

XXXI

AUSTRALASIA

“The destiny of modern democracies is foreshadowed in the history of democracy amongst the ancients. It is the struggle of the rich and poor which destroyed them as it will destroy us, unless we take warning!”—LAVELEYE ON “Primitive Property,” Vol. V.

Indifference of the Mother Country to this Colony—Startling Advances in Material Wealth and Political Experiment

A GEOGRAPHICAL globe and half a dozen statistical figures tell us a tale of Anglo-Saxon expansion which is marvellous to-day, and still more wonderful for its possibilities. Australia is not only the largest island of the world, but a continent containing as many square miles as the United States (3,000,000), and a larger population of English-speaking white people than was contained in the United States of America when they separated from the mother country in 1783. On the North American continent are French in Canada and Louisiana, and Spanish-speaking Mexicans across the Rio Grande. Throughout Australia, including Tasmania and New Zealand, we have to-day a completely homogeneous population of Anglo-Saxons governing themselves successfully, and, moreover, showing not merely the capacity to look after their own affairs, but in case of need to despatch troops in defence of the mother country, as in the late

AUSTRALASIA

South African War. As we in America celebrate July 4, 1776, so in Australia July 9, 1900, is the date held to be of supreme national interest, as the one on which was finally consummated the federation of the different colonies, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia, and the Island of Tasmania. New Zealand, for our purposes, may be loosely regarded as part of Australia—the same language, race, and customs—but being 1,200 miles away from the main island, it has not been yet found convenient to regard it as part of the Australian Federation. In this respect it recalls somewhat the early relations of Barbados to Virginia. Both colonies represented local self-government and common Anglo-Saxon aspirations, but the distance between them made co-operation practically impossible in 1776. When I first sighted the Australian coast (1876), that portion of the globe was regarded as something quite outside of the great current of human interest. The islands of the neighborhood were treated as a species of No Man's land, merchantmen went armed when cruising in the neighborhood, and the interior of the great continent was depicted as a wilderness—to be compared with the so-called Great American Desert, which the American school-boy of that time has since learned to conquer and cultivate.

Australia to-day has but 3,500,000 people—to 3,000,000 square miles. When she shall be populated to the present density of the mother country, her population will be 1,500,000,000—figures that convey little, merely because they are so enormous. North America is still a land of the future, for what are sev-

THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

enty-five or eighty millions to an area like that of North America? But recent events in the Pacific call our attention to the fact that west of the American continent is a world whose future is no less interesting, for it is to-day, with South Africa, one of the great links binding together the English-speaking empire throughout the world.

Nor is it merely the 7,000 miles of Australian coastline which makes that island important. Far more interesting from the colonial point of view is the political influence which such a mass of energetic white colonists is bound to exert upon the countless islands of Polynesia, that great South Sea wilderness reaching from New Sidney to San Francisco!

A striking illustration of Australia's new position in the eastern world is the fact that her people vigorously interfered when there was a prospect of Germany's controlling the neighboring island of New Guinea, or of France's founding a penal colony at her gates. England took little interest in the matter, for she attached slight commercial importance then to that huge island. But Australia looked at the matter with sentimental, if not commercial, eyes, and finally, upon promising to pay £15,000 annually for ten years, succeeded (November, 1884) in coaxing a reluctant mother country to hoist the British flag upon that portion of New Guinea which had not yet been taken by Holland and Germany. That was at a time when Bismarck was inaugurating his colonial policy by running up the German flag wherever a vacancy could be found. New Guinea bears about the same relation to Australia that Cuba does to the United States, and

AUSTRALASIA

Australians have already formulated something of a silent "Monroe doctrine," whose purport is that in any future scheme of colonization in her neighborhood Europe will have to deal directly, not with Westminster, but with the Government of Federated Colonies, whose capital is to be in New South Wales.

Australasia is another instance of a colony growing strong through the wholesome neglect of the mother country. Even after Captain Cook's landing, in 1770, England would not take the trouble of hoisting her flag there. She finally did so in consequence of the American War of Independence, for she needed a place to which she might deport those of her people who had made themselves obnoxious to the law at home. Prior to 1776 such as these were sent to the Southern States of the United States, where they were welcomed as farm apprentices or indentured servants. At that time men were sent to jail for being in debt and for many crimes which to-day would be passed over very lightly. Hundreds of white men therefore left their native land in convict-ships, who subsequently proved valuable colonists in a new world.

But aside from sending out convicts (from 1788 down to the middle of the nineteenth century), England took little interest in this far-away possession; and when finally the discovery of gold brought a rush of free and enterprising settlers from all parts of the world, and when the white population commenced to clamor for local self-government, the mother country made no objections—being rather pleased than otherwise with a good excuse for being rid of heavy responsibility.

THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

Australia is a very recent thing compared with America. New South Wales and Victoria established responsible government in 1850, New Zealand in 1852, Tasmania in 1858, South Australia in 1856, Queensland in 1857, and Western Australia not until 1890.

The Australian has more in common with the American than with the Englishman; I might go a step further and say that all colonials of British ancestry resemble one another more than they do the people of the mother country. I venture to think that in a gathering of Canadians, Africanders, Australians, Americans, and Englishmen, the man from the home country would be the least understood. Australians have developed a manner at once blunt and business-like—a manner springing from daily contact with real things, and not conventional symbols. An Australian can often be taken for a Yankee—never for a Londoner.

The present constitution of Federated Australia is more American than English, though it is the work of practical men seeking for a good working machine and not given to declamatory assertions regarding the abstract rights of man.

Under this new constitution the individual States reserve to themselves all rights not specifically surrendered; in this respect following the example of the United States. In Canada this rule is reversed. The Australian Federal Government assumes all that the United States Central Government does, and much more—for instance, marriage, and the settlement of industrial disputes. Railways throughout Australia

AUSTRALASIA

are mainly the property of the different States, and it is anticipated that the Federal Government will in time control interstate lines requiring more capital than a single State could afford.* The State is to run not only the postal, but the telephone and telegraph systems; and to a large extent do the work now monopolized by express companies in America. So far, the State ownership of railways has, neither in Australia nor South Africa, been followed by the harm that we of America anticipated. On the contrary, the public have benefited to a highly satisfactory degree. It is worth noting that the experiment of nationalizing railways, which at one time seemed to be a peculiarity of military monarchies like Germany and Russia, has found its most enthusiastic defenders in ultra-democratic communities like New Zealand and Australia.

Federated Australia has followed the lead of the United States in providing not only a House of Representatives elected on a basis of proportional population, but a Senate to which each State sends an equal number of members, irrespective of its size or population. But each Australian State sends six senators, whereas in America only two are allowed to each State. This was done in order to protect the smaller States from possible domination by those of larger population, for while Western Australia has 970,000, Tasmania has only 26,000. So far as the right to

* The first railway in Argentine was opened in 1857. At the end of 1898 there was a little over 10,000 miles of track in operation.

Brazil has nearly 10,000 miles of railway.

Japan in 1900 had 3,635 miles of railway. Australia operates more miles of railway to-day than any State of South America.

THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

vote is concerned, Australia has practical manhood suffrage—only criminals and lunatics are excluded, and the Upper House, or Senate, is elected about the same as the Lower House, so that there is in the Australian constitution no such restraining influence as the House of Lords in England or even the indirectly restraining influence that exists in America, where the Senate is elected by the legislatures of the different States.

Members of both Houses are paid alike, £400 a year, and are also entitled to free passage over the State railways. This is a better arrangement than with us, where the railways grant passes as a favor to those who are called upon to make laws. Such a favor comes perilously near to being a bribe. I have known American members of legislative bodies who uniformly purchased their own railway tickets, but not many. The functions of Upper and Lower House in United Australia are so nearly identical that an American is inclined to wonder why one was not regarded as sufficient. Time may permit the Australian Upper House to arrogate to itself powers not at present specified; to-day the Australian Senate appears to have been created simply in order to give each of the five colonies the appearance of equality. As, however, the five States together return only thirty Senators, we may safely anticipate a superior degree of dignity in the deliberations of that body. In case of deadlock there can be a joint meeting of both Houses, when an absolute majority must prevail.

The American Supreme Court has been reproduced in Australia for cases affecting the interpretation of

- AUSTRALASIA

the Constitution, and for quarrels between States. This Supreme Court can permit cases to be referred to the London Privy Council, but the colonies have jealously provided that it shall be practically within their own right to carry a case to London or dispose of it at home.

King Edward VII. figures as the nominal head of the United States of Australia, and his Governor nominally directs affairs, but practically the colony is as independent of home-country interference as Canada—or Cape Colony. The Boer War did much to create that warm feeling between Australia and the mother country which culminated in federation; and the example set by Australia will no doubt do much to encourage South Africa in her turn to attempt federation as a cure for her present state of strained relations between her several States. If federation achieved nothing more than Free Trade between the States, that alone would be worth heavy sacrifices.

The Federation of Australia was long in coming—fortunately it was not accompanied by bloodshed—though much bitterness had to be overcome before all could unite on a few vital points. Of course the question of custom houses roused much ill-feeling, for all those who believed in free commercial intercourse with the outside world felt that they would suffer severely when a tariff-wall should have been reared around them, forcing them to pay highly for domestic articles after having been accustomed to the cheap and excellent things hitherto imported free of duty. Our Louisiana and Virginia States felt thus when the manufacturing interests of Massachusetts

THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

and Pennsylvania placed import duties on articles needed by planters—this matter alone did much to prepare southern public opinion for secession in 1860.

Australian Federation took its rise in the first jubilee of Queen Victoria (1887). Englishmen who travelled commenced to popularize the notion that the various colonies of Englishmen scattered throughout the world were more than mere isolated subjects, that they formed the basis of an empire of which the English Sovereign should be the titular head.

George Parkin, now Principal of the Upper College in Toronto, was one of the pioneers in this great movement—a movement that was strengthened by the largely increasing stream of colonial families that returned to England for a holiday and the education of their children. In 1889 General Sir Edward Bevan Edwards visited Australia with a view to reporting to the British Government on the question of Colonial Defence, and naturally he advocated an Australian Union of States. Sir Harry Parkes, an eminent diplomat and clear-headed patriot, whose services in China entitle him to grateful recognition by Americans, took advantage of this visit to call a council of Australasian Prime Ministers, who met in 1890, cordially endorsed the notion of federation, and called upon all the States to send delegates in the year following to a congress that should discuss this subject.

All the States sent delegates, including New Zealand. Sir Henry Parkes presided, and after many weeks' deliberation, a bill was drafted which has formed the basis of all subsequent legislation on this subject.

AUSTRALASIA

This congress (1891) did excellent work, but it failed to excite great popular enthusiasm, because its members were not the result of direct popular election—and public sentiment was not yet sufficiently educated on the subject.

The matter was once more taken up in earnest in 1895. A meeting of Premiers was held in Tasmania, and here it was determined to hold a convention of delegates elected by direct popular vote. This convention met in 1897, the year of Queen Victoria's second jubilee. The central feature of this great jubilee was a festive procession in London, which included representatives from every British colony, and gave the world an object-lesson of Anglo-Saxon unity and power.

Finally, by the close of 1899, in the midst of the South African War, the last difficulties were overcome, and on July 9, 1900, United Australia took her place not merely as one of the great colonies of England, but as the mightiest centre of Anglo-Saxon energy in the Far East. No other nation has such a base for future operations in the South Pacific as Australia. French, Dutch, and Germans may have coaling stations and Crown colonies in those latitudes—the Anglo-Saxon has here a nursery of his own flesh and blood which is growing stronger every day, and as it grows, relieves the mother country of much expense connected with maintaining commerce beyond Suez.

In the event of a future European war in which England might require the whole of her fleet at home, it will be found that Australia will prove herself equal not only to protecting her own shores, but also to

THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

equipping a navy that will protect Hong-Kong, Singapore, and other exposed stations. At any rate, little England of the Northern Hemisphere may draw comfort from the thought that, so far as the Southern Pacific is concerned, her big children are quite ready to accept the responsibility of maintaining themselves in that part of the world, without calling upon the mother country for more than benevolent neutrality.

New Zealand is a small thing compared with Australia, yet it is as large as all England and Scotland and Wales, with half of Ireland thrown in. It stretches over a thousand miles from north to south, and while it is 1,200 miles from the continent of Australia, it is nearly 5,000 miles from the nearest port in South America, with nothing between but the lonesome Pacific. This favored island has a magnificent temperate climate; and pretty much everything required by the white man is here grown in abundance. It was only in the reign of Queen Victoria that New Zealand was reluctantly incorporated by the British Empire—indeed it is a curious commentary on human fallibility that, while fleet upon fleet has been destroyed in struggles over wretched little islets in the waters of the Caribbean Sea, the vast territories in the Southern Hemisphere, notably Australasia and South Africa, should have been, throughout the earlier years of the 19th century, treated as not worth annexing. There is very good reason to think that the extraordinary alacrity with which England accorded complete autonomy to her children in the Southern Hemisphere arose largely from indifference to their existence—possibly from a desire to be rid of them as cheaply as

AUSTRALASIA

possible. In 1850 few people dreamed that Germans would colonize Shantung, Russians fortify Port Arthur, or that war-ships would be built in California.

New Zealand to-day offers a picture of state socialism carried further than in any other democratic community. The railways are in the hands of the State, as elsewhere in Australasia; but in addition to that the Government has practically undertaken to control the relations between capital and labor.

New Zealand boldly decrees eight hours as the length of a day's work, pensions every workingman in his old age, furnishes a seat for the shop-girl, and in many other respects steps in between the employer and employé in a manner suggesting fatherly, if not socialistic, legislation. This colony is determined that there shall be no strikes or lock-outs, and, therefore, when disputes arise between employers and employees, arbitration is made compulsory. Under such a system, where all political power is created by the laboring man, tribunals are apt to be in his interest; yet there are many earnest writers in that colony who are not discouraged by their experience in this matter. Those of us who have followed the course of gigantic strikes in the United States during the last quarter of a century, must concede that any arrangement that could free us from the present uncertainty on this vexed subject would contain enough of blessing to make us readily put up with much discomfort.

Already in 1890, according to the official reports of the agent for New Zealand in London, the State was the largest receiver of rents and the largest em-

THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

ployer of labor in the colony. It owned nearly all the telegraphs, railways, and telephones in the country. It controlled and supported the hospitals and lunatic asylums, and virtually dispensed all the public charity throughout the colony. Its officials did all the law business connected with the transfer of land, a branch of work which enriches many London and New York lawyers. Australia has set a shining example to the rest of the Anglo-Saxon world in facilitating land transfer by means of a very simple and inexpensive system of land registration. New Zealand has also sought to limit the evils springing from the monopoly of the soil, and therefore grants leases for terms of nine hundred and ninety-nine years, taking in return an amount of interest (four per cent.) which, while it does not wholly absorb the unearned increment, yet makes it unlikely that any person would hold land without making use of it.

This colony also takes charge of estates, as trustees—and may be named as executor. In other words, the State regards itself as the head of a family. We that have been reared in the hard school of Cobden and Adam Smith, stand by complacently while the weak go to the wall and the masters of finance grasp the reins of power. New Zealand declares that such a state of society is undesirable, and that for their part they mean to experiment in hopes of finding something better. We are pretty well agreed that Henry George made a masterly analysis of modern society in his "Progress and Poverty"—but it is not yet understood to what extent his remedy can be applied with success. At any rate, the experiment of New Zea-

AUSTRALASIA

land deserves close attention—whatever may be its result.

Of course education in New Zealand, as throughout Australasia, is free and compulsory.

Large estates are discouraged by a graduated income tax, which rests lightly upon the man of small means, but takes a great deal out of the rich ones. The influence of Henry George is seen in a law of New Zealand which exempts improvements and buildings on a farm, and taxes solely the land itself. Small farmers are altogether exempt. Land worth £5,000 is taxed one penny in the pound on the capital value. The tax rises with the value, culminating at three pence in the pound on land of £210,000, or more, value. Everyone votes in New Zealand, women as well as men.

We must not think of our New Zealand State Socialists as we do of those in France and Germany, who deal almost exclusively with theories so blended with truth that the practical politician has difficulty in using them. The New Zealander is a practical Englishman, who deliberately undertakes experiments on new soil and under favorable conditions which it would be almost revolutionary to attempt in England or any other old country where men are bound down by social prejudice and tradition. Even in America, men who advocate such reforms as New Zealand is now enjoying are pronounced to be cranks.

It is interesting to note that, with insignificant exceptions, all the communities of white men south of the Equator are either republics in name or enjoy practical self-government. Of these communities

THE CHILDREN OF THE NATIONS

South America furnishes the earliest settlements, and also a priority as regards the time when most of them cast off the yoke of Spain and declared themselves independent. Brazil was the last to become a republic in name, though in fact she has throughout this century enjoyed a fairly liberal constitutional rule. British Guiana has enjoyed much local liberty, though in dealing with so vast a territory as South America we can afford to ignore the three Guianas entirely, even were they in the Southern Hemisphere.

The two South African Republics were created at about the same time that the various States of Australia were granted Responsible Government, and the English colonies of the Cape and Natal have enjoyed virtual Home Rule even when ostensibly they figured as mere Crown colonies. South Africa, Australia, and South America are now dominated by the white man. In each of these continents the natives are being exterminated. In Australia there are about 50,000 left, in Africa even the negro cannot hold his own against the imported laborer from Bombay; and as for South America, if we limit ourselves to Chili, Peru, and the adjacent territory, we may safely regard the day of the native as having passed, and the day of the white man, or at least the Chinaman, as having arrived. South America, however, is handicapped in having behind her centuries of clerical misrule, and a population largely made up of negro elements. The white man of South Africa and Australia has been wiser in this respect, and has not sought to multiply at the expense of his racial purity. Australia is the youngest of these great communities of the Southern Hemi-

AUSTRALASIA

sphere, she is the most homogeneous, the most enlightened, the least hampered by tradition, the most ready to adopt new ideas and experiment with new theories. It is not surprising, therefore, that she should in the past fifty years have pushed ahead more rapidly than South Africa, to say nothing of the Argentine and Chili. She furnishes us one of the few examples in history of a great agglomeration of States uniting into one organic whole through the mere force of common-sense unaided by fear of a common enemy. We may live to see the United States of South America, as well as the United States of South Africa—when that time comes, Australia may have occasion to fear for her supremacy in the Southern Hemisphere—but not before.