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IS AUSTRALIA TO BE AMERICANISED?

BY MR. HENRY GEORGE.

Mr. Henry George begins a series of articles in the *Cosmopolitan* for January upon his impressions of Australia, which are very interesting, as the following extracts are sufficient to indicate:—

ENGLISH AS YET—

The Australian people are, as might be expected, more English in their habits and customs than the Americans, as is shown by many little indications. They have no Sunday papers, and do not want to have any. They are hardly Sabbatarians, yet they are tender of running Sunday trains; and between Melbourne and Adelaide there is only railway communication five days in the week, since even starting on Saturday would involve Sunday running in one colony or the other. Their bars are all tended by women, and their hotels kept in the older English style,

kept in the older English style, and (notably in the smaller towns) are wonderfully good. They know nothing of the domestic uses of ice, and have the English idea that it is unwholesome; have but a faint knowledge of ice cream, and none of soda-water fountains, and drink tea to the exclusion of coffee. They speak of luggage rather than of baggage; what we call a drug store they call a chemist's shop; and what we know as candies they call sweets or lollies. They estimate their weight by stones, and in this connection do not understand pounds. They drink the strong British beer or the still stronger colonial, even in the tropics, and lager beer is only just being introduced as one of the results of the Melbourne Exhibition some years ago coming from St. Louis or San Francisco, and in bottles. As in England, the pipe is smoked rather than the cigar. The furniture of their houses and the arrangement of it is English, and a bedroom window must always be blocked up by a drawing table. Their diet has the English monotony. Nor do I think that the Australians talk through their noses.

—BUT BECOMING AMERICAN.

But such things are of the surface. And in spite of the retention of English ways and habits it seems to me that the Australian type that is developing is nearer to the American than the British. The new country, the fresher, freer life, the better diffusion of wealth, are telling in the same way on the offshoot that has taken root in Australia as on the offshot that took root here. There is, I think, in the people, and especially in the native born, evidences of the same inventiveness, the same self-reliance and push, the same independence, the same quickness of thought and movement, the same self-satisfaction and spread-eagleness as are supposed to be characteristic of our own. They are even more prone than the Americans to the invention and

naturalisation of new words and phrases. The quickness of the people, the newness of the country, and the mobility of the governments make political changes and legislative experiments comparatively easy.

DISUNITED AUSTRALIA.

The Australian states are only nominally colonies. They are in reality, in all things of practical importance, except perhaps the matter of legal appeals to the Privy Council, which could easily be got rid of, self-governing republics, for the system of responsible ministries leaves to the governors appointed to each colony little but social and advisory functions. The colonies are, moreover, absolutely independent of each other. The American realises what the greatest blessing of our Union really is when, on passing from one Australian colony to another, he finds that his luggage is liable to examination. In addition to this there is the difference in railway gauges. The New South Wales roads have the standard gauge of England and America, 4 feet inches. The Queensland system, with which they connect on the north, has the narrow gauge of 3 feet 6 inches. The Victorian system, with which they connect on the south, has the Irish gauge of 5 feet 3 inches. From Adelaide the South Australian system makes connection with the Victorian system with a 5 foot 3 inch gauge, but a little distance to the north of Adelaide South Australia breaks her own gauge and resorts to the 3 foot 6 inch, so that her roads cannot connect with the New South Wales system, which ere long will be pushed west to the South Australian line. And in the colonies there are many little indications of that spirit which, if suffered to grow and intensify, may give justification to the adage that peoples separated by creeks may more utterly hate each other than those separated by oceans.

AWAITING ANNEXATION.

With the political connection with Great Britain, which under present conditions combines security with freedom, there is no restiveness. Neither do I think there is any loyalty more than skin-deep. Imperial federation, such as is talked about in Great Britain, has no hold in the colonies. In fact, the tariff legislation, in which Great Britain is treated as any other foreign country, is a more substantial declaration of independence than any mere formal separation could be.

In truth, though I doubt if it is fully understood in Great Britain, the Australian feeling toward the mother country is no more filial and involves no more loyalty than does the feeling of the people of our newer states toward the older states.

As for the feeling toward the United States it is fully as good and as warm as we deserve. I am inclined to think that the Australians would be quick to respond to any proposition from us for reciprocity. We could virtually annex Australia as we could virtually annex Canada and Great Britain, by the simple process of abolishing our tariff and raising our revenues by means not in themselves corruptive and impoverishing.