

THE



VAGABOND



ARTIST
SERIES

JOHN STANLEY JAMES

AKA JULIAN THOMAS AKA THE VAGABOND

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THE VAGABOND

Name: John Stanley James
Julian Thomas -
The Vagabond

Born: 15 November 1843

Died: 3 September 1896 (52)

John was the son of a very influential and rich family, in Wolverhampton, Staffordshire, England. His father was a well to do attorney , and was a part of the upper layer of the judicial system.



Julian Thomas in 1860.
Courtesy State Library Victoria

John Stanley James was born in 1843, son to Joseph and Elizabeth, and was raised and educated close to home. His education did not go well, with him being the target of ongoing bullying which he later wrote about (*Vagabond Papers - 5th Series*).

It was expected that John would continue in his father's footsteps, though they did not get on well which led to ongoing conflict. In time this led to a major falling out and John fled the safety and security the family afforded him, moving to the city of London. Here he tried his hand in numerous areas of employment, including menial tasks such as engrossing legal documents. Of all his ventures, it was his efforts as a journalist in 1868 when he was 25 years of age, that was to have the most lasting impact on his life.

In the years to come he published a number of written pieces in the early days of the Empire, including articles on the establishment of the powerful Agricultural Labourer's Union, and the Franco-Prussian war. He later told of how

he was once held as a spy in Paris for a number of weeks, whilst pursuing his investigative journalistic endeavours.

Around 1872, and after a new series of further disputes with his influential father, John fled to America and changed his name to Julian Thomas. Here he married, however the relationship only lasted a short time. He then travelled to Australia, arriving at Sydney penniless and 'sick in body and mind' he later declared.

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In Victoria, John (Julian Thomas) worked for the Melbourne *Argus*, with his first piece being published in April of 1876. The article was titled 'A Night in the Model Lodging House', and interestingly he chose to use the pseudonym 'The Vagabond'. The Vagabond was to become the identifying name by which Julian was known, and his writings became more and more professional with each piece he scribed. His writings included a series describing the inside of some Melbourne institutions, to which the commoner would hope never to be afforded the opportunity of being in. These institutions included Pentridge Prison, Alfred Hospital and a local insane asylum. Such writings helped establish him as a well read writer who was respected in the community.

As his ability increased, so did his confidence in reporting important details. His pieces became works of art, and by December 1876, his writings had become known as the *Vagabond Papers*. He now found himself a well read public celebrity, and in 1877 this celebrity led to employment at the *Sydney Morning Herald*. Within a short period he was writing on the migration of Chinese gold diggers in Cooktown. A month later he was back in Sydney and sent to New Caledonia amongst his other numerous assignments. He was getting used to the travelling lifestyle to which was to become core to his later life.

In 1885 Julian began the *Picturesque Victoria* series. It was these writings that connected him firmly with our district centres of Marysville, Alexandra and Yea. The series followed his wandering ways, and his interludes with the people and places where he travelled and were a great success. The Vagabond wrote three such pieces that illustrated country life in our district. The three pieces were subsequently published by Gordon and Co in the *Alexandra Standard* in 1885:

1. Marysville to Alexandra (20 June 1885)
2. Around Alexandra (No 1) (27 June 1885)
3. Alexandra to Yea (4 July 1885)





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THE VAGABOND

We learn in an article in the *Alexandra Standard* and published Friday 27 March 1885 that the people of Alexandra had often requested of *The Argus* that The Vagabond be sent to us, but they never received a reply. It was then somewhat of a surprise when he was sent:

'The "Vagabond's" visit to Alexandra was somewhat unexpected; for, although repeated requests had been sent to the 'Argus' office asking that he might be Fix this text sent to us, no answer was ever returned to our demands.'

Today these extraordinary poetic works give us a window into the lives and lifestyles of our early town and country folk, as they went about their daily business.

In 1887, Julian was appointed as the official reporter/correspondent for the Colonial and Indian Exhibition in South Kensington, England by his new employer - *The Age*. By 1889 he was in the New Hebrides and New Caledonia, and then travelled to Samoa and Tonga in 1889. In 1890 he was appointed as the Secretary to the Victorian Royal Commission of Charities, a position he held for two years.

He continued to write until his death on 4 September 1896. During that night he passed away from cardiac asthma, after retiring to his bed. He died a pauper in the Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy, and was buried in the Melbourne General Cemetery. His grave is marked with the words 'Julian Thomas, The Vagabond'.

Julian's true identity as the son of a rich and influential English Attorney was not known until 1912, 16 years after his passing.

Julian was noted as being outgoing and a risk taker, as well as often taking more latitude with his stories that was correct. He was at times given to exaggerate his own position in the community, though generally was known as a sharp and witty man, with a reasonably sound mind. He was generous and often humble in his position. His ability to quickly analyze a location, its people and the day to day goings on, then write about them in a poetic style, helped make him popular.

On the other side of the man, he carried his demons close to his heart, and they tormented him till his death. He found it hard to settle down, and never reconnected with his family. It is likely that the way he was treated by his father helped create the man and slowly destroy the man at the same time.

TIMELINE

BASIC TIMELINE OF EVENTS



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TIMELINE

- 15 November 1843** John Stanley James was born in 1843, son to Joseph and Elizabeth, and was raised and educated close to home.
- 1855** John was being bullied at school, which caused him to run away from the school, causing much upheaval.
- 1868** John started his Journalistic career, writing his first piece.
- 1872** John fled to America, where he was briefly married and changed his name to Julian Thomas, presumably in part to become invisible to his families prying and judgemental eyes.
- 1872** John migrated to Australia, where he was to spend the rest of his days. He arrived in Sydney first.
- April 1876** John (Now Julian Thomas) wrote for the Argus. The article was entitled: 'A Night in the Model Lodging House'. He first used the pseudonym 'The Vagabond'.
- December 1876** Julian began writing articles that were later to become known as 'The Vagabond Papers'.
- 1877** John began to write for the Sydney Morning Herald. This appointment saw him involved in a significant amount of travel.
- 1885** Julian began the 'Picturesque Victoria' series, the pieces that was to connect his firmly with our district centres of Marysville, Alexandra and Yea. The tree pieces were Published by Gordon and Co in the *Alexandra Standard* in 1885:
- 20 June 1885** The *Alexandra Standard* published the first of three 'Picturesque Victoria' articles by Julian. This first article was titled *Marysville to Alexandra*. He tells us in this article that he was requested to do the trip by some of his readers in Alexandra.
- 27 June 1885** The *Alexandra Standard* published the first of three 'Picturesque Victoria' articles by Julian. This first article was titled *Around Alexandra*.



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TIMELINE

4 July 1885

The Alexandra Standard published the first of three 'Picturesque Victoria' articles by Julian. This first article was titled *Alexandra to Yea*.

1890-1892

was appointed as the Secretary to the Victorian Royal Commission of Charities, a position he held for two years.

4 September 1896

Julian Thomas died 4 September 1896, when he quietly passed away during the night, after retiring to his bed. He died a pauper in the Melbourne suburb of Fitzroy.

1912

It finally became known that Julian Thomas was in fact 'John Stanley James' of Staffordshire, England.

November 2011

Artworkz commenced work on this factsheet and transcribing articles. The factsheet was also first published.

PICTURESQUE VICTORIA

MARYSVILLE TO ALEXANDRA

20 JUNE 1885





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MARYSVILLE TO ALEXANDRA

PICTURESQUE VICTORIA
BY THE VAGABOND
(From the Argus)

Marysville to Alexandra

20 June 1885

The summit of Mount Arnold is as far as the ordinary tourist will care about roaming from Marysville. Sassafras Gully, or Myrtle Bend, or Cumberland Creek, will be his *Ultima Thule*. From here to Wood Point there is very little traffic. The mails are taken through on horseback. I hope at an early date to make this journey, and visit the wondrous district around Woods Point. In summer the stout pedestrian from Selbourne-chambers will find much to interest him in these mountain regions, which until 1862 were hardly known. Yet for a time this was a real "Tom Tiddler's ground."

The richest-bearing quartz in Australia was found here. It ran 30 and 40, and 50 ounces to the ton. The Mountain Eldorado has far more romantic associations than those surrounding Ballarat or Bendigo. Where, except in California, could one find a mining township like that of Matlock, built on the summit of a mountain nearly 5,000ft above the sea. In contrast to this, the Jericho diggings caused the rise of a town "built in the deepest part of a wild gorge." Mr Anthony Trollope describes Jericho in February, 1872, as being "grandly picturesque," and Matlock as being "intensely cold, and the highest inhabited spot in Victoria." Now, Jericho has disappeared from the map, and the *Australian Handbook* gives it no record; but Matlock is still the centre of a mountain population of about 100, and possesses a state school with an average attendance of 28.

The rise and fall of the Woods Point mining district is one of the most extraordinary things in Australian history. In three years, ending 1866, the produce of one claim that of M^cDougal and Company, amounted to over £164,000. Mr George Sutherland, in his highly interesting *Tales of the Goldfields*, thus describes life around Woods Point:

"Among the diggers who lived in these places, the most reckless extravagance prevailed. One might have expected that the poverty and disgrace of those who had squandered their money ten years before on the Ballarat and Bendigo diggings might have acted as a



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salutary warning to these Woods Point miners But such was as not the cast. The, same absurd games of bravado were played over again — the burning of pound notes, the playing at skittles with bottles of wine, and all the mud brained devices for ruining the working man and enriching the sharper. For instance, on one occasion two lucky diggers laid a wager about which of them should treat the assembled company with the largest 'shout'. The first one ordered several dozens of the most expensive wines — far more than the company could be expected to drink, even with the utmost diligence. But the other completely eclipsed this effort by ordering out the landlord's whole stock of champagne, amounting to about 200 bottles. It was bought and disposed of in every absurd way that reckless ingenuity could invent. This sort of conduct ruined many of the diggers, but it by no means dimmed the glory of Woods Point, for such stories of superabundant wealth only attracted the diggers in greater numbers. It was the stock jobber who administered the death blow to the prosperity of this district. A large number of bubble companies were started in 1864 They all collapsed completely and from that time even those who possessed really good claims could never induce anyone to invest his money in Woods Point. The result was that, in a few years, the whole district was almost deserted One or two quartz mine's still maintain a small population in the town of Woods Point, but Matlock has disappeared. The last inhabitant moved away from it in 1879, and the ruined houses now stand tenantless on the ridge of the mountain, suggesting a striking illustration of the vicissitudes of gold mining."

Mr Sutherland is wrong about the disappearance of Matlock which still exists, as stated above on a restricted scale.

What a pity it is that mining life has now become so very respectable! The seeker for "character" sketches has now a hard task to discover anything worth depicting. Still in the summer, when the cold will be less piercing, and there will be no danger of a snowing up, I intend to visit Woods Point and Matlock, and talk to the solitary school master. who according to the last authorities, still remains there and moralise amongst the ruins of the saloons, and see Jericho "the grandly picturesque," and I dare say have very disagreeable and hard time of it. My route then will be from Euroa to Mansfield and Jamieson to Woods Point, thence to Walhalla and the Gipps Land. I am persuaded that this will make a very pleasant circular tour from Melbourne. At present I am working a shorter route, an inner circle, from Lilydale along the Yarra Track to Marysville, thence due north to Alexandra, and westward to join the railway again at Yea. In easy stages a fortnight can very well be put in on this holiday journey, although if one comes right



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through to Marysville, a week will be sufficient. It is 20 miles to Alexandra, an easy ride or drive, and horses and buggies can be hired from Cobb and Co. and Host Keppel. If there is a party I would recommend a special coach to be procured as the pleasantest mode of travelling. Some pedestrians and cyclists may prefer another way. I wish them a happy issue out of all their afflictions. It is with real sorrow that I leave Maryville It is a place where I am convinced I could be very happy for many days, but in this, my present quest, I cannot taro in the pleasant spots where otherwise I would love to take my ease. It is a beautiful morning as we drive across the Stevenson and turn northwards along a narrow valley. The slopes of Mount Grant are on the right, the river and the flats to the left. And this is a very fertile valley, taken up by little farms and selections. Keppel's is one of the best of these. It is very pleasing to see so many little homesteads. Seven miles out we pass Mr Sherwill's, who is an old "bush missionary," living in a charming cottage near the road. Although retired from active service he still looks after the spiritual wants of those in the neighbourhood of Buxton who take their religion with an evangelical bias.

Buxton is at the junction of the Fisher's Creek and Nar-be-thong roads. It is the centre of a pastoral and agricultural district, with a population of about 100, and consists of a bush public house and a state school.

We are here under the remarkable Cathedral Peaks. Further ahead we pass Mohican Station, and also Taggerty Creek and Station Mr J. A. Bachelor's cheese and dairy farm deserves noticing. Here, on an average, 150 cows are daily milked. All about the luxuriant paddocks many pigs are running picking up a living without my trouble. For this Acheron Valley is wonderfully well watered, and the soil is very fertile. The patches which are here and there cultivated produce very good crops. There are little streams on every side, and 16 miles out we ford the Little River, where a bullock dray is halted before an old pub now only an "accommodation house" at which of course, one could not possibly get anything stronger than tea. The Little Uiver joins the Acheron here, which we cross by a good bridge This as a fine, broad swift flowing stream. It is a real river, running a "banker" with the bushes which clothe the banks dipping into the water. It is a stream which delights the anglers eye. The Murray fish. they tell me, are found here in plenty, and in a year or two the trout which Newman placed in the head waters for the acclimatisation Society will doubtless develop themselves. It is just across this river that we pull up at Kelvin Grove, the post office which is the adjunct of the farm of Mr Wylie. We have brought Miss Wylie with us from Marysville, but without that means



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of introduction would have been hospitably welcomed, for I find that for many years Mrs. Wylie has been one of my many unknown friendly Victorian readers. She would kill the fatted calf if we would let her and feast us on country delicacies. This nourishing farm shows what can be done by settlers with energy and enterprise, and with stalwart sons and daughters to help them. Two thousand acres are now taken up in the family. On this fine property 1,200 sheep and 200 cattle and pigs are running. On the river flats peas, and potatoes, and Indian corn are largely raised, and turned into pork. Here, in an out-of-the-world truck, where it takes two days to send produce over the Black Spur to the railway terminus at Lilydale, it would not pay to carry grain or root crops to town, so pigs are fattened instead. The maize, I find, is cut green for that purpose, as at Mr. Jacksons, at Sandford. Bacon, and hams, and butter go to Melbourne; fat cattle and sheep are bought by dealers. Fine wool is also raised at Kelvin Grove, which brought last year 11 1/2d. a pound. Altogether this strikes me as being a model farm, at which, in the American manner, there is a general utilisation of resources.

I admire the cool fairy, and the barns, and the piggeries with the little porcine beauties frisking about, little recking of the day when the frizzle at the breakfast table, and the orchard with its wealth of fruit, and then *en route* to Alexandra. This beautiful road from Marysville, or Nar-be-thong, appears to be quite unknown to the majority of Victorians, although I find that my friend Major Binnum, and Colonel Parnell, of the United States cavalry, who, in suite of late differences, I respect, have been here before me. The settlers along this valley complain sadly that they have been left out in the cold as regards railway communication. Their fertile flats they cannot properly cultivate, as it does not pay to send the crops to market. The Black Spur road, beautiful as tourists find it, is an-abomination to the farmer. And to the present railway at Yea the road is as bad, with increased freight charges when you get there. Since I have been on the Yarra Track I have been told by many that the making of the Black Spur road was a mistake; that along the canyon of the Watts from Fernshawe a track might have been made which would strike the Dividing Range near the head waters of Fishers Creek, at a very easy gradient. They say this is the path the blackfellows took in the old days, and that the railway from Healesville could easily be earned along this route, and then, the settlers contend, it should run up the valley of the Acheron to Alexandra, thence connecting with the North Eastern railroad, and relieving the traffic on that line. I think there is good evidence that the Black Spur is not by any means the easiest point of crossing the ranges, for the rest I only record the facts as stated to me. The settlers here have, however, an un-doubted grievance from their point of view.



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Good-bye and good luck to all the Wylies! On past Acheron station and Acheron township! The surrounding country is undulating and hilly, with rich alluvial river flats, partly cultivated. The land is heavily timbered and thickly grassed. At Lower Acheron we find the state school and the blacksmith's shop. Here there is a highway junction. The road to the right leads through the gorge to a ford over the Goulburn, but we are locally informed it is difficult to negotiate, so we turn up the hills to the left. For the last five miles we have been looking out for snakes. This neighbourhood is, Newman tells me, noted for its tiger snakes. A young girl in all the promise of womanhood lately died through being bit by one of these venomous reptiles. When I hear of this, and think of the sorrow of her friends, I am wroth, and vow vengeance against any snake I may see on the track. We see their marks in the dust in every direction, and once Newman follows one into the bush, where the brute gets away from the judgment of the whip. I had intended to have a single combat with the second snake myself, but he does not appear. The road up the steep hillside is by a very easy grade. Our horses, without any exertion, walk smartly to the top. Suddenly, and without any preparation, a most magnificent view bursts before us. One has a *coup coup d'oeil* all around. Behind is Mount Grant, Mount Torbreck, the Cerberean Range, the Cathedrals, and the fertile vale of the Acheron. Before and below us is the real Goulburn Valley, the river, from its mountain sources, winding — a silver belt — through broad flats surrounded by tier upon tier of hills, and rolling downs like those of the Wannon, which, in fact, the whole country very much resembles. The recent rains have washed the face of nature, there is a sea of verdure on the flats and the uplands, which the gentle wind stirs into sheeny waves. Here and there these are diversified by stubble patches, showing where the corn has just been cut. The river's course is traced by a belt of trees, otherwise the country is lightly timbered about the same as it is around Colac, and this timber adds greatly to the beauty of the landscape. The "apple trees" which we see here are a pleasant variety of the eucalyptus. I have never seen them south of the Dividing Range.

I open my lungs and take in the pure ozone wafted from the mountain heights. Air and space are necessary to my being. Since I left the west I have had no such glorious view as this. It is a typical Australian landscape, and it appears more charming for being so thoroughly unexpected. Almost unknown are the beauties of this Upper Goulburn Valley, yet **my friends in Alexandra, who wrote soliciting a visit from me**, boasting of their "grand and varied scenery," were certainly not protesting too much. This is grand, and it possesses all the variations of mountain, hill, dale, river, stream, and foliage to make up a picturesque whole. And as we drive along the narrow track cut in the hillside,



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one could not have a better opportunity for viewing this lovely panorama I recommend to everyone the excursion from Marysville to Alexandra. No one can be disappointed in it! Round and down we go till the plain is reached, and we meet Mr. Dobie, the master of the Acheron Station, driving even as Jebu, and are glad that we had not to attempt to essay passing each other on the gradient above. Although I do not know it, this gentleman had volunteered to bring me from Marysville, with hospitable intent, to waylay me for a night at his station. But **I am a day before my time, and Alexandra does not expect me.** However, my thanks are due for this proffered courtesy, as much as if I had availed myself of it. And so we drive on through fertile cultivation or grazing paddocks, by pleasant homesteads, Whanregarwan and Riversdale, until, 26 miles from Marysville, the bridge over the Goulburn is reached. A flock of travelling sheep is passing, and we are detained half an hour before we can cross. The scenery just here reminds me very much of the valley of the Seine, near Rouen, or near Elbaeuf, and my thoughts wander back thither and to the troubled times in 1870, when I first met Olivier Pain. But the sheep get over the narrow corridor at last. There is a mile drive on a good road, und *Ecce Alexandra!*

The "sea-king's daughter from over the sea" who so graciously rules the domestic hearths and social circles at Marlborough house, Sandringham, and Abergeldie, and whom I once had the honour to assist from a railway carriage, **was sponsor to Alexandra.** It has risen up since the sixties. Although now in the midst of an agricultural country, gold first brought Alexandra into existence. The alluvial diggings are in the Beechworth mining district, and extend over 35 square miles of ground, and still give employment to 250 miners. Seventy-four quart reefs have proved to be gold bearing, and the plant in use is estimated to be worth nearly £7,000. A very large quantity of gold has been obtained in this neighbourhood. The returns were highly respectable, although not equal to those of the Eldorado around Woods Point, or at Mount Morgan. In two years the crushing of the five principal claims here amounted to 16,210oz of gold. The approximate total yield of these claim from 1868 to 1876 was 44,110oz. Since that date quartz mining mound Alexandra has faded, but the inhabitants have still hope. Capital, they say, will yet develope the treasures of the reels, which, as yet, have not been half exploited by the working miners who were the proprietors around here. Alexandra being on the main road to Jamieson and Woods Point, and also near a crossing place on the Goulburn, was early the centre of a considerable traffic. It seems strange, however, that the township was not built on the river's bank, until one sees the poppet heads of the mines which first brought into existence the stores and



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public houses. No gold was found near the Goulburn. The alluvial deposits are on the banks of the U.T. Creek, which runs through the township. This stream which rises in the Puzzle Ranges, affords permanent water supply to the inhabit. The quartz reefs are on the hill slopes on which Alexandra is situated. The claims around are at present unworked. The miner's cabins scattered on the common are untenanted. The powder magazine is nearly empty. The flush old times have gone ; but an era of solid prosperity has set in here.

The main flocks and of herds first penetrated this this beautiful Upper Goulburn Valley ; then came the goldseeker ; the storekeeper and publican followed ; lastly the farmer and selector. Agriculture is firmly established. Wheat, oats beans, peas and potatoes are largely grown, and pigs raised in quantities. Seven thousand acres are under tillage. The population of the shire is about 3,000, of the town of Alexandra 500. It will be seen that the mining industry is now a very small factor in the prosperity of the place, although, of course, if rich quartz is again struck in the reefs, as the people say it will be, things will "boom" here. But Alexandra can live without that. The community is one of the happiest I know in Australia. Neither crime nor drunkenness is met with here. There are no poor, and, on the other hand there are no very rich people. There is a general prosperity, begotten first in the good old mining days, and continued in the era of agriculture All the tradespeople do 'comfortable businesses without any particular exertion in toiling and spinning. Alexandra possesses 10 stores and five hotels. This heavy proportion of hostelry is counter balanced by five butcher shops. Home made bread must be the rule here, as there is only one baker. But there are three blacksmiths and three livery stables. At the one banking establishment, the Union, Mr Waymouth tells me he receives more money than he can lend. The district being thus so financially prosperous is, I presume, the reason no other bank is started. I think one is badly wanted. And a new bank building would do credit to the place. The present one is a discredit to any institution. There is one doctor in Alexandra, and one chemist dispenses the prescriptions and sells eau-de-cologne. Western's wizzard oil, and tooth brushes. There are two auctioneers who possess two cattle yards, and hold alternate fortnightly sales here. Happy and lucky place that Alexandra is it has no lawyer within its gates. Mr D. Wilkie and Mr F. Stephen have to be imported from Melbourne when litigants consider it necessary to assist or impede the course of justice by such aid. At Alexandra local industries are represented by MR. F. Wheeler's aerated water manufactory. which supplies the surrounding country, by two saw-mills and a flour mill, and by the printing office of the *Alexandra and Yea Standard*.



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In connexion with this it may be noted that Alexandra resembles Birmingham, in that each contains a gentleman familiarly and affectionately known us "Our Joe". If Mr Joseph Chamberlain M. P., subtends a large political angle in the "hardware village," Mr Joseph Gordon, editor and proprietor of the Standard, subtends a large public angle in Alexandra. He is a young man, full of mental and physical vigour, and is a hearty and efficient worker in the cause of the free library, brass band, and public societies. Mr Gordon is not a Scotchman, but an Englishman, born at Notts, by Trent side. And there is still a Doric burr in his speech which I love to hear. Mr Gordon is a true Englishman, but travel in America has enlarged his mind, and although a comparative new chum in the colonies, he is as good an Australian as I wish to meet with. I do not think that the politics of the Standard, or of Alexandra generally are in accord with those of *The Argus*, but Mr Gordon and the inhabitants here recognise my mission in its fullest sense. They can appreciate the motives of my conductors in sending me out to describe the goodness of this fair land of Victoria irrespective of political considerations, and so from Mr Gordon, as from courteous "Opposition" journalists in the West and elsewhere, I receive the utmost kindness. "Our Joe" is so attentive and amiable, and he really works so hard on my behalf, and he hunts up statistics and arranges my programme for me, and is always beaming with health and good nature, possessing the very attributes I lack, that, but for the "hostages" which he has given to fortune, I would entice "Our Joe" from the Upper Goulburn Valley to travel with me as my *alter ego*, and do all the hard work of drinking with deputations of eminent citizens. Also, when occasion required, Mr Gordon would be highly effective as a "chucker-out." That he is known to all as "Our Joe" is to me a striking proof of his popularity. Of course, editorially he is rather *déjeune*, and does not please everyone, but he is nothing if not public spirited, will yet "be heard of," as "Augur" would say, and I am sure will not be offended that I call him by his familiar appellation. It is only great and popular men who are thus honoured by the people they live amongst.

Alexandra, in itself, is as nice a township as one would wish to see. The streets, two chains wide, are well laid out at right angles, with good side-walks planted with trees. Some of the houses are very good brick structures. All down the main street are broad verandahs, which with the wooden side-walks, are quite American in appearance. The Corner Hotel is a pretentious two stoned building with its balconies and verandahs. The stranger is astonished to find such an establishment here. The shire council has done its duty in the matter of streets and roads. Of the public buildings and institutions at every



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place I visit, the state school always claims my first attention. Here there are nearly 200 scholars on the roll, with an average attendance of 130. A new school house is sadly wanted. The inhabitants complain that, in the matter of Government assistance, they do not get their fair share. Alexandra is in the electorate of Kilmore and Anglesey, which, it is alleged, is too large for one member to properly represent. Mr Hunt M.L.A., is they say, a splendid member for Kilmore, but not for Alexandra. He lives too far off. So of the seven schools in the Alexandra Board of Advice there is not one thoroughly up to the requirements of the scholars or the teachers. In striking contrast to the paltry state school here is the Shire hall. This magnificent building attracts the attention of every stranger. It is the finest of its kind out of Melbourne. The main hall is 75ft by 40ft, with a splendid stage, scenery, and dressingrooms. Behind this is a council chamber, and rooms where Masons meet, and offices of the shire where Mr. Moon (the secretary) and Mr. Alston (the rate collector) hatch their schemes against the pockets of taxpayers. The Alexandra Shire Council is nine, of which the present president is Mr. Thomas Carison, of Alexandra, are naturally proud of the grand building they own. The rateable value of the property in the shire is about £20,000. I do not think the council is in debt, but they have a good asset in their Shire hall.

I am in Alexandra but a very few minutes when I am taken by a committee of citizens to inspect the Shire hall and other public buildings. Mr. James Jeffers, to whose exertions in marshalling the way before me I am much indebted, is the first gentleman I called upon. He is not an old Alexandrian, but possesses a considerable amount of imported enterprise. The president and shire councillors and Government officials take me in hand and I am shown the court house, and the treasury, and the lands office, and mines office, and post office, all making up one fine building.

Mr Bernard Smith has been resident police magistrate here for some time. He is a distinguished amateur artist and we have joint souvenirs of a great English sculptor, who I am astonished to find was at one time a gold-seeker in these valleys, a digger on the U.T. Creek. The lands officer Mr Hardy, is a very old resident of Alexandra. Mr Ainsworth is inspector of mines. In the new treasury officer and C.P.s. I discover a gentleman from the West, with whom I would gladly exchange souvenirs of mutual friends but that I am earned off by the hospital committee to view the institution on the hill.

PICTURESQUE VICTORIA

AROUND ALEXANDRA

27 JUNE 1885





HISTORIC FACTSHEET

AROUND ALEXANDRA

**PICTURESQUE VICTORIA
BY THE VAGABOND
(From the Argus)**

Around Alexandra Part 1

27 June 1885

The best view of Alexandra is from the hill above the town on which the hospital is situated. From thence one surveys the settlement, prosperous-looking and substantial, the shire-hall alone being sufficient to give an imposing appearance to the place. The trees in the streets and around the houses pleasantly tone down the vagaries of architecture. The flats and hill-sides surrounding the amphitheatre are verdant after the late rains. The course of the road winding through the gap from Yea can be traced, as well as the course of the river. The mountain backgrounds are all clothed in primal forest and scrub. Peace, plenty, and prosperity reign in this valley. Population is here too, for as far as the eye can reach all around, on the hill slopes and up to the tops of the ranges, the land, I am told, has been selected. Even the scrubby country it is found will keel one and a half sheep to the acre. The Upper Goulburn Valley is like the Colac district in that it combines the highest qualities of the picturesque with fertile soil and climate. I should like to own it.

The churches do not make much of a show at Alexandra. These are Episcopal, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and Wesleyan. I have the pleasure of meeting the Revs W. Jennings and T. B. Swift, who supervise the spiritual wants of the members of the two former denominations.

They are friends of friends of mine, the latter gentleman coming across from across the Pacific. The Catholic Church, ministered to by father O'Hanlon, of Mansfield, is at present only a spiritual body. It has no temporal habitation. The old wooden building has just been blown down. We pass it en route to the hospital, a mere heap of planks. I think, as I look at these, of the day when, standing on the verandah of the hotel at Charters Towers during a tornado, I saw the Catholic Church on the hill opposite, go down like a house of cards. Father Hennebery was at that time praying that "all vagabonds" might be cursed, and if the building in which I was to lecture had been destroyed, I presume it would have been styled a "judgment." His mission was spoilt at the Tower through this. We pursue our way to the hospital. This is a rather primitive wooden building. It contains twelve beds, but only four patients are here at present. The lack of funds is sadly perceptible. The fifteen members of committee do all they can with their limited means at their disposal. But this institution is really in very impoverished circumstances.



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As before pointed, out, there is not around Alexandra a wealthy community as in the West. There is no people here who can afford to give their £100 or £50 cheques to a charity. The Government subsidy to this has been reduced from £200 to £100 a year. And in this matter I think the inhabitants have just cause of complaint. With a mining population around, at a distance from the railway, and the next hospital being at Mansfield, 35 miles away, the Alexandra Hospital should certainly receive more support than it does.

The free library and reading room is an institution they are proud of at Alexandra, I have to visit this, escorted by Mr. Hardly, the president, and "Our Joe," the honorary secretary. This building cost £600 to erect. The library contains 700 volumes, and the reading-room is well supplied with periodical literature. It is only open during three nights in the week. These nights have come to be considered events to lighten the daily toil. Everyone using the reading-room is required to record his name in the visitors' book. Last year the attendance was 4,293, showing that this institution is well appreciated. Other means of relaxation are provided at Alexandra by a capital amateur brass band, a highly efficient body of musicians, possessing good instruments and neat uniforms. I am very much surprised, as well as delighted, to find such an organisation here. The way in which one of the members wrestles with an enormous brazen serpent, which encompasses his body, commands my highest admiration. Of course, there is a cricket club here, which has a good ground, enclosed by a picket fence. Alexandra also possesses a racing club and a racecourse, and an agricultural society and show-grounds. Likewise a bicycle club, and a rifle club of 42 members, who, with their president, Mr. Whiting, are ready to shoot straight in defence of their native hills. There is a good rifle-range near the town. Other public necessities here are supplied by the cemetery, in which I feel I could rest peacefully, and the police camp. At the latter there are two smart troopers, under the command of Senior constable Irvine. An occasional fire is the only thing to trouble them. Superintendent Montfort is in charge of the division.

I have great pleasure in meeting that gentleman here for the first time. It is at wonderful instance of the smallness of this earth that out of a company of eight assembled in this out-of-the-world spot in social intercourse, two, the president of the shire and myself, are American citizens ; air Montfort was in his youth for a considerable time in the States ; and my old friend, Major King, who turns up here, and " Our Joe." have both visited, and retain most pleasant recollections of the land of the free and home of the brave.

The eagle spreads its wings slightly on this occasion. Scotland and Ireland for once are nowhere. But the consensus of opinion is that American experiences fit a man to be the best of Australians. This is proved by the fact that my dear friend, Monsieur E. A. Pesoli, who resided in the United States for 18 years, was the most popular representative France has had in the



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colonies. His life in the Great Republic taught him to understand our people. By "our" I mean Australian. As a 16 year old colonist I now claim that title.

Alexandra is in itself a pleasant place ; it is most picturesque in its surroundings, and situated as it is 750ft. above the sea, is essentially healthy. For a decade the average yearly rainfall was 26 inches, and there is a never-failing supply of water in the streams around. But Alexandra also claims to be the centre of beautiful scenery, which tourists in Victoria have all yet neglected and passed by. The "boss" is the Niagara Falls. This is the first visit. The president of the shire, Councillor Baker, from Birmingham, and the editor of "The Standard" escort me thither. A stout wagon and pair of horses are brought to the door. I say "goodbye" to Newman, who driven back to Lilydale, taking with him my best wishes to Mr. Watt. Travellers in my footsteps who will get Driver Newman to escort them through the Acheron Valley to Alexandra will not be disappointed. But here I no longer require the buggy, for the citizens take me in hand and "put me through". We drive along the old Woods Point road, east by south, and over the ridge from which one obtains a different, but as beautiful, a view of the valley than from the other side coming in from Marysville. We pass Mr. George Lamont's Mount Pleasant station to the left, and cross the Goulburn by a good bridge. Here the river is broad, with long reaches, sandy bars, and snags and drifts of logs, reminding me of many a stream in the New World. The banks are shaded with mimosa and acacia, and in the deep pools large fish are to be found. It is a lovely drive. In this late summer's morning the temperature is charming. There seems a lilt of pleasure in the air. We rejoice with Nature. Life is worth living to-day. And this drive is all the more pleasant, that we have pleasant converse together. With Mr. Carlson I exchange reminiscent of his birth place on the Hudson ; with "Our Joe," of Notts and the Trent; and with Mr. Baker, of Birmingham and the black country, of George Dawson and "Bob" Brettle, of John Bright and the "Tipton Slasher," otherwise James Perry, of J. S. Wright and Morris Roberts, of Lords Stamford and Dudley, and the Russell's of Westbromwich-hall. "Do you know that Dampier, he who has the two little girls, married a Miss Russell? I always go to see him when in Melbourne," says Mr. Baker. I tell him that it is rather curious this question should be put to me respecting an old friend and partner, and that the two little girls are getting big girls now, one of them playing ingénues in my own pieces.

As we drive along we catch occasional glimpses of the Goulburn, in places as broad and as deep as at Murchison. If properly snagged, and a few sand-bars cleared, I think this might have been utilised for purposes of navigation. To the left are the fertile flats through which the Rubicon flows. Here and there are small holdings. In the Goulburn Valley, 16 miles on each side of the river upwards from Alexandra, there are 31 settlers occupying larger or smaller holdings. Oats, wheat, peas, pigs, and potatoes are raised here. This is a thoroughly British community. Of course, there are Chinese gardeners at Alexandra. " John" is the only man who will grow a cabbage in the country. It is objected that his ways are not always nice, but



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certainly they cannot be worse than the method the Brighton gardeners have of piling empty fruit cases on the top of their loads of "fertilisers" with which they weekly return from town. Bill the boss farmer on the Rubicon is an enterprising and typical John Bull. Away on the hillside, Mr. R. W. Wightman has his dairy buildings and homestead. Eighty cows are daily milked here ; the result - cheese. Two miles further on he has another homestead and farm. As with my friends the Wylies, at Kelvin-grove, Mr. Wightman has been blessed with sons and daughters who have proved a most efficient aid to him. Here at this second station Miss Wightman shows us over the farm buildings, including one of the grandest barns I have seen in Australia, stored with oats, and peas, and wheat. The land in this valley will produce 28 bushels of wheat to the acre, the average being 25. The return from this is 40 to 84 bushels, and from peas 70 bushels. There is an enormous stack of straw in Mr. Wightman's yards. "What is to be done with this?" I ask. "Oh, nothing. The pigs and horses and cattle call pull out what they like ; but it doesn't pay to cut it up into chaff - it costs too much for carriage. If the railway were at Alexandra it would be a different thing." I think of how precious chaff is on the Lower Murray end Darling, and yet, owing to the lack of means of transit, it does not pay to transport it from here. Much of the produce raised on these flats is converted into pork. Pigs are running about here, almost as numerous as in the West.

The tourist who has time will halt at the Rubicon Hotel, seven miles out from Alexandra. Here is the crossing of the Rubicon River, rising in the Cerberean Range in the south. There are some romantic freestone cliffs to be inspected, and a good quality of building stone is to be found near the junction with the Goulburn. But no one wants to build here as yet, except with weatherboard. The settlement here is called Thornton, and possesses a post office and state school. But we are bound to-day to see the great falls of Australia's Niagara. We pass Thornton and Eildon, and are 12 miles out from Alexandra when we cross one more river, the swift-flowing creek which rises in the south on the slope of Mount Torbreck, which towers 4,999ft. above sea level. This was at first called "Cobbler's Creek," and then "Snob's Creek," but the inhabitants, with a better perception of the fitness of things than the people of Marysville, declined to perpetuate such matters, and christened it Niagara, and as such it is now known on the Government maps. Near the creek is the house of Mr. Charlesworth, and his son Oscar kindly volunteers to accompany us as guide to the falls, which are five miles off in the bush. We drive through a luxuriant scrub for about two miles, and then unhitch and tie up the horses and cross the stream on a fallen log. The waters here are embowered with verdure, foliage as beautiful as anything I have seen in the South Seas. Dancing along full of life, this stream sings a song of gladness; it inspires and yet soothes one. Pan speaks to me. I would that I had here with me all those who faint and grow weary in the strife for existence in the cities, who feel that they are but a drop in the great sea of humanity - a drop too many sometimes - to whom the present has no joy and the future is clouded. Here they would listen, and learn the lesson the waters sing, and care would slide away. I feel that I could sit on this log until



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nightfall, until the canopy of heaven above is star-spangled with "eyes glistening with heavenly tears over the little lot of man." And then I should go home happier and better.

Have I an instinctive warning of what is before us that I am thus in love with the stream, and would tarry on its banks ? Already I feel a sinking, but it is not of the spirit, and is shared in by my companions. The commissariat has gone astray. To one who never breakfasts this is a consideration. When we - fly like - climbed round those rocks in the Bridgewater caves, I, with the ancient squatter, thought the lunch should have been hereafter. Here, at the Niagara Creek, we all feel that lunch would be a righteous thing before going further. At first the path is easy enough, over a flat with great tussocks of grass, from which there is betting that we shall scare snakes. But I resemble St. Patrick in that all creeping things avoid me. The serpent never shown up when I am around. Wallabies hop along before us ; beautiful butterflies flit through the air. The sinking does not affect us as yet. For some distance one could ride along here, and I should certainly advise all visitors to do so. For half way the trouble commences. The steep hillside along which we climb is covered with stones, and rocks, and fallen timbers. Insect-like, we have to scale and crawl around these. You slip on the dry grass and bark your shins and hold on by the tussocks, and take every opportunity of sitting down and admiring the beauty of the valley below. On the other side of the stream the hill rises like a wall clothed with dense scrub from summit to base. At its foot the river flows midst a belt of light wood and musk, and acacia and mimosa, showing glimpses here and there of whirling rapids over moss-covered rocks. It is as lovely as the Upper Hopkins, of which it somewhat reminds me. Upwards and onwards I toil helped by willing arms until we reach a thicket beyond which there is the mighty roar of many waters. We push through this, I thinking that it would be much easier to be careering over the sands of the Soudan on a camel. Oscar gives me his hand and hails me up on to a rock, and there I lie panting on the edge of the Niagara Falls, a foaming torrent of water, which shoots down from 150ft above us to 150ft below.

My first thought here is that Hannibal was indeed a mighty general, in that he never separated himself from his commissariat. My second, that the term Niagra is a misnomer. The Wannan Falls only in Australia, except perhaps, the Falls of the Herbert, which I have not seen, have any resemblance to that mighty wonder of nature between Erie and Ontario. My third impression is that this immense body of water, which with musical rush comes tumbling, tossing, and sliding over granite rocks from the table land which it is collected from the mountains around, is the most beautiful thing in the way of waterfalls I have seen in this country. *Finis coronat opus!* All my trouble and toil and hard work in the journey thither, are rewarded by this crown of nature's beauty. After all, water, moving water, gives the greatest charm to any landscape. Brunton Stephens says, in *Convict Once*:-

"Give me the beautiful rush of any river, its ever renewing



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Life and intensity, song, dance, and revel by night and by day."

Waters sing ever a different tune. Sleeping in the Cataract of the Clifton house, on American and Canadian shores, or meditating on the Sisters, or in the midst of the Cave of the Winds with many doubts as to the safety of one's footing, or compassed by the whirl of waters and the sun-tinged clouds of spray in Terrapin Tower, Niagara always gave me a feeling of awe. It is such a wonderful embodiment of the calm, irresistible force and power. It impressed me with a strange *cultus*. This Australian Niagara, enormous as is the rush of water, sings, however, only a song of life and festivity. It speaks in laughter and whispers hope of the joyous possibilities of existence. Here the Greek love of more physical life itself, a pure pleasure in one's being seizes me. This is the best of all possible worlds! Let the future take care of itself. With Horace I can say.

*"Ille potens sui
Laetusque deget, cui licet in diem
Dixisse vixi"*

On this occasion I am that man! Fate cannot harm me.

This is the best of all possible worlds! But this portion of its surface which surrounds the Niagara Falls, county of Anglesea, State of Victoria, Dominion of Australia, will, I hope, be improved in the future. I say today "I have lived," and I am happy in that this feast of the picturesque has been provided for me after the toil we have had in getting hither. But I think we might possibly be just as happy if the road had not been quite so rough, if a track were made here as from Marysville to the Minne-ha-ha Falls, and it were thus practicable to ride to the foot of Niagara. A tract of land should be set apart here for a Government reserve, not only for the enjoyment of the people of Alexandra and neighbourhood, but for all the holiday population of Victoria. This should be done at once before it is too late, before the fee-simple of the land passes into private hands. And as Government aid was given to Marysville in the making of a road to the Falls, the people of Alexandra have a right also to claim assistance in clearing the path to their Niagara. If His Excellency the Governor and some of his Ministers will visit this spot, they will not only, I am sure, be delighted as I am, but will appreciate my suggestions. What a charming luncheon place there could be made here! When I mention this there is a sinking amongst my companions. A small quantity of adulterated cold water alone supports exhausted nature. But at all events we can rest and be thankful for a time whilst the waters swirl past us in fantastic forms which seem ever varying, and defy the eye to truthfully analyse their shape. There is an ever moving kaleidoscope from the height above, which Mr. Carson has scaled, as becomes a citizen of the Empire State. In seething sheets and in knots of foam, and in white tumbling masses, the water shoots down to the rapids of the river below.



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Luxuriant masses of ferns grow to the very brink and on the granite boulders which intercept the falls. It is as beautiful as Montmorency. We are silent, and content to rest and feel the loveliness before us. And when at last we descend to the bottom - our Birmingham member swearing this is the grandest sight he has ever saw, but still he will never come here again till a track is made - we only find that the beauty is increased, the finest view is from the base. It is a hard task scrambling down these cliffs, but all my friends are ready to assist the old *padre*. I never knew a Trentman to fail me? The road back, the flat being reached, is easier than when coming, and we have a pleasant journey into town, and well-earned refreshment in good company lightens labour.

Mr. Allardyce comes early in the morning to drive me down the left bank of the Goulburn, that I may see the surroundings of Alexandra from another point of view. The president of the shire again adds the weight of his official position to the party. We cross the long narrow bridge, and tarry for a short time at Riversdale. This is one of the oldest homesteads in the east. The house is covered in creepers, and in the garden there are English fruit trees as large and productive as you would find at "home." The lines of Mr Allardyce are east in a pleasant place. On this station there is considerable amount of horse-breeding, but also much land is under cultivation. The thick stubble shows where there have been food crops of wheat and oats. Some of the land along this valley should be as well suited for hops as in Gippsland or on the Watts. There is plenty of water everywhere, and force for irrigation purposes could be obtained from the Niagara Falls, where there is so much power fruitlessly expended. We halt at Whanregarwen, formerly one of the many properties of Mr. Hugh Glass, now belonging to Mr. McCrae. The homestead here is a brick building, with a flat roof, in the Eastern style. There is a fine garden on the bluff overlooking the river flats. Here is the largest ivy trees in Victoria. It is quite 33ft high, having grown round and above an old stringy bark gum stump till it is one thick mass of leaves and branches. One cannot see Alexandra from here ; but Mount Prospect, 1,600ft high, which shelters the township, shows its site. On the other point of the compass are Mounts Cunningham and Nebo. In 12 miles of this Goulburn Valley below Alexandra there are 50 settlers, big and little, from the old Canadian fisherman who owns an island in the river to the squatters of Riversdale and Whanregarwen. Formerly the whole of the lands on the Upper Goulburn were occupied by two stations ; now some hundreds are supported here, and they tell me — and with a good show of reason — that hundreds more could be comfortably settled if they had but railway communication. I record with pleasure that here the squatters and the farmers live together in the greatest peace and harmony.

After a pleasant drive of 12 miles through fertile country, the magnificent pair of chestnuts proving worthy of their breeding, we strike the Yea road, and halt at Molesworth. This embryo township consists of a state school, and the Punt Inn, an establishment which also includes the store and post-office. This charming little hostelry, which, if situated elsewhere, say at



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Fernshawe, would be highly popular. But it has already been discovered as a quite country resort by some Melbourne visitors. It contains a number of private rooms, and no less than four pianos. There is a good garden, in which an intelligent magpie hides everything he can steal, and the only thing one requires there is *The Argus*. I tell Mrs. James that I could manage to exist with only three pianos in a house, if a daily newspaper were sullied instead. On the hill facing the highway is a house of Mr. Francis, which commands an extended view of the valley. All around there are small holdings. Deposits of cobalt have been found within a mile, and some day may add to the prosperity of Molesworth. Lunched and refreshed, we drive back, crossing the Goulburn, and calling first at Cathkin, Mr. McKenzie's station. Here is the proposed junction of the railway line to Mansfield running up the valley of the Colonial Creek. It is from hence that there is to be the branch to Alexandra. We follow the course of the main road, past many a little homestead, and also past roadside pubs, left stranded here after the waves of prosperity during the mining rush, struggling feebly for existence.

But I am happy to say we also pass a good State school, and the children going homewards, well fed and contented looking, attest the prosperity of their parents, who have selected and settled in this neighbourhood. Ex bullock drivers, teamsters, splitters, miners - hard workers are all these agriculturalists in the Upper Goulburn. They prosper exceedingly here, and are especially blessed with a bountiful rainfall; and there is a never failing supply of water in the streams. There seems to be water everywhere. On the banks of the brooks grey cranes and red-crested water-hens are plentiful. I have not seen these since I was on New Zealand. Two miles out from Alexandra I am shown the stump here it is proposed to locate the terminus of the railway. At this the citizens are wroth and indignant. I am shown how, by a slight deviation, it could be easily carried on into the town. The Shire of Alexandra has a special survey made for this propose, and they back the opinion of their engineer against that of the Government official, and Mr. Carlson offers to take the contract to complete this extension for a sum which, if private railroads were allowed here, would ensure its being at once made. I am altogether very sorry for these badly used people of Alexandra until we reach a deep cutting in the hill. Then we dismount and climb the banks, and the whole grandeur of the Upper Goulburn Valley lies before us, The Cathedrals, Mount Torbreck, the Cerberian Range dominating the distant horizon, the river, the plains, the township nestled in the hillside below, all combine to make up such a charming picture that I am glad there is no railway here as yet, or I should miss much of this beauty. Then we drive on, and complete our round of both banks of the Goulburn, returning into Alexandra past many fertile gardens, country homesteads, and pleasant resorts of the people.

The Argus
Saturday 27th June 1885

PICTURESQUE VICTORIA

AROUND ALEXANDRA TO YEA

4 JULY 1885



AROUND ALEXANDRA

**PICTURESQUE VICTORIA
BY THE VAGABOND
(From the Argus)**

Alexandra to Yea

4 July 1885

There are so many picturesque spots around Alexandra which I have not time to visit. Mr. Allardyce is very anxious I should scale Mount Piagah, on his estate. This would give me an opportunity of airing my extensive Biblical knowledge, but I resist the temptation. Also there are other beautiful waterfalls in the hills, if not so magnificent as those of Niagara. But I cannot attempt to describe any more cascades, big or little. I have seen so many during the last ten days that I feel incompetent to introduce any variety, and should have to fall back on the waters of Lodore, or crib from Mr W. D. Howells, who has depicted the Genesee Falls. Niagara and Montmorenci in one book, *Their Wedding Journey*. I think it is this author who said "We should be grateful to fortune for all queer things," and I feel that I should be now grateful for any quaint character whom I might utilise to vary the descriptions of the picturesque. Perhaps we shall find him at Yarck, whither Mr. Lamont drives me in company with the Shire president.

Half-way to Molesworth we turn off to the right. Here is a pub, the inhabitants of which might be used to point a moral or adorn a tale. But I forbear. The dusty Mansfield-road winds between the lulls along a narrow valley. But on the slopes and in the mountain gorges there are many little farms, all the land being taken up. And the heavy-laden drays and the jolly looking yeomen of Yarck, whom we meet riding into Alexandra, are evidences of the prosperity of the district. Yarck itself, some ten miles out, presents itself to the outer world in the form of a pub and a state school. A kirk, however, is being erected. There are potentialities in Yarck. It has made its couice heard in the matter of deputations, and has been able to get promised railway communications, when Alexandra failed. The yeomen of Yarck know what they want, and go for it and get it. They believe in themselves, and their farms, and have faith that this will yet be the hub of the North-east. Old by faith Ministers can sometimes be moved. Past Yarck, we drive on again along the watershed of the Colonial Creek into the heart of the Puzzle Ranges.



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With merry conversation and song and jest the time passed away. One touching Scotch ballad which I rehearse for the benefit of Mr. Lamont brings back his childhood's days, and draws us nearer together in spirit. Every bit of available land about here is selected, although the valley gets narrower, and is but a canyon when we turn off the road to Mr. Stodart's station. The woolshed and other buildings here impress one, the homestead more so, and the hearty welcome completes the charm. I ought to have known instinctively that I was in the house of a Western man. It is many years since Mr Stodart left the luxuriant banks of Lake Colac to become a pioneer here. He has had his reward. I think he is to be commended, for if he had not come to the North east I should have missed pleasant company and talk about Western friends, and a lunch and a salad to be remembered. After this a drive homeward, soothed in body and mind.

The visitor to Alexandra may make it the base from which to visit Mansfield. Mr. Macartney, of Mount Battery station, sends me a pressing invitation, and promises to show me the secret haunts of the outlaws, where the police were murdered, and other curious and beautiful spots. But I must reserve this for the time when I do my Woods Point trip. Travellers in this neighbourhood will be struck with the peculiarity of nomenclature. Why should Jerusalem Creek run into the Devil's River? What was the connexion between the city of the tabernacle and the Prince of Darkness? Many of these things I hope some day to solve, but for the present I must bid good bye to Alexandra and district. I take away with me many pleasant memories and hope I leave no bitter ones behind. My thanks are due to everyone in the shire for the kindness and hospitality shown to me. I think I have left some *souvenirs* in the minds of many by which I shall not easily be forgotten. Cobbs coach conveniently leaves Alexandra in the early morning, connecting with the railway at Yea, Melbourne being reached at 2 pm. But I am not allowed to travel with Cobb Mr. Doran, livery-stable keeper, and ex-resident of the United States, is instructed to produce his "unicorn" team. Not even Garton's can turn out a better, or a better whip. The president of the shire and "Our Joe" purpose personally conducting me safely to Yea. A touching farewell at the Corner, Citizen Doran shakes the reins, we are off. Up the hills once more, the rain and the mist producing new effects of light and shade in the valley below. But what matter for the wet outside, when one has a light heart and a little good whisky, as a preventive against cold, within!

At the Gap I turn my head and take my last look at the fair, though to-day watery, loveliness of the Upper Goulburn Valley. A typical Australian scene this, which I would



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show to every globetrotter. A learned friend of mine, who has not yet the greatest admiration of things colonial, says that he can only endure my articles because my highest meed of praise is given to scenes which have some touches of English beauty, to places which are "home-like" in their outward appearance. I do not know that this is an accurate criticism on my articles. Certainly I love the green lanes of England, the broad meadows, the purling brooks, the stately homes, the magnificence of British manhood, and the pluck of the British race. Anything in Australia which reminds me of these arouses my admiration. But, alas ! I know too well that in England, close beside the palace, there is the hovel. A poorhouse is ns prominent a feature in the landscape as a castle. No more glorious sight in the world is there than that of a "meet ' in the shires. There one Bees highborn men and women — beauty, blood, courage, and wealth all represented. But hanging in the skirts of the ring of hundred-guinea hunters is Hodge, poor, cold, hungry, and miserable, as much hereditary serf of the soil as Gurth the thrall of Cedric the Saxon. And for the cities? My Friend Mr. George R. Sims has thrilled London with his masterly book *How The Poor Live*. Looking back over Alexandra, I say, "Thank God this is *not* like England." In this Upper Goulburn Valley there may sometimes be hard struggles with Nature, a straining in making resources meet, but there is no such thing as poverty and hunger, and the future is always assured. This is a country of unknown possibilities for those who will work. There is a place for every man here. But the other day I received a letter from a gentle man asking me to share his "mud hut und damper." He who at one time hunted four days a week with a crack pack in the shires, now earns his living with pick and shovel. We have mutual associations in England, and his proffered hospitality will be accepted before that of any lordly squatter in the neighbourhood, for I hold Mr. ---- to be a truer gentleman in his rough soiled, labourer's clothes than when riding in the front flight. He is proving his manhood ; so I to him, "Courage, brave heart ; your reward will come." But in England it would have been impossible for him to obtain work. This is the true paradise of the labouring man. It is the haven of all British men who toil with hand or brain ; for true Americans although Mr Carison and myself are, we agree that Victoria is good enough for us. Being good Americans, we make the best Australians

Again we cross the Goulburn, again we interview Miss James at the Punt Inn, at Molesworth. Past this the road gets worst. We are out of the shire of Alexandra and in that of Yea now. This latter extends some 30 miles by 20, and is particularly blessed, or otherwise, by possessing an abnormal share of hilly highway, hard to keep in repair. We have left the valley of the Goulburn and are ascending a range running, between that and



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the Yea Valley. This is easy at first, but after a time we come to a very steep grade. The highway appears to have followed the track of the pioneer engineers of Australia — sheep and bullock drivers, and is worse than anything round Alexandra. It culminates in "Cotton's Pinch." Tradition gives an arousing account of the reason this was so named. There is a new road round here, but as it is the "Pinch" is bad enough. The old grade was quite of the precipice type, like some in Otago or Westland. From the top of this range the traveller on the box-seat of the coach obtains a most extensive and magnificent view, north, south and east of hills and ranges. Like billows, they mount one above the other, culminating, afar off in the snow-capped monarchs of the Alps. Today the gorges and valleys are filled with white mist, clouds float across the hillsides, or hang suspended around their summits. Varying in light and colour, cloud, mists, and sky are often blended together. The earth and the heavens seemed joined. The effect is as magnificent as anything of the kind I have seen. The view from Cotton's Pinch is a thing every tourist should see. At all seasons of the year it is beautiful, and it is a beauty to which the spirit and the heart expand. Here, and not in crowded cities, the revolt against the "everlasting No" would possess one. A sense of life, freedom, and liberty is inspired with the mountain ozone, and, like Carlyle's hero, you can for the nonce defy the world

Four miles descending eastwards from the top of the range and we cross the Yea River and are in Yea township. Between Molesworth and this railway terminus there is very little settlement, and one is at first surprised at the smartness of the place. Then one finds out that this is not a new township — that it has a history, and a past, and associations connected with its nomenclature. In my goings to and from Victoria the derivation of the names of the different places I visit is always of the greatest interest to me. On this journey nothing can be more appropriate than the naming of Lilydale ; at Healesville the memory of a lamented statesman is perpetuated ; at Alexandra we have a souvenir of England's future beautiful and gracious Lady, and here at Yea one finds a connexion with the Crimean war. In other parts of the colony, in the names of Sebastopol, Inkerman, Malakoff), and the Redan one may also find these ; but here there is a closer connexion. This township of Yea — proper pronunciation "Yaw" — was named, in what now seems a very remote age, after Captain Yea, who was Surveyor General Clarke's commanding officer in the field. The latter, as Sir Andrew Clarke, still lives, a highly prosperous and pensioned gentleman. But Captain Yea, then Colonel Yea 30 years ago died a hero's death. In command of the 7th Fusiliers, he was killed in Wyndham's night attack at the Redan. And so Yea is proud of its name, and rightly so. For if at the present moment we look back with shame to the decade of warfare with



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savage tribes, the result of which is that England is losing her honour, we remember at least that three decades before British pluck and valour showed supreme in a great struggle, from the September day, when "the thin red line" won Alma, till the mighty fortress of Sebastopol fell. It is a good thing to have this remembrance, and we hope other nations will also bear it in mind. The naming of Yea shows its early settlement. Before the era of railways this was on the highway from Sandhurst and Castlemaine to the Ovens district, Jamieson and Woods Point, and also to Melbourne via Broadford and Kilmore. I am only sorry for one thing — that with the associations of Yea I cannot find anything English about it. Not even to please my friend "Mac" will I pervert "the thing which is to the thing which isn't".

There is a line broad main street here, with enclosures in the centre somewhat reminding me of Nagambie. There are some good brick public buildings and some old weather-board structures. The main features are the railway ; "Constitution hill," flanking the township, up which every tourist should climb to view the valleys to east and west and north and south ; the shire-hall, built of brick ; and the new temperance-hall, also a good structure, and the churches. That devoted to the Episcopalian service is a really fine building of brick and cement. The Rev A. R. Stackhouse is the only resident clergyman here. This district can hardly support the incumbent, which is the reason, I suppose, that another one is demanded. Australian people nowadays are getting too lazy to walk or drive far into church. They want a railway station, a post office, a state school, and a church at their very gates. In England, I once lived in a county where I paid tithes to two parishes, and the nearest church was five miles off. This, unfortunately, prevented me attending regularly. Here we have neither tithes nor church rates, and people, when they cry out for a religious camp near their doors, are not particularly anxious to pay the parson. Is there not a Bishop of Melbourne's Fund! At Yea they are falling back on that popular swindle, a bazaar, in aid of the funds to provide another clergyman for the district. The Roman Catholic Church is periodically spiritually supplied by rather O'Hanian, from Mansfield. The Presbyterian, last of the places of worship, also lacks a resident clergyman. If the churches are not particularly nourishing here, the state, as represented by the court-house, and the post and telegraph office, is in a very bad condition. The former is poor, the latter wretched. Better accommodation should certainly be provided. There are good quarters at the police camp, scarcely required here, as the service of the police is of an ornamental character at Yea.



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The population of the town of Yea is about 250. Out of this there is an attendance of 90 at the state school. The birth rate far exceeds that of deaths. In this upland valley one is 500ft above Melbourne, and it is marvellously healthy. At this the traveller may rejoice, as the cemetery is not well kept, and must to one of aesthetic tastes be an unpleasant place to be planted in. Of course there is a racecourse here, and a recreation ground, and a cricket ground and club, and also I am happy to say, there is a rifle club. There are eight stores at Yea, an insurance agent, a chemists shop (offshoot of the eminent apothecary's at Alexandra), and three hotels. The *Yea Standard*, although printed in Alexandra, is published here, and *The Argus* is obtained at 10 o'clock in the morning. Although some of the houses and stores are antiquated, new buildings are growing up, population is increasing, and trades people appear to be flourishing. As the rail way terminus, this possesses an importance, and when the line is being carried on to Alexandra and Mansfield things will "boom" here. The district is principally a pastoral one, but all along the valleys the land is being gradually brought under cultivation. Over 1,000 acres are under tillage with wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, and hay. Gold-mining was, and is still, carried on around Yea. The principal claim is the "Welcome," eight miles distant. The shaft is sunk 500ft down on to the reef. Here 30 men are employed, all Chinese, except a a Russian Finn, who is a paid servant of Ah Mouy and Company of Little Bourke-street and Hong Kong. As a miner the Caucasian is played out around Yea. Neither the Providence," reported to be a good claim, nor the "Pig and Whistle" are now worked. Some sanguine inhabitants say that there is plenty of gold in the hills. To act as the matrix of the precious metal seems to me about all they are good for, except to heighten the picturesque effects which one sees all around Yea.

There are very jolly and kind people in Yea, One hotel keeper is an old showman, and as such I am under obligations for courtesies to him. Mr. Webster is about the oldest inhabitant I interview. The newest is an American storekeeper, native of Niagara, New York State, who is rejoiced when I talk with him about the Falls, and the big hotels, and little bazaars there. He is a live man, and will prosper here. Another old settler I meet is a son of one of the West Country *employee* engaged by Thomas Henty to serve him for a certain time at the Swan River settlement, where he acquired a vast tract of land, before the family settled in Tasmania, and Edward, the pioneer, sailed for and founded Portland. I see the contract made in England, a quaint document, worthy to be preserved by our new Historical society. My hotel I find well worthy of the praise which Mr. Stodart and others have bestowed upon it. Round the verandah at the back is twined one of the finest vines I have seen in the colonies, or indeed anywhere. Here, sitting in the



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shade and smoking the soothing cigar, an idyllic feeling possesses one. One feels us if in France, Italy or Germany. This cannot be the Australian bush with these beautiful vine-leaves and magnificent bunches or grapes hanging overhead. Here Lily and her sister sing sweetly as they come and go at their work. Now, if there is one thing that I like better than another it is to hear handmaidens or housewives sing at their domestic duties. There are good servants here that I think I may have "struck a patch" in this line, which may benefit some lady friends of mine in Melbourne. If Yea can produce female rustics like these to make them good servants in the country, why cannot they be imported to the metropolis! What a blessing, they would be in St. Kilda and Toorak.

Anyone can tell an Australian-born girl. In domestic service the imported article is recognised by her bad grammar. Lily and her sister, brought up in the state schools, speak good English, are neat and smart and respectful and self-respecting. Certainly, my friend Mrs. —, who is always changing her Irish servants, would consider these Yea girls perfect treasures. But on interviewing them under the vines I hear that they do not come from Yea, but from Ballarat. Victoria's golden city, I find, as a rearing-place of domestic servants. I have often met Ballarat girls in New South Wales, and in parts of this colony I have lately been visiting. Miner's daughters, brought up sensibly, they do not rush to factory work like the girls in the metropolis; and I find, according to Lily's statement, that they dislike Melbourne. "There is too much noise and bustle, and it is such a wicked place too." Our great metropolis is getting with country people the same character that London town has to the rustics of England. It is for the Melbourne mistresses who wish to obtain excellent maids to overcome this feeling by kindly treatment. They may, object, perhaps, to the Ballarat girls as all, of every class, I met there were pretty, with complexions like those popularly supposed to belong only to Tasmania and England. And although, as I have said, Yea does not at all resemble England, still memories of the *Pickwick Papers* come back to me as I look out of my window and watch the local Sam Weller whistling at his work under the vines, and flirting with the girls. I think he has a good place of it. In this charming climate everything bursts into such expressions of melody as are furnished by nature. The magpies in the morning whistle in the garden as beautifully as in the Gellibrand forest, where I have heard them. Sam Weller whistles, and the girls sing. These matinlays please me much, as I lie awake, although, perhaps, there are whisky-drinking old bachelors with less of the great Pickwick's nature than I have who would object to be so awakened. I know men who absolutely call our Australian magpie melodious harbinger of morn, a nuisance! Well, I trust the two birds now *en voyage* to Derry will be



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honoured in Old Ireland, if they were not here.

President Carison and "Our Joe" leave me overnight to return to Alexandra, but another gentleman kindly takes charge of me, and I have a good time. The morning at Yea is so beautiful that I am quite loath to leave by the first train. Lily plucks a bag of grapes to sustain me on the way. All of her name are good and kind. If Yea is not included in the railway tourist schedule it ought to be, for it is the connecting link of the most charming journey which I have been describing during the last few weeks. I am sorry I did not know some esteemed friends of mine were on their wedding tour at Fernshawe. No doubt they endeavoured to comport themselves publicly quite like old married people, and no doubt they lamentably failed. Fernshawe, with "its sylvan solitude and umbrageous streams, far from the ken of envious or unsympathetic eyes, is, I admit, quite the place for brides and bride grooms to bore each other with their oft-told "*Je t'aime.*" But my advice to all wedding parties is — make the round trip from Lilydale, through Healesville, Fernshawe, Alexandra, and "Yea. You will get a most charming variety of scenery you will not be bored with one place, and you will not bore each other. There is not enough coach journeying to make it irksome and tedious. There is not enough railway journeying to reduce two people, just entered into partner ship, and therefore *pro-tem* anxious to keep up appearances to each other, to the dusty, dirty level of an overland traveller, in which, in the male, "the blacking fades gradually from the boots, the coat loses its rigour of cut, the shirt and collar are rumpled, and the whole person becomes one dusty crease " — and in the lady, but I dare not pursue the subject. My last advice to brides, however, is — do not start on your wedding tour by sea or by a long rail journey, take it all in easy stages like those I have sketched out above.

This advice is given not only that all the places I have mentioned has each its special point of loveliness, winding up at Yea with grapes for breakfast, but that from thence to Tallarook there is the most beautiful bit of railway line in all Victoria. It is worth a trip from Melbourne, and the expenditure of thirteen shillings in a first-class ticket to see it. Not only do I think it most beautiful, but Major King — and he ought to know — says that there is nothing like it in the colonies, and I daresay Mr Speight agrees with us ; and one has plenty of time to view the scenery, for the 23^{3/4} miles of line have three stations *en route*, und the journey occupies one hour and a quarter, a magnificent, slow performance, surpassing even those of the trains to Lilydale and Colac. But I do not regret this. Other than so, I rejoice ; for if whirled rapidly through the country at 40 miles an hour, we should miss its beauties. The gentleman who *circuivit terram et*



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perambulavit eam, as he announced when summoned to Court, no doubt travelled fast, and found things not only barren from Dan to Beersheba, but from China to Peru. The traveller who wishes to thoroughly appreciate Nature should go slow, as this train does ; and then he can fully appreciate the glories of mountain and river, the varying tints of the foliage, from the wattle to stringy bark, the canyons 'tween the hills, the glimpses of water, the bold outline of the rocks. It is all as wild and weird as one could desire. In the Susquehanna Valley there are occasional "bits" of scenery very much like this. Again, in South Wales, on the line from Nant-ybwch to Aberga'ny, I remember wild and picturesque vistas ; but *per se*, I know nothing to equal this stretch of line from Yea to Tallarook.

The learned gentleman known to fame as Dr. Syntax, who preceded me in a tour in search of the picturesque, has recorded his feelings —

"To be by local Impulse moved,
I oft have thought but never proved,
Until I Milton's 'Comus' read
Beneath the walls where it was bred ;
This would you woo the muse of Gray
It should be by the churchyard way.
Say do you think to charm the time,
In chaunting Pope's melodious rhyme,
Go wander midst the forest groves
Which the chaste muse of Windsor loves:
Or would you feel dramatic rage,
In pondering over Shakespeare's page,
You should pursue th' awak'ning theme
On the tree green banks of Avon's stream."

That is the trouble here. In the midst of all this charming scenery there are no romantic associations. I feel the want of historians and poets. But perhaps it is a greater tribute to the might and majesty of glorious nature, that irrespective of any fictitious glamour this valley of rocks and forest and shining water should charm me. What an awful time the bullocks must have had of it drawing the drays in the old days up and down these precipices. *Bien entendu*, however, the line, as that over the Blue Mountains in New

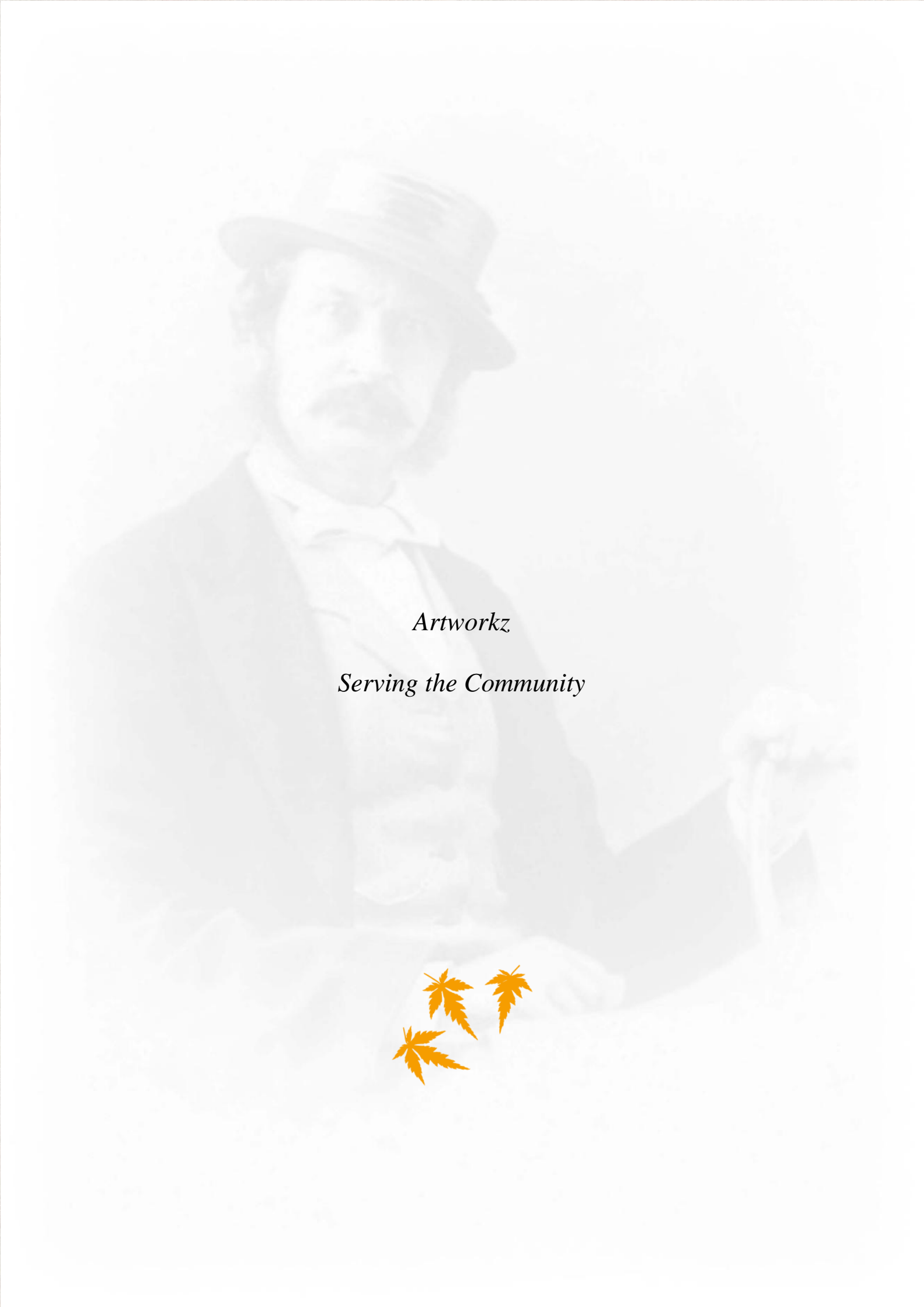


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South Wales, often closely follows these old bullock-paths. There is nothing but scenery to charm one *en route*, for in spite of the three railway stations, the population is very scanty. There isn't room for many people to live in these gorges. They cannot exist on *Chiaroscuro* an picturesque effects. But when Tallarook station is reached at last, and one has half an hour to wait, in which to inspect the township and sample the soda water at the good hotel and look in at the state school and the churches, the traveller will be satisfied that the lack of history and historians, of poetry and of bards, this line from Yea is in itself an epic in Nature's writing, fit culmination to the journey commenced at Lilydale All the muses in England may go hang! They cannot better these verses writ in stones, and bush, and running brooks. The singer here must ever be less than his themes!

The Argus
Saturday 4th July 1885

A faded, sepia-toned portrait of a man with a mustache, wearing a top hat and a suit with a bow tie. He is seated and looking slightly to the left. The image is semi-transparent, allowing the text to be overlaid.

Artworkz

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