

The night-breeze sighs, the moonbeams play  
 In tranquil beauty o'er  
 Yon rocky tomb : but where are they  
 Who came its depths to explore ?  
 No more they'll tread this upper earth,  
 No more they'll plough wild ocean's wave,  
 Nor greet the distant land of their birth ;  
 Here is their far, unhallowed grave.

It was not without regret that we left this petrified looking city, for such it resembled ; but we had promised to visit a gentleman to whom belonged the—in words—large territory of a whole island. With Alexander Selkirk, he might have exclaimed—

“ I am monarch of all I survey.”

But, alas ! his diminutive kingdom was a source neither of wealth or power to him. He had pressed us to visit his patrimonial island, and curious to see so primitive an establishment as we had heard it was, we had agreed to call for him at Tortola.

On nearing the land he hoisted a small striped flag, which he called a *signal*, and which was to give notice to his wife and family on shore that their retirement was about to be invaded by unexpected guests. Presently a great deal of bustle was observable in the vicinity of a house which was perched on some level ground at the top of the hill that formed the north-west angle of the Key, as such small islands are generally called, and two or three white female figures were seen flitting about an arched gallery that overlooked the sea ; while sundry black faces were popped out here and there, then speedily withdrawn. It was as if a nest of shy birds had been disturbed in the lofty eyry, where they had sought security from the intrusion of the destroyer, man. The sloop ran safely into a clear little bay that served as the harbour to this calm retreat ; and while the party were preparing to land, one of them pointed out an athletic negro man climbing the hill “ in hot haste,” with an unhappy sheep on his shoulders. Our host laughed, and informed us that his meek burden, which, but a few minutes before had been browsing on the pastures below, was on its way to figure at our afternoon repast.

On landing, our host took us to see his *turtle-crawl* and fish-pond, which lay near each other. “ I cannot offer you a turtle steak to-day,” said he ; “ the lateness of our arrival prevents that ; but

choose what other fish you prefer—here are many of different sorts.”

The fish, most of them bright and beautiful in their colours, were darting backwards and forwards, and, unlike the lazy turtle, seemed enjoying their uncertain existence. A grooper was fixed upon, and being hooked up by a negro in attendance, he was unceremoniously snatched from his kindred, to share the fate of the hapless “mutton,” as the blacks call sheep, even when they are “alive and kicking.” Escorted by the negro with the grooper, our party now commenced ascending the hill; but we had not proceeded more than half way, when our ears were greeted with the loud gobbling of turkeys, the quacking of ducks, and the cackling of fowls innumerable. From the poultry-yard issued these sounds of rage and woe, and a few steps further brought us to the scene of action, where we beheld two or three black urchins in full chase after a couple of retreating hens, whose doom of death was also passed. Thus, our entrance into N——’s Isle being marked with destruction among its innocent inhabitants, we approached the airy dwelling-house of the chief himself.

We were first ushered into a long gallery, with open arched windows on three sides—if windows those spaces might be called, where windows there were none. The fourth side leading by folding jalousied doors into the interior of the building. In this gallery were placed several machines, such as are used in preparing raw cotton for exportation. They resembled large spinning-wheels, and by them the cotton was removed from the pods in which it grows, and the seeds were expelled from the cotton. Smaller and larger heaps of cotton were to be seen piled up in different directions against the walls, ready to be packed in bags, and in this, the first process towards the manufacture which forms so lucrative a branch of British trade, the family often amused themselves by assisting. Cotton was the growth of the little island, which could boast of nothing else but some pasture-land, a patch of Guinea-corn, and the yams and other vegetables that were consumed by the family and negroes.

We were introduced to the wife of our host, his sister, and eldest daughter, who, with half-a-dozen younger children, formed the only white inhabitants of the island. The mistress of this secluded family had the remains of beauty, but her features were sharp, and her countenance was sad and careworn, proving, alas! that even in unbroken solitude, those anxieties and disappointments will intrude, which

might be supposed to belong only to social life. The daughter was a very pretty, artless girl, whom we regretted seemed destined to share the fate of many a lovely flower that is

" Born to blush unseen,  
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

The aunt was one of that class whom some people are so uncivilized as to look upon as nonentities in the creation, though they are often equally estimable, useful, and agreeable. In the course of half-an-hour the ladies had become quite intimate with us, and inclined to confide to us all their joys and sorrows. Of joy, indeed, poor people, there was little to tell; more ample was the history of their sorrows, and its principal feature was the loneliness of their life. They were expected to be content amidst those privations, and in that monotonous solitude, which he by whom they were condemned to bear them could not, with the superior energies and strength of a masculine mind, endure himself. Business often afforded him a pretext for leaving them, and he was frequently absent for days or weeks *amusing himself*, as his wife shrewdly suspected, in the neighbouring islands.

In this sequestered abode there was nothing of luxury to be seen; everything indicated penury and decay. The family of our host were paying the penalty of his early extravagance, which, joined to the terrible depreciation of West India property, had left him in middle age a ruined man, with no other means of support than those derived from this small and unproductive island. Those unconnected with the West India Colonies can hardly conceive the frightful deterioration of property that has taken place there—a deterioration which, even in individual cases, no amount of energy, industry, or economy has been able to avert. The West Indians, as a body, have been accused of great extravagance; this, however, is too sweeping a denunciation. If some among them *were* too profuse, which cannot be denied: that profusion was principally caused by their unbounded hospitality, and a spirit of generosity which rivalled the warmth of their glowing climate, and is but little understood in the regions of cold and caution.

The house occupied by the owners of N——'s Island was built after an inconvenient fashion. The only sitting-room was a sort of centre hall, on one side of which were the sleeping apartments, and these had more windows than wall in each, the admission of fresh air being as great an object in West Indian houses, as the exclusion of it seems to be in European habitations. The rooms were neither

papered nor painted, but merely yellow washed. White-washing would have created too great a glare for the eyes. The furniture was of the plainest description, but the mahogany tables were so bright from frequent rubbing, that they might have served as mirrors, which, by the way, were much wanted in the house. Great was the grief of the poor hermitesses when our party prepared to re-embark; they actually shed tears, and even the children were loud in their lamentations. As long as they could see us they stood waving their handkerchiefs from the highest pinnacle of their island-prison; but our little sloop soon bore us away to other scenes.

The singular island of Saba was the one which we next visited. Viewed from the sea it presents the appearance of a steep, barren, and uninhabited rock, conical in shape, and small in circumference. Its principal commerce is in cabbages and other vegetables, which it exports to the neighbouring islands. A few low fishermen's huts were thinly scattered near the base of the hill, and we landed at the bottom of a long flight of steps hewn out of the rugged rock itself. The solitary town is situated in a round hollow at the very summit of the hill, and here, excluded as it were, from the rest of mankind, live in rude contentment its unsophisticated Colonists—

“The world forgetting—by the world forgot.”

From Saba we were obliged to return to our island home, and the voyage being somewhat long, we were glad to amuse ourselves by watching the Portuguese men-of-war spreading their gossamer sails, which glittered as it were with lilac and silver, burnished gold and rose-colour, as they skimmed over the intensely blue waves of the Caribbean Sea. At length the features of the land we were approaching became more and more apparent. The cocoa-nut trees, that had but now seemed pigmy twigs, fringing the tops of the hills, rose against the cloudless sky, waving their graceful branches in the fresh yet gentle breeze. The fields of tall canes, interspersed and chequered with their lilac arrows, gave verdure and beauty to the sloping sides of the mountains, and to the luxuriant plains beneath; while the bright line of dazzling sand that skirted the shore was subdued and softened by the masses of creeping vines that every here and there seemed wandering into the ocean itself, and sporting with the glistening spray.

’Twas the sunset hour, and golden light  
 Was streaming over yon fair isles—  
 Ah! looked they not as calm and bright,  
 As when Columbus woo’d their smiles!

## AN ASCENT OF MOUNT WELLINGTON, OR TABLE-MOUNTAIN, VAN DIEMEN'S LAND.

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MOUNT WELLINGTON, frequently called Table Mountain, from its resemblance to Table Mountain, Cape of Good Hope, is the great lion of attraction to all visitors to the capital of Tasmania. It rears its stupendous head directly behind Hobart Town, being about four miles distant from the city, which it appears actually to overhang, and to be within immediate reach of it. It is to the inhabitants an excellent barometer, for, when the weather is fine, the margin of the summit is perfectly distinct to the naked eye; but, at other times it is either partly or totally lost sight of in the clouds. Nobody ever undertakes a walk, or excursion into the country, without first observing the appearance of the mountain.

Mount Wellington is of an oblong quadrilateral form. The sides are very precipitous and in many parts quite perpendicular, being composed of regular basaltic pillars, resembling at a distance, the Giant's Causeway, in Ireland. The extreme height is 4,300 feet above the level of the sea, and the summit is covered with snow eight or nine months in the year. As its name implies, it is quite flat on the top, forming a plain of several miles in extent.

It is very unsafe to attempt to ascend it without a guide, many persons having perished by losing their way. A melancholy instance occurred about three months before I arrived: the surgeon and first-lieutenant of the *Sea Horse* undertook the ascent without a guide, lost their way, and being unprovided with a compass to direct them, their provisions became exhausted, and they parted company. The surgeon was never heard of again, and his companion was found some days afterwards in a dying state, by parties sent out in search of them. He was brought home and recovered with great difficulty. Not long before some ladies attempted the ascent with a strong party of guides and attendants with other facilities that few could command, and succeeded without accident. But a few days afterwards, a party of ladies and gentlemen undertook the same feat, and nearly perished in the

attempt. They lost their way, and the Governor, suspecting some mishap, despatched troops from the town in all directions, with bugles, who fell in with, and succeeded in rescuing them from their perilous situation.

Aware of the dangers attending the enterprise, I had fully made up my mind to undertake it, and guard against them by proper precautions. Having been kindly offered by the ex-sheriff, Mr. Beaumont, the services of his servant as guide, we started three in all, Mr Beaumont, junior, the servant, and myself, at noon, expecting to reach the top before dark. We were equipped with fowling-pieces, a telescope, a pocket compass (most indispensable), a tin kettle, a few kitchen utensils, and provisions for two days, consisting of ham and veal, bread, coffee, eau de vie, &c. Our clothing was light, the heat being excessive; but we had reason afterwards on reaching a different temperature to repent of not being more warmly clad. The first part of our journey was easy enough, there being a broad foot-path through a partially cleared forest for about three miles, on leaving which the steepness increased considerably, and we arrived at the intricate part of our route. The track lay along a ridge, on each side of which were deep gullies, covered with tall sassafras trees, and so thickly studded that the eye could scarcely penetrate them. It is here that there is the most danger of losing one's self, because it is impossible to know in which direction to turn to get to Hobart Town.

We pushed on for about two miles, through an almost impenetrable forest, here called *bush*, consisting of gum, peppermint, oak, wattle, and sassafras trees, most of them of great height, many reaching from one hundred to one hundred and fifty feet. Our march became much impeded by a stubborn species of grass, breast high, rendered still more interesting by our guide informing us that it abounded with snakes, which in this country are extremely venomous. In traversing the bush we turned out two kangaroos so unexpectedly that, before we could get our guns ready, they were out of sight. Lizards and guanans were very numerous, and we picked up a scorpion. We saw innumerable flights of parrots, paroquets, and many magpies, laughing jackasses, white cockatoos, and a few black ones. These last are very difficult to approach, and it is said that a nest has never been known to be taken, as they build upon the tops of the loftiest trees, in the most savage and inaccessible parts.

We collected numerous specimens of plants peculiar to this mountain, and saw, for the first time, the native cherry tree, which is

more remarkable for its stone growing outside the fruit, than for any other pretensions to be classed with the European fruit after which it takes its name. We at last emerged from the *bush*, and then perceived plainly that our labours had not yet begun, although we were already pretty well knocked up, and were much distressed from the want of water to drink, not having, inadvertently, brought any with us.

The mountain now presented an irregular basaltic appearance. The stones, instead of following any sort of order, were heaped pell-mell upon each other. They were all nearly square, and each one, detached from the rest, several tons in weight. We had to clamber from one to the other, and clung to each as for our lives, the least *faut pas*, would have sent us rolling headlong several hundred feet beneath, to be dashed to pieces against the sharp edges of the rocks. It is at this part that many who undertake the ascent give it up, thinking it becomes beyond a joke. Here we felt that our baggage was a great encumbrance, and, before we had half got through our task, our boots and clothes were all in tatters. At last we reached the top of this basaltic portion of the mountain, and entered again into the same kind of bush as that we had left behind, with the exception that our passage was obstructed by quantities of large trees, torn up by the roots, and lying prostrate in all directions. Such is the force of the hurricanes from off the mountain that the roots of some of the trees torn up were twenty feet deep, and formed with the earth adhering to them a perfect mound, leaving by the side a pit of the same depth, which they had once occupied. We had now accomplished three parts of our task; it was getting dark, *nox incubit ara*, and, but for the cheering hope of soon obtaining water, and bivouacking round a good fire, that kept up our spirits and renovated our energies, we could not have completed it. Our physical strength was quite exhausted; and had we not been tantalised by the spring which our guide promised to find on the summit, if we could only muster up courage to reach it before dark, we could not have stirred another inch.

We came now to a second ridge of basalt, but not so steep, nor closely heaped together as the former, so that it was comparatively easy. At this height a very great change had taken place in the temperature, and we clearly felt that we were entering a more rarified atmosphere; the cool air was rather more favourable to our depressed condition and enabled us to hasten our pace. At last we saw before us the clear and well-defined margin of the summit, and attained it at eight, P.M., having been seven hours performing the ascent. The cold

here became very intense, and our great solicitude was about finding the spring, which to me appeared impossible, as it is not bigger than a hand-basin; our guide did not despair, having often been there before. However, after many fruitless attempts he began to doubt, but at last when on the point of giving it up, we had the good luck to fall in with it.

Our joy may be easily imagined, when it is considered that we drank one bottle of brandy out of sheer necessity only to wet our parched lips, which had the effect of rendering us still worse, by adding fuel to the flame, and for years after I had an antipathy to that spirit, which originated entirely from this circumstance. Having filled our kettle and bottles, we proceeded in search of a favourable place to pass the night. The proper way is to descend a few hundred yards down the side of the mountain, where the cold is less severe, but the darkness rendered the step dangerous to undertake, and we were compelled to remain on the top. At last we found three large square rocks forming a partial inclosure. Having collected a large quantity of firewood for the night, we lighted an immense bonfire, and set about cooking the provisions.

The novelty of our position, and the pleasure of having accomplished successfully this perilous undertaking, soon revived our spirits, and I think I never sat down to a heartier or more acceptable repast, than when squatting round the fire in the dead of night, on the summit of Table Mountain, at the farthest extremity of the globe. The wind began to howl most fiercely, and a snow storm was coming on fast. There was no alternative—there we must sleep that night, on the bare rock, in our light clothing, and the thermometer at 32 degrees. We all three laid ourselves down, and soon fell into a most profound sleep. Our guide got up in the middle of the night to rake up the fire, which was nearly extinguished by the snow. About four in the morning I awoke, and found myself literally embedded in the snow, which had fallen all night. We shook ourselves clear of it and made preparations for breakfast, for which we had to return to the spring, distant nearly two miles from our resting place. The fog was so thick that we were afraid of not being able to find out our fire and baggage, which we had great difficulty in regaining. The fog began to clear away, and standing at the verge of the precipice, the clouds rolled beautifully beneath us, and quite interrupted our view of anything in the distance. We found the top of the mountain a perfectly level plain as far as the eye could reach, and covered all over with immense square and oblong stones, similar to those before spoken of, each one lying separate, and some curiously



resting on one point only, so that persons can by pushing them cause them to shake a little.

The soil is of a marshy nature, and from being frequently covered with water by the rains or melting snow, gave rise to the idea that the summit of the mountain formed a vast lake, which of course was quite erroneous. The spring before alluded to runs down the side towards the village of Newtown, and in its course to Hobart Town turns several miles. In the rainy season it becomes a powerful torrent, but in summer it is comparatively trifling. Owing to the hazy weather, we were prevented from having a chance of opossum-shooting which was our intention, these animals being generally met with by moonlight, just before day-break. We did not see any; the emu, a bird something like the ostrich, and common to the Australasian islands, is also met with here, but not so much so since the increase of civilisation has driven it further back into the bush. There is not much to fear from bushrangers, who prefer the lowlands and the vicinity of farms, but they have occasionally been seen in these parts. As the sun rose the clouds began to disperse, and we soon had a beautifully clear horizon.

The view then became truly magnificent. In front, at our feet, lay Hobart Town, and its picturesque environs, Sullivan's Cove, covered with shipping, and the wide meandering Derwent losing itself in the distance. On the left, New Norfolk, a town twenty miles off, was easily discernible. On the right, the view extended along D'Entrecasteaux's Channel as far as Storm Bay, which opens into the great Southern Ocean. Iron Pot Lighthouse, at the mouth of the Derwent, was seen distinctly; and having once had a narrow escape of being wrecked on its rocky shore, it was a spot I looked upon with more than ordinary interest.

The country inland, as far as the view extends, presented a continuation of lofty mountains, covered to their very summits with impenetrable forests of evergreen trees of great height, a description of scenery peculiar to Van Diemen's Land. The Peak of Teneriffe, fifty miles distant, was the farthest point visible with the glass. It is about four thousand feet high. After having feasted our eyes on the beauty of this grand and majestic scenery, that well repaid us for all our toils, we again lighted our fire, and made a substantial breakfast, previously to undertaking the descent. This was not by any means so fatiguing, but owing to the rain that had fallen, the ground was very slippery, and our course was not unattended with danger.

About midway down, I was seized with a severe illness, brought on by sleeping all night in the snow, and felt unable to proceed any farther. At the same time the rain fell in torrents, rendering my position anything but pleasant. We found a large hollow tree capable of containing twenty people, and got inside for shelter. Having been subjected to this natural shower-bath for a couple of hours, which approached very much to the water cure, I had so far recovered as to be able to resume the downward course, the fear of being left behind having also a little salutary influence upon the system. Nothing remarkable happened during the latter part of the descent, which became gradually easier.

We shot several small birds with handsome plumage, and saw many eagles and black cockatoos, but they were too wild, and in fact we had not strength enough left to trouble ourselves much about them if we had had the inclination. Our boots, too, were falling off our feet, and our clothes were in a most miserable plight, so that when we arrived towards dusk in Hobart Town, people could pretty well guess as we passed along from what excursion we were returning.

After a bath, fresh outfit, and supper, I went on board, where all were anxiously expecting me, and some had already voted us lost. Having given my friends a brief account of the *quæ que ipse miserrima vide . . . et pars magna fui*, I "turned in" and slept for the next twenty-four hours without intermission. Although at the time I said that going up to the top of Mount Wellington once in a man's life was quite sufficient, I soon forgot the past, and was ready to make another trip before my departure from the island; but my friends not being quite so eager, and the time for sailing drawing near, I was compelled to give it up.

Since these pages were written, I have been informed by Lady Franklin that three or four years ago a magnificent cataract was accidentally discovered by a gentleman on the southern side of the mountain which had never before been known to exist. There are two falls, one of thirty feet, and a second of one hundred and sixty, in one continuous sheet. These waters are now found to be connected with Brown's River, which takes its source on that part of the mountain, and empties itself into D'Entrecasteaux's Channel. This cataract will be now a powerful inducement for the Tasmanian traveller to face the difficulties I have attempted to describe, and, as I have heard from a gentleman who has seen it, will repay him well for his trouble.