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**THE RICHMOND RIVER DISTRICT.**

[FROM A CORRESPONDENT.]

This extensive but comparatively unknown district, whose fertility of soil is unsurpassed in any part of the colony, and which possesses the inestimable advantage of navigable rivers and creeks flowing through its whole extent, appears destined at length to be opened as a field for the employment of capital in agricultural and commercial pursuits; townships are in course of survey on the banks of the river, and large reserves for agricultural purposes have been formed in the most eligible positions.

The opening of a tract of country so situated is contemplated with satisfaction by those who may be considered unbiassed judges. In the lower part of the district alone there is room for a large body of industrious settlers, and such is the nature of the soil, that little apprehension is entertained of its affording abundant compensation for any labour that may be bestowed on the cultivation of wheat, maize, the vine, tobacco, sugar, cotton, indigo, and many other articles of consumption and of export.

The height of the neighbouring mountains so near the coast ensures to this district protection from the hot winds that prevail to so great an extent in more exposed parts of the colony, and to their proximity to the coast may also be attributed the frequency of showers at times when other districts are parched with drought. The semi-tropical character of the climate is evidenced by the luxuriance of the vegetation on the banks of the river, where the trunks of gigantic trees, covered with creeping plants of various descriptions falling down in graceful festoons from the upper branches, produce an effect observable only in a region favoured with an abundance of moisture, and a fertile soil.

When it is stated that the valley of the Richmond and of its tributaries extends for fully 100 miles inland, and that it includes nearly 200,000 acres of the richest description of alluvial land, a great portion of which is in its natural state clear of timber, and that the various rivers and creeks are navigable for a distance of from 80 to 90 miles, these facts alone are sufficient to point out the eligibility of the district for the employment and subsistence of a numerous population. When to this is added the fact that no part of the colony presents greater inducements to capitalists for the breeding of sheep and cattle, a fact well known to those individuals who

have invested their capital in the rearing of stock in this district, it is obvious that a country possessing so many advantages cannot long remain unnoticed and comparatively unknown.

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The connection with Moreton Bay is already established by the discovery of a practicable route between the coast range and the sea, but at present the whole trade of the district is carried on with Sydney, by means of coasting vessels. At the town of Cassino near the head of the navigation of the Richmond River, a Post Office has been established, and a weekly mail is also carried from thence to the township about to be formed at the mouth of the river.

The mouth of the Richmond River, or as it is termed by the natives "Ballina," is situated in latitude 28 degrees 45, or thereabouts. The south head is formed by a low sand-spit; the north head being comparatively high land, consisting of hills of sandstone formation, clothed with timber, and a remarkable eminence near the anchorage has been called Richmond Hill, although bearing but little resemblance to its beautiful namesake.

The navigable entrance to the river is considerably contracted by a bar of shifting sand, extending across the river's mouth, and which viewed from the sea, appears to block up the entrance to the river. This, however, is not the case, there being a narrow channel with a depth at high water of from 10 to 12 feet; in its present state, therefore the bar precludes vessels drawing more than 9 feet water from entering the river, but it appears by no means improbable that a permanent deep water channel might be formed by the construction of a mole or covering pier formed of the ballast discharged from the vessels, projecting from the South Spit, and carried seaward into deep water. This work would have the effect of contracting the present outfall, and consequently of deepening it; and even the depositing of the ballast at this point would be advantageous, by throwing the navigable channel further to the north, where it formerly existed. After passing the bar the anchorage is in from 2½ to 3 fathoms, and is perfectly secure. A bank extends for some distance up the river, having the deep water channel on its eastern side, and further up the channel has a uniform depth of about 3 fathoms.

For a distance of about 20 miles on its mouth, the Richmond River has a course which is nearly parallel with the line of coast, so that at that distance, it is not more than three miles from the sea; this narrow strip of country bordering on the sea is for the most part low and swampy, or sandy.

At the distance of about 12 miles from the Heads, there is a small settlement at a place called Blackwall; fresh water is here found in abundance, and the land consists of an open forest of pine, cypress, honeysuckle, bloodwood, &c.

After passing Blackwall, and a few small islands in the river, a shallow inlet, called Broadwater, extends for several miles in a north-westerly direction; the adjacent country

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north-westerly direction; the adjacent country being, in general, low and swampy.

Rocky Mouth Creek, at the distance of about 25 miles from the Heads, is a small creek on the banks of which some good land is to be found. The neighbouring country consists of forest ranges well grassed, and fresh water is to be found by sinking to a small depth.

From this point to the junction of the North Arm with the Richmond River, the banks are low, and dense bushes extend on each side for a depth of a quarter to half a mile, the soil being of the richest description. A little way back from the river banks are swamps and alluvial plains of many miles in extent, the land being all of a description similar to the rich flats of the Hawkesbury and Hunter districts, and this general description applies to the greater portion of the district of the lower Richmond, as well as that bordering on the North Arm, or North Richmond River.

The North Richmond is the largest tributary of the Richmond River. At the junction of the rivers, its width is about 250 feet, with a mean depth of 12 to 15 feet, and it maintains this width and depth for a distance of 30 miles, to a point where a large creek, called Leicester Creek, joins the river at the village reserve of Lismore.

Above this point, the river becomes narrower, but is still navigable for about 12 or 15 miles, beyond which point it ceases to be navigable, in consequence of falls and rapids.

Nearly the whole of the land which lies adjacent to the banks of the North Richmond consists of the richest description of brush land and alluvial flats: and at a moderate computation there cannot be less than 100,000 acres of land available for cultivation on the banks of this river and of the numerous creeks which empty themselves into it. The whole of this land is well adapted for the growth of maize, tobacco, cotton, and other plants indigenous to a tropical climate. With respect to wheat some doubt is entertained that the soil and climate are unsuited to it, and that on the rich alluvial flats it would run too much to straw, and produce little in the form of grain, but experience alone can confirm or disprove this idea.

The sugar-cane and the cotton-plant have been introduced into garden cultivation, and the result appears very favourable, whilst among fruits the banana and pine-apple are nowhere to be seen in greater perfection. Other tropical fruits and plants might no doubt be introduced with success; as the guava, the taro, the yam, and the bread-fruit tree. This latter, it is believed, would thrive well in the rich cedar brushes near the river; the taro is cultivated in the much colder climate of New Zealand; the yam (*dioscorea alata*) would doubtless succeed on the alluvial flats; and the sweet potato (*convolvulus battatus*) is

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the sweet potato (*Convolvulus batatas*) is already grown largely in the gardens of the settlers. The common potato is also cultivated, but this root appears to degenerate on the rich lands of the Richmond, and requires that the seed should be continually renewed from other districts.

The ginger, turmeric, arrowroot, and coffee plants, which are all found growing luxuriantly in the Society Islands, the Navigators', &c. would doubtless thrive well in the rich soil of this district, which is also admirably adapted for the growth of tobacco on a large scale. From the above brief sketch, it will be perceived that the Richmond River District must become, at no very distant period, an important field for the enterprise of agriculturists, and there can be no question that so soon as the lands are surveyed and laid out into numerous farms adapted for all classes of purchasers, a very large population will be attracted to this district.

At present the great want of the Richmond River District is a more rapid and regular communication with Sydney, and this can only be effected by the establishment of a steam vessel. Sailing vessels are often detained at

the Heads for periods varying from 3 to 6 or 7 weeks, in consequence of light or unfavourable winds; and at the present time no less than 10 vessels are thus detained to the great detriment of their owners. A small but powerful steam-vessel would be invaluable, as its services might be rendered available as a steam-tug at such periods, in combination with the Sydney and river trade.

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