

AUSTRALIA.

Her Mineral Wealth Clearly Described.

The Gold Fever—Down in a Coal Mine—The Tin Mines—A Wealthy Colony.

From our own Correspondent.

The mining resources of the Australian Colonies are large, particularly as regards coal, tin, copper, iron and lead. The yield of gold in New South Wales, and in fact, throughout all the colonies, is greatly on the decrease compared with the returns of a few years ago. The principal districts in this colony where the most active operations are now carried on are Bathurst, Mudgee, Leichlan, Tumut and New England, in all sixty-five goldfields, covering an area of about thirteen thousand square miles of auriferous formation. The discovery of gold in Australia was first made in Victoria in 1851, but the Government would not recognize the right of the people to seek for and obtain the riches believed to be hidden under their feet until 1851, when it was found to be totally in vain to try to stem the flood of opposition, and licenses to mine were issued. No sooner was gold mining declared a recognized pursuit, than the entire population of Melbourne—then a flourishing colonial town—was plunged into a feverish excitement, and, as aptly said, they were "drunk with gold."

The town was almost depopulated in a short time; tradesmen put up their shutters, lawyers and doctors left their practice, clerks threw up their situations, sailors deserted their vessels, everybody rushed to Ballarat and its neighborhood, then the chief theatre of action, to gather in a few days what many struggle through a whole life time without making—a fortune. Melbourne property was sold for a song to raise money to start mining companies; and all trade and business was at a standstill; but notwithstanding the troubled state of affairs, Victoria was in a single day, as it were uplifted from being an unconsidered, out-of-the-way nook in the wilderness to become a power amongst the nations. The fever rapidly spread to New South Wales, where rich fields were also discovered, and where the total yield for the first thirty years of systematic gold mining is nine and a quarter million ounces or something over two hundred and eighty-eight and a quarter tons, valued at nearly one hundred and seventy millions of dollars. The history of most gold mines in Australia as in America or elsewhere, is very simple and in most cases identical. Gold is discovered in some valley which ages before was the bed of a river, there is

A RUSH OF MINERS to the place, wash-dirt is struck probably at the surface or it may be deep in the soil, and while the alluvial gold is being worked by those lucky enough to come on it, the less fortunate search the neighboring hills for quartz-reef, knowing it must be in the vicinity. This found, claims are pegged out, leases taken and machinery set up to crush the quartz. If the alluvial claims come to an end the greater number of the miners, leave for new fields. Many of the business places brought into existence by the rush are closed, depression creeps over the place, and in a year or two people have forgotten that such a place existed. There is probably few more melancholy sights than

A DESERTED GOLD FIELD, a number of gaying holes, drear as graves, where probably fortunes were made or lost; a lamppost and the crooked remains of a building or two, likely transformed from a grog shanty into a dwelling house; numerous scattered bottle-fragments and other signs of life and revelry, are now all that remain to mark the place where a few years ago stood a thriving mining town with several thousand of a population. There may be pointed out a deserted claim that in itself has a history and yielded its owner a fortune; further on one even richer in its returns, but was the means of its owner's ruin; everything we see is in fact a significant illustration of the evanescent nature of the pursuit of the

"Bright and yellow hard and cold. Heavy to get home; light to hold." Many stories are told of the early discovery of gold in Australia. It is said that in New South Wales

A CONVICT WAS THE FIRST to find a specimen of the rich metal. He was ordered to disclose the spot where the discovery was made, and after many ineffectual efforts to satisfy the demands of those in authority, he was accused of beating up old gold ornaments to deceive the people, and was put to death as a breeder of dissatisfaction among the other convicts, many of whom started with "French-leave" in search of the gigantic treasures they held I to be hidden around them. Men and half of those perished in the search, or were killed by the natives. In Victoria a shepherd was the first to get the machinery of the colony out of its normal state. He brought a lump of the ore to Melbourne and sold it to a jeweller, but would not disclose where he discovered it. When the rush was first made to Ballarat

FABULOUS AMOUNTS were washed from the alluvial diggings, and it was an ordinary day's work in some claims for two men to wash from one to two thousand dollars worth. This sudden wealth brought about its almost invariable consequence—titter abandon and recklessness. All old Victorian miners are familiar with the story of the Scotchman who left the Glasgow police force and made rich in a short time by his good-fortune, was so elated that he had his horse shod with

SHOES OF GOLD, and did many other like extravagant things, and died almost a pauper. In the museum at Brisbane we saw a cast of two nuggets found in Victoria, each weighing over one hundred pounds, and valued at about twenty-five thousand dollars. Bathurst and its neighborhood gave the richest returns of any place in New South Wales, and New South Wales not to be behind her sister colony

was almost as prolific in her golden nuggets.

THE LARGEST NUGGET found weighed one hundred and twelve pounds. It was discovered by a young black fellow (aborigine) who was a boundary-keeper for a Dr. Kay. The black fellow, like his master, and like many of the colonists at this time, carried a hammer for securing specimens of quartz, for where quartz is found alluvial gold is not far distant. He came to two large boulders, partly covered what appeared to be a smaller black one partly buried in the earth. Satisfying himself that this was no ordinary rock he went for his master and unearthing it he found a nugget of nearly one hundred and twelve pounds weight and valued at over

THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLARS. Alluvial mining in New South Wales is nearly a thing of the past. Quartz mining is carried on with tolerable success, but most of the gold fields are suffering from a want of the necessary capital, and this want is attributed to a disinclination on the part of the Colonial capitalists to engage in any speculation where there is a shade of the uncertainty of one pound making another twenty shillings.

THE GOLD DIGGER'S LIFE is a very wandering, homeless one, attended by hardships, privations and many dangers, to say nothing of the uncertain results. He possesses little else than a pick-axe and shovel, billy-can and blanket. When one field is worked, he straps his blanket in a roll on his shoulders, and with his billy-can and shovel starts for a new field. Many such men may be seen in Australia who for years have led this aimless, nomadic life. When night overtakes him he builds a fire, hangs his billy-can over it to boil his coffee, and prepared his "dampers"—cakes made of flour and water and baked in hot ashes. His simple meal finished, his blanket serves for a bed, and with the canopy of a brilliantly star-illuminated Australian sky, with its Southern Cross Magellanic cloud, Milky Way, ("barn" or big river of the aborigines), constellations of Pleiades, Orion, Hydra, the "Coal Sack"—a dark spot in the Milky Way near the constellation of the Southern Cross, or the "bright Aurora Australis" shooting in every direction over his head, he seems content to call this home, and thus year after year drags in his unfriended existence.

TIN MINING in New South Wales appears to have a future before it very similar to that of gold mining. The surface tin is pretty well exhausted, and miners are now engaged in deep sinking. For this much time, patience and capital is required. There have been some extraordinary finds near Vegetable Creek, in the New England district, and the richness of the wash-dirt is remarkable. A handful of the dirt taken from the heaps formed at the mouth of a shaft requires little more than a breath to blow away the sand and leave the hard covered with pure tin. The industry is only about nine years old, and is worked as yet on a small scale. Many Chinamen are employed, and in some of the tin mining districts two-thirds of the population are Celestials.

Of all the mining resources the coal treasures of New South Wales are the most extensive and at present the most profitable and valuable. The

COAL COMPARES FAVORABLY with English or Welsh coal, and for gas making and some other properties tests prove it to be superior. The principal field in the colony is at and around Newcastle, about seventy-five miles north of Sydney. This field covers an area of 23,000 square miles, and ranks as one of the best and most extensive in the world. It had long been our desire to visit coal mine and see its workings, and having secured a pass from one of the overseers, we put ourselves in readiness to make our first trip into the bowels of mother earth. It might be interesting to those not familiar with coal mining operations, to give a brief description of what we saw. On approaching the mine the surroundings, the working of engines, and the clanking of chains and pulleys might be mistaken for the evidences of some large manufacturing establishment, but the mountains of refuse coal heaped about, the sooty appearance of the buildings and the ebony hue of the workmen—quite "in correspondence with their environments"—all betoken the nature of the work. Above

THE MOUTH OF THE PIT is a massive platform to which all the coal from below is brought and is then wheeled in "skips" or small cars each containing about half a ton to the "shoot" into which it is emptied, and from there run into coal wagons or cars and from there run down to the shipping docks. Above the platform are two large wheels over which run strong wire cables attached to the "cages" which descend or ascend as required. Having dressed ourselves in an old suit and each being provided with a miner's lamp, and accompanied by a guide, we entered one of the cages with express instructions not to move until we found ourselves at the bottom. The shaft was about nine feet in diameter, and showed by the light of our lamps as we shot by a variety of strata. Soon we were

AT THE BOTTOM in total darkness except the unsteady glimmer of our lamps which are like small coffee pots filled with grease and having the cotton wick sticking from the spout. Having "got our sight" by sitting down and accustoming our eyes to the surrounding darkness, we were better able to realize the working of this busy, noisy little subterranean world. Boys shouting and beating their ponies, cars or "skips" rattling past in all directions, cables rumbling, chains clanking, pulleys working and in the distance, the steady stroke of the force-pump worked by compressed air, all tend to give the visitor a favorable impression of life underground. We next proceeded with our guide along one of the main arteries to find some of the workmen engaged in digging the "dusky diamonds." These roadways or tunnels are about ten or twelve feet in width, and from six to ten feet in height. In the centre is an iron track, over which is drawn by means of the cable attached to the engine above, a train of skips which pass loaded and

of the mine. After a walk of nearly two miles walled in on all sides by seams of coal and rock we came to where men were at work. They generally work together by twos, both

FOR COMPANY AND SAFETY. By a lottery system called "tobling," they change places every three months. This does away with all possibility of overseers showing a partiality to any of the workmen, and besides doing away with favoritism gives all equal chances as to positions of safety or danger, advantage or disadvantage. On our approach nothing was at first discernible but dull, unsteady, flickering light, soon the dusky outlines of men stripped to the waist could be made out. One is in a corner picking around a great mass of coal weighing several tons, trying to dislodge it. Another is lying on his back and digging a cavity under another seam preparing to blast it, and which may at any moment prove treacherous and crush him to death. Another has put in a charge of blasting powder and has retired to a safe distance to await the result. The men are black from head to foot, and some who are not near the main current of air are obliged to live for eight hours a day in an atmosphere both foul and dense, and the new ones coming in reeking with perspiration. From here

WE VISIT THE STABLES where some fifty to sixty horses and ponies are kept for weeks without seeing the light of day. When their day's work is done they are un hitched from their skips where they have been engaged in drawing loads to the main line, and through the dark windings they readily find their way to their stables. They are generally taken above ground once a month to enjoy a holiday, and for hours at first stagger about unable to see. As a class the miners are industrious, but only a small proportion of them are thrifty, sober and church-going. They live in small shanty-like or wattle-and-dab huts, built upon public commonage, generally belonging to the mining company; they pay six pence or a shilling a week rent; they earn from twelve shillings (about \$3) to one pound (\$5) per day of eight hours, but the hours spent out of the pit, except by a small proportion, are employed very unprofitably, and consequently they live from hand to mouth, and many of them are frequently in debt. Their condition as a class might be greatly improved if

THE TEMPERANCE QUESTION were agitated here, and the same active steps taken as we notice Ontario is making to that end. They are generally given to sporting, and every second Saturday is his apart for recreation. Racing and other sports are set on foot, and the two weeks' wages rapidly change hands on the result of these races. From Friday afternoon the following Tuesday is given up as a time for a general carouse, with the more dissipated class and the "clubs," during that time do nothing but drink, and rake into their title many a poor fool's hard-earned fortnight's work.

Silver and lead have been found in various parts, but the mines are little worked. A difficulty is found in successfully treating silver ore. Copper is widely distributed, but the most profitable formations cover over 5,000 square miles. In this mining industry work has been retarded by the low price of the metal, but the exports for last year amounted to nearly to two million dollars. D. E. McC.

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A REWARD—Of one dozen "TEABERRY" to any one sending the best four line rhyme on "TEABERRY," the remarkable little gem for the Teeth and Gums. Ask your druggist or address.

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