

EXTRACTS FROM *THE LEADER*

Gardening at the Kew Asylum

8 January 1881

The providing of gardens with handsome shrubs, beautiful flowers, shade trees, and the like, for our national lunatic asylum is well worthy of commendation, for they cannot fail to act beneficially upon the unfortunates whose fate it is to be confined there. Though gardening was only commenced there some four or five years ago, great progress has been made, and much credit is due to Mr. A. Morrison, farm bailiff and landscape gardener, who has the management of the ornamental gardening and who, it may be said has effected wonders in the time, especially when the peculiar site and the wretched nature of the soil are taken into account, for the soil is little else than rotten sandstone rock, either from the foundations of the building, or where the same rock had to be broken up and planted after the surface soil had been carried away. Notwithstanding the apparently infertile nature of the soil the trees and shrubs are in good health, and making vigorous growth, showing that they have been well cared for. Great pains were taken in planting by furnishing each plant with a portion of fertile soil, and duly watering until it was fairly established, since when no water has been given.

The building is finely situated, the views to the north, west and south being both varied and extensive; but it cannot be said that there is much display of taste in the laying out of the approach or grounds, convenience rather than ornament having been apparently studied; but Mr. Morrison contemplates altering the line of approach, in which there is much room for improvement. The building standing on the crown of a ridge - the ground sloping to both back and front - it was necessary to raise the level considerably on the south side in order to form a terrace, which extends the whole length of the building, with a straight drive running through it.

Next to the building in front of each wing are large recreation grounds for the men on one side and the women on the other, In each of these are a large arbor, walks, turf, flower-borders, shrubs, and shade-trees, the latter certain to become of great utility when grown up. These plots of ground are bounded by a very deep sunk fence, and are separated from the terrace walk by other plots that are planted with shrubs and trees on grass, but only a few of the latter so that the building may not be hidden when they grow up. The two slips are planted alike, and with the same kinds, but there is not a duplicate in either. Among the trees are three

species of *Araucaria*, *Pinus canariensis* and two or three others, and *Abie Nordmanniana*; among shrubs some of the most noteworthy are - *Leucodendron argenteum*, very fine; green and variegated hollies, also thriving; *Euonymus variegata*; double Pomegranate; double Myrtle, *Magnolia grandiflora*, *Cranothus divaricatus*, *Colletia erociata*, forming peculiar though handsome bushes; the handsome *Pittosporum eugenieides variegata*, and *P. Tobiras variegata*. In the central portion are *Araucaria Cookii*; the Common Spruce, and *Abies Pinsapo* thriving well; Planes, Poplars, *Wellingtonia* and others - all tall-growing subjects - corresponding in height with the central part of the building.

On the other side of the walk is a border of some yards in width filled with shrubs, trees, and flowering plants, planted in a rather formal manner. Next the walk is a row of American Elms, 31 feet apart, as shade trees, their stems being encompassed with sweet peas which have a pleasing effect; next is a row composed of three sorts of shrubs - *Pittosporum*, *Euonymus*, and Portugal Laurel planted alternately - intermixed with roses and other flowering plants. The next row is entirely of common laurels; beyond that is a line of a pretty Myrtaceous shrub. These are planted somewhat closely with a view of affording shelter, which they will presently effect, and render the space between them and the building much more comfortable than at present. The terrace is finished with rather a steep slope planted with deciduous trees in 24 groups of five, each group being of a different sort from all the rest; among them are three or four kinds of poplar, willows, planes, oaks, elms, sugar maple (true), alder, birch, lime, and mountain ash.

Beyond the further end of the terrace is half an acre of nursery ground, in which an immense number of shrubs and herbaceous plants are being propagated. The ground is subdivided in plots and beds, and there is a small hot-bed frame, and some other glazed frames, all made by patients, in which cuttings are being most successfully struck, and reared into plants; the cuttings are of all kinds, from the stately *Araucaria* down to the smallest herbaceous plant; in this work Mr. Morrison is assisted by one or two of the patients, who have given what remains of their wits heartily and successfully to the work.

Inside the ranges of building, and enclosed by the wings, though open on one side, are two squares of good size, used as airing grounds for the men and women; these are crossed by diagonal walks, and the ground planted with a choice assortment of shrubs, amounting to 900 different sorts. The soil of each square previous to commencement was simply the rotten sandstone already alluded to, but by trenching and other means of improvement it has been rendered capable of growing plants of nearly all kinds, till double-blossomed Hawthorns have attained a height of 14 feet,

double-blossomed peaches 15 feet in four years, and others in proportion. So vigorous has been the growth of these shrubs and so beneficial are their effects that medical men have given an opinion that they have already produced an improvement on the sanitary conditions.

The collections of plants of all kinds - trees, shrubs, and others - are very large, including nearly all that are to be obtained from the nurseries, and containing something like 36 varieties of Chrysanthemum, equally good lists of roses, carnations, lilies, and others of similar character. There is also a kitchen garden of seven acres, managed by Mr. Burke, but as he was not there at the time we did not see it.

Mr. Morrison showed equal ability in the farming as in the gardening department, his crops and live stock being in capital condition, and showing unmistakable signs of good treatment. Since undertaking the management he has had erected, by the patients, yards and sheds for cattle, of which 50 cows are milked daily, yielding about 400 quarts per day, and of butter from the surplus after the house is served, 600 to 800 lb. per month; the best heifer calves from good milkers are selected for cows, the remainder used as veal in the house. There is also a piggery, containing nearly 200 pigs of the Berkshire breed, in good condition, of all ages and sizes, all the pork and bacon being used in the house, the regulations forbidding anything to be sold, although it would be of decided advantage in some cases. From a well-planned fowl house for poultry of all kinds, some twenty dozen eggs are gathered weekly.

The cultivated land comprises 75 acres, on which are grown mangels, 10 acres, maize, barley and tares, turnips and cabbages for the cows; hay, a splendid crop; carrots and peas for the horses; barley, peas and wheat for the fowls, and potatoes for the human beings. The following quantities of produce, in addition to those already mentioned, will afford good evidence of the value to the institution of the farming operations as at present conducted. The returns are for 1879: - Barley, 55 bushels; carrots, 24,640 lb.; green food, 25,000 bunches; hay, 65 tons; mangels, 100 tons; peas, 60 bushels; potatoes, 83,600 lb.; straw, 2 tons; wheat, 20 bushels; pork, 17,761 lb.; veal [--]64 lb.

There are three carters, and four or five excellent horses, the manual labour being performed by the patients, some of whom can be trusted by themselves, others in gangs, each gang superintended by a warder. The whole of the ground, garden and farm is clean, and in capital condition, reflecting very great credit upon Mr. Morrison's management.

Gardens of the Kew Asylum

31 October 1885

Of all the public gardens in the neighbourhood of Melbourne, it may be safely said that those of the Kew Asylum are the best managed. The soil having been properly prepared, the trees and shrubs allowed sufficient space, their growth has been highly satisfactory. Since our previous visit in January, 1881, when they had just got fairly into growth after being about five years planted, from small trees and bushes they are now large and handsome specimens, their beauty of form being equally as striking as the size they have attained.

On the front lawns especially, owing to the abundant space allowed and the attention they have received in pruning, every specimen, while displaying its natural habit, is as near perfection of form as it can possibly be. Among the more interesting and valuable, the Silver Oak of the Cape of Good Hope - *Leucodendron argenteum* - of which there are two specimens equally fine, stands conspicuous, both for its great beauty and the fact that the species is becoming rare on the globe. Even in its native country - South Africa - the tree is being rapidly extirpated, being used as fuel, and it may be hoped that these specimens and a few others that are thriving in Victoria will in course of time furnish seeds wherewith to maintain its existence for the beautifying of our gardens and even add to the splendor of our woods and forests.

The Wellingtonia is thriving well, trees five years planted and seven years of age having attained a height of 16 feet. The Deodar has also attained a large size and forms trees remarkable for their symmetry and elegance of habit. The Araucarias are also fine. Pines even more so; their regularity of growth could not be exceeded, *Pinus ponderosa* and *P. canariensis* being especially fine. *Abies excelsa* has already formed a handsome tree of nearly 20 feet in height. *Pinus Nordmaniana* has also become a fine specimen. The border on the other side of the terrace is planted with a row of oaks and also with dwarf shrubs and herbaceous plants, of which, though later, owing mainly to the cold soil, than in the neighbourhood south of the Yarra, a number are in flower, and all being in good condition and the ground clean present a very pleasant appearance.

On the slope from the front terrace where groups of several species of deciduous trees were planted some good specimens exist. Oaks, the Aspen - *Populus tremula* - Birch, Willows, Horse Chestnut, Alder, *Acer rubrum*, *A. campestre*, Elms, have all done well. The willows have shown their beneficial power in absorbing the moisture of swampy ground; having been planted in a swampy place, the ground being springy, where a horse in former days got bogged and had to be dug out, they had rendered it

perfectly dry. The ground was covered with the crimson *Mesembryanthemum*, which produces a dazzling effect, though after a time it dies out, and a portion has been replanted with Buffalo grass.

In the yards the trees have attained a great size. Hawthorns of the different varieties, being in full bloom, present a splendid appearance. There is the largest plant we have seen of *Eucalyptus ficifolia*, it being nearly 24 feet in height, at nine years of age; *E. leucoxyton* is also a fine specimen: both flower well. *Cupressus macrocarpa* has attained an enormous size, *Pinis insignis* progressing with equal rapidity. The common oak does remarkably well; trees planted seven years have attained a height of 24 feet; it is being rather extensively planted for avenues and shade, and proves that it is the best of deciduous trees for street and other avenues.

Several new yards have recently been planted, generally at a great expenditure of labor, owing to the rock having to be cut away in levelling the ground and bringing fresh soil. The greater part of the work is, however, done by the patients, under the superintendence of Mr. Abraham Morrison, who has now the sole management of the ground, and under whose tact and humane treatment the poor unfortunates work diligently and contentedly. Among the numerous species and varieties of shrubs some of the most striking are - a variegated *Euonymus*, all the species of *Pittosporum*, *P. undulatum*, *P. eugenioides* and its variegated variety forming magnificent bushes; *P. Tobira* also thrives remarkably well. Four species of *Raphiolepis* form handsome objects; *Hakea simveoleus*, and *H. eucalyptoides*; *Prunus ilicifolia*, largely grown; Portugal laurel, flowering abundantly; *Felicia augustifolia*; several *Boronias*; *Magnolia fuscata*.

The nursery has been greatly enlarged: adjoining it, south-west of the building, an orchard of some acres was planted last year with four-year-old trees, which are thriving well. On the same ground a new house has been built for Mr. Morrison, and near it is a dairy, also new; partly underground, and well designed. Some hives of bees are kept, and thrive. Two new approaches have recently been formed and planted with avenue trees; a row of *Pinis insignis* has been planted along the south fence for shelter; a plot of trees has been commenced at the entrance and will be continued to the building; the ground being prepared by subsoiling a crop of peas is taken, and after being again dug or ploughed the trees are planted, and, under the circumstances, start at once into rapid growth.

The kitchen garden has been greatly enlarged and is now 16 acres in extent. All the ordinary vegetables are grown in large breadths; two tons per week, besides potatoes being sent to the kitchen. There are at present in various stages, 6 acres of cabbages; 3 acres of turnips have recently

been taken off, the ground prepared for maize, of which the first crop has been just put in and will be followed by others in succession, so as to have green fodder throughout the season. Swede turnips are dug up as soon as ready, placed in heaps and covered with straw until wanted for kitchen use when other vegetables become scarce: carrots are similarly treated. Onions, leeks, beans, peas, and celery are all grown in large breaks: the ground being well wrought and manured. Mr. Morrison pointed out a piece which had received a dressing of stable dung at the rate of 150 loads per acre. The soil is of a rather stubborn nature, much of it having been injured by the expensive and unwise practice that formerly prevailed of bringing the subsoil to the surface, thus entailing a large amount of unnecessary labour. Mr. Morrison's plan is to first plough and subsoil the ground to a depth of 14 inches, then pass a grubber through it two or three times to the same depth; where the maize is grown the surface is rolled, the seed sown, covered with a shallow plough furrow, smoothed with the back of a harrow and again rolled to level it for mowing.

On the farm land are crops in different stages of wheat, barley, oats and peas; all heavy crops and looking well: the wheat, after peas, is estimated to yield 30 bushels per acre. Ten acres of mangels have just been sown. Last year's crop is now in an open shed, where it will remain till the winter crop of green stuff becomes scarce - about Christmas-tide. The horses, milch cows, pigs and poultry are all in excellent condition. No small amount of energy and attention is required to maintain a supply of the various products, for the family, including officers, patients and others, numbers nearly a thousand head. The whole place is in excellent order throughout, and reflects the greatest credit upon Mr. Morrison.