



NEW SOUTH WALES.

PART I.

The entrance of the MacLeay River—Trial Bay—Granite headlands—A digression on the nature and appearance of the alluvial jungles or brushes, on the banks of some of the coast rivers of New South Wales—Probable causes of the tropical aspect of the vegetation, and the inexhaustible richness of the soil, which characterise these brushes, especially in the northern districts—Extensive swamps near the estuary of the MacLeay—Successful experiment with rice—Agricultural stations of the squatters—Cedar sawyers—Prevalence of ague at the lower MacLeay—Village of Kempsey—Dongai Creek—Beautiful fertile ranges—Their geological formation the most favourable of any for vineyards—Limestone caverns—Rich fertile well-watered country on the south side of the MacLeay—Densely wooded lofty mountains—Tremendous cataracts and basaltic precipices—Extraordinary altitude of the bed of the MacLeay above the level of the sea, between the cataracts and its sources—Fine table land country of New England—Coldness of the climate from the great elevation of the country—The Nambucca River—Survey of its navigable arms—Murderous attacks of the native Blacks on the Cedar sawyers—Coohalli Creek—First appearance of Pine here, in about $30\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ S.—The Bellengen River—Journal of an excursion over the mountains towards its sources—Journal of subsequent examination of the country in the vicinity of its mouth.

THE MacLeay River, and the adjacent country to the north of it, having been the districts allotted to me, by the Colonial Government, to explore and

survey, I will commence my observations on the northern part of the territory of New South Wales, by a minute description of that river ; especially noticing those peculiarities in the geological formation, soil, and botanical productions, which distinguish the MacLeay from the rivers in the south country.

The general character of the country on the banks of the other rivers, north of Port Stephens, viz. : the Manning, the Hastings, the Clarence, the Richmond, the Tweed, the Brisbane, &c. being, with some little variation, nearly similar to that at the MacLeay, a more brief notice of their natural features will suffice.

The MacLeay river disembogues in Trial bay, lat. $30^{\circ} 40' S$. The entrance is obstructed by a bar of sand, the position of which is not unfrequently altered by floods and other causes ; it has, however, generally sufficient water on it. for vessels drawing eleven feet. Trial bay is a good roadstead, being completely protected from all winds but those between north and east, from which quarters the winds are seldom strong. The basis of the country in the immediate vicinity of the mouth of the MacLeay river, is a pink granite, overlaid occasionally by dark-coloured rock of trap formation ; a few miles west of the bar, this granite rises abruptly to an altitude of nearly two thousand feet in the Yarra-Hapinni range ; which is the termination of the range dividing the basin of the

MacLeay river from that of the Nambucca river to the north of it. Mount Yarra-Hapinni is densely wooded to the summit, with an almost impenetrable forest of gigantic trees, but its spurs towards the sea descend in beautiful verdant park-like declivities to the beach, the grass growing luxuriantly, even within reach of the salt spray of the ocean. At the south extremity of Trial bay, the granite again rises in a lofty conical grassy forest hill, to which I gave the native name of Arakoon; its gullies are enveloped in brushes of bangalo palms, cabbage palms, and gigantic ferns.

In ascending the MacLeay river, from its entrance, the first objects which meet the eye on both banks are extensive mangrove flats, with thickets of myrtle, palm, and swamp oak, which, a few miles further on, are superseded by dense alluvial brushes, rising like gigantic green walls on both sides of the river.

I must here make a digression to attempt to convey to the English reader some idea of the very peculiar appearance of that kind of vegetation to which the colonists have assigned the unmeaning name of *brush*. It grows on the richest alluvial land, and consists of trees of almost endless variety, and very large dimensions, totally differing in appearance from the ordinary Eucalypti and Casuarinæ, which grow on the common open forests of Australia, for the brush trees in general possess a rich umbrageous foliage of bright shining green.

The popular names of the most remarkable brush trees are as follow:—Red Cedar, White Cedar,* Mahogany, Tulipwood, Rosewood, Ironwood,† Lightwood, Sassafras, Corkwood, the Australian Tamarind,‡ Box, the numerous and elegant varieties of trees of the Myrtle genus,§ the Australian Palms, and the Brush Fig-tree, which, from being originally a mere creeper, requiring the support of another tree, gradually envelopes it, and attains occasionally such a size, as to cause it to rank among the largest vegetable productions in the world. But the peculiar appearance of the *brush* is principally caused by the countless species of creepers, wild vines, and parasitical plants of singular conformation, which, interlaced and entwined in

* Red cedar, *Cedrela Toona*, is quite different from the Lebanon cedar, *Pinus Cedrus*, and also from the American Pencil cedar, which is a species of juniper. The White cedar, *Melia Azederach*, appears to be identically the same as the Pride tree of Asia. The foliage of both red and white cedar is deciduous.

† The Australian trees, popularly named Rosewood, Mahogany, &c. belong to totally different genera from the American trees of those appellations, the names having been given from the similar appearance of the wood.

‡ This very beautiful tree is dissimilar in every respect to the Tamarind tree of the Indies; it has obtained its popular appellation from the grateful acidity of its fruit, which hangs in large clusters of transparent, amber-coloured berries, of the size of small grapes.

§ The berries of several trees of the Myrtle tribe are edible, and are sometimes used for tarts, preserves, &c. by the settlers.

inextricable confusion, bind and weave together the trees almost to their summits, and hang in rich and elegant flowering festoons from the highest branches. The luxuriant and vigorous character of the brush, on alluvial land, in the northern part of the territory of New South Wales, cannot be surpassed in any tropical region. When this brush land is cleared, and cultivated, its fertility seems inexhaustible. For even in the old settled parts of the colony, near Sydney, the productiveness of the thickly wooded alluvial flats is most wonderful; thus, on the banks of the Hawkesbury, there is some land of this description, which has now been cultivated for forty years, without intermission, and without any renovating application to the soil; and it has been observed by Mr. Wentworth, the present member for Sydney, in the New Legislative Council, that, on the banks of that river, the same acre of ground has been known to produce, in the course of the same year, fifty bushels of wheat, and a hundred bushels of maize, and yet the settlers have never any occasion for manure.* I have also been informed of fourteen successive crops of wheat having been reaped off the same piece of ground at Illawarra, without manure, and on ground, too, out of the reach of flood.

* Notwithstanding the richness of the alluvial soil on some parts of the banks of the Hawkesbury, it is not a good agricultural district, as the settlers there frequently suffer from the two opposite evils of successive droughts, and destructive floods.

