Recollections of Bush Life in Australia, During a Residence of Eight Years in the Interior

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RECOLLECTIONS
OF
BUSH LIFE IN AUSTRALIA,
DURING A
RESIDENCE OF EIGHT YEARS IN THE INTERIOR.

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RECOLLECTIONS

OF

BUSH LIFE IN AUSTRALIA.

INTRODUCTION.

It is now more than ten years since Australia was at the zenith of its prosperity and reputation. At that time it annually attracted to its shores a considerable share of British capital and enterprise. Many of the resources of the country had been developed, with surprising skill and energy, by the Anglo-Saxon race, which has ever furnished the most industrious and successful colonists; and the progress of improvement was proportionably rapid. Australia was the land of promise. Companies were formed, which realized large profits. The most triumphant reports reached home by public and private channels, and these reports were confirmed to the fullest extent by the successful adventurers who returned.

A class of persons were induced to emigrate, who had hitherto never thought of casting their lot out of England; and by extravagant expectations were entertained—expectations which no natural advantages of the country could warrant, and no continuance of its prosperity could have fulfilled.

About the year 1840 the tide of fortune began to ebb. Immigration, the most important element of the welfare of an infant colony, was checked. The system of unbounded credit, which had produced its usual over-stimulating effects, was suddenly destroyed; and a panic ensued, bringing with it a series of pecuniary embarrassments, which almost amounted to a public bankruptcy, and caused a shock throughout the community, from which the colony is only now recovering.
Since this commencement of its adversity, Australia has been paying the penalty of having been over-praised and flattered in its prosperity. Its real advantages have been undervalued; it has been blamed for faults not its own, and made responsible for casualties from which no country is exempt. In the overweening confidence of full-blown prosperity, the ordinary precautions had been neglected, the means usually thought necessary to ensure success had been dispensed with, and the most extravagant speculations had been made.

When the time of re-action arrived, an extraordinary fall of prices was the immediate consequence; and the over-sanguine colonist, who had ventured his all in the hope of a speedy return to the land of his birth with a competent fortune, found not only that the prospect of wealth was removed to an indefinite distance, but that he could no longer withdraw from the adventure, and that he must remain chained to the spot, unless he chose to retire with the loss of the greater part of his capital. He had probably expended more on his stock and establishment than it would have been prudent to lay out, even if he could have had a guarantee of the continued prosperity of the colony; and, in the moment of distress, he blames Australia for his disappointment, and not his own want of prudence and foresight.

Australia, it must be admitted, has failed to realize the expectations which it once had raised; yet much that has been said in its praise is still undeniably true. Few countries have been more highly favoured by nature; its many yet undeveloped resources, the interesting peculiarities of its animal and vegetable productions, the great success with which those of other countries have been naturalized on its soil, and its healthy and genial climate, all speak strongly in its favour.

It is not a country in which a large fortune can be rapidly made from a small capital; it is not a country in which thirst for gain will supply the place of knowledge of business, or in which haste and rashness will obtain the rewards of prudence and perseverance. In Australia, as elsewhere, markets are liable to be overstocked and prices to fluctuate; like other countries, it is subject to natural casualties beyond the control of man; but it may be doubted whether, upon the whole, any country could with better prospect of success be adopted by the English-