

TASMANIA.

AREA AND BOUNDARIES.

THE island State of Tasmania is the smallest in the Federation, and contains an area of 26,215 square miles. On the north it is separated from the mainland of Australia by Bass Strait, a broad channel of from 80 to 150 miles in width. The Tasman Sea forms its eastern boundary, and its southern and western shores are washed by the waters of the Great Southern Ocean. From north to south the island is about 200 miles long, and the breadth from east to west in its widest part is about the same distance.

COASTAL FEATURES.

The southern portion of the eastern shore of the island is rich in picturesque inlets and bold headlands. Hobart, the capital of the state, is beautifully situated on the river Derwent, which debouches into Storm Bay. Behind the city, the cone of Mount Wellington rises to a height of over 4,000 feet. The bay is protected on its eastern side by Tasman's Peninsula, the extremities of which are guarded by the bluff headlands of Cape Pillar and Cape Raoul. These two headlands are composed of masses of columnar basalt rising to a height of several hundreds of feet. Some of the pillars stand as outliers to the main body, the intervening softer mass having been detached by the combined action of wind and sea. For ages the waves of the Southern Ocean have been relentlessly beating at these lofty promontories, and at times large portions of the mighty mass, undermined by the ceaseless erosive agency of the salt water, topple over and sink heavily into the ocean. Tasman's Peninsula is connected with Forestier's Peninsula, lying to the northward, by the narrow isthmus of Eagle Hawk Neck. The land-locked harbour, enclosed by these two peninsulas, is called Norfolk Bay. On the north-eastern portion of Forestier's Peninsula lies North Bay. Sailing northwards from this inlet for about 10 miles the beautiful and peculiarly-shaped Maria Island is reached, supposed to have been named by Tasman after the daughter of his patron, Antony Van Diemen. The island, on the northern side of which cliffs of basalt rise to a height of over 2,000 feet, is almost severed in twain by the deep indentations of Oyster Bay and Reidle Bay, situated respectively on the western and eastern sides, and joined by a narrow neck of land. Higher up on the mainland is another large inlet named

Oyster Bay, with Freycinet's Peninsula on its eastern flank. Schouten Island lies off the extremity of this peninsula, being separated from it by the narrow passage called Geographe Strait. Proceeding southward from Tasman's Peninsula, the two large islands called North and South Bruni are found lying to the east of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. These two islands, which are joined by a narrow sand spit, contain an area of 90,000 acres. Opposite South Bruni is the estuary of the Huon River. The channel is here bordered by numbers of beautiful bays with well-wooded slopes. Between the South-East and South-West Capes there are several small islands and reefs requiring very skilful navigation. From the South-West Cape the coast trends northward again, and after passing Hilliard Head the fine harbour of Port Davey opens out. Thence the most conspicuous headlands are Rocky Point, Point Hibbs, and Cape Sorell; the latter standing at the entrance to the splendid expanse of water known as Macquarie Harbour. Northward of this inlet the most prominent headlands are—Sandy Cape, Bluff Point, and Cape Grim. Opposite the western apex of the State are situated Hunter's Island, the Three Hummocks Islands, and Robbin's Island. Circular Head is one of the most remarkable projections on the northern coast. It consists of a narrow peninsula running out from the mainland for a distance of about six miles, and terminating in a rocky bluff about 400 feet high. This point is a prominent landmark for vessels sailing from Victoria to Tasmania. Amongst the chief indentations on the north coast are Port Frederick, Port Sorell, and Port Dalrymple, the latter receiving the drainage of the Tamar River on which is situated the town of Launceston. There are several islands off the eastern apex of the state, the most important being Clarke Island, Cape Barren Island, and Flinders Island. The last mentioned is the largest island dependency of the State, and contains an area of 513,000 acres.

GENERAL PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS.

It is believed that Tasmania originally constituted a southward prolongation of the mainland of Australia, and the continuation of the Great Dividing Range, lying near the eastern seaboard of the continent may be traced through the Furneaux and Kent's group across to the island state. From the central range, traversing the country from north-west to south, various lateral spurs diverge, further ramifications from which branch away in all directions. The centre of the island is occupied by an extensive plateau, with an elevation on the northern side, of between three and four thousand feet above the level of the sea. This table-land district extends from Dry's Bluff in the north-west to the Denison Range in the south-west, and although it recedes here and there at the sources of the chief rivers, presents a precipitous slope to the north, west, and east. Several fine fresh water lakes are situated on the comparatively level

stretches on the summit, and these in some instances act as feeders to the streams which reach the coast. The plateau determines the northern, western, and southern drainage slopes of the island and maintains its general elevation from Dry's Bluff at an altitude of 4,257 feet on the north to Cradle Mountain, 5,069 feet in the north-west, a distance of nearly 50 miles; from the Bluff south-west to the Denison Range, for over 60 miles; and from the same point in a southerly direction to Table Mountain, 3,596 feet, a distance of about 43 miles. Below this central plateau there is a second table-land region at a lower elevation, maintaining an altitude of between 1,200 and 2,000 feet. This division stretches westward, including the Middlesex Plains, the Hampshire Hills, and the Emu Plains, and its limits follow the coast line more or less closely, the space between it and the ocean in some localities widening out into low lying expanses raised very little above sea level. At intervals, rising abruptly from this region, various isolated peaks are to be seen, the chief being Mount Bischoff, 2,598 feet, Valentine's Peak, 3,637 feet, Mount Tor, and Mount Pearse, 3,800 feet. In addition there are, round the coast, ridges and plateaus more or less elevated such as Ben Lomond on the north-east, 5,010 feet, Mount Wellington, near Hobart, 4,166 feet, and the Frenchman's Cap, near Macquarie Harbour, 4,756 feet. It has been principally among the plains and lower levels of the North-western, Midland, and Southern portions of the island that settlement has taken place, chiefly in the geological areas of Tertiary and Mesozoic age. Here, in the recent Tertiary period, the soil of the plains and valleys has been enriched by extensive outbursts of basalt with accompanying tuffs. There is evidence to show that these basaltic sheets, which cover large areas in the Midland, North-western, and North-eastern districts, are invariably associated with the ancient Tertiary lake systems. It is from these volcanic rocks that the rich chocolate soils have been produced, and but for their agency a large portion of what is now the most fertile area of the State would have been comparatively poor or perhaps hopelessly barren.

Tasmania is well supplied with rivers, some of them of considerable volume, flowing through fine scenery and magnificent forests, and in some instances adorned with picturesque waterfalls. The largest is the Derwent, which rises in the central plateau, and enters the sea at Storm Bay. In the lower portion of its course, the river widens out into a magnificent estuary on which the capital city, Hobart, is situated. The Derwent receives numerous tributaries, of which the chief are the Nive, Dee, Ouse, Clyde, and Jordan from the north, and the Florentine, Russell, Styx, and Plenty from the south. The Huon issues from Lake Edgar, and after flowing through a heavily-timbered, rich, fruit-growing district, debouches into the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. The Coal River takes its rise in the eastern mountains and falls into the sea at Pittwater, near Hobart. On the north, the Tamar flows into Bass Strait, and after passing Launceston forms a fine estuary with excellent

facilities for navigation. The river is formed by the confluence of the North and South Esk at the city, and is fed by numerous tributaries higher up. The Mersey, on which the town of Latrobe is situated, enters the sea at Port Frederick. On the west and south-west the following streams flow into Macquarie Harbour :—The Gordon, which emerges from Lake Richmond, and receives in its course the Wedge, Denison, Serpentine, and Franklin, and the King River, with its affluents the Queen and the Eldon. In the north-west are the Pieman and Arthur rivers. On the east, the watershed approaches very close to the shore and there are no streams of any great importance. Two short rivers, the Swan and the Swanport, discharge into Oyster Bay.

Several large freshwater lakes are situated on the central table-land. Of these the most extensive are the Great Lake, 13 miles long by a maximum width of 8 miles, and with an area of 28,000 acres ; Lakes Sorell and Crescent, 17,000 acres ; Lake St. Clair, 10,000 acres ; and Lakes Arthur and Echo, each about 8,000 acres. These lakes serve as natural reservoirs for the supply of numerous rivers flowing chiefly to the southward. Most of them are very deep and owe their origin to the same causes which have produced the beautiful lakes of Scotland and Wales. In addition to those mentioned there are numerous lagoons and mountain tarns.