

THE TRADE FEATURES OF THE GREAT COMMERCIAL NATIONS

X. THE TRADE FEATURES OF AUSTRALIA

AUSTRALIA AND AUSTRALASIA

THE term AUSTRALASIA, as now generally used, comprises Australia (including Tasmania) and New Zealand, and a number of small neighbouring islands. So used it practically denotes a British possession; for such islands as are comprised by the term and yet do not belong to Great Britain are comparatively unimportant. But when we speak of Australasia, we are generally thinking of AUSTRALIA, for Australia is so large and important that it seems to overshadow the other parts of Australasia. But in respect to politics or commerce Australia is not one country; it is divided into several self-governing colonies. These are, in order of importance, Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia, Queensland, and West Australia. But a movement is now being made to unite all these colonies, and Tasmania as well, into one "Australian Confederation," just as the several provinces of Canada, which were once independent colonies, have been united into one "Dominion of Canada." This confederation scheme, however, has not yet been accomplished.¹

¹ Since the above was written the scheme has been developed a very considerable way toward completion. The name of the confederation is to be "The Commonwealth of Australia."

New Zealand, because of its distance (1200 miles) from Australia, has so far shown no desire to enter into this confederation.

THE AREA AND CLIMATE OF AUSTRALIA

Australia is a continent not only in name but in fact. Its area, including Tasmania, is almost 3,000,000 square miles, which is about the area of the United States exclusive of Alaska, and only about one fourth less than the area of the continent of Europe. Fully two fifths of this area lie within the torrid zone, and of the rest, even in Victoria, the part farthest from the equator, the climate is so warm that it corresponds with that of Spain, southern France, and Italy. But over so vast a territory great differences of climate must occur, and consequently of products also. A general description of the climate and products of Australia is therefore impossible. Yet there are several characteristics which appertain to the whole continent. The chief of these are (1) the great DRYNESS of the ATMOSPHERE—not merely its lack of rain, but its absolute freedom from moisture; (2) the remarkable INEQUALITY, or want of regularity, in the RAINFALL. Occasionally the rainfall is excessive, but a more frequent and serious cause of trouble is excessive drought. The continent on every side has a low coast region, where the rainfall is heavier and the temperature generally hotter than in the corresponding table-land interior to it. But the vast table-land of the interior has comparatively little rain, and indeed in some parts of it, especially in the centre and west, the rainfall is so slight that the country is practically a desert.

But even when all the desert areas of Australia are excluded from calculation there still remains in the interior plateau, toward the east and south, an immense area

of country of great fertility and productiveness. The Murray River alone drains an area of 500,000 square miles, one sixth of the whole continent, a great part of which is of exceeding richness. In these fertile parts irrigation by artesian wells has been tried, and always with great success. And it is thought that almost the whole continent can be regained for agriculture, or at least for sheep-pasturing, by similar means; for even in the arid and so-called desert parts of the interior, there is very little soil that is not really fertile, for all of it is covered with thick brushwood. Moisture alone is needed to make it bear crops abundantly. And this dryness of the atmosphere which prevails throughout the whole continent is not without its compensations. It renders the climate exceedingly healthful.

AUSTRALIA A CONTINENT OF PECULIARITIES

Australia has MANY PECULIARITIES. It has only one large river, and even that in summer becomes a series of isolated pools. It has no high mountain range, its principal mountains being only a series of ramparts marking off the lower coast lands from the interior plateau. Again, its native quadrupeds are entirely different from those of other continents, being almost all, whether little or big, "marsupials," or "pouch-bearers," like the kangaroo. Its birds are mostly songless. Its flowers, for the most part, have no scent. Its trees are leaved vertically and cast no shade. Its indigenous inhabitants have made no progress toward civilisation. When Europeans first came to the country they found no native animal that could be put to any use, nor any native fruit, vegetable, or grain that could be utilised for food. Still, all European domestic animals thrive abundantly in the country, and so do all European fruits, grasses, grains, and vege-

tables. The English rabbits, indeed, have become a terrible pest. As many as 25,000,000 of them have been killed in a year without any apparent diminution in their numbers. Over \$1,000,000 a year has at times been spent to exterminate them, all to no effect.

VICTORIA

Victoria, the smallest of the Australian colonies, had until recently the largest population (June, 1897, 1,177,304) and also the largest trade. In both respects, however, it is at present surpassed by New South Wales. Victoria has owed its past pre-eminence to its GOLD PRODUCTION. Gold was discovered in the colony in 1851, and for years the output of the precious mineral was not less than \$50,000,000 per annum. The present output of gold in Victoria, however, is only \$10,000,000 per annum. Richer, however, than the gold-mines of Victoria is the fertility of its soil. A large part of the soil is exceedingly fertile— with irrigation one of the finest fruit-bearing soils in the world. The arboreal vegetation of the country is magnificent. Trees thirty feet in diameter rise to the height of 200 feet without a single lateral branch, and then 100 feet to 200 feet higher still. Pear-trees grow to the height of eighty feet, with trunks three feet in diameter. But as yet wool-growing, wheat-raising, and vine-growing are the principal agricultural occupations of the people. The principal agricultural export is WOOL—\$25,000,000 worth per annum. But a considerable portion of this comes from New South Wales. The SHEEP kept number 15,000,000, the cattle 2,000,000. But the colony still remains principally a mining community. Five ninths of the population live in towns. Yet there are few towns, and two fifths of the whole population live in Melbourne—a city almost exactly as large as Boston.

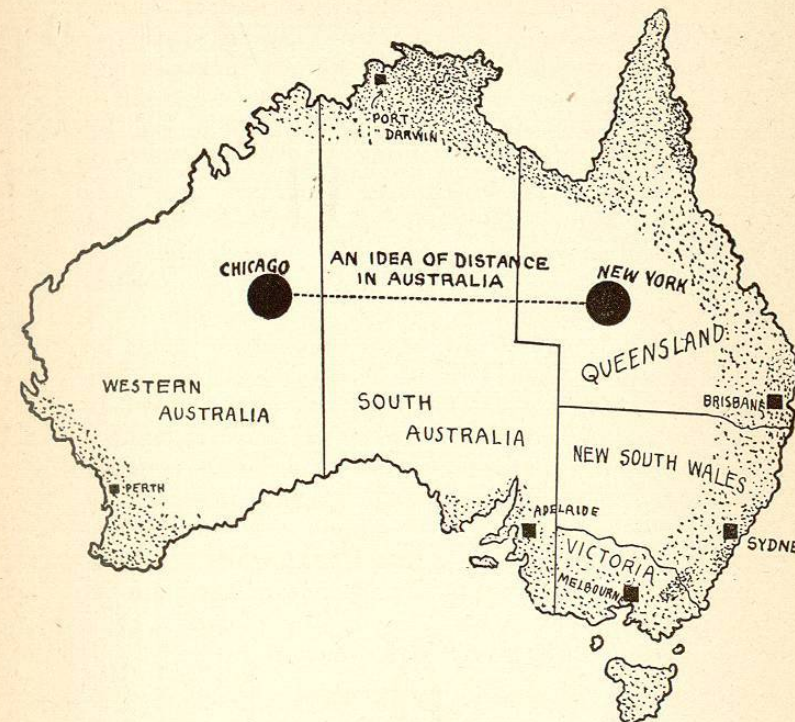
MELBOURNE

MELBOURNE (451,110; with suburbs, 500,000), the capital city of Victoria and the chief city in Australia, is also one of the most beautiful cities in the world. Its parliament buildings, town hall, post-office, treasury, mint, law courts, public libraries, picture galleries, theatres, churches, and clubs are all edifices of architectural magnificence and beauty, while its boulevards, parks and gardens are equally splendid. At one time money flowed freely and great commercial recklessness prevailed. But though Melbourne has sustained several severe depressions its present condition is prosperous and its future is assured. It is, however, a pleasure-loving city, and it is as much on this account as on account of its great beauty that it is called "the Paris of the southern hemisphere." Nowhere else in the world, perhaps, are indoor amusements—the theatre, concerts, etc.—or outdoor amusements—cricket, football, horse-racing, etc.—more devotedly patronised than in Melbourne. Other important places in Victoria are BALLARAT (40,000) and SANDHURST (37,000), both mining towns, and GEELONG (25,000) locally noted for its manufacture of "tweeds."

NEW SOUTH WALES

New South Wales (population 1,311,440) is the oldest colony of Australia and the parent of both Victoria and Queensland. Of all the colonies, it has, perhaps, the greatest range of productions. On the low coast lands its soil is of extraordinary fertility, and even in the dry interior, when irrigation is employed, the fertility is still extraordinary. As yet, however, but one acre out of every two hundred is under cultivation, the chief agricultural

occupation being pasturing. Over 50,000,000 SHEEP are kept, principally the MERINO. Grass grows everywhere, and even the summits of the mountains are covered.



Australia.

Shaded portions show where the rainfall is sufficiently abundant.

Drought, however, is a terrible drawback, and sometimes tremendous losses occur. In 1877 over 8,000,000 sheep perished, and in 1884 over 12,000,000. The total WOOL PRODUCTION is very large, averaging \$50,000,000 a year. The export of hides, skins, leather, and chilled meat, principally mutton, amounts to \$10,000,000 annually.

Chilled mutton and beef are sent direct to London, though the passage takes five or six weeks by steamer and twelve to sixteen weeks by sailing-vessel. Scarcely less important than its agricultural products are the mineral products of New South Wales. Its COAL-MINES are the finest on the continent, and \$4,500,000 worth of coal is exported annually, besides what is consumed locally. Its gold production, though not very large, is general throughout the whole colony. Its SILVER-MINES in SILVERTON and BROKEN HILL are among the most famous in the world, and its tin-bearing lands comprise over 5,500,000 acres. The foregoing comprise the staple products—the production of industries already well established. But fruit-growing, including all fruits, from apples, pears, and peaches, to olives and oranges, is a rapidly developing industry, no country in the world being better suited to it. Wine-making, too, is quickly coming forward, the New South Wales wines equalling in flavour those of France and Spain. Wheat-growing, cotton-growing, and even rice-growing are also in their several districts rapidly extending and prosperous pursuits. The development of New South Wales has only just begun. SYDNEY (including suburbs 410,000) is the capital and by far the largest city. Sydney, like Melbourne, is a beautiful city, but its beauty is natural rather than artificial, and it is well entitled to its name, "Queen of the South." It is situated on Port Jackson, one of the finest and most beautiful harbours on the globe. Sydney is the headquarters of all the various lines of steamships—British, American, French, Italian, etc.—that trade with Australia, and is indeed one of the great seaports of the world.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

South Australia (358,224 in 1897) occupies the whole central part of the continent from north to south. But

as only a very small portion of this vast area is settled—the southeast corner—it may be described as in characteristics resembling Victoria. Its principal industry is WHEAT-GROWING. South Australia is indeed the great granary of the continent, and is destined to be one of the great granaries of the world. Like the other divisions of Australia, South Australia, when once drought has been overcome by irrigation, is destined to become a great fruit country, its warm, moistureless climate being peculiarly well suited to the ripening of fruits of exquisite flavours. Already its olives are pronounced the finest in the world. The principal city and chief port is ADELAIDE (with suburbs 144,352). Like other Australian ports, Adelaide possesses excellent steamboat shipping facilities. In the north, on the Timor Sea, is PORT DARWIN, likely to be an important trade centre.

QUEENSLAND

The most interesting of all the Australian colonies is Queensland (population 472,179), for it is a tropical country with a climate so salubrious that white people can live in it and be comfortable and healthy. The heat, instead of being enervating, is stimulating and bracing. A great portion of its soil is of unsurpassed fertility. The only drawback is the unequal distribution throughout the year of the rainfall. But wherever irrigation wells are sunk the climate becomes highly suitable for SHEEP-RAISING, and also for the growing of many kinds of FRUIT. There are already 15,000,000 sheep and 5,000,000 cattle in the colony, and wool is exported to the amount of \$15,000,000 annually. Other agricultural exports are frozen beef and mutton, and hides and skins. WOOL is the chief export. The second export in importance is GOLD, which reaches \$10,000,000 per annum. Tin is also exported,

and coal, though little worked, is abundant. Developing exports are sugar (\$2,500,000 per annum), arrowroot, cotton, tobacco, rice, and coffee. A difficulty, however, in the development of these products is the labour question. White men cannot work in the plantations. Chinese prefer to work in the mines. The natives won't work anywhere. No negroes are obtainable. As a consequence Polynesians have to be imported. BRISBANE (100,913) is the capital and chief city and port.

WEST AUSTRALIA

West Australia (population 162,394), the largest of all the Australian colonies, has only been recently settled, and its constitution as a self-governing colony dates only from 1890. A large part of its area has never been explored, and a large part is known to be scrub desert. But there is scarcely any part of it, even of its "scrub" areas, but that will support sheep when once artesian wells have been sunk, and large portions of the colony, especially along the coasts, are as fertile as need be. And the climate, though very dry, is exceedingly healthful. PERTH (43,000) is the capital. ALBANY is the principal port.

THE IMMENSE RESOURCES OF AUSTRALIA. ITS PROBABLE FUTURE

Australia is undoubtedly on the eve of a period of great development. Its resources are known to be immense. Its climate has been found most favourable to human health, and the objectionable feature of the climate, the smallness and irregularity of the rainfall, has been studied and become understood and found remediable. Once the confederation that is now in process of formation

takes place, there is no doubt that Australia will enter upon a new and prosperous commercial era. Owing to the fact that its chief opportunities for wealth lie in the development of its natural resources, it is probable that for some time to come almost all the manufactured goods Australia needs will have to be imported. Already its importation amounts to \$275,000,000, of which, of course Great Britain supplies the principal share. This importation is principally clothing and materials for clothing, but it also comprises hardware and machinery, and in fact everything required by a highly civilised and money-spending people, except breadstuffs and provisions. The magnitude of this importation may be comprehended from the fact that it is more than one third of the total exportation of the United States for any year save one up to 1896, including our immense export of breadstuffs, provisions, and cotton. And besides the articles of export already mentioned — WOOL, MEATS, HIDES, SKINS, MINERALS, FRUITS, etc. — there is one other Australian resource that is capable of almost indefinite development. This is its TIMBER. The eucalyptus or gum-tree prevails almost universally in Australia, and some of its commonest varieties, being both strong and indestructible by insects, are of almost unequalled value for ship-building, railway ties, and dock and harbour construction. That the Australians are fully alive to the importance of developing their foreign trade is seen in the efforts they have made to provide facilities for bringing their products to ocean ports. There are 11,980 miles of railway, almost every mile of which has been built by the governments. This is one mile of railway for every 300 inhabitants, as against one mile for every 400 inhabitants in the United States. These railways run wholly to and from the seaboard. There are no manufacturing towns to be catered to. Australian trade consists wholly in

exchanging home-raised natural products for imported manufactures. Equally remarkable with the railroad enterprise of the Australians is their enterprise in telegraphic construction and the establishment of cable communications. For example, a telegraph line 2000 miles long, running across the continent from Adelaide to Port Darwin, has been built by the province of South Australia so as to connect with a cable from Port Darwin to Java, Singapore, etc., and thus with Europe and America. For at least 1500 miles this telegraph line runs through one of the most desolate and inaccessible regions in the world.

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XI. THE TRADE FEATURES OF SOUTH AMERICA

SOUTH AMERICA, A FERTILE CONTINENT WITH DRAWBACKS

SOUTH AMERICA is an immense but very fertile continent, whose natural resources are as yet scarcely begun to be utilised. Though not so large as North America, it has a far greater area of productive soil — and, indeed, much of its soil is quite unsurpassed in fertility. It suffers, however, from two great drawbacks. 1. A great portion of its area (four fifths) lies within the torrid zone. In the low coast regions of this torrid area, and also in the low forest regions watered by the great flat rivers of the interior, the climate is for the most part unendurable to white men. 2. South America has been unfortunate in its settlement and colonisation. Until in recent years colonisation as understood in Anglo-Saxon communities has scarcely been attempted in South America at all. All the earlier immigrations from the Old World were prompted by the thought of getting gold and silver and precious stones — if need were by the spoliation and enslavement of the natives. Only a small proportion of the population — not more than a quarter of the whole — consists of whites, and these are principally from Spain and