

A FLOATING HOTEL.

[A LADY'S EXPERIENCE.]

HAVING spent a delightful week on the Gippsland Lakes, I think it would be as well to let your readers know what a very pleasant trip there is to be had, at a small cost—all the more to be appreciated after the heat and glare of Sandhurst. After taking our berths on the Steamship Burrabogie, or Floating Hotel, we left Flanders-street by the first train on Wednesday morning. The weather was not all that could be desired, but we were on pleasure bent, and it troubled us very little. I was surprised and pleased at the rapid growth of the townships en route. Warrigal, especially, being quite a large place. Here it is we stop for refreshment, and here, as at Kyneton, I find the same trouble to get anything at all. I do not know why it should be so; it is very tantalizing to see the lords of creation sitting down comfortably, enjoying a good meal, while we ladies can scarcely get a cup of tea, and when we do get it there is so little time left to drink it, that one has to risk a scalded throat or leave half behind. Now, I think matters could be arranged much better by having one waitress told off to serve ladies, instead of keeping them waiting until the gentlemen are satisfied. However, our time is up and we are off again through very heavily timbered country, with lovely fern gullies and streams of water every where, books are thrown aside, and we give ourselves up to enjoyment of the scenery, and think of the sandheaps and dust we have left behind. At Moor, the country changes completely, and looks decidedly poor, but we get a splendid view of Mt. Baw Baw. Further on the country again changes to splendid park-like lands, with prime fat cattle grazing on each side of the line. At last Sale is reached. From the station we are taken by cabs down to the wharf, which is three miles away. We are shown the canal which is in course of construction from the Latrobe to Sale (after the plans of Sir John Coode), and will allow the boats to go right up to the town. This, no doubt, will very much improve Sale, and be more convenient and pleasant for tourists, than having the three mile drive in cabs with very indifferent horses.

At last round a turn in the road we catch a glimpse of the Burrabogie, and in a few minutes are resting comfortably on board after our long journey. We find the accommodation excellent, nice airy cabins of pine; stained and varnished, exquisitely clean and furnished very prettily, quite as large as we could expect with sufficient room for about 25 passengers. Two very bright looking girls as stewardess and waitress, both wearing caps which are very becoming, wait upon us, and we are soon settled in our respective places. Captain Bull giving orders to cast off "full speed ahead" we were soon steaming down the beautiful Latrobe River, with its

splendid reaches almost long enough for Haulin and Beach to contest the championship, with room for thousands of spectators along its beautiful grassy banks. In about an hour's time we reached Lake Wellington, which is a magnificent sheet of water about twelve miles across but otherwise uninteresting. Dinner being announced and served in the very pretty saloon at six o'clock, consisted of six courses, one of delicious fish fresh from the lake. Mr. Durham is to be congratulated on his success as caterer and in having secured the services of such an efficient cook. At dinner we had ample time to study our fellow passengers, whom, although not numerous, we afterwards found to be exceedingly agreeable and amusing. Dinner being over, we were on deck just as the steamer was entering Mc. Lellan Straits, from thence across Lake Victoria to Paynesville, which was our destination for the night.

Paynesville is only a small fishing village about ten miles by road from Bairnsdale. Several gentlemen from that town (including Mr. Relford, whom many old Sandhurst residents will remember), keep their own boats there and spend their holidays in fishing. During the night, the rain which had been threatening since we started, came down in earnest. About nine o'clock next morning anchor was weighed and we sped across Lake King, which is the most beautiful of all the lakes. Here, whilst promenading to keep ourselves warm, we got a splendid view through our glasses, of the great Dividing-range with Mt. Taylor and Disappointment in the foreground. On to the Tambo which has the reputation of having the most charming scenery of any of the Gippsland Rivers, but that is quite a matter of taste as the Tambo, Nicholson and Avon, are equally beautiful and I should give the palm to the Nicholson, which is short but very sweet. For some distance the Tambo is cultivated on both sides, and very pretty little homesteads are to be seen on the high banks. I noticed that hops are not grown to such extent as formerly, but that maize has taken its place, being the more payable crop. We passed by a large sawmill where there were quantities of paving blocks for the streets of the metropolis. The scenery improved with every turn of the river; in some places the cliffs were very high and clothed with every possible shade of green. How we wished the rain would cease that we might go on shore and gather some of the lovely flowers and ferns that abounded on every side, but fate was against us and we made ourselves as comfortable as possible under the awnings. During lunch we were tied to a tree and then steamed back again and up the Mitchell to Bairnsdale where we arrived at 3 p.m. I found Bairnsdale much improved since my last visit. We made the most of our time, being driven to a pretty spot called Picnic Point, which is at the back of the town some distance up the Mitchell. We also visited a large fruit garden abounding in

some distance up the Mitchell. We also visited a large fruit garden abounding in delicious strawberries which we were allowed to enjoy *ad lib.* It seemed a pity to see such quantities of fruit going to waste, there being no market for it, but this will be remedied in a short time when the railway is opened. Bainsdale is very pretty and we were sorry to leave it, but fresh scenes awaited us and off we went down the Mitchell across the lake's past Paynesville, intercepting a steamer on the way to get the Melbourne papers; that by the way was quite a feature in the day's proceedings as Captain Bull always managed to be somewhere near when a boat was coming down so that we might have the papers every day, for which the gentlemen were very grateful. This done, we headed for a little bay called Duck or Lady Bay, a lovely little spot, where we anchored for the night. After dinner we rowed up to the head of the little bay by moonlight which added to the effect in a marked manner, and was quite as pretty as anything to be seen in the Sydney Harbour. There is plenty of shooting to be had, and fish were seen jumping about us in every direction, only waiting to be caught. On again next day, down through the back Lakes; we spend a delightful morning on the ocean beach. I believe the Burrabogie is the only steamer that visits these Lakes, as she only draws four feet of water and even then she stirs up the mud occasionally.

Off again after lunch across the Lakes past Rusherville, Jimmy's point, and the new Entrance in course of construction. Anchoring off Cunningham at 4 p. m. with the wind blowing very fresh from the east, we finished up the day with songs and recitations, with the roar of the breakers a few yards off, making a fitting accompaniment.

At ten o'clock next day we started for Lake Tyers in a drag provided and driven by Mr. Durham. The road leads up over the tops of the hills, from whence is obtained a glorious view of the ocean and lakes, passing beautiful fern gullies echoing with the cry of the Bell-bird and the occasional sharp note of the Stockwhip-bird, we very soon catch a glimpse of the Lake through the trees. We lunched on a charming spot overlooking the Lake, and opposite the aboriginal station. We hoped to have visited the station, but there being quite a sea on, we had to abandon the idea, as a drenching would have spoilt our pleasure, to say nothing of our clothes. But we were more than content with the splendid panorama which lay at our feet. The lovely purple waters of the Lake, divided only by a strip of yellow sand from the beautiful blue rollers of the Pacific, made up a picture never to be forgotten.

On the way home Mr Durham takes us to a perfect fern-tree gully, which has not as yet been spoiled by tourists, and over a real bush road where we had to keep ducking our heads to avoid the overhanging branches, and

which proved Mr Durham to be a capital whip. We arrived at the boat in time for a splendid dinner, which was done full justice to after a most enjoyable day. Next day being Monday, the boat's head is again turned towards the Lakes, and we make for the Nicholson River, and spend a quiet happy day, sitting on the deck in the numerous easy-chairs, while the gentlemen recline in hammocks. With nothing to do, and all our domestic cares forgotten, we revel in the charming scenery, and thoroughly enjoy ourselves. Returning through the Lakes for the last time, we anchor for the night in Lake Wellington, two miles from the mouth of the Avon. Next morning we ascend the river, passing the aboriginal station of Rahmayuck. The natives came running down to see us, as a steamer is quite an event on that river. We anchored at a lovely spot called Redbank, where we went on shore and got a glorious view of the mountains. Back again up the Latrobe to Sale. Our voyage being ended, we all felt the greatest regret at parting from the Burrabogie and her kind and enterprising owners, who had done everything in their power to make our trip enjoyable. We arrived in time to catch the afternoon train to Melbourne, which we reached at 11 p. m., feeling all the better for our most delightful week's holiday.