

yards of this place, and it was here that Major Mitchell encamped when he was employed in laying down his plans for the construction of it across the whole range. This road will compare advantageously with almost any work of the kind in any country; and this and other public improvements are frequently adduced as the benefits conferred upon the colony by convict labour. There can be but little doubt that the colonial government has many facilities to carry forward improvements, but I very much question, if all things were taken into the calculation, that it would be found to result in so great a difference as is generally supposed.

After leaving the mountains, the road leads for several miles through an undulating country, covered with an open forest of stunted gum trees, and then comes in sight of the plains of Bathurst. These are of moderate extent, being little more than the valley through which the river Macquarie finds a channel. In the month of December there was no flowing stream, and the river, which at some seasons is a broad and powerful current, consisted merely of a string of pools.

The appearance of the town of Bathurst disappoints. It consists of a few hundred houses, scattered in detached groups over the plain. The absence of trees and cultivation serves to increase the want of interest in the landscape. The town-plot was first laid out on the eastern side of the river, but after several houses had been erected, it was removed to the opposite bank, a circumstance which accounts for the dispersed appearance of the village. Most of the wealthy inhabitants have their dwellings two or three miles removed from the town, among the low hills in the neighbourhood; from which circumstance, the importance of the place and the extent of the settlement is not at first apparent.

The low bottom-land in which Bathurst stands is believed from various indications to have been at no distant period a lake. At the time of its discovery it was little better than a marsh, and the Macquarie was flowing in a deep and strong current nearly on a level with its banks, and was navigable for large boats. The plain was covered with long prairie grass, which led to the belief that it was of inexhaustible fertility; but the general opinion of the intelligent residents is, that for the last twenty years the country west of the Blue Mountains has been gradually drying up. Lakes which, when first discovered, were extensive sheets of water, deep enough to float a seventy-four, are now inconsiderable ponds; swamps have been converted into dry pasture-lands; and there is hardly a river which now continues running throughout the year. It is remarkable, that in these lakes and ponds, which have become dry, there are found the stumps