

A HOLIDAY AT THE GIPPSLAND LAKES.

(By T. EBBARD)

Where should I go for my Christmas holidays. A friend suggested Gippsland; "go the round of the Gippsland Lakes," said he, and you will not regret it. I did, and I did not—that is, I went, and I did not regret it. On the contrary I passed so very pleasant a week doing those Lakes, that for the benefit of those who do not know them, I purpose giving a short account of what is to be seen and done there. I first of all invested sixpence in the purchase of "Hutchin's Tourist's Guide to the Lakes," which aided by the map in it gives you an excellent idea of the route to take, and what to see. If I could only get the proprietor of the journal in which this effusion may appear to print that map as an addenda to my letter, the whole route would be shown as clear as the sun at noon day, and it would help my description greatly, but I doubt if any but the publisher of a Gippsland paper, having a share in the steamboats, or a sleeping partnership in some of the hotels on the route, would go the trouble of copying that map, so I will do the best I can without it. Now I must be off to the Lakes if I mean to return from them; so it happened that on the 3d January, 1882, I took an excursion-ticket at Princes Bridge station, paying only £2 6s. 6d. for a first class return, rail and steamer included. A wonderful boon to a poor man with a numerous offspring. It being the first time I had travelled by the Gippsland line, I found plenty to admire in the way of beautiful villa residences and more pretentious dwellings, which are to be seen on each side of the line for nearly the first hour's ride, after which the country showed more of "the forest primeval," and gradually the giant gum and other forest trees that show the richness of the soil appeared on each side for miles and miles; occasionally you got a peep of lovely Fern Tree Gully, varying the monotony of the eternal gumtrees, till Warragul was reached, where there there is a stoppage made of about ten minutes to refresh the inner man (and woman.) The station was prettily decorated with fern trees (it being holiday time), lashed to the pillars of the platform. I admired those fern decorations more after I had refreshed that I did before; so did most of the passengers, I think, for it is a long ride from Melbourne to Warragul. There is no undue haste on the Gippsland line, no rushing madly along at sixty miles an hour at times and then standing still in a cutting because of being "before time,"—they neither lose nor gain time on that line, but keep up an average speed of about twenty miles an hour, and the devil a bit could, or would, those respectable engines go faster I believe. Leaving Warragul, we pursued the even tenor of our way till Moe was reached, in which locality I was interested, a relative of mine having been the engineer of construction for some 10 miles of the line thereabouts, and, having heard from him the difficulties and discomforts he and his young wife had to encounter when living in a small weatherboard place at Moe, where there was then a vast swamp, and a part of which had to be gone through, and converted into the present even running railway line. As a reward for what

running railway line. As a reward for what that engineer had done, he was kicked out on Black Wednesday. I took good stock of that part of the country, you may be sure. What is now a thriving townships was then almost uninhabited. Miller's Hotel, a butcher's shop, (of the most primitive description), to get a leg of mutton from which to where the station now is, along in a sack on a man's back, and the man mounted on a good horse was, during the winter months, a work of difficulty, and one not always accomplished, the man and mutton remaining one side of the bog and the hungry family on the other, and the inevitable blacksmith's forge. These were about the only habitations within miles of what is now Moe township. Well, with this digression, on we go to Sale, which was reached in some eight and a half hours from Melbourne. As I was not, and am not, in the employ, or even confidence of any of the numerous hotel keepers in Sale, I will not say where I stayed while there, but, if the hotel I was at is a fair sample of the others I can only say they are all good, and I can say the same of all the hotels on the lakes route, moderate charges and good living, civility and every information not charged in the bill, you get both for nothing. Sale is a fine town, much larger and better laid out than I expected, and the shops as good as any reasonable people, not caring for all the display in the Collins-street shops, can want. The public buildings are substantial and well placed. I made a great mistake about Lake Guthridge at an end of Sale township, which I took to be a swamp, with a cemetery beyond it; and I rather disgusted one of the principal inhabitants to whom I was introduced, by saying I wondered they did not fill up that swamp at the end of the principal street, near the cemetery. "What swamp? What cemetery?" said the indignant townsman, "That sir, I'd have you to know is our lake, Lake Guthridge, and the place you call a cemetery is our Botanical Gardens, both formed and beautified at great expense, partly through my exertions during my term of office, sir." I found I had unwittingly trodden on the corns of an ex-Mayor, or next door to one, whose pride and hobby was "the lake and garden." I humbly begged his pardon, and he granted it, and we ended by partaking of an "Artesian" together, and parted good friends. I am glad that man wasn't a teetotaler, or we might have been enemies still. "Will you do an Artesian," is, I find, a common way of asking a man to join you in a glass of ale at Sale. The Saleites are proud of their artesian well, and not to have a glass of ale made from the water of it is a slight on the place. The funny man of the place told me he was tired of hearing the well spoken of, it was a great bore to him. There is no Lunatic Asylum or Home for Incurables, which accounts for that unfortunate being at large. Any one

having the time to spare could, I am told, spend a very pleasant day by driving over to the aboriginal mission station at Ramayuck, going by way of Stratford, which the guide book tells you is beautifully situated, has four churches, shire hall, and three hotels, one of which, I believe is kept by the redoubted "Tom Curran" who will put you up to any amount of sport, if you should call on to his place in preference to

will put you up to any amount of sport, if you should pull up to his place in preference to either of the four churches, the shire hall, or the other two hotels. Stratford is the first Australian township I ever heard of as containing more churches than hotels. I wonder if Tom Curran has anything to do with this? There are also several other pleasant outings from Sale, so I heard, but my time being short I took it all on trust, and believed all I heard. One of the principal attractions of Sale to me,—an old English fly fisherman, who had not cast a fly scarcely since leaving the old country—was the excellent fly and other fishing to be had in the Thompson, and McAllister rivers, in the latter particularly and through the kindness of a well-known disciple of Isaac Walton, whose Government duties do not occupy the early mornings and late evenings, as well as through the courtesy of the sporting editor of the *Gippsland Mercury*—being an extremely modest man he would blush to see his name in print—I was put up to many "likely spots" in the above rivers, in which good sport might be calculated on, but tho' "Barkie was willin," the time, as I said, was short, and after laying in a stock of flies sufficient for all the fish in the McAllister, I made a solemn promise to return and spend that part of the following Tuesday with them on the river which was not taken up by my devotions, but which promise, I am sorry to say, I could not keep. I left Sale, and drove to the Latrobe wharf, on which, unlike Stratford, the hotels outnumber the churches, and got on board the steamer Tangil, and was then fairly off for the lakes. I found a goodly number of passengers on board, and amongst them some from my native village—Sandhurst. The Latrobe river, which you have to go down to get into the first of the lakes (Wellington), is prettily wooded to the water's edge with dark green foliage, shrubs, and trees; and the windings of the stream shows fresh beauties at every turn, while here and there a lagoon opens, covered with wild fowl, which scarcely take any notice of the passing puffer. I didn't care much for Lake Wellington, it is too big to see much of the shore scenery, and if it were not for the Australian Alps in the far distance, and the lesser mountains nearer, there would be no beauty in Lake Wellington, which is, I believe, some twelve miles long by ten broad. While steaming thro' this lake, we exchanged signals with a small "yot,"—I know there's an "b" and a "c" in it, but I never could spell that word; so we'll call a spade a spade, and make it a "yot"—which was cruising about, and on nearing each other, a boat was lowered from that "yot," and a letter formally handed over to the boatman thereof by our captain for his master, Mr. B—x, who has, I believe, an estate in that neighborhood, and amuses himself in holiday times by cruising about the lake, fishing, shooting, and intercepting the steamers from distant lands for news and letters. We had only one for him. I hope it wasn't a *Dun*. The time (Christmas) was suspicious. It must have taken him hours to get that letter. I trust he read it in a Christmas spirit, even if it was a wise merchant's bill. That little incident made quite a pleasant break in our rather monotonous way across that lake, which having got through we entered McLellan Straits (so called because they are very crooked), which are some six miles long, well wooded on

Straits (so called because they are very crooked), which are some six miles long, well wooded on each side, with any number of water fowls to be seen, and so into Lake Victoria, which is rather larger than Lake Wellington, but being only some three or four miles broad you get the benefit of the beautiful shore scenery. Having got through Lake Victoria, you enter a narrow pass, called McMilla n Straits, between the main land and Raymond Island, during the passage of which the captain of our steamer facetiously told me he had sometimes to use the lead, pointing to some outgrown hop poles on deck, which he had to use occasionally to punt his vessel along. However, we got through without having recourse to the hop poles, and entered safely into the harbor of Paynesville, which is a sort of starting point for Kosherville, the Lake Entrance, the Back Lakes, the Tambo River, and other places of interest. Here we Tangil passengers were transhipped to the Broadside, a screw steamer, that can and did do her ten miles an hour all the way through, and a comfortable boat she is, having a grand captain, first and second officers (all in one). This Paynesville is a fine place for a sportsman—he can from thence and without going far afield, get excellent snipe, ducks, swans, and other shooting, kangaroo shooting and hunting, and fishing galore; boating enough to satisfy the most nautical of landmen, and hotel accommodation as good as anyone out for a holiday could desire. Riding horses, buggies, dogs, and guns can all be provided at one or other of the hotels, while boats and fishing appliances can be hired from the fishermen located near, who gain a living by catching and sending fish to Sale and thence to Melbourne. But we must get on to Bairnsdale, to reach which we steamed through the remainder of McLellan's Straits until we reached Lake King, the prettiest of all the lakes, with a well wooded shore, and through Lake King into the Mitchell River, on which Bairnsdale is situated. The Mitchell River is a winding and picturesque one; most of the way you have Jones' Bay on your right and Lake King on your left hand, visible at times with an occasional lagoon, always with wild fowl in them. The distance to Bairnsdale might be shortened considerably if a cutting was made through a narrow strip of land at "Eagle Point," and there entering the Mitchell River, instead of, as now, having to make a great stretch over the lake to the eastward, to enter the mouth of the river, and wending one's tortuous way up it again till opposite the aforesaid Eagle Point. However, I did not complain of the length of the passage. I was, in fact, sorry when it was over, and Bairnsdale reached, 70 miles from Sale, in about six hours, more or less, and I think it was more. I took up my quarters at one of the many comfortable hotels, and as soon as the bats began to flit about I turned in, first having secured the services of a well-known sporting guide to show me a likely spot or two on the river at break of day. I didn't bless my guide when, at an unearthly hour next morning, he roused me out, and wouldn't take no for an answer. However, once up and out in the fresh morning air, down by the willows fringing the Mitchell, I was heartily glad I had not given way to a strong inclination to have forty winks more. The morning was an unpropitious one for fishing though—no fish on the rise—it may be they had

though—no fish on the rise—it may be they had been up late the night before and hadn't turned out yet. Any how, I snaked into my hotel about eight a.m., having hidden my rod on the roof of ashed and dropped my bag in an outhouse, and wished the fair young landlady good morning, as if I was just come in from a stroll round the town. Fortunately there were fish for breakfast, and those who were my fellow-passengers the evening before believed I was the catcher of them, which was almost as good as if I had been. After breakfast I took a stroll round, and the first thing that struck me was the splendid pasturage in the long three-chain wide main street. No occasion to paddock travelling mobs of cattle passing through Bairnsdale; let the mob enter the street at one end, send a drover on a head to stop them when they have fed their way to the other end, which terminates at the river, where they can drink the health of the municipal authorities who have so hospitably provided for them; and you have a very Bovine Paradise in Bairnsdale main street. I gathered that Bairnsdale is a rising place; certainly the dust rose there, for I never saw more dust blowing in (in this respect much maligned) Sandhurst than I did that morning in Sale. However, the inhabitants said it was unusual, and I said I hoped I should not be there on an unusual day again. But though Bairnsdale may have herbage in its streets, and an occasional duststorm, there is a great deal to be said in its favor. There is a fine agricultural country round it, and a good class of selectors have settled on it, while the soil and climate being favorable to the growth of hops, tobacco, maize, etc., and water is plentiful, it only wants the railroad to be pushed on beyond Bairnsdale to make a grand future for the district. Mind, all that about the hops and the tobacco, maize, and selectors, I took on trust; I didn't see any of them, but I have no reason to doubt the truth of it all, for surely they would not be mean enough to take in a stranger! Besides, did not some of my fellow passengers toil over to those hop gardens, and maize fields, and tobacco grounds, on that dusty day, and come back declaring they were delighted with all they had seen with a big D, though I must say they all looked done up, and not so jaunty as when they set out for their walk. At Eagle Point, about six miles from Bairnsdale, there is good fly fishing, and after an hour or two with the rod there, the pull home up the river of a moonlight night, making your boatman do all the pulling, is an outing to be remembered. But time is up, and the next morning I had to leave Bairnsdale for the lakes entrance by the same steamer that brought me there. We called at Paynesville, and then put into Rosherville, which is a favorite resort for sportsmen and tourists. There is good hotel

accommodation at Rosherville, bathing-houses, sea air, lovely scenery, game of all sorts abundant, and within easy reach. Steamer daily to Sale and Bairnsdale. I was told that a large party of ladies and gentlemen from Melbourne had been "camping out" for a fortnight in a pretty spot near Rosherville, the ladies "camping" in a couple of cottages, and the gentlemen of the party roughing it at night in tents with most elaborate fixings—air mattresses,

with most elaborate fixings—air mattresses, hammocks, opossum rugs, and a French cook! A hard life I fear they led, but what will not pleasure-seekers put up with. Leaving that pleasant little settlement, we steamed on to the lake's entrance, through Bancroft Bay, with its lovely scenery, past Smythe Point, Flannigan's Island, and Jemmy's Point to the pier opposite Laughton's Hotel, our destination for the night, to which we were glad to wend our way, after a delightful day on board. We invaded that hotel about ten p.m., and all clamoured for beds, and supper. We were twenty-six new arrivals, all told, and no baker, butcher, or store within miles. Only twelve had telegraphed for beds, and it looked at first as if the odd fourteen would have to camp out in the verandah and elsewhere; but that hotel was elastic, and we all got rooms according to seniority. I rejoiced in being the senior of the new arrivals, for I got a capital bedroom all to myself, not so much as a mosquito being allowed to share my room. Our landlady did the best she could for us in the way of supper. I was pressed to carve a ham—I said I was not (I) ambitious of the honor—a feeble attempt at wit, which went down well with a few of the weakest. The man who carved that ham got none of it, as I knew he would not, and very little else. Up at daylight to catch the slack of the tide, which, I was informed, was the best time for fishing off the pier. To get bait I pressed into my service an Aboriginal named Dick, "the last of his tribe, of course." Dick was attired in the remains of an old "belltopper" hat, an ancient dress coat with one tail off, and nothing else, I believe, but his dark skin, which filled up the interstices, and made him look somewhat like a black butler very much out of place and elbows. Well, Dick grubbed about and got me some nasty-looking yellow caterpillars out of an old trunk of a honey-suckle tree, and some small crabs, which he kindly chewed before handing them over to me—"Like um best that um way," Dick said. If so, the fishes must have depraved tastes. However, off I went fishing, and had some good sport before breakfast. There is a telegraph office, and a boarding-house somewhere on the hill, which latter I didn't see, but took on trust, and that is all "Cunninghams" as the settlement is called, can boast of. It must be rather lonely in winter, with nothing in front but the big Southern Ocean booming at you continually, and amusing itself with silting up the entrance to the lakes, which it had formed a week or two before, and forcing another in a totally different place, to the discomfort of mariners generally, and unskilful pilots in particular. I was not fortunate enough during my short stay to meet with a certain "Pretty Jane" I was told of as very often at the Lake's entrance. There were two or three nice-looking girls staying at the hotel, but no Jane, pretty or ugly, that I could make out, but she must have been there or there about, as the day after I left I saw that the "Pretty Jane" had been at the Lakes Entrance the day before, and assisted the "Ugly Duckling" or some such individual over the bar. I suppose she was a gymnast, or a female pilot. I am sorry I did not meet her. However, I spent a very pleasant time without the "Pretty Jane,"—some fellows at Sale wanted to cram me that the "Pretty Jane" was a steamer, and I let him think that I believed him. In the afternoon a couple of friends of mine from Melbourne

him think that I enjoyed it. In the afternoon a couple of friends of mine from Melbourne who were out on the lakes on a shooting and fishing expedition lent me their boat, as they were off overland kangaroo shooting. I took advantage of their kindness, and having invited some fellow passengers of the day before to come for a sail, we started for Jimmy's Point, not to have seen the view from which would be a great loss. I was told everybody made a point of going there, so, of course, I must make a point of it too. Unfortunately, just as we started and had all sail set "to catch the cooling breeze," the cooling breeze died away, and we had to have recourse to the less cooling work of pulling that big boat, or we should soon have drifted with the tide on to the bar and away from our destination. I was so sorry I had hurt my thumb last year and could not join in the pulling, but some of the gentlemen in the party worked at those two huge oars like galley slaves—Tittlebat Titmouse would have said they looked more like slaves of the gale—while the young ladies sang something about their voices keeping time (which was true) and the oars keeping time (which was untrue). However, by dint of hard work, we reached Jimmy's Point, some two and a half miles up, in about two hours, having to get on to the back of our stalwart boatman and be ignominiously carried ashore, as the water was too shallow and no landing jetty. Then a scramble up the zig-zag path leading to the top of the "Point," when we were amply repaid for our exertion by the beautiful panoramic view of the river, studded with numerous wooded islands as far as the eye could reach, and the Southern Ocean, with its boundary of sandbanks in the back or rather side-ground. The slide down was accomplished in safety, not having seen a single snake, which we were told were plentiful there. We had the tide with us on our return and a slight breeze in our favor, so I offered to pull, but they wouldn't hear of it; I had forgotten my thumb. In the course of conversation I found out that our boatman was an Icelander, probably the only one in the colony, who had, in the early days of Danolly, been a digger there, and I, having known Danolly well some years ago, my heart warmed towards that Icelander, and he thawed a bit, which, I'll be bound to say, he never did in his own country. In the evening, and till about eleven we, that is, our Jimmy's Point party, fished off the pier, and an amateur concert by "The talented family," as I named them, was improvised (I not being a relative), finished up a most pleasant day. The arrival of the steamer, about 10 p.m., is nightly looked forward to by the visitors, and so we 24 hours old visitors had our stare at the new arrivals, as we had been stared at the night before. I was sorry to have to leave such a pleasant place, but time was on the wing, and my time drawing to a close; so about six next morning I got on board, and returned to Sale by the same route I had come (leaving out Bairnsdale). I regretted not having had time to have a day up the Tambo River, which you can do in a day from Paynesville, as I believe the river and its scenery are well worth seeing. However, another time I'll do the Tambo, the back lakes, and several other pleasant places that I was told of.

The above round is a healthy, pleasant eight days' trip, and without undue fatigue, and can be made for an outlay which, I engage to say, would have been greatly ex-

and can be made for an outlay which, I engage to say, would have been greatly exceeded by "a week in town," and I strongly advise all those who have not been the round of the Gippsland Lakes to go there and judge for themselves whether it is not one of the pleasantest and least expensive "outings" any man can take or woman either.

Another season, if all goes well, I shall certainly repeat my trip to the Lakes; and, in addition to what I have described, I would make up a party of, say six, half shootists and half fishers, charter a small steamer at Sale, which, I believe, can be hired from the Friday till the Monday night in any week for about £2 10s. a day, and start off for the "Back Lakes," taking provisions, a few hammocks, and a tent, it may be (but not a French cook), camping out when and where good sport was to be had, and moving about amongst scenery which the guide book to the Lakes tells us is not to be surpassed, with the benefit of sea air all the time thrown in. A few days thus spent would, I am sure, be ever afterwards marked with a white stone in the calendar of those whose days, like mine, are not "all beer and skittles."