards public buildings, Melbourne will rank quite as high as a great many cities very much larger, wealthier, and older ; but in church architecture the capital of Victoria certainly does not shine. To attempt to describe the Exhibition would take up far too much space. Suffice it to say that it is in a picturesque locality, known as Carlton Gardens, and bids fair, when finished, to completely throw in the shade its quondam rival in New South Wales.

It is wonderfully easy to find one's way about the city, all the streets being laid out at right angles.

The principal parks are Albert Park and Princes Park ; the former containing a handsome edifice devoted to Her Majesty's representative in Victoria, and also the magnificent ground of the Melbourne Cricket Club. Princes Park, about two miles from the heart of the city, is chiefly remarkable for a small but select collection of wild animals and birds, and for its beautiful specimens of tropical vegetable life. It is situated on the Sydney Road, in days of yore a mere bush-track, but now a handsome macadamised highway, about four miles up which, behind a handsome row of plane trees, stands one of the largest penal establishments not only in the Australian colonies, but in the world. It is called Pentridge, a name well known and hated by every criminal in the colony. In it every trade is represented ; bootmakers, tailors, hatters, printers, all are there. Many hundred men are actively engaged all day long ; and a year or so back, several Melbourne tradesmen, beginning to feel adversely the result of this unequal competition, presented a memorial to the Chief Secretary, praying that the sale of articles made at Pentridge should be more restricted. Some alterations were accordingly made ; but even now the place puts one forcibly in mind of a miniature manufacturing town, with its lofty shafts and chimneys. One look at the wretched dress and large straw hats of the convicts, not to mention the watchful sentinels armed with their deadly rifles, soon dispels the illusion, and brings the looker-on back to all the painful realities of

life's shady side. In this prison, dragging out a miserable existence, are several well-known bushrangers, notably Power, who not many years back made travelling as dangerous as Dick Turpin and his followers in the good old days of our ancestors to the wealthy citizens of London on Hounslow Heath.

Quitting this rather dreary theme, a word may be said about Flemington. This little place is about six miles from Melbourne, and is dear to all Australian lovers of sport by reason of its race-course, pronounced by all good judges to be unequalled as regards its position, for from any part of the ground the entire immense course can be seen by anyone, and the horses can be kept in view from the start to the finish.

The Melbourne Cup, which is to the Australians what our Derby is to us, always attracts an immense concourse of people from all parts of the Australian continent. The rough element, so prominent a feature at an English race meeting, is conspicuous by its absence, as the police look after them more strictly than they do here. That class of persons commonly called "roughs" in England are known throughout Australia as "larrikins," a term more expressive than euphonious. It is this class, as a rule, which gives so many subjects for police reports in the Melbourne newspapers. Melbourne journalism is very fair on the whole, though occasionally rather unequal. The principal daily papers are the "Argus" (the "Times" of Melbourne), the "Age," "Daily Telegraph," and "Herald." The first of these is a first-class paper in every way, containing thoroughly well-written articles, and all the latest European and Colonial news. The other papers call for no special mention, with the exception of the "Herald," a penny evening paper which is famous for circulating extraordinary rumours one evening and contradicting them the next. At the same time, however, it occupies a very high place among colonial newspapers, and the little failing above mentioned is not entirely unknown among certain of our English journals.

One word in conclusion as to the scenery of Melbourne. There is no use disguising it: Melbourne, that is the country round it, is not pretty, but there is one exception to prove the rule. Let the visitor to Melbourne make his way to a tiny village called Broadmeadows, nine miles away, and if the lovely scenery does not put him in mind of some of the sweetest spots in the dear old country so far away, he must be a man hard to please.

But now the curtain must fall; the busy city fades from our sight. To the writer, Australia, with its glorious sun and bright blue skies, is gone, never to return. All that remains to him of the great city under the glorious stars of the Southern Cross is a creature of imagination, a child of fancy, a memory of the past.