

## THE EXCURSION STEAMER GOLDEN CROWN.

The marine excursion season was inaugurated on Saturday afternoon with a trial spin of the Port Phillip Steamship and Hotel Company's paddle-steamer Golden Crown from the Sandridge railway-pier to Queens-cliff, Portsea, Sorrento, and return. The weather was rough and uncongenial, and extremely unfavourable to a thorough enjoyment of the occasion, from a pleasure-seeking excursionist's point of view, but was admirably adapted for crucially testing the sea-going qualities of the boat, which has been strengthened and thoroughly overhauled and refitted since last season. The wind blew half a gale from the south-west all day, with occasional squalls and heavy rain towards the evening, and the sea was unpleasantly hulky, except when under the shelter of the land. As a natural consequence, the boat met with rough treatment in the rough chopping seas that broke in the long reaches off Corio Bay and the entrance to the Heads, but on the whole she behaved admirably, and preserved a pretty even keel, which enabled the majority of those on board to remain on deck and enjoy the fresh breeze and charming scenes of the surrounding panorama. The steamer was taken into Wright, Orr, and Co.'s dock, Yarrabank, early in August last, when the hull was stripped for the purpose of ascertaining the condition of the frame and the necessity of substituting new timber amidships, which was formerly considered to be the weak point of the vessel. A thorough overhaul was made of the vessel from stem to stern, and such additions and improvements were made as to render her as trustworthy and serviceable as when originally constructed. A portion of the main keel has been renewed to the extent of 100ft. with redgum timber, 16in. by 12in. Two new garboards of redgum, 12in. by 14in., 120ft. in length, have also been fitted. Side keelsons of Oregon pine, 150ft. in length, have been fitted inside, and all this mass of woodwork has been bolted through vertically, horizontally, and diagonally. This almost solid bottom not only extends under engines and boilers, but some 25ft. beyond either end of the engine-room space. The strengthening also includes two bilge-riders inside, 12in. by 8in., and 60ft. in length. Diagonal braces of the same length, and of Oregon pine, have also been supplied, and these are all through fastened from the outside. An outside stringer has also been placed on either side. These are of Oregon pine too, 12in. by 7in. They are scored in on the frames, and fastened with screw-bolts and nuts. A new spring-beam has been fitted on the port side, and strengthened with T iron. The sponson stays have also been considerably strengthened. The additions repre-

siderably strengthened. The additions represent a combination of strengths capable of standing the most crucial tests. The hull has been caulked and recoppered, and the decks and upper works have received careful attention. Two new boats have been placed on the davits for use in case of emergency, and the ship has in other respects been thoroughly equipped. The improvements have been planned by Mr. Douglas Elder, shipwright-surveyor to the Steam Navigation Board, and carried out in a satisfactory manner under the supervision of Mr. Robb. The engines and boilers have received a thorough overhaul and repair by Messrs. Forman and Co., under the supervision of Mr. Cullen, the chief engineer, and to the satisfaction of Mr. Alexander Wilson, the engineer-surveyor in connexion with the Harbours and Navigation department. Extensive alterations have been carried out in the saloon, which has been refurnished throughout by Messrs. Alston and Brown, and is much improved in consequence. The captain's cabin has been removed from the saloon to the deck, and the space is now devoted to a neatly-fitted scullery. The bar, which is located in the stern, has been thoughtfully partitioned off from the saloon, and may now be used as a smoking-room. The ship has been painted and ornamented throughout by Mr. Alexander Borthwick, and a cosy little cabin has been fitted up amidships especially for the convenience of the ladies. Every care has been taken to provide for the convenience of the public who are in the habit of "going down to the sea in ships," at a cost of between £5,000 and £6,000, and the ship has been placed under the control of Captain T. W. Smith, formerly the commander of the *s.s. Nelson* and the *s.s. Dawn*, one of the most popular "skippers" in the port. The catering will be carried out by the company under the personal supervision of Mr. Daniel Gibson, and the whole will be under the direction of Mr. R. W. Evans, the general traffic manager for the company. There was a large party on board on Saturday, but no special test was made of the steaming power of the vessel. The trip each way took upwards of three hours, but owing to some delay having been occasioned in getting alongside the jetties through the rough state of the weather, the passengers were not landed at Sandridge until 10 p.m.