# "GOD'S OWN COUNTRY"

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## AN APPRECIATION OF AUSTRALIA

BY

C. E. JACOMB

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TO ALL

ENGLISH PUBLIC SCHOOL

AND UNIVERSITY MEN,

BUT ESPECIALLY TO ALL

HARROVIANS,

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE,

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

# CONTENTS

# "GOD'S OWN COUNTRY"

## AN APPRECIATION OF AUSTRALIA

### CHAPTER I

#### REALLY A PREFACE, BUT TOO INTERESTING TO BE SKIPPED

"IF the French have as great an aversion for travelling as the English have a propensity for it, both English and French have sufficient reason. Something better than England is everywhere to be found; whereas it is excessively difficult to find the charms of France outside France. Other countries can show admirable scenery, and they frequently offer greater comfort than that of France, which makes but slow progress in that particular. They sometimes display a bewildering magnificence, grandeur, and luxury; they lack neither grace nor noble manners: but the life of the brain, the talent for conversation, the 'attic salt' so familiar at Paris, the prompt apprehension of what one is thinking but does not say, the spirit of the unspoken, which is half the French language, is

nowhere else to be met with. Hence, a Frenchman, whose raillery as it is finds so little comprehension, would wither in a foreign land like an uprooted tree.

"Emigration is counter to the instincts of the French nation. Many Frenchmen, of the kind here in question, have owned to pleasure at seeing the Customs House officers of their native land, which may seem the most daring hyperbole of patriotism.

"This preamble is intended to recall to such Frenchmen as have travelled the extreme pleasure they have felt on occasionally finding their native land, like an oasis, in the drawing-room of some diplomat: a pleasure hard to be understood by those who have never left the asphalt of the Boulevard des Italiens, and to whom the Quais of the left bank of the Seine are not really Paris. To find Paris again! Do you know what that means, O Parisians? It is to find—not indeed the cookery of the Rocher de Caucale as Borel elaborates it for those who can appreciate it, for that exists only in the Rue Montorgueil—but a meal which reminds you of it! It is to find the wines of France, which out of France are to be regarded as myths, and as rare as the women of whom I write! It is to find—not the most fashionable pleasantry, for it loses its aroma between Paris and the frontier—but the witty understanding, the critical atmosphere, in which the French live, from the poet down to the artisan, from the Duchess to the boy in the street."

So runs the first paragraph of one of Balzac's novels.

There are Englishmen who once in their lives passed a fortnight of their summer holidays in Paris. They visited the " Bon Marché " and the Madeleine, glanced hurriedly at the Louvres Statuary, and walked through the Jardins d'Acclimatation, and possibly wound up with a very bad and very expensive supper at " Maxims." The "Champ Elysées," "Les Invalides," and the "Café Americaine " are names that they have learned to mispronounce, and for the rest of their lives they ride in " fiacres " instead of cabs. Talking of this little jaunt is a perennial source of enjoyment to them. They are superior to their acquaintances who always go down to Bournemouth. In their mind's eye they are gay, wicked Parisians; and in always referring to "Paree" as an old and cherished haunt, they imagine themselves to be possessed of a remarkable and exclusive " chic." In truth, they are very entertaining. These gentlemen will undoubtedly agree with Balzac's remarks.

The majority of English readers, however, will consider him unnecessarily severe, and that his aspersions on the charms of England must be put down to a manifestation of ignorance or " jingo " patriotism. Indeed, such a frank expression of opinion is sufficient to label him " Anglophobe " for all time. A similar passage, however, penned by an English author, comparing London favourably with some other capital, is tacitly agreed with;

and to be dubbed "insular," with a sympathetic smile, and a shrug of the shoulders, is the worst penalty the author suffers.

Be this as it may, Balzac's paragraph hints at two profound truths. They are these. First, the existence of an innate dissatisfaction of many Englishmen with England, or, in other words, a deep spirit of unrest that craves for change: emotions which irresistibly impel them to leave England, and start life anew in strange distant countries. Second, the habit of every man of every nation to assert, in the teeth of criticism, the superiority of his particular country and compatriots over the countries and citizens of every other nation. This habit is miscalled "Patriotism."

The former of these truths is an eccentricity far more fully developed in Englishmen than in any other race, and for this reason,—a migrating Englishman can find a home in one of the British colonies without changing his nationality. He is under the same flag, speaks (more or less) the same language, and (with variations) is governed by the same basic laws; but, above all, he is still in "the Empire." Thus, it is an infinitely lesser wrench for him to emigrate than for other Europeans who have not such a world-wide choice of venue, and who are for the most part compelled to sink their nationality before being on an equal footing with their fellow-colonists.

The latter truth is more important for the present consideration, inasmuch as a fervid patriot of any

nation under the influence of his own overwhelming admiration, can, and often does, give to a stranger idealistic and entirely misleading pictures of his native land. This he achieves by unconsciously suppressing disagreeable traits—traits that are not particularly disagreeable to him,—and exaggerating the good qualities,—qualities that are to him unique. All this he does with absolute *bona fides*. His colossal belief in the truth of the claims he presents leads him into the common error that "assertion is proof." In fact, the praise of his country becomes with him a monomania, and for the stranger to venture on any criticism is a sign of great eccentricity, if not of positive insanity. This frame of mind, in a more or less acute form, is universal to untravelled men. Indeed, much restraint has to be displayed by any foreigner away from home, and great tact is necessary to avoid treading on patriotic corns. It is only travel that gradually modifies the "provincial" view, and permits comparisons and criticisms to be made without offence being taken. And yet it is a fact that customs and conditions vary the world over, and that a critical estimate of any one country can be formed only by comparing it, point by point, with surrounding lands. To make such a comparison is easy, to make it without offending is difficult. It is perhaps a difficulty that cannot be overcome.

Amongst the British colonies, and therefore a goal for English emigration, is Australia. Owing to its comparatively recent colonisation, as well as to its

great distance from home, less is known in England about this country than about any of our other colonies. Until a few years ago the general knowledge was limited to a realisation of the Australian cricketers, a firm belief in kangaroos and opossums, vague ideas of sheep, and gold, together with attendant dusky millionaires, and a doubt as to whether Tasmania was the capital of Sydney or the Society Islands. More recently, Mr. Deakin, the capital site, the Arbitration Court, White Australia, and a few more facts and fancies, have enhanced the scope of English conversations about Australia. Beyond this, nothing much is known or cared by the man in the street, and any real appreciation of the country, its people and customs, successes and mistakes, is practically non-existent.

Year by year more Englishmen look towards Australia as a possible home. And year by year they are deterred from, or made very dubious about the momentous step, by the impossibility of obtaining reliable and, above all, unbiassed information about the country. Most of them pay a call on one or other of the Agents-General, and after a pleasant chat go away carrying under their arms a bundle of text-books, year-books, etc. The chat invariably leaves a good impression, and the literature is interestingly written. Moreover, it gives a vast quantity of well-chosen statistics. The objection is that both the man and his books are directly interested in gaining new settlers. To advertise Australia is their whole function. This

consideration appeals to our inquiries, and they look around for other sources of information. Some of them perhaps have, or their acquaintances have, Australian friends "home" on a visit. In these cases meetings are arranged, and in each case the Australian, let loose on his favourite subject, fully substantiates the text-book statements, and strongly urges the anabasis. He weaves prophetic visions of immediate success, financial and otherwise, in the most convincing language at his command. Others, who have no Australian acquaintances, sometimes meet Englishmen who have visited Australia. Some of these also bear out the general contention that Australia is a land of promise, but many of them are as emphatic against as are Australians for the country; these men are as honest in their opinions as the others. Both should be taken *cum grano salis*.

Often enough the combined effects of the good testimony, a strong feeling of "change at any price," and imperialistic enthusiasm, are sufficient to induce the plunge being taken, and one fine day our prospective settlers find themselves on board ship *en route* for Australia. Even now, let it be remembered, they have absolutely no concrete idea of what they are going to, and in most cases the very haziest notions of what they will do when they get there. Meanwhile the Australians on board are exceedingly kind; they never let the spirits flag for a moment. Australia is universally described as "God's Own Country," "The best

country in the world," etc. Melbourne is the finest and most up-to-date city in the world (*sic*), and our travellers are carried away in a whirl of superlatives and keen enthusiasm, until they believe that they are at the threshold of the real Arcadia. That this is so the Australians believe profoundly. They will admit of no disadvantages whatever; indeed, the possibility of disadvantages existing has probably never occurred to them. In this, I repeat, they are perfectly honest, and their patriotism is worthy of profound admiration.

Nevertheless there are essential differences between Australia and England, and whole-souled admiration of Australia is not universal amongst English emigrants as it is with native Australians. There are phases of Australian life that do not appeal to some of the visitors as Australians could wish. Every hundred English emigrants contains a percentage that is frankly disappointed. As I remarked above, Australians cannot understand anybody who is unappreciative, and this percentage appears to them a harrassing and inexplicable phenomenon.

Its existence proves, however, that some men at any rate came under a misunderstanding, for none but serious people go to the expense of time and money entailed by a trip to Australia. And this misunderstanding must have arisen from the "chats" and books. It follows that the information gleaned from these was exaggerated, or that all the facts did not appear. The truth is that all

the information of the Agents-General, the text-books, and Australians generally, is perhaps unconsciously prejudiced. It is to their interest, directly or indirectly, to obtain a stream of new settlers: and who shall blame them if they unconsciously paint their favourite picture in perhaps too glowing colours? Still, admitting the existence of malcontents—and I feel sure Australians will agree with the undesirability of introducing them—is it not possible that they would have been deterred from coming had they known of "this" or "that" disability?

In truth, it is this lack of precise information on all conditions of life in Australia that permits the introduction of many men unsuited for, or unsuitable as, colonists. It equally prevents the introduction of a much larger number of men who would be both useful and contented men. It is said that the "malcontents" should leave. True, but they do not find out their unsuitability at once. In the meantime they may have bought land or a business, from which they can only free themselves by heavy financial loss. For in Australia the maxim "It is easier to buy than sell" is equally true as in other countries.

But as there are many books on Australia, why should this information be lacking? It is because each of these books is written from one point of view only. To Australians Australia is charming; therefore their books idealise the country. Englishmen whose feelings are appreciative but critical

prefer to remain silent than to give stinted praise; and for this reason we get very few books of an appreciative character by Englishmen. There is the other Englishman, who is thoroughly "malcontent." When he does succeed in leaving the country, after a long or short period of—to him—real misery, he decides to "get even," and having collected all the most bitter of his experiences, proceeds to colour them as highly in his fashion as the appreciative Australian does in his. And yet he believes implicitly that no account can be too vivid if it only succeeds in preventing compatriots from sharing his "fate." Both these authors feel themselves inspired, though to opposite poles. The mistake of one is that he refuses to temper the good with the bad, while the fault of the other lies in his refusal to allow anything of a pleasant character to appear.

There remains one class of book that is of value, —that written by travellers. Of these, John Foster Fraser's "The Making of a Nation" is infinitely the best, as well as being the most up to date. His grasp of Australian conditions is extraordinary, and his facts are invariably accurate. It is, however, with Australia "in general," instead of "in particular," that he deals: and whilst fully and ably debating national problems, he devotes little space to conditions of life as regards the individual, and none at all to critical analysis of the "personnel" of the race from the point of view of the intending settler. We all judge people as we our-

selves find them, and in considering Mr. Fraser's deduction, it must be remembered that his short visit to Australia was paid under the ægis of many letters of introduction, which ensured him substantially different experiences from those meted out to most travellers. This circumstance is sufficient to explain many enthusiasms on his part, that are not likely to be shared entirely or universally. In fact, his book leaves one large side of the question unopened, and this side can be discussed only by one who has seen a long residence in the country, lived side by side with the colonials, and personally engaged in their pursuits. Such a man alone is able to gauge the differences between the two races, enumerate those things that will be missed by the emigrant settler, and what he will gain in compensation. The habits, modes of thought and ambitions of the people he will live amongst, and a thousand details of comparison—critical and appreciative—apparent to an unbiassed mind.

No such book has yet been written. And it is in the attempt to supply its undoubted need that I have penned these pages.

It is evident from the nature of the subjects under discussion that this book will be considered controversial in the extreme. And the only remarks I wish to make by way of "apology" are that I criticise English colonists as severely as I do Australians, and that I have subordinated my own prejudices—and I possess as many of these

as do most people—to the facts under consideration.

Before closing, as I wish to be absolutely frank, I can say that personally I do not like life in Australia, and that I have now terminated my residence there by the sale of all my Australian interests. Had it been otherwise there would have been no necessity to write this book. This dislike on my part is idiosyncratic, and whilst feeling sure that many men will share my views, I can perfectly realise and sympathise with the fascinations held out for men of a different temperament. These latter will find as much information to support their views as the former. As for the rest, I have engaged in fruit growing at Mildura, Victoria, for the past six years, and, incidentally, have made frequent visits to other parts of Australia. During this time, beyond living free, I can claim to have neither made nor lost money. The gain lies in having acquired a fairly exhaustive knowledge of colonial life, and an insight into general business, that would have been hard to acquire in the same time at home. I do not in any way regret my sojourn there, nor have I any personal animosity against the Australians.

To conclude: in England I had the honour to be educated at one of the large public schools, and it is chiefly with a view to giving to men of the same type of education and upbringing as myself a fact book on Australia that has caused me to undertake this task.

## CHAPTER II

### A GENERAL SURVEY

I HAVE spoken of the "English point of view." It is essential that this should be accurately defined, as I understand it, for the whole problem is discussed here with deference to my comprehension of this standpoint.

Remembering the distance from England, practically no wealthy men can be expected to emigrate to Australia, and any of this class that do come out are tied only as long as their inclination may decide, and can thus remain or depart at will. They can, therefore, be eliminated from further discussion. The case of the working man is treated fully later on, so there only remains the man of small capital—possessed of, say, from £500 to £5,000—to consider at this point.

Australians realise that the wealthy man is too comfortable at home to be transplanted, and therefore see the futility of trying to induce him to come out. Their policy as regards the imported working man is really hostile. Under a tremendous show of large immigration schemes, they make very little active effort to people their country with him, as they are swayed by such catch-words as "Australia for the Australians," "We will welcome no

emigrants until every Australian has a substantial stake in the country," and the like phrases. I am aware that they realise the harm they have done themselves financially and otherwise by the expression of these sentiments, and that they are now repudiating them in the Press and on the platform. Despite their protestations, however, very little is being done towards the expansion of their population, and to the largest section of them the arrival of every fresh emigrant ship is viewed with strong resentment. That this assertion will be hotly denied by Australians goes without saying. The proof of its correctness lies in the immigration figures for the last few years.

The man they really wish to attract, and the man who could be unquestionably of the greatest value to them and the country, is the small capitalist. They do everything in their power to get him to come, and when he arrives they welcome him with open arms.

It is this man's point of view that I wish to define, and when it is defined, to discuss Australia systematically under its searchlight.

First and foremost he wishes to make money out of the country; more money than he could make at home. He is prepared to "rough it" if necessary during the process of making his money. He wishes to keep a perfectly open mind on the question of returning to England, or settling permanently in Australia when his competence is made; and will make up his mind on this point

when he has definitely decided if he can find happiness and comfort in Australia or not. In fact, he wishes it to be purely a commercial transaction until circumstances warrant the introduction of sentiment; and whether sentiment be introduced or not, can only be decided after a fairly long residence.

To my mind this is not an unreasonable point of view, for, after all, he is investing his own money, and surely has a right to purchase what he wants with it, or to refuse to purchase anything that has been misrepresented or which does not come up to specification. Australians do not understand this point of view. They resent investigation as they do criticism, and the man who does not immediately admit to the Australian world superiority, whether regarding country, climate, comfort, and people, is a very ungrateful being. He is a bad Imperialist, in their opinion. If he stays in the country he is made to feel his unworthiness; if he leaves it he has their undying hatred. "Imperialism" is a word much used in Australia, but its meaning is very different to that obtaining in England. They wish it to be a case of "Heads I win; Tails I do not lose."

Viewed from this commercial standpoint, it is a matter of simple elimination to discover the occupations in Australia lying open to the small capitalist. It is widely known that the large towns of Australia are heavily over-populated, considering the total population of the country; and it

follows naturally that the professions are overcrowded. There is as much competition in these walks of life as there is in London, and absolutely no more certainty of making a larger income, or of leading a more comfortable life to balance it. Besides, our emigrant is scarcely likely to leave his office in England to enter another office at the Antipodes. No! His idea, generally speaking, is that, having come so far, he might just as well do the thing properly, and go right into the country at once; where he will be able to economise whilst getting used to the new life, and where he can acquire knowledge to start some undertaking for himself. Shelving the question of manufactures for the present, as this involves many considerations regarding labour and tariff, we are left with the last alternative, that of going on the land. The largest proportion of English emigrants desire to go on the land; and this is the occupation Australians most ardently wish them to follow. The land is their one real bait, *and every Australian is a land agent.*

The land offers a large diversity of chances or "potentialities," as Foster Fraser so amusingly calls them. Our emigrant can sheep-farm, raise cattle, go in for dairying, grow wheat or other cereals, fruit-farm, or engage in many smaller industries such as growing potatoes, onions, sugar, beet, etc. In fact, he has plenty of choice. Sheep farming is undoubtedly the most lucrative of all these pursuits, despite the frequent droughts; but

to establish oneself on a good run, stock it properly, and make water provision to guard against droughts, requires a large capital : sufficient, indeed, to keep one in tolerable comfort in England without being entirely dependent on one's own efforts. Undoubtedly many men make large fortunes out of sheep if they are fortunate enough to get a few good seasons running, but for every fortune made, two are lost ; and in one drought season it is possible to lose the profits of two good years. Save in especially favoured districts, where land is now at impossible prices, sheep farming is a great gamble, at which one can make a large fortune or lose everything in a few years.

It is worthy of note that the last seven or eight years have been extremely good ones.

The requirement of a large capital puts sheep farming out of count for most emigrants, and many that have the requisite capital are unwilling to risk it all in one venture by buying a sheep station. Discounting the drought problem, it must be remembered that sheep farming needs as much time and brains to learn expertly as any profession with exams to pass. Wheat and other crops are also liable to heavy losses through lack of, or through too much rain at a critical time, as they are in other countries. And the average yield per acre by no means justifies the assertion that Australia is the best country in the world on this score. Moreover, the inducements to grow wheat are gradually becoming less, and in direct ratio to the increased

labour demands. Their latest wishes are embodied in the "Rural Workers' Log," which has every prospect of becoming a law in the near future. When this occurs it will go hard with the farmers indeed. It must be remembered that in these staple products the Australian has to compete in the world's markets, and that to protect them is absolutely out of the question.

Turning to the protected industries, such as fruit growing, one finds equally hard problems to grapple with. People who are tired of trying to compete with cheap foreign goods when their labour cost 7s. or 8s. a day in Australia, turn hopefully to any field of production that is protected by a substantial import duty. Theoretically this duty permits them to make substantial profits, and still pay the high rate of wages. It has this effect for a few years no doubt, and astounding and perfectly *bona fide* lists of profits are published in the newspapers. Then too many people go into this industry, and it is not long before the production exceeds the Australian requirements. When this point is reached—and it does not take long to reach it—they are worse off than they were under Free Trade. They are still compelled to pay exorbitant wages, and the Australian public still purchases a percentage of their goods at exorbitant prices. What about the surplus percentage? Its production sometimes costs more than can be realised for it by exporting and selling abroad; so that virtually the producer is paid for only 50 per cent.—or what-

ever the figure may be from year to year—of his goods; the remaining 50 per cent. he makes in order to give the Australian labourer work at high wages. When this state is reached, there is very little enthusiasm felt by those who have all their money invested in the venture.

It would be better to be content with small profits on legitimate production carried out by labour paid at a reasonable wage. There would remain always a small margin of profit, and production would not be strangled just when it is finding its feet. Australians will not realise this. Their object is to keep up the price of labour to a fictitious value, and they trust to the natural resources of the country to undo the effects of their bad finance.

I would point out that the problems of Free Trade and Protection are absolutely different in England and Australia, and this from a very simple cause: that of population. Protection invariably raises the cost of production. When the cost of production reaches a certain point, export automatically ceases to be profitable. Protection therefore fixes the limits of production by the home or protected requirements. In England, where there is a large population, this consideration is not pressing. In Australia, where the population is small and very slow of growth, Protection simply muzzles enterprise.

The foregoing is sufficient to show that there are a good many problems before Australian states-

men; and that pending their solutions on progressive lines, the foreign investor of capital may expect just as many difficulties in his path towards a competence as he would have to encounter in any of the older European countries. These solutions cannot be arrived at until the present attitude of provincialism be cast off.

If Australia be the "Home of Freedom," it is a pity that freedom practises bachelor habits.

This general survey clears the ground for more precise and detailed examination. Let us proceed to consider the Australian claims for world's priority of climate.

## CHAPTER III

### CHIEFLY CONCERNING CLIMATE

We are accurately informed of the colossal size of Australia in conversation and in text-books, and as a corollary to the figures, elaborate computations of its possibilities for maintaining a huge population are given.

These computations are made by multiplying the number of square miles in Australia by the population per square mile of England or America. The resultant population on paper is enormous. This method of calculation seems reasonable enough, and but for one consideration might well prove its accuracy in course of time. This consideration is climate.

We are informed unceasingly by Australians that their climate is the best in the world. It is a curious fallacy. Australia has fifty different climates, and it is entirely a matter of personal opinion whether these climates compare favourably or not with those of other parts of the world. To discuss exhaustively the details of climate respecting the whole of Australia would be tedious. Fortunately it is unnecessary. Remembering that well over two-fifths of its total area is in the tropics, and therefore impossible of dense population by

white races, we are able to eliminate a vast area from consideration for the present. In fact, it is only the portions of the continent at present settled that need be seriously discussed. And this for the following reasons.

Australians have committed themselves to the policy of a "White Australia"—meaning thereby that no members of any coloured race may enter the country to trade, hold land, or even labour. This dictum holds sway over the whole continent, tropical and temperate. The result is not difficult to guess at. Practically speaking, there is no settlement in tropical Australia. Even now Englishmen consider carefully on the score of climate before going to live in India, where they know they can get abundance of coolie labour, and the advantages of an ancient civilisation. It would require very big inducements to lure them to similar climatic conditions, minus any of these things, and to a country several thousands of miles further afield. Even Australians themselves fight shy of risking either their health or capital in such untempting surroundings. No! Tropical Australia is never to be opened up without the help of the black man, and as the black man is barred, the land is padlocked effectually. That some solution of the problem will be forced on Australian legislators sooner or later seems inevitable. It is unthinkable that so large an area of land will be locked against the expansion of European and Asiatic powers for all time. Meanwhile it is unsettled, and impossible of

settlement until the advent of cheap coolie labour.

For the remaining three-fifths of the continent—that is to say, the more or less settled area,—more detail is required. Nearly all of it possesses a trying climate, if a good one. All the interior is subjected to great extremes of heat and cold, and the changes of temperature are most rapid. During the summer it is not uncommon for the thermometer to register a temperature of 115 deg. F. in the shade, and to drop to 45 deg. F. within six hours; whilst the winter invariably gives many days with from 5 deg. to 15 deg. of frost. These conditions are not unhealthy as are the fever haunts in the tropical parts, but they certainly negative the contention that the Australian climate is absolutely Arcadian. To live in it is to live hard,—a contention proved by the weather-beaten faces of the men and the colourless complexions of the women.

The temperate portion of Australia most certainly possesses an admirable climate from the agricultural point of view, if one discounts droughts and other inimical natural features, such as the lack of river systems, etc., difficulties or similar ones that every country possesses in a greater or lesser measure. And although it is a more formidable climate to exist in than that of England, it is by no means unpleasant of itself. It is the Australian method of living in it that makes the climate nearly unbearable. The excessive cost of everything prevents any but the very rich,—and they clear out during the trying months,—from building houses

suitable to the climate. Instead of large, roomy houses and cool, shaded courtyards, where it would be possible to keep cool in the parching summer, the Australian is compelled to content himself with a ramshackle tenement built of corrugated iron and boards: small, exceedingly ugly, and badly built. Outside the towns it is most unusual to see a brick or stone house. These iron houses attract the heat in the summer, and the temperature inside is terrific. Then, when the temperature at night becomes cooler outside, the iron retains the heat, and any benefit of the change is lost. In the winter the houses are equally unsuitable. Draughts penetrate everywhere, and there is little comfort.

These things might be borne with, if one had good servants. The summer months would approximate to the usual discomforts of living in the tropics, and the winter would at least afford some rest. Servants are, however, practically out of the question in the country. It is most difficult to obtain any at all, and if one does, it is at a cost of from 15s. to 25s. a week. Even at these figures it is very rare that they know their work, and being every whit as independent as the men workers, they resent being told anything, and very rarely stay in any place for more than a few weeks. Most mistresses cannot afford the wages, and many that can, say that the servants are so useless and troublesome, that they would prefer to do the work themselves. So it generally resolves itself into the wife doing all the cooking, housework, and washing,

whilst the husband cuts the wood, draws the water, and cleans the boots. My experience of Englishmen is that they object to their wives becoming general servants; as often as not it is to get a general servant that Australians marry. So much for the different temperaments!

This unnecessary hardship cannot but have a deleterious effect on the race, and there is no question that each generation deteriorates physically and morally. Let me repeat that this is not the fault of the climate; for were the ordinary comforts available, life could be made very pleasant in Australia. In the future, when there is less Socialism and more comprehension of the elementary necessities of civilisation, Australia may offer acceptable living conditions as well as good land. It will never offer better opportunities than are to be found in other parts of the world, for the land is not better than can be found elsewhere, and the climate is not unique.

To describe it so, is as false as it would be to accept the following lines, much quoted by Australians, as an accurate description of the English climate:—

> First it rained, and then it blew;
> Then it hailed; and then it snew:
> Then it friz, and then it thew.
> Oh dear! oh dear! what shall I do?

## CHAPTER IV

### WHO ARE THE AUSTRALIANS?

ONCE I was privileged to hear some very amusing word play between an Australian and a Frenchman. The Australian was expatiating on the excellence of his countrymen, and finished a long harangue with the words, "We are the best chosen race in the world." "True," murmured the Frenchman, "you were most carefully chosen by the best English judges."

It remains on record that the greater portion of the persons arriving in Australia during the first sixty-two years of its occupation by whites came from the English gaols. Australians of the present day (sixty-three years since the arrival of the last convict ship) feel very strongly about the use to which their country was put in its first years. They resent the term "convict" being applied to the majority of the first arrivals. They argue with perfect truth that many of these men and women were branded as malefactors, and extradited for the most trivial offences. Petty theft, poaching, sheep stealing, and the like offences are met nowadays with a much saner sense of proportion, no doubt; but I should like to point out that this new

measure of misdemeanours is of comparatively recent inception. When these men were tried and convicted, their offences were every whit as heinous to the majority of their contemporaries, as much greater crimes appear to us to-day. If we wish to come to a rightful understanding of these men as law-abiding citizens or the reverse, we must not judge them by the penal code of to-day, but rather by that of their own time. Judged by this standard they must be considered as having been very dangerous members of society. They were aware of the heavy penalties for certain acts, and yet they did not hesitate to break the law. Granting even that they considered themselves ill-used in their punishment: this very resentment would have prevented them from settling down contentedly and accepting their doom with resignation. Rather would they smoulder with anger for their unjust expatriation, and wish to harm those in authority over them.

Under the best of circumstances they do not seem to be a promising nucleus for founding a new race; and that these men or their progeny should hold much affection for England or Englishmen appears practically impossible. The records of them and their crimes have been burnt, in justice to their children or grandchildren living to-day; and it is impossible, therefore, to compute how large a proportion of the present-day population consists of their progeny. There can be no doubt, however, that the proportion is fairly large. Of these

convicts, all types were represented; from the gentleman forger to the dishonest serving boy; from the female adventuress to the low cut-throat. The greatest number came from the lower classes.

Simultaneously with the importation of convicts, proceeded the arrival of free settlers, and they recruited their labour from the best behaved of the sentence-expired convicts.

In considering the type of these earlier settlers, we must remember the general opinion obtaining in England about Australia in these times. The agricultural value of the country was only being proved gradually, and, as gradually, were the first official reports that it was incapable of supporting a white population being disproved. Everything was in an experimental stage, and pioneering was of the roughest. It was the spot furthest distant in the world from England, and as such had been fixed upon by the British Government as a suitable spot to place its outcasts. In those days there were no steamships and no Suez Canal. The voyage had to be made round the Cape in small sailing vessels. It took a year, or even longer, to negotiate the distance, and the hardships were unspeakable. Once a man or woman landed in Australia, it was a matter of extreme improbability as to whether they would ever return home again. All these things were known to the general public in England.

It is not to be wondered at that opinions concerning Australia were unfavourable. An arid

country, without friends, without reasonable prospects, amongst hostile natives and convicts, and, above all, without much hope of ever seeing home again, is scarcely the bait to draw a desirable class of men. As a matter of fact, it did not. The English Public took their cue from the Government. The Government found it a useful place in which to dispose of its criminals. The Public considered it a useful place in which to dispose of its failures. Men who had failed to "make good" at home were shipped off to Australia. Youths who had kicked over the traces in some way or other shared the same fate. Anyone who had compromised the family honour was in danger of receiving a single ticket to Australia. I refrain from expressing an opinion as to the morality of these proceedings.

The intentions of those sending these unfortunates out were, however, not wholly bad. They said, justly enough, that the opportunities of leading a reasonable life and making an honest living at home had been scoffed at and cast aside; but that, amidst new surroundings, and in a new country, better counsels might prevail; that the temptations of England were absent in Australia, and that, whilst freeing themselves from the anxiety and expense of maintaining the erring ones at home, they were giving them an admirable opportunity of making a fresh start in life, to return home some day, perhaps, as successful and respected members of society. It was not their fault that even keener

temptations existed in Australia, and that the privations made it harder still to combat them than in England. The refining influences of home were entirely absent, and made the lot of these outcasts more difficult than ever: and, remembering that they were prone to yield to temptation, it is scarcely surprising that they failed to realise the expectations of their friends at home, and gradually sank down to the level of their worst companions in distress. Very few of these people ever returned to England, but dragged out a precarious kind of existence in Australia; often marrying women who were as unhappy as themselves, and rearing up families of children amidst the most sordid surroundings.

We find another type of early settler in absolute juxtaposition to these unfortunates, although unluckily in much smaller numbers. It is the type of hardy adventurer, who is always to be found in England, and ready for a risky undertaking. These were straight-going, clean-living men; often of the best family and upbringing, and who went out of their own free will to conquer a new country, and to make for themselves English homes in it. This type of man will succeed anywhere. They succeeded in Australia, and their children are the cream of Australian men and women to-day. It is much to be deplored that so few of this type came to Australia. Amongst so many questionable arrivals these men of worth could easily be recognised by the authorities,

and it goes without saying that every inducement to remain that could be offered them was offered. Opportunities of taking up tracts of good land were put in their way, and they had the first pick of the time expired convicts—who were still debarred from returning to England—for labour. It was good policy to make things easier for them. They repaid the assistance they received with interest, by proving the agricultural value of the country, and starting the sheep raising and wheat growing industries, which have since become the mainstays of Australian enterprise.

The discovery of gold was the next factor in populating Australia. Hopes of making fortunes rapidly drew thousands of men and their families to the country. All countries and classes were represented. Fabulous were the tales of wealth to be won. The streets were said to be paved with gold, and fortunes were to be had for the picking up. Each successive gold-rush drew more immigrants, and passages to Australia were eagerly competed for. Everyone was in a fever. In Australia everything else went to the winds. Some men threw up lucrative positions, others abandoned their land; the very crews of the ships deserted their posts to hurry to the gold fields. Everyone who could, by hook or by crook, in the new country or out of it, hurried to join in the race. Adventurous spirits, those who should never have left their native village, actors, parsons, schoolmasters, shopkeepers, labourers—all were infected.

Fortune smiled on some, but in the main she was coy. There is no high road to wealth. Those who found the most gold were the most reckless to spend it. For the most part it was flung away in debauchery and fell into the hands of pimps, thieves, and publicans. Few indeed amongst those who came out so full of hope succeeded in their ambition of taking home a fortune.

In time the alluvial gold gave out, or at any rate that on the known gold-fields. To obtain the precious metal now necessitated large outlay in machinery; so that gradually the search passed out of the hands of adventurers into those of companies, and thus were evolved gradually the mining industries of to-day.

Meanwhile what of the stranded miners? Those of them who could procure a passage, shook the dust of the country from their feet and returned home, —men broken in health and fortune. The balance, not so lucky, were forced to remain and pick up such a living as they could, at absolutely uncongenial tasks. Australia at that time offered but small scope for men of culture and refinement. And whilst such men are willing to laugh at a rough life with the bait of gold dangling in front of their eyes, it is not so easy for them to adapt their tastes to more menial occupations when there is no such prize waiting to be won. With the collapse of the gold rushes, thousands of such men were faced with the problem of making their livelihood. Many died; but many found their way gradually into

niches of life in the new country. They were like flies in a spider's web : they could not get out ; and so were forced to make the best of it. One can get used to anything in time. They got used to it. In the end they were resigned to the new life, and when they could perhaps afford to return home after many years' struggling, they found all the old interests dead, and themselves out of touch with the old life, and so returned to Australia as the definite land of their adoption.

The discovery of gold was the best advertisement that Australia has ever had. It attracted thousands of men in whose ears all other advertisements would have been unheeded. After attracting them by El Dorado tales of wealth, it played with them by golden visions, till all means of escape were closed, and then when all was lost it gripped them closely and said, " Develop me, or die ! " The riches of Australia lay not in gold so much as in the land, and years of unremitting toil were necessary to extract them. A class of men more unsuited for this work than the gold-seeking derelicts would be hard to name ; but they provided hands, unwilling maybe, as much bondaged hands as those of the original convicts,—but hands. So long as they were hands it was all grist to Australia's mill. Men, men, at any price ! that was her cry. Her legislators at the time did not foresee the trend that affairs would take, and were much alarmed at the prospect of these hordes of unemployed men. They need not have feared, however, for these men all

played their part in opening up the country, and by marrying provided a new generation to carry on the work.

The same tale is told with regard to the land booms. Prospects of making enormous profits in a few weeks by merely buying and selling town allotments and tracts of agricultural land accounts for another large section of the population. Frenzied speculation following on a few good years raises the selling price of land to absurd values. Foreign speculators are imbued with the madness, and come to Australia in swarms. Prices go higher and higher whilst there is anybody to buy. Then comes the slump. Prices go down. People are ruined right and left. The banks fail. There is ruin everywhere; and a new contingent of workers is marooned in the country to join ranks with the original convicts and gold-seekers.

The whole history of Australia is a tale of booms and depressions following fast on each other's heels. Financial crisis has followed financial crisis with short intervals, and each time the country has taken its toll of ruined men, thrown high and dry, and without hope of departure. And the end has not come yet. The population is still small, and the land is still unopened. Millions of more men and hundreds of millions of money have to be expended before civilised life and financial security are to be really reached.

Possession of such enormous mineral wealth has continuously thrown dust in people's eyes regard-

ing Australia. Precious metals are not her most valuable possessions. Self-supporting, happy homes on the land must be the object of Australians, and for permanent safety these must be numbered by millions instead of thousands. It is only of recent years that the possibility of these becoming facts has been realised. The country is gradually proving her capabilities to Europeans. With knowledge and application, nearly everything can be grown in one or other part of Australia. In time everything will be grown there, but there must be a large population. Hitherto all efforts to secure immigration have been half-hearted. The legislators are afraid of a large increase of population. They are afraid that it might lower existing wages. "Festina lente" is their motto. "Australia belongs to the Australians, and must be governed by Australian ideals," say they. "We will not allow ourselves to be swamped by the votes of strangers and permit our destinies to fall into alien hands." They are making an enormous mistake. It is only with the help of a quadrupled, and constantly increasing, population that they can realise any great destiny.

At present they are in ever-increasing danger of occupation and subsequent domination by a foreign power. Their only bulwark is the British Fleet. Real safety can never be theirs until the vast areas of unoccupied land are unlocked and settled. This can never happen till they cast aside the provincial fantasies of Labour and Socialistic government in favour of a sane policy of untrammelled expansion.

They must look on each new arrival as a friend who will one day fight with them against a common enemy; and not view him with hostile eyes as an unwelcome guest to be provided for out of their pockets; or, worse still, as a convenient fool to be plucked. Unhappily both these views obtain largely in Australia to-day.

Such settlement as they have secured through legitimate immigration has been too small for rapid development of the country. Still, they have done something, and are doing more now. But their efforts have always been, and still are, reluctant. They advertise for settlers, but are rather embarrassed when they get them; whilst the Labour organisations—which are enormously strong—are frankly opposed to any and every increase. They salve public opinion by a great show of effort; but fail to make adequate provision for the new arrivals. The result is dissatisfaction amongst these newcomers, and on the Australian's part a tacit condoning of the evil reports sent home, and the subsequent bad advertisement for Australia. "If they are not satisfied they can go back, and, at least, they will refrain from drawing their friends after them," is the local comment.

The shut-door policy has not been entirely successful, however, for there has always been a thin stream of immigrants coming in. Of late it has been growing somewhat larger, and some show of welcome is being made. There is still hostility at the influx of labourers, or, rather, of those who

have no money; but real efforts are being made to attract men with a small capital, and to this intent the "closer settlement" arrangements are much advertised. The old restrictions are, however, having their effect now. Australia is rightly looked upon in England as the Working Man's Paradise; and whilst plenty of indigents are ready and eager to share in this Arcadia, the man with money, who fears that he may have to pay for some of the delights, remains shy.

All these considerations show why the majority, at least, of the arrivals coming of their own accord, and with the purpose of settling, have been of the lower classes. The man of cultured thoughts and tastes is a *rara avis*, and finds himself in a very different atmosphere to that in which he has been accustomed to live. He neither understands his neighbours, nor can he be comprehended by them. At present Australia is a working man's country, and "toffs"—to use their own phraseology—are not made to feel at home.

No convicts are sent out nowadays, but Australia is still utilised as a convenient retreat for the failures, who, as often as not, receive a small quarterly allowance from home and loaf round the towns as "Remittance men," leading irregular lives, and giving Australians a very objectionable and highly erroneous opinion of the type of an English gentleman.

Allowing for a small percentage of foreigners of all nations—by no means picked representatives—

we have now reviewed the raw material of the Australian nation. Now let us follow the process of evolution, and consider the types produced by intermarriage amongst all these different sets of people: the men and women of Australia to-day.

## CHAPTER V

### AUSTRALIAN MEN

One of the inducements for Englishmen to emigrate to Australia is, as I have already pointed out, the hope of finding themselves amongst their own kind. They believe that Australians are Englishmen in all essentials, and that an Englishman in Australia is certain of the same comprehension that he gets at home.

Never was there a greater mistake. Australians have evolved themselves into a type as different from the English as are the Americans. Their whole outlook on life is different. They have a different mode of thought, different ideals, different habits, and different tastes. With the exception of possessing a somewhat similar vocabulary—I do not say they speak the same language, for this would be inaccurate,—Englishmen and Australians are dissimilar in almost every point. When in contact each receive constant surprises. Were they not labelled kinsmen, this would be no matter for wonder. No one is annoyed or surprised at a Frenchman's or German's different behaviour, for their nationalities have their own peculiar traits; were this not so, "nationality" would cease to have a meaning. The surprise comes in when

people from the same country prove to be so utterly out of sympathy. Australians are as much a different nation as are the French and Germans. Englishmen in Australia are as much abroad as they would be in Russia.

That this truth is constantly ignored or denied merely widens the breach. Were the differences frankly admitted, it would be possible to study one another from the friendly standpoint of foreigners desiring to be friends; allowances could mutually be made for points of difference, and gradually these differences could be bridged over, by each learning to steer a middle course. At present this is impossible. Each is constantly trying to impress his habits and beliefs on the other, with the natural result that they succeed merely in irritating themselves, and leaving a nasty impression of priggishness in the other's mind. Englishmen accentuate their peculiar habits of dress and speech; and Australians laugh or sneer. They are constantly antagonistic, and failing to find common grounds for liking, soon learn to hate each other. It is a very great pity. To effect a *rapprochement*, Englishmen must cease thinking of Australians as "beastly colonials," and Australians must stop calling us "stuck-up Englishmen."

Putting all questions of ways and means out of consideration, the fact remains that Australians are now a self-governing nation. And it must be realised that they have a perfect right to govern themselves in their own way, form their own habits,

and live their own lives, without heeding other people's suggestions. For Englishmen to come out to Australia and criticise everything they see is simply impertinence. It is like a guest criticising the habits and household arrangements of his host. If the guest is not satisfied with the manner of his entertainment he has an absolute right to pack up his traps and go; and he is perfectly justified in warning any friends of the reception awaiting them in that house, if he sees fit to do so; but he has no right whatever to criticise whilst in it. It is this habit of outspoken criticism that Australians resent so much, and consequently they are always on their guard with Englishmen.

Nevertheless, the fault is not entirely on one side. Australians are constantly in the habit of pointing out some object they appreciate, affirming that it is the best of its kind in the world, and asking an Englishman to agree with them. If he does not comply,— and he is often quite unable to, truthfully,—they are deeply insulted, and accuse him of running down their country. Both these attitudes are so absurd. It is manifestly to the advantage of both to live on amicable terms when they are thrown together, and their "go one better" method can only produce antagonism.

I say that Englishmen have no right to criticise Australian habits and ideals: but, if they contemplate settling in the country, it is their duty to study them. From now on my task is simply one of definition.

In trying to understand Australian men we must keep their heredity constantly in mind. Although their forebears were of all conditions and rank, the rough life of pioneering proved a very effective leveller of social differences. "Misfortune makes brothers of us all": and Australian pioneers proved no exception. In this land of constant ups and downs, the wealthy man of to-day may easily be a labourer to-morrow, and in a few years' time he may be just as wealthy as ever. Then a fall to bankruptcy is by no means as serious a thing in Australia as in the older countries. The enormous wages paid for unskilled labour practically eliminates the possibilities of starvation; failure to a man of brains merely means living "tight" for a few years; and then, with any luck at all, he is on his feet again, without having suffered any desperate hardships. In this land of speculation such ups and downs are thought very lightly of, and consequently the terms "employer" and "labourer" have scarcely the same significance as in other lands: they change places so frequently.

Practically speaking, there are no leisured classes in Australia. Nearly everybody has some active interests to compel residence in the country. And, putting on one side the numerically negligible Government House circles, culture is not pursued with enormous enthusiasm—and if pursued, it is not caught. Broadly speaking, Australians are either employers or labourers—this is as far as class distinction is generally recognised. And to a great

extent even these two classes are interchangeable and merge largely one into the other. The labourer certainly considers himself every whit as good as his employer, and makes a point of telling him so, addressing him by his christian name.

It is generally possible to " place " an Englishman pretty accurately after glancing at his dress and appearance and exchanging a few words with him. Not so an Australian. A smart-looking young man, well dressed, good mannered, and staying at a first-class hotel, turns out to be a boundary rider down for his annual holiday; whilst an unkempt, foul-mouthed individual with a handkerchief round his neck in place of a collar, and the rest of his dress in keeping, is quite able to sign his name to a cheque of five figures without risk of its being dishonoured.

This is all very curious to Englishmen. All old standards of comparison are useless to them, and they constantly give offence by ignorance of the local customs. Social differences exist in England, and lines of demarcation are rigidly drawn. In Australia it is not so. It is not a question of snobbishness that prevents middle-class English people from knowing their shopkeepers socially. They do not assert that they are superior beings : it is simply not the custom for the two classes to meet. It never occurs to them to ask their grocers to dinner : in Australia it never occurs to people not to do so. Surely Englishmen are not guilty of a crime in being ignorant on such points as these. Recog-

nising at a dance or dinner party the man who sold him a leg of mutton the day before, invariably causes the uninitiated Englishman great embarrassment. He does not realise that no social limitation attaches to the calling of a butcher in this country, and generally gives great annoyance to the gentleman in question by expressing, consciously or unconsciously, surprise at his presence. He feels horrified at finding the daughters of well-to-do men, possessed of comfortable homes, serving behind the counters of shops, rubbing shoulders on an equality with common shop assistants, and learning their slang and habits. It is incomprehensible to him; but if he is to remain on a friendly footing with Australians he must express no surprise, but accept everything as if it appeared absolutely natural to him.

Democracy is perhaps the keynote of Australian character. Everybody is as good as everybody else; that is, so long as they are Australians. Englishmen are pityingly regarded as "new chums," to be carelessly patronised and laughed at, until such time as they lose the crudity of their good manners and fastidious speech, and embrace the Australian methods completely, when, perhaps, they will be forgiven their nationality, and be accepted into the fold. All foreigners, from Chinese to Greeks, are contemptuously referred to as "Bloomin' Dagos," and are tolerated without much emotion, unless they show signs of possessing personality or intellect, when they are soon informed of their

inferiority. However, the arrival of foreigners is discouraged as much as possible.

Underlying their superficial attitude of amused contempt towards Englishmen is a feeling of dislike and distrust, amounting almost to positive hostility, and the causes of this hostility are not hard to find. They have not yet, and, in truth, are never likely, to forgive us the convict stigma which our ancestors placed on their race. They feel that we at least have not forgotten their ancestry. Then they know that English failures are still coming out to them in large quantities. The behaviour of these men in Australia is simply hair-raising. Knowing that they would not be tolerated for one moment in decent society at home, it is pitiful to see them playing the part of Arbiters of Elegance in Australia. They do not deceive the best Australians, who are 'cute enough at least to know that they are dealing with bounders; but they destroy the chance of friendship for other Englishmen. So much is this the case that many of the best Australians refuse to meet English arrivals now, on the grounds that they will not be patronised by vicious, ill-mannered numskulls. The trouble is that they cannot discriminate.

Nobody will blame them for refusing to waste their time over men who insult them over their own dinner-table; indeed, insults are the least of the injuries they have suffered. It is by no means uncommon for their daughters to marry some of these bright specimens, only to be deserted a few

months later. Even the marriage ceremony is dispensed with sometimes. The pity of it is that in the Australian estimation we are all tarred with the same brush. It takes a long time to neutralise their distrust and get beneath the surface. At the same time, curiously enough, although they distrust and hate them, the bombastic manners and veneer of polish displayed by these adventurers exercise a peculiar attraction to all save the best Australians, and these Englishmen have no difficulty in finding an audience for their opinions. Although pretending to despise it, the Australians envy their affected drawl, supercilious look, and exaggerated dress, and make ludicrous attempts to copy them. If the original is absurd, the Australian imitation is heart-rending.

The best type of Australian is a thoroughly good fellow. He is not the least bit like a cultured English gentleman in either manner, appearance, or speech; rough colonial life scarcely makes for fastidiousness in these respects, but one could not wish for a better or more reliable man to deal with or make a friend of. He is as rough as he is genuine. It is peculiar to note that no matter how much he reads or travels, his speech and manners remain uncouth. This is an inexplicable national idiosyncrasy. To all appearances he is as happy and contented living in a tent in the bush as he is in a well-appointed house. A rough diamond: the pity is that he is so very rare.

For the rest one cannot be so complimentary.

Their parentage, upbringing, and environment has made them the most difficult people to comprehend. Notwithstanding their much-boasted of education systems, they are enormously ignorant. And, like all ignorant people, they believe themselves to be omniscient. Knowing nothing of the outside world, and often very little of their own country, they love to tell themselves and other people how they are "showing the world the way" in all paths of activity. They say they are a progressive race. It is not true. Owing their presence in Australia, directly or indirectly, to dislike of laws, they have created laws of their own liking, and are too ignorant to perceive that these new laws hold them infinitely less free than did the old ones. They prate about freedom. Australians are restrained at every step by their legislation. Every evil they overthrow by their untutored laws gives rise to six new evils, each worse than the first. They entrust their political guidance to working men who could not make a decent living by their trades, even in this land of high wages; to Socialistic demagogues, who have probably never opened a book on political economy in their lives; and to unscrupulous visionaries, who find ample opportunity to feather their own nests, whilst exercising despotic sway over all men and interests. It is curious that the " best educated " and " freest " race in the world should be under the heel of perfect organisation in restraint of any real enterprise commercially, or even any freedom of action in daily life. It is more than curious that

they should be completely satisfied with this state of affairs; and it is positively grotesque that they should claim to lead the world in intelligent and up-to-date government. If frenzied borrowing, expending the loans in paying workmen double rates for short days of work, and landing the country in a condition not far removed from bankruptcy is "leading the world," their claim is a just one, but not otherwise.

If their legislation is not honest to English eyes, neither are the Australians in their daily lives. In their own opinions this is not so. It is that we have different codes of commercial and moral rectitude; yet another proof that we are of different nationality. All business transactions must be defined on paper and in every detail, if they are to hold good in Australian eyes, for no verbal agreement whatever is binding. They are quaintly frank on this point. It does not appear dishonourable to them to repudiate a word of mouth contract; to do so, on the contrary, shows great business acumen, and a gain by this means is much boasted of and chuckled over. Quotations for goods or work done must be submitted in writing. If a written quotation cannot be produced, the goods are delivered certainly, or the work is done; but when the bill comes in, it is at an enhanced figure, and this figure must be paid. It is well for Englishmen to realise this point if they wish to deal with Australians, for its careful observance is always essential. This lack of business integrity is really

not so surprising if one considers the history of its opponents.

Reverting for a moment to the Australians' speech. I have affirmed that they do not speak English. This is so much the case that Englishmen landing in Australia find the greatest difficulty in making themselves understood, or indeed comprehending others with any facility for the first few days. This is not altogether due to the extraordinary pronunciation with which they articulate their words, nor to the surprising and entirely ungrammatical formation of their sentences; which considerations certainly demand a most careful attention from listeners; but rather to the presence in their vocabulary of a large number of slang words entirely foreign to any English dictionary. Nobody will object to a certain amount of slang; its use is inevitable; but there is slang and slang. The Australian variety is peculiarly irritating to English ears, being as uncouth as thieves' jargon. The peculiar part is that all Australians speak alike. A girl brought up at the best ladies' college can comprehend perfectly and carry on a conversation admirably with an uneducated boot-black. Leaving out the latter's oaths, their speech is identical. Speaking of oaths reminds one that swearing is much more the fashion in Australia than it is in England. Nearly all Australian men swear habitually; and their type of swearing also is common to both classes. In truth, there is very little refinement in it, and the habit of swearing in front of

their womenfolk—a habit, unhappily, far too common—is positively disgraceful. Associating for months at a stretch with Australians has the effect of vitiating one's speech terribly, for tricks of expression are the most catching things in the world; and very great care has to be displayed to avoid a slip, and sometimes no little embarrassment is caused by making one on returning to more exacting society.

Australian manners claim our attention next. In one sense these may be traditional, but in another they certainly are not. Good manners in the English sense are conspicuous by their absence. Indeed, the most ordinary courtesies between man and man, and for that matter between man and woman, are not practised, and when practised by strangers are not understood, and are, therefore, ridiculed. Lack of polish is perhaps not surprising in a country where everyone is busy fighting tooth and nail for a living. There is no time for it; but it is hard to agree that Australia is charming to live in "because" manners are free and easy. "Free and easy," let it be understood, does not mean merely omitting to wear a dress suit when asked to dinner; but it includes the freedom of refraining from rising from one's chair when a lady enters the room; the non-necessity of addressing one's seniors as "Sir"; the permission to substitute a nod of the head as greeting for raising one's hat; and indeed all the little courtesies that lend charm to contact with one's fellow men and women:—

courtesies that cost little to perform, and whose performance or non-performance makes such a difference to social intercourse.

Englishmen in Australia are generally most scrupulous in these matters for a few weeks, but they soon find out that their efforts at politeness are put down as affectation or fawning, to be laughed or sneered at, as the case may be. When they realise this, good manners are purposely dropped one by one, which is no gain to the Australians, and bad for the Englishmen, should they ever return home again. For if it is easy to drop the habit of good manners, nothing is more difficult than to resume it again.

Most Englishmen like their friends and acquaintances to be possessed of some physical attraction. It is not essential that they should be good-looking; but a certain charm of expression, or at least fastidiousness in dress and personal habits, is demanded. None of these attributes are to be discovered amongst Australians. I state it as a positive fact that during my six years' residence in Australia I have not seen six good-looking Australian men. A friend once told me that in his opinion "they are not even ugly!" Why this should be I do not know, but it remains a fact that Australia systematically produces ugly men. It is not their mere ugliness that fails to attract; but they add to it a studied slovenliness of attire. In Australia it is not good form to be well dressed; nor is it considered necessary to be careful of one's personal

habits, such as shaving regularly, or keeping one's hair trimmed. On all these points Australians are most lax: they consider them beneath serious attention. At this point a French epigram may not be out of place; it is descriptive, and, in a measure, accurate:

"Cochon de Pays; Pays de Cochons."

## CHAPTER VI

### AUSTRALIAN WOMEN

HERE again we are faced with the local bombastic descriptions. Australian men describe their women as being the most beautiful, charming, and intelligent in the world. It is impossible to agree with them, but one can at least pay a tribute to the good taste that they show in sticking up for their womenfolk, albeit their boast be an idle one.

Unfortunately the men do little more than speak kind words. They certainly do nothing to try and make these excellencies materialise. It is in their treatment of the weaker sex that they show such utter lack of chivalry, and, indeed, such criminal negligence. Australia is a hot country, and in the summer months it is a trying ordeal for a European even to exist in it. The heat is excessively enervating, and the sudden changes to biting cold are most trying to any constitution. And yet Australians deny servants to their wives.

I have already pointed out that the enormous wages demanded by domestic servants and the difficulty of getting efficient girls even at these prices, practically put their employment out of court as regards the majority of families. Then the

few available domestic servants are so extraordinarily independent in their actions, and so excessively democratic in their ideas, that the advantages of their help are outweighed by the disadvantages of their presence. And many women who can afford and would be willing to pay even the extortionate prices demanded refuse to employ domestic servants who behave as if they themselves were the mistresses, and who leave precipitately, without notice, whenever the fancy takes them, or when any fault whatever is found with their work or omissions.

It is worth while pointing out, and amusing to note, that even in this democratic of democratic countries the principle of universal equality is found irksome when brought within the privacy of the home!

The great bulk of Australian homes are carried on entirely by the efforts of the wives and daughters of the family. Where the house is small and there are several daughters, this condition of things may be bearable, although not exactly enviable during the summer months. In the case, however, of a woman who has three or four young children to look after, as well as the housework, cooking, and often washing of clothes as well—and there are very many such cases,—the conditions of life are deplorable, and words cannot be found strong enough to censure adequately the race of men permitting such burdens to be placed on the lives, health, and happiness of their womenfolk.

And to what end? So that the chimera of a White Australia can be upheld for a while longer, and that wages shall be kept at their present high level. These are the only reasons alleged, and they refuse to see that neither reason holds water for a moment.

The obvious remedy for this domestic difficulty is to import foreigners to do the work. A moment's reflection will convince any unprejudiced mind that this would in no wise undermine the White Australia principle, for it would be easy to obtain efficient indentured labour—Chinese or Indians preferably —to be employed solely as domestic servants. They could be signed on for any short term of years, say, from two to five years; and at the expiration of their contracts could be repatriated or signed on again, at the discretion of the authorities.

Admirable men for the work could be obtained at wages within the reach of almost everybody's pocket, and as so few domestic servants are employed, the fear that existing wages would be lowered is idle. Such a scheme could do nothing but good to the whole community, and its adoption is refused for simply frivolous reasons. So strongly is this racial prejudice implanted in the Australian nature, that were a vote of the women taken on this question to-day, the proposals would be thrown out by an overwhelming majority. To their minds all members of the coloured races are lower than the animals—untrustworthy and unclean. I have met Australian women who actually prefer to do their

own washing rather than send it to a Chinese laundry. Were a few good coloured servants introduced, however, they would soon sing a different tune, and wonder how they existed in the old life of drudgery and fatigue for so long.

It is not merely the life of constant exertion that matters so much, for hard work is good for everybody. The evil lies in other directions entirely. If the wife is engaged in menial labour the whole time, what chance has she of reading solid books, keeping up her music, retaining her interest in art or what not, and justifying the claim of being cultured that is so insistently made on her behalf? What chance has she for pleasant social intercourse? And on this latter point, the long distances between houses have also to be taken into consideration. What chance has she even of devoting time to the upbringing of her children?—but of this more later on.

It stands to reason that if she does her duty by the house, all these things are allowed to slide; and without the stimulus of mental interests, and bereft of human friendships, what chance has she to be other than a drudge? If, on the other hand, she elects to keep up these things, as many of them do, the housekeeping is left undone, and she and her family live in a dirty, ill-kept house, and family life as we know it comes to an end. The worst aspect of all, however, is on the question of health. It is not fit for white women to toil relentlessly over the kitchen stove or wash-tub through the

Australian summer. If they do it, Nature takes her revenge.

The Legislature should surely take some care of the health of the nation's women, if only from the point of view of the younger generation. That they omit to do so results in thousands of women, prematurely worn out, giving birth to children whose birthright is to start life with impaired constitutions. In a word, it means decadence of the race. Decadence after less than a century and a half's existence! But such is the fact.

Proof of the rigour of the climate and the effect of the women's slavery in it, is to be had in the low birth-rate obtaining all over Australia. Blue Books show that, whilst the fertility of an Englishwoman coming to Australia and residing there is unimpaired, her daughter has a lesser faculty for producing children, and her granddaughter is still less able to do her duty to the race. Further, and as a natural corollary, were no more whites introduced from outside, the Australian race would disappear within two hundred years. If this does not spell degeneracy, I do not know what does.

I am not inclined to put the whole onus of blame on the lives of toil led by the women, for under any circumstances the climate would take its toll of the less fit. Restraining the faculty for productivity seems a likely method for Nature to employ, until a type should be evolved used to and suited to the peculiar conditions.

It should be recognised by Australian law-makers

that the type is not yet found, and earnest efforts should be made to cope with the problem of producing it. But they are blind to all this. They see their girls become old women at 30, worn out, and "*still giving birth to children*"; little ones who will in their turn marry and hand on still further weakened constitutions to the next generation. I say they see all this, and merely shrug their shoulders, and return to the evergreen occupation of legislating to bolster up wages still higher!

This is a terrible problem for Australians to meet when they do wake up. At present they don't even see that there is a problem to be dealt with. It is one, however, touching the very existence of their race. So much harm has already been done that the consequences are bound to be transmitted for several generations; until, in fact, the weeding-out process of Nature,—the survival of the fittest,—can gradually eliminate the weaker constitutions. Nothing can stop this waste; it is inevitable: but much can be done to prevent further waste in the future. The health of the nation is shocking now, and it can only be brought back to virility by taking care of the womenfolk. As a first step to attaining this change, their bodies must be looked after; and this can be done only by relieving them in some measure of the burden of toil.

Even if this be done, and coloured house-servants become an accomplished fact, Australian women

are being asked to do more than their sisters of other countries. Nature lays heavy burdens on women of all lands, but these burdens become immeasurably heavier when borne in surroundings to which their bodies have not become acclimatised. It is only by the utmost care that they can perform their functions without subsequent harm to their constitutions. And Australian men are to be blamed that this care is lacking.

The folly of their attitude is even harder to comprehend, considering that the embargo on labour reacts in their own homes. It is easy to tell one's wife to do the cooking, washing, and bringing up of children without assistance, but it is not so easy for her to carry out the instructions. There are only a certain number of hours in the day, and these things all take a long time to do. They pay for their folly by an infinity of discomforts. Instead of well-cooked meals they get tinned things—which, by the by, are very much more expensive to buy than fresh meat. Their clean clothes are not always ready when they want them, and the house they live in is often far from spick and span. Then many men habitually get up and light the fire in the morning, and it is not seldom that they cook the breakfast as well. In the country there is always the wood to chop up and the water to draw and carry to the house.

In doing these things efficiently and cheerfully, besides helping to wash up the dishes in the evening, and helping in many other small tasks, one

cannot but praise Australian men; for, in this at least, they prove themselves good husbands; but one's admiration turns to exasperation when one remembers that it is through their own idiotic legislation that these things have to be done at all by either husband or wife.

Few married Englishmen would bring out their wives if they knew the conditions of life under which they would be compelled to live. And fewer still would risk going home to England for a wife and bringing her out to the hardest conditions of colonial life: the certainty of recrimination would be too great. The alternative of marrying an Australian woman is dealt with fully later on; but meanwhile let us consider the general characteristics of Australian women as they appear to English eyes.

As to the claims made that they are the most beautiful women in the world, I have little to say. It is indisputable that many Australian girls are very pretty in their extreme youth: certainly not prettier than English or French girls, but still worthy of the highest appreciation. It is equally indisputable that they age prematurely—much earlier, in fact, than their European sisters. Whether this is due to the hard mode of life, unsuitable climatic conditions, or earlier emancipation from the restraints of parental control, or all these reasons together, it is hard to say. However, the fact remains that at 25 years of age, or in many cases even earlier, the Australian girl has said "good-

bye '' to her youth and fresh looks for ever. At 30 she is as tired and careworn as are most English women of 45. There is very little buoyancy of spirits in Australian women at any age: for the climate, the freest mixing of the sexes, and unprecedented liberty of home life, conspire together to strip away the illusions of youth at a very early age. To all intents and purposes they are grown up at 14; and reach maturity and almost complete independence from parental control at 16 years of age.

Although often possessed of great prettiness for a time, I have not seen six cases in which this physical charm remains beyond the early twenties. One nearly universal point of deterioration is in their teeth. These start to go almost as soon as the second set appears, and it is the most common thing in the world to see girls of 18 or 20 with sets of false teeth. When great care is taken this may be avoided for some years longer, but it is a very rare occurrence to see an Australian girl over 20 with even a passably pretty mouth. The loss of teeth is so common as to have ceased to cause remark now. Indeed, Australian women do not consider that false teeth are less charming than real ones; and the men, being in the same boat, view it with similar philosophy. Whether this trait is caused by incipient ill-health, or through lack of cleanliness, I do not know. In all probability both reasons are more or less responsible.

The hair, another great attribute to beauty,

suffers equal ravages. In early youth a girl may have a lovely crop of prettily coloured hair; but within a few years the sun has bleached away the individual tint, and the dry air has thinned it out terribly. And when she reaches maturity, all sorts of artificial aids are required to make it nice to look at. Lack of good constitutions probably plays a big part in this question also, for any ill-health immediately registers itself in the appearance of the hair.

Complexions, too, in the English sense, simply do not exist. This also is not surprising. The terrific temperatures of the summer enervate the system and make the blood thin. Besides, when the thermometer is over 90 deg. it is impossible to sleep; so late hours become a necessity, and this adds a weary expression to the face and makes dark rings under the eyes. Instead of a pink, healthy colour suitable to young girls, Australia imparts a tired white colour most pitiful to see. Consequently recourse is had to the colour box and powder puff, aids to beauty used by practically all Australian women. It is impossible to maintain a good skin in Australia, the desiccating north winds take good care of that; whilst the constant glare imparts a strained look to the eyes consequent on ceaseless puckerings.

Their dress, however, makes up for a lot of deficiencies. Australian girls certainly have the knack of dressing themselves tastefully. Not all of them, of course, but enough to impress the visitor

that they endeavour to keep up with the times. A walk down Collins Street in Melbourne, or George Street in Sydney, will always show a number of really pretty dresses, and at parties or dances one is struck with the contrast the women present to the men in this matter. This fact is the more surprising considering the enormous prices asked for wearing apparel in Australia.

I do not feel competent to offer many remarks on their figures, as I have not studied anatomy or physical culture sufficiently to express valuable opinions on this phase of feminine beauty. At the same time it is permissible to note that the slim, lissom, well-built English girl has no counterpart in Australia. The Australian seems to mature quicker, giving the impression of being fully developed at 16. Later in life she looks less shapely than an Englishwoman, and often develops a positively flabby appearance. I can offer no reason for this feature, but simply note down the facts as they would appear to any passing eye.

Of their walk I can be more precise. There is no freedom in it, such as one admires in European women. It is not so much a walk as a waddle. With hands glued to their sides, and every muscle apparently held tense, they pass down the street wobbling from side to side. It is positively ludicrous until one gets used to it. Decidedly Australian women are best sitting down.

Education generally ceases at 18, and in many cases even earlier. There is the choice of returning

home and taking a share of the housework, or going into an office or shop. In the latter case the girl becomes *ipso facto* her own mistress, and in the former she awaits marriage to complete her independence. In both cases all study, save in exceptional instances, is definitely given up, the result being that Australian girls are rarely well read or capable of carrying on a conversation save on the most ordinary topics.

Many Australian conventions seem very strange to English eyes at first. One is the free use of Christian names between friends and strangers. After the first introduction girls are seldom addressed, or expect to be addressed, by their surnames proceeded by the conventional "Miss." Hearing this in operation for the first time causes one to think that the manners are very free; however, it is the fashion, and has to be accepted. Another curious point is the absolute freedom of the girls in accepting invitations to go to theatres or other entertainments, escorted by men acquaintances and without any chaperone. Quite young girls are allowed to do this without any question of propriety being raised by their parents. In fact, no restraint is placed on their liberty of action, except in very exceptional cases, where the parents happen to be very strict, and in these cases the restriction is considered unwarrantably harsh.

Perhaps this freedom gives a sense of self-reliance not possessed by our English girls, but at the same time it takes away many of the charming attributes

of youth; notably fresh innocence; and allows a full realisation of sex at a much earlier age than seems desirable according to English codes.

Still, taking everything into consideration, some Australian women are very good sorts. They are adaptable, and it is surprising to see how they assimilate new ideas and acquire new habits when placed in a favourable atmosphere. Although it is always a very risky proceeding, I would a hundred times rather see an Englishman married to an Australian woman; than see an Englishwoman married to an Australian man. In the first case, happiness is not always unattainable; but in the second, it is nearly impossible.

Australian women are much more sinned against than sinning, and being possessed of very receptive minds, would do much to raise the tone of the nation if they were only given a fair chance.

Australian men being what they are, this chance is not likely to be given.

## CHAPTER VII

### AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN

In the preceding chapters I have endeavoured to give a fairly clear account of the various factors that play parts in the upbringing of the children. For, after all, the hopes of every nation are centred in the rising generation. It will be readily recognised that the breeding of a suitable type of child, and subsequently providing a suitable training, means everything for the future progress; indeed, the very existence of Australians. The men and women of to-day matter little when weighed in the balance against the rising generation. Their problems, hardships, and miseries will count for nothing fifty years hence. The critical time for Australia has not yet arrived; when it does arrive, that is when Australians are challenged for the possession of their country by a foreign race: how will the young generation respond to the call? Were the challenge received to-day, foreign domination would be an accomplished fact in a week, but for the protection of the British Fleet. Although Australians are "leading the world" in almost everything one can name, they have been curiously blind as to their military weakness.

Even now they are scarcely alive to their danger. I have asked many of them what would happen in case of invasion. The answer is invariably the same, "Let 'em all come; they will be glad enough to get away when we have once finished with them." This would be a bold answer to make even if they had a trained force; for the enormous coast-board of Australia would permit of a hostile army landing and establishing itself at a hundred different spots, difficult of access to the Australians, before any preventive steps could be taken. And with the small population in existence at present, even the forced military training, when it has been in operation for some years, can only provide very inadequate protection against a large invasion. At present, without any force whatever in existence, their boasted security is a dream; and that they do not believe in their danger merely shows a pitiful ignorance of European and Asiatic advance and aspirations. Surely the recent Turkish *débâcle* should show the results of military unpreparedness against a determined energy. The Compulsory Training scheme recently inaugurated is certainly a step in the right direction, but its real value lies in the discipline and physical training the youth will receive, rather than in any gain of real military efficiency.

England cannot be responsible for the integrity of Australia indefinitely, especially as she has ceased to have any voice in the government of the country, or even any power to protect English capital in-

vested in it. No! the sooner Australians realise that defence is a burden they must learn to shoulder themselves, the better it will be for themselves and everybody else. This burden is yet another rod in pickle for the rising generation. Let us look at them, and see whether or not they are likely to accept and cope with their responsibilities.

Their fathers have lived and died under the ægis of British protection, and have spent their political energy in working out elaborate Socialistic schemes, which have had the effect of largely isolating trade within the Commonwealth. They have told themselves and each other that Australians are a race apart and superior to the rest of the world; and as their attention has never been forced away from themselves by invasion from a foreign race, they have gradually ceased to realise the existence of the rest of the world, except in a shadowy way and as not affecting themselves, and they have certainly never desired to, or even seen the necessity of studying foreign politics and policies. Their horizons have been bounded from North, South, East, and West by Australia alone, and to be an Australian was the only necessity. All these influences have been carefully passed down to their children.

Their mothers, on the other hand, have had too many troubles and hardships of their own to have been able to have time or inclination to exercise much restraining influence or give much training, except in their extreme youth; and, being hard at

work most of the time, they are forced to let their children run wild. So the early life of the Australian child lacks much of the loving care and strict regimen considered so essential by English parents.

Of course, this all reacts on the parents. Where there is no supervision there can be no authority, and where there is no authority there can be no respect. The behaviour of Australian children to their parents is simply scandalous, and one cannot blame the children.

Let us commence at the beginning.

Australian homes are uniformly small, and, except in very exceptional cases, of only one storey. A nursery is, therefore, quite out of the question for most families, and even if there be one, or if one can be extemporised, it is of very little service, as there is no nursemaid to see that the children come to no harm or to look after them at their meals.

The natural result is that the children spend their whole time running round and getting in everybody's way, with very occasional restraint when their mothers find time to attend to them for a moment; generally when they are mischievously interfering with their mother's work. Time is only found to give an angry reproof and an order which is not enforced, because to enforce it means catching the children, which, in its turn, is often no easy matter. Practically, there is no supervision from the mothers, and until they go to school nine-

tenths of the Australian children run absolutely wild.

Lack of servants and small homes necessitate the children taking all their meals with the grown-up members of the family, and sitting in the same room with them afterwards. This means that they hear all the conversation of their elders. Another factor to ensure this is the method of house building, which allows that almost everything done in one room is distinctly audible in all the other rooms in the house. Proverbially "little pitchers have long ears," and this is exemplified in the Australian children by their lack of "childishness." Constant contact with their parents leaves little chance of their retaining the traits generally associated with childhood, and indeed one finds the minds of Australian children curiously precocious. Some people consider that this lost childhood is a great handicap to Australians. The habit of late hours is acquired early, and through the fault or misfortune of the parents. If there is nobody to leave in charge at home, the children have to be taken wherever the parents go; whether it be to church or to a concert, to a garden party or a dance, if it entails a ten-mile drive home and getting to bed at 2 o'clock in the morning, the children have to go too.

It may be necessary, but it is not the way to bring up children.

Before they even go to school they have learnt to flout authority, and are on more than a bowing acquaintance with the habits and pleasures of their

elders. As a very natural consequence they are cheeky, didactic, and opinionated.

School merely provides a repetition of the home training, with, if anything, more freedom. Australian State schools, to which the majority of children of both classes go, provide education for both boys and girls. Little, if any, supervision is exercised during the actual school and play-time, in which boys and girls of all ages mix freely together; and none at all when school is over for the day. A more pernicious system could scarcely be called into existence. As may be easily foreseen, these State schools are hotbeds of vice; and it is safe to say that no boy or girl attending one of them for a year has anything to learn about the relation of the sexes. It is experimental realism. The parents know perfectly well what goes on in these schools, and yet one hears of no protests, and the children continue to go and become infected in the poisonous atmosphere.

It will be remarked with perfect justice that Australian schools do not possess a monopoly of questionable practices. Of course, in every school all over the world there must be, and is, a percentage of undesirable characters; but elsewhere than Australia some check is put on the bad influence these children are bound to exercise over some of their companions, by a strict supervision of every hour of the day both at school and in the children's homes. No such check is enforced in Australia, and the boys and girls have every opportunity to meet

unobserved and unquestioned after school hours. Moreover, in other countries the evil is confined to mischievous talk; as no opportunities exist for further progress in depravity; and in nine cases out of ten even this is dropped in course of time, as the children grow to mature minds and learn to set a correct value on such matters. Unhappily this is not the case in Australia. Opportunities are not lacking for matters to progress from talking to the experimental stage. Many young children are drawn into the toils, simply through the bad example of elder ones, through curiosity or in the spirit of emulation and without knowing that they are being more than naughty. The State school system has a lot to answer for.

The lack of differentiation of the classes at these schools may be in accordance with the principles of democracy, but its effect on the children's subsequent outlook on life is not good: it puts the employer of the future on an equality with the employee of the future, gives them the same education and points of view on life, and then turns them out into the world to take opposite sides in the class war between Capital and Labour. The fact that they have been on Christian-naming terms in their youth only makes the conflict a personal one, and, consequently, more bitter.

Both boys and girls are considered as being grown-up when they leave school, and are not expected to account for their time or actions any longer. The climate, again, plays a big part in this,

for the great temperatures preclude much pleasure from being found in the houses. In the summer, at least, Australians consider their homes more in the light of places to eat and sleep in than in the English sense of the word "home." One cannot blame them, for it is not much fun sitting night after night in a stifling house, being bitten to death by mosquitoes. Reading is impossible, it is too hot to play games, to talk even is a bore. They take the line of least resistance, and go out. Thus the intimacies of the school-days are kept up, with very doubtful results in many cases. Clubs give another method of killing time to many, but it is doubtful if habitual club or "pub" loafing is a healthy occupation for young men.

Many picture-shows also claim enormous nightly patronage from other sections. These shows do no harm of themselves, but they afford youthful couples reasonable excuse for stopping out late at night, and once the excuse has become habitual and accepted without question the nightly jaunts become habitual, . . . but the picture-shows are not always visited.

To sum up, one has a nation of children brought up in the hardest kind of homes, with mothers and fathers either incapable or ignorant of taking in hand their upbringing. From earliest infancy the possibility of childishness is crushed by circumstances, whilst self-reliance allied with ignorance are fostered together. Every liberty of action is allowed to both sexes, including that of mixing

without restraint the one with the other, from the earliest ages. They are exposed to every temptation without warning or check, and are not even trained to respect advice from elders when it is given them. They despise not only the inefficient parents they know, but the rest of the world which they do not know. And still Australians contend that their younger generation is destined to teach the world.

In truth they will teach the world: but it will be to what heights folly can go, and to what depths ignorance and degeneracy can lead.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SOCIAL EVIL

I AM aware that this subject is seldom discussed in books, as the theme is not considered a fit one for general discussion; nevertheless, it seems to me that a survey of any race of people is incomplete without some reference to this side of life, a side that everywhere has at least some influence on the rest of the community; and it is the wish to point out the dimensions and trend of this influence in Australia that necessitates the writing of this chapter.

Without expressing any opinion on the morality or immorality of the matter, I shall endeavour to state the necessary facts in as unobjectionable a manner as possible.

The social evil has been in existence as far back in the world as history can take us; it has continued right through the ages, and is with us to-day. If it had been a problem capable of human solution it would have been solved centuries ago. As it has not been solved, there can be no question that the evil will continue to exist just so long as the human race remains on earth, or until the race has evolved into a higher kind of beings in whom evil passions

and selfishness do not exist; both of which contingencies seem far enough off. Meanwhile it has always been, and still remains, one of the most baffling problems to statesmen of every nation. Experience has shown that no human power can stop the traffic, for every expedient has been tried and proved a failure, times without number. Exhortations of preachers, appeals to self-respect, even the death penalty—they have all failed. There always has been, and ever is, a constant demand for vice: and where there is demand are always found those ready to supply. It is an ineradicable side of human nature.

Now, broadly speaking, there are two courses open to society in dealing with this question. Realising that it cannot be stopped, society can recognise the evil and segregate it, thereby always keeping it within certain dimensions, and, above all, retaining the power to supervise and control: or it can refuse to accord any official recognition, save to pass laws against it, and enforce these laws more or less severely, as the public conscience dictates from time to time.

It is well known that the former system is practised on the Continent and the latter in England. Australia, in every State, follows the lead of the Mother Country.

Now I do not propose to enter upon a discussion as to the wisdom of the English system as regards England, as opinions are divided largely on the matter, and there are many arguments to support

both sides. A few facts, however, are worthy of note.

The strongest opposition to Government recognition and proper obligatory medical supervision is displayed by the religious professing people of all sects. Their objection is that recognition is tantamount to legalising vice, and thereby according it a certain status, which is in entire opposition to all religious ideals.

If it were merely a question of traffic in vice, this view would be absolutely unanswerable, for whilst recognition is in abeyance, women engaged in the trade are classed as vagrants; their gains are held to be dishonestly earned, and the penalties of social wrecking which invariably follows may be expected to act in some cases at least as deterrents to engaging in the life. In fact, under the present system they become social pariahs, a disgrace to themselves and the community that contains them; and the penalty they pay is in losing forever the privileges of honour and mutual respect shared by the rest of the community. Whereas any legislation entailing supervision would at once raise prostitution to the rank of "profession," and those engaged in it could claim to be performing a function necessary to the State, for if the State accorded its sanction the trade could claim to be useful and indispensable—a mischievous contention tantamount to placing a premium on vice, if not actually raising it to a plane of usefulness alongside a legalised and church-sanctioned marriage.

It is, however, not merely a question of traffic in vice that has to be considered. There are other penalties besides social degradation to be feared. These penalties are the diseases that walk hand in hand with vice. To ignore vice means to ignore the existence of these diseases, and to do this, risks tainting a large section of the community that is not habitually vicious; and through them tainting their children.

This consideration is the argument of those favouring legal recognition. Their contention is that of the two evils,—giving a status to vice, or risking the wholesale dissemination of disease,—the former is the lesser; for by insisting on registration by all persons engaging in the calling, regular medical inspection can be made by Government officials, and all cases of disease can be isolated as soon as they are discovered, with excellent results to the public health.

Another argument supporting this view, and one frequently urged, is that in the absence of regular medical inspection there is no restraint on persons infected with diseases from continuing to exercise their calling, and that they do so continue, despite the menace to the health of their clients. It is pointed out that clients are shy of running such a risk, and as an alternative seek out pure women and deliberately seduce them under spurious promises of marriage; and it is agreed that this wholesale seduction would be stamped out by providing a professional element easily accessible, and

of a type without risk of infection; and that such a professional element should be called into being, if only for the protection of the rest of the women of the community.

There is both truth and falsehood in this view. Without doubt vicious men would avail themselves of the provision, for the reason of its medical guarantee and easy accessibility; and that in preference to attempting seduction, which would demand more time, and also hold many risks over the heads of those engaging in it. So it is quite reasonable to expect that much evil would be averted from the general public; but that it would entirely or even nearly stamp out seduction is too much to hope for, the truth of which contention can easily be proved by examining the statistics of illegitimacy of countries using this system.

The question then crystallises itself into the query, "Is the gain to the community in lessening the number of seductions, and granting a larger immunity from diseases, sufficiently large to warrant the loss of moral tone sustained by recognising a class of professional prostitutes?"

This question I shall not attempt to answer, but I would point out that although there are stringent laws in England forbidding the existence of disorderly houses, these laws are not strictly enforced, except from time to time when some circumstance or other stirs up a wave of popular indignation, and demands an example. So, in a modified way, and excepting the enforcement of medical inspection,

the situation approximates to the Continental system. That is to say, disorderly houses are not raided by the police so long as they are conducted in a manner that causes no public scandal or gives no annoyance to the rest of the neighbourhood; although their existence may be well known to the police. And further, when a raid is ordered by the authorities, it is invariably the badly conducted houses that suffer.

Also, very little is done to prevent the free lances from conducting their calling safe from persecution, if they do not flaunt themselves objectionably in the public eye and make their presence too obvious to overlook.

This laxity of administration doubtless goes a long way towards minimising general seduction in England; as do certain features such as climate, careful upbringing of children, and the comparatively late age of arrival at maturity. All these circumstances conspire together as defences for the girlhood of England. Until maturity is reached there is little fear of girls falling of their own volition, and the penal code provides another safeguard to cover this period of youth.

The time of greatest danger occurs between the age that maturity is reached and the age that girls realise the terrible consequences to health and happiness inseparable from a life of vice; and have gained sufficient mental balance to render them safe from temptation. This period is, of course, of different duration with each girl, but English

parents are for the most part fully alive to the dangers, and take very good care that their daughters are carefully guarded during these critical years of development. Very little liberty is allowed, the choice of male friends is most carefully scrutinised, and no evenings are spent away from home, except when the destination is known and approved of; and then a suitable and trustworthy escort is insisted on, and a time limit fixed for the outing. The climate certainly helps enforcement of this régime, for, save during a few weeks of the summer, evenings could not be spent either pleasantly or profitably out of doors.

Taking all these things into consideration, it is reasonable to state that seductions in England do not occur in vastly larger numbers than are absolutely indispensable to meet the necessary and inevitable demand. Also the large importation of foreign women to England must not be overlooked, for this lessens the number of Englishwomen engaged in vice; and the recent legislation against the White Slave traffic has already largely lessened the export of English women to foreign countries. So, putting on one side the difficulty of instituting obligatory medical inspection under the present system, it is a moot point whether a change to the Continental system would be of benefit to England or not.

Now let us examine the position in Australia, and see how it approximates to that in England.

As I have already pointed out, Australian

methods are almost identical with those of England in the statute books; but there are many modifying influences that have the effect of entirely changing the results of these laws when seen in practice.

Australia is possessed of many rabid "social purity reformers," or, in their own descriptive phraseology, "wowsers," who spend all their time in stirring up popular feelings to the disgrace of vice being allowed to flourish in the community, and urging that the law should be enforced with the utmost rigour to prevent and stamp it out. They succeed in giving their views great publicity, and, as a result, disorderly houses are practically non-existent, and vagrants are mercilessly haled in front of the magistrates and fined whenever it is possible to obtain sufficient evidence to procure conviction. From the same promptings, no foreign importations are allowed that can possibly be stopped, the law against "undesirable immigrants" aiding to achieve this prevention. Then procuration is hounded down remorselessly, and, when discovered, is penalised heavily:—all the usual avenues of the traffic are closed as far as may be by stringent laws enforced by ever-watchful police. The result is that such professional element as does exist is entirely unorganised, constantly on the move, and most difficult of access to clients, not to mention the lack of medical supervision existing in it.

The class of kept-woman, too,—possibly the least objectionable form of vice from the point of view of the whole community,—is made impossible from

similar reasons. The Purists insist that it is desirable for them to be married to their lovers whenever sufficient pressure can be brought to bear to force it. So breach of promise cases where misconduct has been proved are penalised heavily, and affiliation claims are nearly always won by the plaintiffs even when there is large doubt as to the sole paternity.

Altogether, Australia affords but a thorny path for professional vice to tread.

It must not be thought, however, that immorality is stamped out or even lessened by these precautions. Rather the contrary. The demand is there just the same, and difficulties merely add a spur to desire. Where there is no embargo on vice, the public spends little time in thinking about it, for desire can always be satisfied by spending a few shillings; and when viewed from this commercial standpoint, disgust steps in as a wholesome deterrent. Not so when it is hedged in with every possible and carefully thought-out restriction. It then becomes an *idée fixe*, and, once that point is reached by the man in the street, it is a bad look-out for the general morality of the community.

All other avenues being closed, it falls to the married women and the unmarried girls living at home to supply the deficiency. As regards the former—who provide the one class giving comparative safety, for blackmailing is out of the question, and secrecy is as essential for the woman as for the man;—Australian married women are courted ceaselessly from this point of view, and it is small

matter for wonder if many of them prove unfaithful to their husbands. With the latter, there are more risks and more difficulties, from the forced marriage to the affiliation case; but these very risks have the effect of doubling the number of seductions; for the men resent coercion to marry their mistresses, and therefore do not remain as lovers to one girl for long. Once they have succeeded in seducing a girl, they do all they can to prevent her from getting a hold over them sufficient to force a marriage; and they achieve this by immediately courting somebody else. It thus degenerates into a general post of the most undignified nature. The great liberty acceded to girls of all ages makes all this perfectly easy, and every opportunity is eagerly availed of for promiscuous immorality. In truth, the "mot" "Australia is a country where the flowers have no scent, the birds no song, and the women no virtue" is not entirely without foundation.

Australian men either do not demand purity in the women they intend to marry, or they are extraordinarily blind to the consequences of their own intrigues. Englishmen are cast out of decent society if they endeavour to tamper with the daughters or sisters of their friends: and, indeed, the thought of such behaviour does not even occur to most men—it is against all codes of decency, and beneath contempt. The Australian point of view is different: if they be not found out, everything is in order; if they be, marriage adjusts the position.

The number of forced marriages from this cause in Australia is simply stupendous. It is not too much to say that it equals the number of spontaneous alliances; and there still remains a large list of illegitimacy unredeemed at the last moment, and in full public view.

All this is bad, but the resultant spread of contagious diseases is worse. The taint permeates all through the country, and gets worse daily. It has now reached such an acute stage that it is considered a national calamity in medical circles, and public opinion has forced the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the matter and make suggestions for reform. When these suggestions are submitted, it is more than doubtful if they will be acted on, as the Purists are too numerous and influential to be gainsaid.

It is tending to the formation of an utterly vicious and degenerated population with constitutions weakened by hereditary, if not direct, disease. And all this through the legislators refusing to realise a few fundamental facts of human nature and climate.

In the generality of cases, Englishmen demand purity as the first virtue in their wives both before and after marriage. Therefore purity is consistently practised by Englishwomen; for, after all, the women are what the men make them, in matters of this sort at any rate. Australians, on the other hand, are too prone to shrug their shoulders at purity and modesty, holding, if not actually

expressing, the opinion that the women should have the same freedom as the men before marriage. Well, they get what they want, and that is wives of far from spotless purity.

It would be absurd to say that all Australian women are either impure or diseased. They are not. Purity, however, is much rarer in Australia and much harder to retain, than in many other countries. And those who do retain it need give no thanks to other than their own good taste and sense of propriety, for they receive no help from either Australian men or Australian legislators.

## CHAPTER IX

### AUSTRALIAN WORKING MEN: THEIR STATUS IN AUSTRALIA

THE Australian working man comes next for inspection, and he affords a most interesting study. Passing over the inevitable boast that he is more intelligent, a better workman, a more useful and enlightened member of society than any other workman in the world, and all the rest of the tiresome rigmarole, he still presents many unique features, if not quite such charming ones as he imagines.

Truly Australia is the working man's Paradise. No other of its much-quoted names fits it with such splendid accuracy. It is the working man's Paradise *par excellence*, and no other country can hope to rob it of its laurels in this respect for many years to come.

Everything in or out of the country under Australian influences is subordinated to the working man's wishes and prejudices. He is supreme, and rules the country with a heavy hand. Legislation is not passed for the good of the country, for the benefit of the community at large, or from consideration of any careful policy of expansion; it

is invariably passed in such a way as to be palatable to the working man. He is the spoilt pet of all Australian Parliamentary parties.

There is no party in Australia corresponding to the Unionists at home. The Australian Liberal Party holds similar views to the English Labour Party. The Australian Labour Party in Parliament is occupied in passing Socialistic measures of the type advocated by stump speech orators in Hyde Park, and is being prodded on the whole time by the Labour Party outside Parliament who are Syndicalists. Altogether, the picture they make teaching the world in politics is a most entertaining one for onlookers.

The humorous point of the situation to-day lies in the financial position. The Labour Party in power, and the Labour Party out of power, vie with each other in their attacks on Capital. It is a scandalous thing, they say, that so many thousand pounds of Australian money should be disbursed annually in paying interest on English loans, when the money would be so much better employed in ameliorating the hard lot of the Australian working man, and they proceed to pass laws penalising Capital as much as they possibly can. At the same time they are in desperate straits for more money to meet various contingencies, and endeavour to float further loans in England: when these loans are not subscribed cheerfully, as, for instance, in the case of the recent South Australian loan, 75 per cent. of which was left on the underwriter's

hands, they rail against the English capitalist as a close-fisted miser destitute of any imperial principles.

Any comments to Australians on the extraordinary position occupied by Labour in their country causes a shrug of the shoulders, and evokes the reply that Labour difficulties and problems are equally pressing in every other country in the world, and that it is only a matter of time before everything will be adjusted for the mutual benefit of everybody. They point out that every country has its demagogues, and seek to show that Australia is possessed of by no means the most virulent type.

The answer to this is, that other countries certainly have demagogues who do a lot of harm in disseminating dangerous propaganda amongst ignorant people and causing much discontent, but these men are, after all, mere nobodies, without any real influence, and incapable of inflicting great national disaster except perhaps during the course of a revolution. Elsewhere but in Australia they are confined to blatant talk, and at the worst to engineering a few strikes that generally fail of their purpose, and leave the men concerned poorer in pocket if wiser in head. The position in Australia is the very reverse.

The complete lack of hard and fast lines of demarcation permits the demagogues and agitators to gain a footing in many places that are absolutely closed to them in other countries; and consequently invests their words with a significance, and them-

selves with an importance highly dangerous to the interests of the general community. In this country of social equality, unskilled labour is considered on a par of dignity with skilled labour; just as trade is on social equality with the professions. All influences that act as a restraint to the application of these opinions, such as capital and vested interests of any kind, are anathema.

Viewed through the lens of these ideas, it is not so difficult to understand how a Labour Government came into being, as it would be were we to examine the position from ordinary standards. If ignorance be no deterrent, and fitness no serious consideration; if no standards of excellence or merit exist or count, certainly a country does well to entrust its legislation to the least intellectual class of its people. Such an action will assuredly guarantee plenty of freak legislation, besides affording much amusement to the rest of the world. Australia has certainly done her utmost in both these directions during the last three years.

Let us look into this side of the question for a moment. Each Australian State has a little Parliament of its own, and since the Union, there is an additional House called the Federal Parliament. All these Legislatures have been dominated by large Labour majorities until quite recently.

All Labour members in both State and Federal Parliaments are nominated, piloted through the elections, and given their fighting platform by an unofficial body known as the Caucus. They owe to

this Caucus their very political being, and any disobedience to its behests is easily punishable by withholding support at the next elections. Now, politics as a profession is very well paid both directly and indirectly in Australia, and Labour Members, once in Parliament, do not relish losing the suffrage of their party, and, consequently, their seats: it is too much to lose, for once out of the House they soon sink into the obscurity of day labourers again, or at the best become Union agitators, strike fomenters, etc. To retain the confidence of their party they are not asked a great deal, they need not even display any intelligence. Their one real business is to vote. And vote they do.

It is difficult to define the Caucus, as it is a secret body, whose membership list is jealously guarded from the public view. Nobody save the Labour politicians and Trades Hall officials know its real composition; but its policy is well known, and one can conjecture the rest. In all probability the Members of Labour Cabinets, if not all Labour Members holding seats in Parliament, belong to and take part in Caucus proceedings; and it is pretty certain that all the large Unions are represented as well. Be the details as they may, the organisation is one of enormous power, having succeeded in centralising all Labour interests in one comprehensive society. Not only does the Caucus dictate all Labour activities in Parliament, but it also engineers and fosters strikes, subsequently

using its influence in Parliament to prevent legal consequences from overtaking the strikers.

To such an extent are Members of Parliament dominated by the Caucus, that even election pledges are not held sacred, when orders conflicting with these pledges are received from the secret body. Cabinet Ministers as well as the rank and file are under the whip, and nothing is more amusing to the onlooker than to see the Prime Minister make sudden and frequent changes of front on important questions, eating to-day the words he uttered last week, and all without the least explanation as to the cause of his changed views.

Australians have ceased to be amused or irritated at this now. They realise its significance, and yet seem content enough to be ruled by a secret society with puppet Ministers and Parliaments as its mouthpiece. Labour Members in Parliament accept their thraldom stoically. They are more than content to accept a large salary in return for unquestioning obedience to orders. Indeed, they make no pretence of being interested in the proceedings of the House, with the exception of scrupulous care in recording their votes. Whilst the Opposition is debating on a measure, the Labour Members retire to the billiard-rooms or reading-rooms until the bell warns them that it is time to go and vote. Truly there is no premium on intelligence in Australian Labour politics.

The only restraining influences on Labour legislation is the Constitution, which is guarded by the

Federal High Court. Mercifully there have been level-headed men sitting on this Court as judges, and despite vituperation, slander, and misrepresentation, they have given judgment after judgment on constitutional lines. Nothing in Australia is worthy of more appreciation than the loyal behaviour of these gentlemen, of whom Sir Samuel Griffiths is the chief.

Needless to say Labour politicians are chafing at the great restraint opposed to their unconstitutional legislation by the High Court, and they will not rest until this restraint is taken away. And in this connection it is worthy of note that recent appointments to the High Court Bench have included several gentlemen whose names are unidentified with Liberal interests.

However, the simplest method of nullifying the adverse decisions of the High Court is to change the Constitution; and Labour politicians are straining every nerve to achieve this. The method employed is to submit certain amendments to the Constitution for consideration by the electors in the form of Referendums. Far-reaching amendments were submitted just over two years ago, and, fortunately for the country, they were defeated. These same amendments, with only slight revision, were again submitted in May of this year. This time they were again defeated.

The Labour Government's action in bringing forward these proposals again was in obedience to the resolution of the Inter-State Labour Conference

held at Hobart in 1912. And it was further resolved at that Conference that even in case of a second defeat, they would continue to bring forward the same proposals at every opportunity until the electors are forced at length to accept them from very weariness.

They are absolutely determined that their amendments shall become law, cost what it may. And become law they will sooner or later, without any doubt whatever. Although the proposals were negatived by the electors, the polling results were not published, and it is therefore probable that the majority against them was not large.

We must now have a look at these amendments and see just how far their acceptance will play into Labour hands.

First we must remember that prior to Federation each Australian State was completely self-governing, and that each State therefore controlled its own finances, and made laws to deal with its own particular domestic problems; in short, each was quite free to work out its own salvation without considering or being considered by its neighbours.

Federation was never intended to interfere with this freedom, and had it been proposed with any idea of trammelling any State, it could never have been accepted. Centralisation of State powers in the Federal Parliament was most carefully guarded against in the draft of the Federal Constitution; as this very possibility of Federal encroachment was considered the only danger in accepting Unions.

The Federal Parliament was constituted to deal with national problems that could not be coped with by any one State Legislature, and for this purpose its value is undoubted. For it to meddle with petty local affairs would be quite another affair, and could be of no possible gain to anybody save the Socialists.

Without the power to dominate everything and everybody of all and every State by the Federal Parliament, Socialists could deal only with each State separately in their nationalisation schemes, which is tantamount to saying that they could never succeed in their aims. Once vest all the powers in a Central Government, however, and their difficulties are at an end. There would be no High Court to control, or the High Court would be gagged, and the dissentient voice of one or even all the States through the State Parliaments could be ignored without danger, and on strictly constitutional lines. This is what we have to remember whilst reading over the Labour amendments to the Constitution.

There were six amendments proposed in all. Let us take them in order.

## CHAPTER X

### AUSTRALIAN WORKING MEN : THEIR POLITICS

**1. Trade and commerce, with other countries and among the States ; but not including trade and commerce upon railways, the property of a State, except so far as it is trade or commerce with other countries or among the States.**

The old Constitution defined the sphere of action of the Federal and States Parliaments in this connection perfectly plainly. Each State retained control of the business transactions of its own citizens, whilst these transactions were confined to their own State. Directly the transactions overlapped into other States, the control passed out naturally to the Federal Parliament. Beyond this all imperial and foreign trade and commerce was, of course, under Federal control.

The proposed amendment would make all the difference in the world. Remember first what a vast field the one heading "Trade and Commerce" comprises. It includes every business transaction that takes place in the country or in connection with the country. Navigation, shipping, railways, professions, businesses, shops ; and especially hours of labour and rates of pay : they are all covered.

Now give the Federal Parliament power to legislate on all or any of these branches at will, over all or any of the States, and this over the heads of the States Parliaments, and see what the result would be. Two sets of laws would control the same matters in the same country, until such time as the Federal Parliament had completely absorbed control. In the meantime, and pending this event, wholesale litigation would be the rage. Without doubt the intermediate stage would be one of long duration, for every Federal encroachment would be tested fiercely in the Law Courts by each and every State affected. Altogether it is perfectly evident that such a step should be taken only to secure great results, for wantonly to plunge the country into a slough of litigation and legislative uncertainty would be a folly beyond even irresponsible Labour politicians.

However, they do hope for great results by passing this measure. It is the first step towards achieving their Nationalisation of Industries scheme, by which they hope to attain Utopia for the working classes.

Their powerful Union organisations are already there to force up wages to almost any height by means of strikes, and the country is still able to keep above bankruptcy point, by means of passing on the increase of cost from producers to middlemen and from middlemen to the consuming public. The purchasing power of money, however, is lowered with each heightening of wages, and labour is

penalised in common with everybody else. Nationalisation would overcome this difficulty, for if they were able to fix the price of distribution as well as control the cost of labour by law, the door to all the money in the country would be open, and they could plunder to their hearts' content.

This is the real meaning of amendment Number one.

Amendment Number two is nearly as far-reaching.

**2. Corporations, including :—(*a*) the creation, dissolution, regulation, and control of Corporations ; (*b*) Corporations formed under the law of a State, including their dissolution, regulation, and control, but not including Municipal or Governmental Corporations, or any Corporation formed solely for religious, charitable, scientific, or artistic purposes, and not for the acquisition of gain by the Corporation or its members ; and (*c*) foreign Corporations, including their regulation and control.**

It must be explained that the word "Corporation" in the amendment refers to Joint Stock, Co-operative and other public Companies, and not to Trusts and Combines, which are dealt with in one of the other amendments.

The law certainly wants strengthening with regard to corporations, and were the amendment simply one empowering the Federal Parliament to control the creation and dissolution of corporations, but not allowing Federal interference in their operation and governing them as at present under

the State Parliaments, no fault could be found: indeed, it would supply a badly needed want.

The Labour amendment, however, goes much farther than this, and in directions that can only cause commercial chaos. For, whilst Corporations are to be under Federal control, firms or individuals are exempted and remain under State control.

Plenty of large private firms are engaged in precisely the same business as companies, and according to this amendment the private firms would work under one law, whilst the companies worked under another. Again, there would be the anomaly of two sets of laws in operation for the same thing in the same country.

How business would be carried on at all is a mystery. To quote a judicial authority on the subject, "If the argument be right, the Federal Parliament is in a position to frame a new system of libel laws applicable to newspapers owned by corporations, whilst the State law of libel would have to remain applicable to newspapers owned by individuals"; or, again, "The Federal Parliament may enact that no foreign, no trading or financial corporation, shall pay its employees less than 10s. a day, or charge more than 6 per cent. interest, whereas other corporations and persons would be free from such restrictions."

It is easy to see the advantage Labour would reap from this amendment. It, together with the Trades and Commerce amendment, would effectively gag the High Court, which could offer

no protest whatever to the wildest laws. Again, this amendment would help them to prevent any business from getting strong enough to offer active protest to unjust legislation. Without the power it gives, they would be unable to restrain the growth of powerful combinations which so often act in the best interests of the trade of the community as a whole, by efficiently supplying a standardly good article. Private individuals cannot as a rule offer strong resistance to legalised thieving, whereas the resources of corporations are greater. Their law would be used to prevent corporations becoming powerful, and would open up the ground for the more sweeping amendments dealing with Trusts and Combines.

### 3. INDUSTRIAL MATTERS.

**Labour, employment, and unemployment, including: (*a*) the terms and conditions of labour and employment in any trade, industry, occupation, or calling; (*b*) the rights and obligations of employers and employees; (*c*) strikes and lock-outs; (*d*) the maintenance of industrial peace; and (*e*) the settlement of industrial disputes.**

It has already been pointed out that the only consideration of the Labour politicians is to provide enormous wages and short hours for the working man, regardless of the effect on the rest of the community. The Federal Arbitration Court, a political experiment, has been used by the Labour Party to gain these ends. Mr. Justice Higgins, the President of this Court, and a gentleman of

profoundly Socialistic views, has been, and is, engaged in interpreting what, in his view, constitutes a "fair and reasonable wage" in the numerous cases of industrial disputes which are brought up for compulsory hearing before the Arbitration Court. His judgments are almost invariably in excess of the highest hopes of the workers, with the not particularly surprising result that every worker is anxiously awaiting his turn to appear as plaintiff before so sympathetic a tribunal. Indeed, never has there been so much discontent in all classes of labour—often from the most unexpected quarters—than since Mr. Higgins started his beneficent judicial career.

His judgments shower benefits on working men beyond their wildest hopes, and it is not surprising that the hitherto contented worker, hearing the fame of these judgments, makes the experiment of becoming dissatisfied, and pleads for higher emoluments. He is never disappointed.

It occurred to somebody to question the legality of these judgments, and the High Court was appealed to. The result was that one benevolent autocrat found that he had no power under the Constitution to "make an award a common rule in any industry." This cut his wings enormously, for by this interpretation any one case might have to be heard over as many times as there were respondents, to ensure the award holding as law in each case; a consideration that put many cases outside his possible jurisdiction.

Having once experienced and acquired a strong taste for lucrative judgments, Labour is gnashing its teeth at the High Court restrictions. Not only do they want Mr. Higgins to be freed, but they desire more men of his opinions to hold similar positions. In fact, they would like several Arbitration Courts going at full steam all the time. And they would like to enlarge the functions of these Courts so as to allow them to give awards to "prevent disputes arising and spreading." That is to say, it would be the function of these Courts to take evidence and make awards in industries where no complaint has been made concerning hours of work, pay, and general conditions. In fact, the Courts would practically invite labourers to invent grievances, so that they could be given higher pay and shorter hours.

This would apply, of course, not only to unskilled or even to skilled labour, but to every class that is employed in every way. Domestic servants, clerks in offices, shop hands. They would all have *carte blanche* to fix "logs" of hours and wages, and the Court would make these logs legally binding on all employers.

The next amendment is with regard to railway disputes.

### 4. RAILWAY DISPUTES.

**Conciliation and Arbitration for the prevention and settlement of industrial disputes in relation to employment in the railway service of a State.**

Here we have yet another proposal to widen Federal powers at the expense of the States. It is a very cunning Labour scheme, and would act in this way.

The Federal Parliament, through its Courts, would be empowered to dictate hours of labour, wages, and all details of employment on the State railways, whilst the State Governments would be left to bear the brunt of managing and financing them—rather a large responsibility under the circumstances.

Without any fear of deficits or financial obligations to be met later, the Federal Courts would be able to interpret " a fair and reasonable wage " in terms of glorious magnitude, and the railway servants could defy all State authority by threats of appeal to the Federal Courts. This could only result in constant warfare, strikes, and general inconvenience to the public, besides financial chaos on the railways. Of course, these considerations do not appear of importance to the Labour members. This amendment is merely one more link in the chain that is to compass Socialism.

### 5. TRUSTS.

**Trusts, combinations, and monopolies in relation to the production, manufacture, or supply of goods, or the supply of services.**

Both parties are agreed on the necessity of legal power, sufficient to prevent trusts from exploiting the public by artificially raising the prices of commodities through corners and other questionable

methods. The Opposition is perfectly ready to strengthen the Constitution to ensure its possessing the control; but before restrictions can be exercised they very properly insist that "restraint of trade" or "intent to injure the public" should be proved, thus differentiating between predatory trusts and organisations acting in a perfectly legitimate manner.

This, however, is not sufficient for the purposes of the Labour Party. They wish for powers of an infinitely more dictatorial character. The function of this amendment commences where the Trade and Commerce amendment ends. Commercial and trading trusts are to be controlled by the latter, whereas the former would deal with trusts and combines trafficking in production, manufactures, and the supply of goods or services.

Between them the whole ground of enterprise and activity of every kind and description is covered. Everyone and everything in the country would be under Labour's unquestioned and despotic control. The last amendment indicates plainly the use that would be made of these despotic powers.

### 6. NATIONALISATION OF MONOPOLIES.

**(1) When each House of Parliament in the same session has by Resolution, passed by an absolute majority of its members, declared that the industry or business of producing, manufacturing, or supplying any specified services is the subject of a monopoly, the Parliament shall have power to make laws for carrying on the industry or business by or**

**under the control of the Commonwealth, and acquiring for that purpose on just terms any property used in connection with the industry or business.**

**(2) This Section shall not apply to any industry or business conducted or carried on by the Government of a State or any public authority constituted under a State.**

Here is the end to which all the previous amendments have been gradually leading up. It is the supreme end of the Labour Party's intentions. "Nationalise everything that is worth anything for the benefit of the working man." By first putting into practice the other powers of fixing rates of wages and prices of distribution to the purchasing public, it would be easy to make the margin of profit extremely small, or in some cases even turn it into a deficit, of course depreciating the value of property simultaneously. This position achieved, the condition of "acquiring *on just terms* of property, etc.," would be complied with at extremely low figures, especially as the purchasers (*i.e.*, the Federal Parliament) of any property acquired under the power of this amendment, would themselves be the valuators.

It is simply Socialism on other people's money. Any vested interest worth having, whether Australian or foreign, could, and would, be first legislated into insolvency, and then "acquired" for a song; and all by the most approved Constitutional methods.

This amendment is supposed by most electors to

refer to monopolies only; the word conveying the usual meaning, *i.e.*, the operation of predatory trusts and combines: but there is no such definition of monopolies in the amendment. The amendment could, therefore, apply to any business or industry that Parliament cast eyes of desire upon, by the simple expedient of Parliament "declaring" it a monopoly. To achieve this, no reference would have to be made to the electors. The expedient would be quite in order. It is as well that this point should be thoroughly realised.

Already the Labour Party has a list of thirty-three industries that it classes as monopolies, and with *carte blanche* to define the word when and where they like, this list would be added to every day. It would be as exciting a spectacle as that of watching an African witch doctor "smelling out" his enemies with all the pomp, ceremony, and charlatanism at his command.

As mentioned above, there would be absolutely no discrimination between predatory or friendly trusts. The only discrimination would be in seeing if they be wealthy or not. If wealthy, they would be nationalised immediately; if poor, they would be left alone until they were worth while meddling with. Labour is after the other man's shekels. That is all.

Another point to be remembered is that Amendment Number five gives power to "control," "regulate," or "suppress" trusts, and the exercising of the power of suppression would again

compromise the likelihood of "on just terms" being defined in favour of the present owners.

Labour politicians tell the electors that they do not wish or intend to use these powers of nationalisation extensively, and that it is sufficient that the powers should be there, in order to strangle the malpractices of certain combines. In a word, they ask the people to trust them. A pertinent question on this score is, "Why were they not content with the amendment insisting on proving 'restraint of trade,' but insisted on possessing the wider powers, if they did not intend to use these wider powers largely?"

Very little need be said of the inevitable results of embracing Socialism. The same experiment has been tried before often enough in other places, and the experimenters have invariably been thankful to return to traditionally governed countries, after a very short experience of Socialistic actualities.

Naturally it could not last very long; the purloined money would soon be finished; but its indirect effects would be more lasting.

Noboby in this world works hard and continuously for years to create a large business unless he hopes to benefit from the business some day. He hopes to raise himself "out of the ruck," and have something substantial with which to educate and endow his children. If he knows that his business is liable to be confiscated at any time by the State, for the benefit of less intelligent or less hard working men than himself directly it is worth their

while, there remains no stimulus whatever for his enterprise. It classes everybody as being of equal intelligence, which naturally brings down everybody's work to the level of the least intelligent.

Then, whilst Socialism did last, Labour would be in clover, and the remembrance of enormous wages for a minimum of work could but make them discontented when the Committee funds ran out and they had to return to their old conditions, or most probably to ones infinitely worse than their old conditions.

Besides, it would take a generation to overcome the distrust of foreign investors who lost their money in the nationalisation schemes, and funds for rebuilding society would be very hard to obtain.

The Labour Party is incurring these risks deliberately and with its eyes open. To them nothing in the world matters but their inflated idea of a "just and reasonable wage."

In complete contrast to all this Socialistic legislation there remains one piece of statesmanship to the everlasting credit of the Labour Party. No tribute is too high to pay them for having carried it through successfully. I refer, of course, to the Compulsory Military Training laws and Defence schemes.

The value of these lies not so much in any particular security for the country from invasion, for any force they could raise would be hopelessly inadequate to offer any effective resistance to a well-equipped enemy; but in assuring that the

future youth of Australia shall come under discipline. It gives some hope of staying the wave of degeneracy by instilling a sense of national responsibility and exacting strict obedience from each youth, if even for a short period. At the present time obedience is an unknown quality among Australian children, and the camp discipline will supply a substitute for the lack of home training. It is not too much to say that these admirable laws provide the one hope for producing a virile Australian race. The whole credit of this grand achievement belongs to the Labour Party.

Indeed, no other political party could have carried through these laws in Australia, because of the peculiar formation of party policies. The Opposition—*i.e.*, the Fusion Party—naturally enough were perfectly well disposed on the matter; but for party ends Labour, before they were in power, refused to support the proposals. It would have given too much kudos for their opponents. So, had they not come to power themselves, there is little doubt that compulsory training would still be lacking. This consideration resigns one somewhat to their having been in power for the last three years, and brings absolution for much of the harm they have done in other directions.

## CHAPTER XI

### AUSTRALIAN WORKING MEN: THE INDIVIDUAL

THE Australian working man claims superiority over Labour of other countries on the ground that he is more intelligent and better educated. It may be that his claims for intelligence and education are correct, or it may not; but how this affects the superiority of his labour, except in inverse ratio to his mental attainments, I fail to see.

If his education and intelligence be of a sufficiently high order, there is little difficulty in his obtaining a job to raise him out of the position of labourer; but if it just does not permit this rise of position, his education merely makes him discontented with menial tasks. And, when interest in work is lacking, or when it is positively despised, efficiency comes to an end.

As a matter of fact, the Australian unskilled labourer is not one whit better equipped mentally than his English or European counterpart. Where he does differ is in his overwhelming self-conceit, his arrogant social equality belief, and his boundless assurance. All that the much vaunted education has done is to have given him a firm belief that

employer and labourer are natural and bitter enemies, and to make him a keen participator in the bitter class war with every form of capital. An enormous number of these men can do little more than sign their own names, and take their opinions on all subjects ready-made from the Union agitators.

Their standpoint towards employers is somewhat peculiar, and requires a little explanation. They view him in a dual light : first as a man, and second as a capitalist. As the former he may or may not be to their taste. If he be, they are perfectly ready to fraternise with him on terms of equality outside working hours, and permit him to lend them books, or buy them drinks, when occasion offers, with great good nature. In fact, they accord him their real friendship. All this, however, does not prejudice their minds against the fact that he is still a " bloated capitalist," not to say a " social parasite," " battening on the life-blood of their labour." And, remembering this, they lose no opportunity of bleeding him.

They are at war, and therefore consider all expedients justifiable against the enemy. Thus, unless watched ceaselessly, they will purposely start work ten minutes late, and knock off ten minutes before the correct time. They will work as slowly as possible in order to make every job cost the maximum possible figure, and they will take as many " smokos " as the watchfulness of their employer permits. All this is simply carrying out

a settled policy, and works quite irrespectively of how much or how little they like their employer personally, or how well or badly he treats them. If their neglect causes his interests to suffer materially, they sympathise quite genuinely with the man in his misfortune, whilst rejoicing at misfortune to the capitalist.

At heart many of them are thoroughly good fellows, always ready to keep a friend at a pinch, and as honest and genuine a set of men outside the question of labour and wages as one could wish to find. It is unfortunate that a half completed education has made them ready victims to the Union agitators' sophistry.

These complimentary remarks apply almost exclusively to the older generation of labourers, and not to the younger men.

These are universally imbued with the most ultra views on Capitalism and Nationalisation, and hate their employers personally as well as officially. Their party has tasted power, and has made them many extravagant promises for the immediate future. No wonder that they, ignorantly believing in these promises, are discontented with even the high wages and Arcadian conditions they work under to-day. No wonder that they hate anybody and everybody who appears to retard the day of their complete emancipation. They have been taught, and have learnt to believe firmly, that all the natural resources of the land are theirs by right, and that everybody who is engaged in traffick-

ing with these resources in any way whatever is directly robbing them.

Perhaps they could endure the sight of this without emotion; but when they find themselves compelled, in order to live, to assist these "robbers" in their nefarious work, no matter on terms how advantageous to themselves, it is the last straw; and they retaliate as venomously as possible.

The Labour agitator has induced this philosophy of labour and employment, and well he has succeeded in his task. Seemingly it never occurs to the labourer that he is maintaining a band of officials in very easy circumstances, and is getting very little in return for their advice. For it must be recognised that the constant strikes in Australia are of benefit to the agitators alone, and that, realising this, they do all in their power to foster discontent, with the avowed object of creating disturbances between master and man.

The strikes give them their opportunity for notoriety, and they take every advantage of the strike funds to feather their own nests at the expense of their dupes.

Any benefit that is gained by higher wages wrung through the strike is kudos for the agitator, and in the labourers' view quite justifies his theories and methods. It does not occur to them that they gain little themselves in the long run, as it takes a long period of employment, even at the new wage, to make up for the loss of any wages at all experienced during the actual strike. And raised prices of

living commodities, the natural corollary of every rise in wages, is attributed by them to other causes.

What of the stream of English immigrants that pours in to swell the ranks of labour? Does not this stream act as a break to the Australian labour point of view? Unfortunately it does not. These men and women come in to the country gradually, in small batches, one at a time. The danger of their advent acting as a wage depressor has long been apprehended by Labour officials, and they have taken all precautionary measures.

Every branch of Australian Labour is banded into a Union, the members of which are constantly questioned by their officials as to the hours they are made to work and the pay and overtime pay they receive. Every man who refuses to join a Union gets, in their own terse phraseology, "Hell upon earth," until he does consent to join. Many employers even now are afraid to engage a non-unionist for fear of strikes; indeed, most of the strikes are pinned on to this point of refusing to work alongside non-unionists as the chief grievance.

What they have already achieved by intimidation they are seeking to justify by law. "Preference to unionists" is an important plank in the Labour platform. The Labour Government has already recognised the principle in all public works, and now seek to make it illegal for a private individual to employ a non-unionist if a unionist is available, quite irrespectively of the value of the two men for the particular job.

As I say, the principle is in working now. If an employer uses a non-unionist, all the unionists leave work till the offender joins the Union or until he is dismissed; it is not a question of wages that actuates this, for they will strike even if the non-unionist is receiving practically the same wages as they are themselves. They simply refuse to work with a non-unionist.

If his employer refuses to dismiss him, and is fortunate enough to secure more non-unionists with whom to carry on his work, his goods are labelled "black-leg" and boycotted in every way by unionists of all trades. The obdurate non-unionist is called "scab" by all he meets, he suffers every kind of insult, and is not even safe from personal violence. He is known as "scab"—through the Union Intelligence Departments—all over the country, and finds it impossible to obtain protracted work anywhere he goes. Intimidation towards employer and non-unionist is all pervading in Australia, and the Union agitator holds the power of Father Confessor and Inquisitor over all members.

This is the environment to which the English workman comes. It is not many days before he is invited to buy a union ticket, and if he refuses it is not many weeks before he realises his powerlessness without it. The hand of every man is against him, nobody dares to employ him, and his fellow-workmen will have nothing to do with him; and all the time the indefatigable Union agitator follows him

up, getting him ousted from any temporary employment he may have got, and telling him at the same time that the Union ticket is a universal passport.

He is compelled to give way in the end, and very soon proves the usefulness of his ticket. He is admitted to the confidence of his fellow-unionists, learns from them the new position of importance that Labour holds, learns to despise and cheat his employers, and becomes in every way sympathetic with their extravagant ideals. The smallness of the batches of new arrivals makes this course easy to the agitators, for "new chums" are always conspicuous and easily recognised in a hundred different ways. Another method of keeping up wages is the embargo on all unionists from accepting any figure less than that specified in the Union "Log." It does not matter if it is a married man who wants work badly. He may not accept a shilling a day less, even if suitable work be offered to him. The principle is always this: "Log wages or none at all."

No man dares to refuse answer to the agitators, for their power of intimidation over all Union members is well known; and to admit to receiving a lower wage—*i.e.*, in the agitator's opinion "lowering the dignity and prestige of Labour"—is to admit the worst possible offence in the unionist calendar—scabbing. So this rule is scrupulously adhered to.

It is amusing to note that the agitator invariably

refers to "the glorious freedom existing in Australia." He knows the value of blarney! This hide-bound price of labour is all very well for a bad worker, as it enables him to live in luxury by the expenditure of very little effort; but it is very heavy in its effect on good men. No extra price is paid for excellence, as the Log wages are always the highest that can possibly be squeezed out of the industry. There is no room for paying intelligence or interest. Good men see others receiving the same wages as they get themselves, and doing very much less or very much inferior work. It does not matter how poor or how little the work is, from the point of view of wage earning, for the "minimum" wage must be paid if the men be kept on; and piecework is not in favour with Union officials, and is therefore a system not much in vogue.

The very natural result is that the good men shrug their shoulders and slow down their output to the level of the slowest worker. When no inducement exists for smartness, no smartness will come forth. The system admits of no inducement. It lays a premium on idleness. All Australian workmen get, sooner or later, down to a dead level of mediocrity.

In other countries where keenness and intelligence are recognised and rewarded, even the unskilled labourer becomes highly skilled in the particular work that falls to his lot day after day. And, generally speaking, this skill stands him in

good stead, and keeps him at the same kind of job for years at a time. To learn another job in connection with another trade as well would take a long time, and it would not be worth his while to take the trouble. Besides, he has his little groove, and does his own particular job better than anybody else, so he need have very little fear of being displaced. The benefit of this is found in the excellence of the manufactured articles turned out, and is reaped by the labourers, manufacturer, and the consuming public.

The reverse applies in Australia. Wages of unskilled labour equal those of much skilled labour in Europe, while the price of living for working men—not for others, as we shall see later—is not very much higher.

It is an admitted axiom that "the higher the wage, the less the work," and "the shorter the hours, the more the tedium," is equally true. It certainly fits Australian labourers *à merveille*. They receive high pay, and work short hours, consequently they are discontented. At the age of eighteen they receive the same pay as they will receive—barring strikes and Arbitration Court judgments in their favour—when they are forty. There is no room for ambition; they have grown up too young. It is impossible for them to muster keenness, and uncommon for them even to preserve interest in their work.

A few weeks of employment, barring "busts," leaves them with a substantial sum of money in

their pockets, and then they get bored with their job. After a few weeks' holiday they drift into another billet in another occupation, with the same result. Thus, one meets hundreds of men who have meandered half over Australia, working for a few months at a time, in a score of towns and farming districts, at as many different jobs. True, they are very handy men, resourceful in many ways, but are by no means specialists in any one job.

This nomadic life, in which they acquire a little knowledge of a number of different trades, gives them very great self-reliance, and they are ready at any time to undertake to carry out work they have never seen before, without doubting their capacity to invent some method of getting through with it. They always do it somehow, but it takes longer and is less skilfully done than when performed by a trained man. It does not matter to them if the employer is not satisfied, as they are rarely keen to keep their jobs for any long period, and after all, their employer is bound to pay them full wages, however badly these are earned. If the employer is not satisfied, that is his look-out; they have had a new experience, and can pass on to the next with money in their pockets. A large number of Australian labourers do not work for more than eight months of each year, and some do even a shorter period; the high wages make this constant loafing quite easy.

This naturally reacts on the quality of the goods made in Australia. Putting on one side considera-

tion of the raw materials such as wool, wheat, etc., which are almost all shipped away to be processed in other countries, and such products as butter and frozen meat, whose quality is not directly dependent on the skill of Australian labourers, it is a fact that everything else made in Australia is vastly inferior to similar manufactures in other countries; and the price of the Australian article, to the consumer, is simply staggering.

Australian-made pianos, furniture, cloth, boots, groceries, tinned foods, biscuits, and confectionery, to mention but a few of the manufactures in daily use, would simply fail to get a market elsewhere. They are universally fifth-rate, and even in Australia, despite the high protective tariff, hundreds of people refuse to buy locally-made things if an imported article can be procured.

This is not the fault of the raw materials, which are for the most part on an equality with those of other countries, but to the "don't care" attitude of the labourer in refusing to learn his work. He complains of the "tyranny of the trusts," but has himself greatly formed the biggest trust in the country—that of Labour. And by his use of this trust in refusing to work or permitting other people to come in and work, has successfully strangled excellence.

The results of his policy are to eliminate competition, prevent the growth of business turning out good articles on the one hand, and to encourage idleness and incompetence and put a premium on

mediocrity on the other. And they still think they are well off on the score of comfort, and continue to boast of their unsurpassed manufactures. It is well that few of them have travelled.

As to speed and strength, they are, with few exceptions—*e.g.*, sheep-shearers and some axemen —equally deficient. They cannot hold a candle to many black races, even when it comes to heavy toil, either on the score of work done or endurance. A gang of Kaffir and Zulu ship-coaling coolies will do twice as much work per man as any set of Australian navvies, and, moreover, will work double the number of hours without giving in. Even the much despised South Sea Island Kanaka can give the Australian points in mere heavy labour. There is no need to multiply instances. Watching the Australian at work for an hour is the most convincing proof of his languor.

"Ambigitis" is said to be the national disease. It is a word coined to express the symptoms told by a sufferer to his doctor thus: "I eats well, I drinks well, and I sleeps well: but when it comes to work I feels all of a tremble." So much for his work.

As for the man himself, I maintain that it is difficult to discover a more objectionable type anywhere. If "Jack is as good as his master," as sometimes occurs, the fact is generally self-evident. It is certainly unnecessary to draw frequent attention to it. The Australian labourer constantly tells his employer of his own superiority in luridly blasphemous and highly offensive language. Such

ebullitions are received with a shrug of the shoulders, for any question as to the necessity or propriety of his remarks always elicits a request to stuff the job into the corner of his (the employer's) eye. Any mutual appreciation or respect which would make the relations between master and man so pleasant is quite out of the question in Australia. It is simply a question of who can get the biggest pound of flesh.

Content is the rarest attribute of the Australian workman, and its lack gives an expression of sullen resentment and confirmed boredom to his face. With him it is most difficult to get under the surface, for the all-pervading class distrust prevents easy confidence. When confidence is gained at last, one is astounded at the crass ignorance and utterly narrow-minded fixed ideas displayed. Positively the only subject on which he can talk with any originality or interest whatever is horses. On this theme he will enlarge by the hour, telling long-winded stories, destitute of any point, with the greatest gusto. If by some curious chance there is a mild joke in any of these anecdotes, and one can manage to produce a laugh, he immediately repeats the whole story over again. The laugh is taken as an invitation for an encore.

As a class his sobriety, personal cleanliness, and mental attainments are on an absolute level with the same attributes possessed by workmen of other countries. The only difference is that his general attitude towards life is more hostile.

## CHAPTER XII

### MILDURA : ITS INCEPTION AND GENERAL HISTORY

*(Cutting from " Mildura Cultivator ")*

THE Mildura Irrigation Colony, founded in 1887, is situated on the Murray River in the County of Karkarooc, and is part of the North-Western Province of the State of Victoria. The Shire is a very extensive one—having the Murray as its Northern boundary, the Swan Hill Shire on the East, the newly proclaimed Bent Shire on the South, and the South Australian border line on the West. Its area is something like 4,000 square miles. The Irrigation Settlement, controlled by the Mildura Irrigation Trust, comprises 45,000 acres, and the White Cliffs Waterworks district of another 5,400 acres ajoins. The latter started in 1909, and is controlled by the State Rivers and Water Supply Commission, with Mr. Elwood Mead as its Chairman and Messrs. W. Cattanach and J. S. Dethridge as his co-commissioners.

The town of Mildura is distant from Melbourne, in a direct line, about 300 miles, but the train journey is 351¼ miles. Other rail distances are : Woomelang 110 miles, Birchip 136½, Donald 168¾, St. Arnaud 192¾, Maryborough 239¼, Castlemaine 273¼. River towns which are convenient of access

are Swan Hill (112 miles direct), Euston (40 miles), Balranald (82 miles), Wentworth (17 miles), and Renmark (70 miles). Trains arrive from Melbourne six days a week, but two are goods trains and do not carry mails. Express train leaves Melbourne each Monday and Wednesday at 4.50 p.m., and reaches Mildura at 8.40 a.m. on Tuesday and Thursday; mixed trains leaving Melbourne at 6.45 a.m. Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, reach Mildura at 5.50 a.m. on Wednesday, Friday, and Sunday respectively. Mixed trains leave Mildura on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings at 6.30 o'clock, reaching the city at 3.55 p.m. on the following days; the express leaves at 6.30 a.m. on Wednesdays and Fridays, reaching Melbourne at 11.55. There are regular coach services with the five river towns mentioned above. When the Murray is open for traffic, boats ply regularly between Swan Hill and Mildura and between Morgan (S.A.) and Mildura.

The Mildura run was a cattle station as far back as 1846—five years before Victoria was declared an independent colony. It was occupied simultaneously with Kulkyne, Kulnine, and Cowarp. "Tiertman" was the name first given to the run, and the first settler was Mr. Frank Jenkins, who brought a mob of cattle from the New South Wales side of the river, and established himself at Mildura and Cowarp. He did not, however, secure his tenure, and was superseded by Messrs. Jameson Bros., who brought along 6,000 sheep. They

shifted hither on the advice of Mr. Armourer Forster, whose son, daughters, and sister (Miss Murray) are still here. Mr. Jenkins moved across the river to Col Gol. The Jamesons retained possession of the Mildura run for twenty-eight years, and in 1874 it was purchased by Mr. A. M'Edwards. For some years he enjoyed a very prosperous time, but the prospects changed in 1880, when rabbits began to appear. In 1884 M'Edwards sold out to the Tapalin Pastoral Co., and subsequently it passed into the hands of liquidators.

About the time that Mr. M'Edwards sold out the Messrs. Chaffey Bros., who had succesfully engaged in promoting irrigation settlement in California, began to consider the possibilities of developing Australia on similar lines. Mr. Stephen Cureton was sent across to Australia to spy out the land, and, his report being favourable, he was followed in February of 1886 by Mr. George Chaffey. Subsequently Mr. " W. B." came along, and the two spent some time examining the river frontage country between Swan Hill and the South Australian border. After taking levels and analysing soils, they selected Mildura as the most suitable site for their operations. The surface configuration and soil were all that could be desired for effective irrigation, and the water supply appeared illimitable. The grazing capacity of the land had by this time been so reduced by the rabbits that it was practically worthless for the

raising of sheep. The venture was, therefore, somewhat in the nature of reclaiming a wilderness. It was a scheme which commended itself to the Gillies-Deakin Government (with Mr. Alfred Deakin as Minister for Water Supply), and an agreement was drafted providing that under certain conditions Messrs. Chaffey Bros. should receive a grant of 50,000 acres and the right to purchase adjoining land to the extent of 200,000 acres for twenty shillings an acre. The agreement was one of considerable length, and was critically reviewed in Parliament, the outcome of a twenty-five hours sitting being that the "concession" was left open to public competition for two months. The Chaffey Bros. were the only people that wanted the land, and the deed conveying it was ultimately executed on May 31st, 1887. As the land was still in the hands of the bank liquidators, another three months had to elapse before the land became open for occupancy, so that it was not until August, 1887, that the new proprietary took possession of Mildura.

Though the area set apart under the Agreement was 250,000 acres, irrigation was confined to 45,000 acres, comprising the district of the First Mildura Irrigation Trust. Over 30,000 acres of irrigable land are commanded by the main channels of the irrigation system and rather more than a third are under irrigated culture. Water is supplied to the land, which is divided into ten-acre blocks, through channels aggregating about 170 miles in

length, into which it is raised by pumping plants of great power. Six miles from the township the Psyche Bend pumps lift water from the river into King's Billabong, along which it flows for a couple of miles to the main pumping station (the Billabong). Through its large delivery pipe nearly all the water required on the settlement is forced by means of four pumps, together capable of raising 32,000 gallons per minute, the pipe line delivering the water into a channel fifty feet above the summer level of the Murray. A portion of the water is raised to what is known as the " ninety-foot " channel, which supplies the highest land under cultivation in the settlement, but three-fourths of the water flows along the " fifty-foot " channel, and, besides irrigating a small area of land under that level, provides the Nichols' Point pumping plant with the water to be raised of the eightyfive-foot and seventy-foot channels, the latter which supplies the requirements of the bulk of the irrigated land of the settlement. The cost of the water supply is met by rates levied by the Irrigation Trust, varying from 10s. to 40s. per acre, according to class, the greater part of the land under cultivation being liable to a rate of 30s. per acre. The pumps are at work for about 120 days in the year, divided into four irrigation periods—one in the winter months (if necessary), two following each other in rapid succession in the hot months of the year, and the last in the autumn.

The real Mildura settlement comprises an area

of about 12,000 acres, planted approximately as follows: Gordo Blanco or muscatel grape, 2,180 acres; sultanas, 3,739 acres; currants, 1,572 acres; wine grapes, 52 acres; oranges, 557 acres; lemons, 292 acres; apricots, 390 acres; peaches, 195 acres; figs, 63 acres; unenumerated, 2,110 acres; lucerne, 763 acres. House gardens occupy about 250 acres; crop, 980; and vacant land, 920 acres; making a total of about 12,000 acres.

## CHAPTER XIII

### MILDURA—CONTINUED

ALL I have written in the foregoing chapters has been dictated by the general knowledge and experience that must be gained by anyone living in the country for any considerable time as a citizen. It has been learned by a six years' sojourn amongst the people, and by constant study of individuals, places, and literature. Mildura has, however, been my head-quarters, and it is there that I have been able to collect my most valuable material at first hand; and, having collected it, been able to confirm it by oft-repeated experiences.

Before proceeding further I wish to point out a criticism that is certain to be made by Australians. They will say, "Oh, yes, your views on Mildura may be correct, but things are quite different elsewhere. Now in So-and-so town or district your objections and criticisms would not hold water for a moment." I say this criticism is sure to be made, for I have noticed that Australians all over the country use it in daily conversation as an easy way to silence questioning of their methods and customs.

As a matter of fact, Mildura is in many ways superior to most country districts and towns, both

as to the class of resident and condition and modes of life generally. In making this assertion, I am speaking from my own personal knowledge and not merely from hearsay, as I have visited and passed through a good many country towns and districts, besides knowing several of the big towns pretty thoroughly.

In fact, by taking Mildura as a model of Australian country life, other places do not suffer at all—indeed, rather the reverse, for conditions in many other places are considerably rougher, and the compensating attractions of clubs, societies, etc., possessed by Mildura are entirely absent. The large English element that peopled Mildura in its first years probably accounts for this superiority of institutions, for it exercised an influence that is not entirely neutralised even yet.

However, I must proceed.

Mildura, as the first irrigation settlement in Australia, presents a picture of genuine romance. Prior to its inception as an irrigation district, the land, in common with all other land in Central Australia that has a deficient rainfall, was practically useless, and was, indeed, but little more than a desert. Squatters tried to run sheep there, but such ravages had the rabbits made on all fodder—the rabbits are probably the greatest scourge in Australia—that 100 acres were not considered sufficient pasturage to feed one sheep. Indeed, such a bad spot was it that several men went bankrupt in the attempt, and at last it was virtually abandoned.

One day two men arrived from America, men skilled in irrigation and engineering. They had successfully founded several irrigation settlements in America, and then came to Australia to see what the chances were there. They spent a considerable time spying out the land, and at last fixed on this as a suitable spot. Next they applied to the Government to assist them in the experiment.

No help was forthcoming. Nobody believed in these two strangers, who promised to turn a miserable wilderness into a fruitful garden. They were merely laughed at and ridiculed as a couple of adventurers, and foolish ones at that. However, they were not to be discouraged, and after repeated efforts managed to interest Mr. Deakin in the scheme. Through his efforts they succeeded at length in obtaining a concession of land and a permanent water-right, if they complied with certain specified conditions. They accepted those terms, and got straight to work. Little or no help was to be obtained by Australians at that time : the scheme was too chimerical, in their opinion ; besides, they have a horror of pioneering.

So the brothers Chaffey turned their attention to England in search of settlers. A cleverly written, if not strictly truthful, pamphlet called " The Red Book," was posted broadcast all over England, and by its advertisement, combined with the eloquent persuasiveness of the London agents, many people were induced to purchase land. I must say at once that the promises contained in

"The Red Book" had materialised gloriously in America and Canada in similar settlements founded by the Chaffeys. Besides, it must be remembered that advertisers all over the world do their best to present the thing they wish to sell in the most favourable light possible, and that only strenuous advertisement could hope to achieve success in a scheme like peopling Mildura. Indeed, without the advertisement of "The Red Book" Mildura could never have come into existence at all.

Those of "The Red Book" promises that subsequently proved to be untruths as regards Mildura were primarily dictated by practical experience and honest belief. There was no attempt to mislead deliberately, as the country, climate, and conditions appeared identically the same as those in the American schemes. These apparent untruths, or, more accurately, the non-fulfilment of these truths for a few years in Mildura, was from causes that could not have been foreseen from the American experience.

Much has been said regarding the Chaffey's alleged dishonesty in printing this pamphlet; but, viewed in the above light, I think it is unfair to brand them with shame on this point.

All that can be said justly is that the promises were premature, and one must add to this that the Chaffeys scarcely had a fair opportunity of proving their assertions in the first years. The opposition against them was too strong.

Large numbers of Englishmen with small

capitals came out and bought land in blocks of from ten to forty acres, the nominal price being £20 per acre. Now, remembering that only just previously the tenants had been unable to pay ¼d. per acre rent and make a profit, this price of £20 an acre seems unduly high.

However, the Chaffeys were under obligation to spend an enormous sum of money on the settlement one way and another, and it is not to be wondered at that they sought to make a substantial profit out of the scheme themselves. Had their advertisements for settlers been as successful as they hoped, everything would have come off with flying colours. Unhappily for the scheme people with money did not respond in sufficient quantities. They stopped coming suddenly. Something or other occurred to take away confidence in the scheme. This would have been a matter of little moment had the management been on careful lines; for proof of the land's capabilities would soon have restored confidence—as it did in the end—and the stream of settlers would have set in again without a very long delay.

The weak spot was in the finance. So tremendous a sum had the Chaffeys undertaken to spend on the settlement that they were always embarrassed financially, and no one can wonder at their anxiety to get off as much land as they could and get paid for it as soon as possible. For, until they had performed their obligation to the Government no profit could be theirs. So they tried to take full

advantage of the boom whilst it lasted. Their methods were to sell as much land as possible in the outlying portion of the settlement at distances of five to ten miles from the township at the £20 rate, reserving the land nearer town for speculation purposes or demanding much higher prices for it.

Had the boom continued everything would have been well, and their policy would have been justified. As it was, when the demand for land ceased, they found themselves in the position of being compelled to provide irrigation channels and water for each isolated block of ten acres that they had sold, entailing in many cases the contraction of several miles of special channelling, not to mention the costly upkeep, entailing the unnecessary expenditure of thousands of pounds.

Had they been content to work their sales systematically, first surveying a block of 1,000 acres, cutting it up into allotments, providing it with channelling, and refusing to offer other land for sale until it had all been taken up, they would have had a compactly settled area, with limited roads and channel system to provide. There is little doubt that they would not have been forced into liquidation, besides the growth of the place being arrested for years.

As it was, circumstances proved too strong for them. Many problems that had not presented themselves in the American settlements cropped up, and although it meant giving up any hope of

profits, they coped with these problems manfully whilst the money lasted.

Even then all might have been well had not squabbles arisen with the settlers. Arguments about the price of irrigation water got to an acute stage, and many hard words were said on both sides. In the end the Chaffeys were compelled to retire from the management, and their affairs went into liquidation.

Doubtless they made mistakes in their methods, but the bad effects of these mistakes were confirmed by much unreasonableness of the settlers, who flatly refused to work with the Chaffeys for their common good. The thing they failed to recognise is that Australia is not a field for big enterprises like America, and that real progressiveness is not understood. Australian ignorance prevented the Chaffeys from making a fortune, deferred recognition of the possibilities of irrigation in Australia for over a decade, and ruined many hundred Englishmen.

The scheme was a good one, as has been amply proved by Mildura's wonderful success during the last few years. Through its example irrigation is now a recognised principle, and a dozen other irrigation districts have sprung up, and many more are in immediate contemplation. What of the men who pointed the way?

After the *débâcle* one brother returned to America considerably poorer in pocket than when he arrived in Australia. All he received for his

trouble was the hate and curses of Mildura settlers, and the amused scorn of the rest of Australia. I am glad to say that his talents were valued higher in his own country, and that ere this he has made a large fortune.

The other brother elected to stop and see it out. Mildura was the child of his brain, and he believed in it. On the same footing with all the rest of the settlers, Mr. W. B. Chaffey has remained through all the vicissitudes—and these have been many—through which the settlement has passed. Quietly and without any ostentation, he set out to prove that irrigation could be made a success both for individuals and the community, and he has succeeded.

Constantly identifying himself, without any reward or thanks, with all questions of public interest to Mildura, giving his leisure for years to sitting on committees, giving advice and helping individuals and societies, he has won the admiration and respect of everybody in the place. He is Mildura's Grand Old Man. Outside Mildura nobody remembers him. Australians are sublimely indifferent to the man who showed them how to utilise so much of their desert land, and gave them a method of providing homes and occupations for thousands of families.

Years ago the twenty-first anniversary of Mildura's foundation was marked by presenting Mr. W. B. Chaffey with a cheap £250 motor-car. The money for this was made up of small subscrip-

tions collected from his few appreciative friends out of the 5,000 odd inhabitants of Mildura—the whole 5,000, be it remembered, are making their livings, and very comfortable livings too in some cases, as a direct result of Mr. Chaffey's brains and enterprise. The memento seems paltry enough. Outside Mildura, and in the other irrigation settlements scattered over Australia, the occasion was completely ignored. It is a typical instance of Australian gratitude.

For solid service to his adopted country, no man living deserves public recognition more thoroughly. However, he is passed over, and decorations, honours, and knighthoods are given to intriguing politicians and persons whose service to their country is subordinated to that of their own banking accounts.

After all, Mr. Chaffey and his friends can perhaps afford to smile when looking over the names on the Honours lists, for comparison between Mr. Chaffey's achievements and those of the other gentlemen is ludicrous.

So much for Mildura's *raison d'être*. Let us now proceed to lay bare the reasons of its ill-success in the first instance, its wonderful prosperity afterwards, and its inevitable decay from now onwards.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MILDURA—CONTINUED

In the last chapter I referred to unexpected difficulties that had to be overcome in the first years.

One of these, which caused, and is still causing, the expenditure of thousands of pounds, was in connection with the irrigation channels. The American settlements were reticulated with channels formed simply by scooping the earth away, leaving large ditches through which the water was run all over the settlement.

These earth channels were dug out in Mildura, but failed to carry the water. Investigation showed that cuttle-fish, pumped up from the river, bored large holes in the side of the channels, through which the water escaped, and enlarging the breaches as it went through, caused frequent breaks-away. So oft repeated were their attacks that the actual work of irrigation was quite disorganised; for when the channel side gives way the water does great damage by flooding the surrounding land unless it is detected and stopped immediately, and the actual work of mending the break necessitates shutting off the supply at the main.

All other expedients were tried unavailingly, till in the end the cost of concreting the worst parts had to be faced. The Chaffeys did a great deal of this concreting, and the work has been carried on since their deposition by the new authorities; but it has to be done gradually, as there are many miles of channels. To concrete the entire system of channelling would cost several hundred thousand pounds. Meanwhile the cost of upkeep of both concreted and unconcreted portions is far in excess of all estimates.

This upkeep was, of course, accentuated by the failure to people the settlement properly. The population is much scattered, and in some cases the cost of putting down and maintaining the channels to provide water for isolated holdings has been many times in excess of any sum that could possibly be earned from the land in question. And yet these isolated blocks hold the perpetual water-right and must be supplied.

These two features taken in combination have been, and still are, very costly problems for Mildura.

Another thorn in the Chaffeys' side, and one that depleted their funds again, was the appearance of "seepage." This term is applied to the phenomenon of land being spoilt by water. In certain soils there is a great deal of salt, whose appearance does not become evident until the application of water in large quantities brings it out. The combined action of sun and water acts chemically on the

soil and frees the salt. When this takes place the land becomes quite useless for horticultural purposes, and has to go out of cultivation.

The leaky earth channels, together with the unskilful irrigation of the raw settlers, provided the conditions favourable for seepage, and many settlers saw their blocks becoming spoilt gradually, and many of their trees and vines dying. The evil attained to enormous proportions, and claims for refunds of purchase money for the affected portions poured into the Chaffeys' office. These claims had to be met.

Further widespread loss occurred through ignorance of the rabbit scourge. To get any idea of the number of rabbits in Australia compared to home one must realise the fact that hundreds of men spend their whole time trapping rabbits and selling the skins at 1s. apiece; the carcasses they simply throw away. Without the display of any great industry they find no difficulty in making 10s. per day, or even more, year in year out.

The rabbits are enormously prolific, and overrun the country in millions. In a wet season they have little difficulty in finding food, but in a drought year they soon get mad for food. The young vines and trees provided most toothsome fodder, and acres and acres were destroyed by them.

The only way to stop their depredations is to erect strong wire-netting fences right round every block of land. This is a very costly undertaking, but it had to be faced by every settler if he wished

his trees ever to attain maturity. Even with a strong netting fence, great watchfulness must be exercised if there is any young stock, for the rabbits burrow yards under the ground to effect an entrance, and moreover they will find means even to break through the netting itself if any weak spots can be found. Frequent and careful inspection must be made, repairs to broken meshes seen to, and burrows dug out if immunity is to be enjoyed.

All this was to be learnt only by much bitter experience and loss, and some people even abandoned their holdings when they were unable to devise means to stop this scourge. It is not exaggeration to say that the rabbits have cost the settlement thousands of pounds.

Even greater loss was caused in the early days by the ignorance of the settlers and the dishonesty of the nursery gardeners.

It must be remembered that fruit growing under irrigation was not only new in Australia, but that the first settlers engaging in it were for most part completely ignorant of all horticultural matters. They had to buy their experience against nature and the dishonesty of man.

At that time there was no railway communication with any large town that could serve as a market for fresh fruit; and the river, the only avenue for despatching produce, was innavigable during several months of the year. Not only did this isolate Mildura completely—it is over 350 miles

from Melbourne—but it made fresh fruit traffic exceedingly risky; for securing transport when required had to be left to luck, and the finding of a favourable market at the other end was purely a gamble.

These considerations did not deter settlers from planting up acres and acres of fresh fruit trees in the hope that a railway would materialise before these trees came to maturity. Needless to say this hope was disappointed.

When they did come into bearing it was found that no transport or market could be found to ensure reliable prices for the fruit, and every one of these trees had to be rooted out.

Then in Mildura, as elsewhere, certain kinds of trees flourish on certain kinds of soil, but do not thrive on others. The knowledge that trees will do better than vines or the reverse, or that one kind of tree or vine will flourish where another variety will fail on a particular holding, can be gained only by long experience.

The first settlers did not possess this knowledge. They just had a list of names of fruit trees to choose from, and generally planted up their blocks with the fruits they were fondest of eating themselves. A man would plant ten acres of olives because he liked his fish fried in olive oil, or because he was fond of pickled olives, reasoning that if he liked these things so would other people, and there would be found a good demand and lucrative market for his produce.

It sounds very absurd, but there was absolutely no means of effecting a more logical choice. Indeed the choice of stock seemed a matter of small importance in those days, for enormous profits were promised from every kind of fruit, and these promises were believed enthusiastically. The only anxiety was to get the land into bearing, then everything would be all right.

It was soon found that much of the land had been planted with unsuitable stock. No matter what care, labour, and expense were lavished, the trees refused to come on properly. To persevere could never succeed in acclimatising them to the unsuitable soil, and to uproot and replant was merely to risk another experiment. From this and other reasons that we shall see much land in Mildura has been planted to no less than three different varieties, one after the other, before a successful result has been achieved. In fact, of the orchards to-day very few acres represent the original planting. The loss entailed by this unnecessary labour ruined many of the original settlers, and their land, together with the experience, passed into other hands for a paltry sum.

Compulsory replanting was accentuated by the shameless dishonesty of nursery gardeners purveying young trees and vines. Settlers would order a certain number of trees or vines of a stipulated variety—for instance, Moorpark apricots for drying. In due course they would receive the correct number of trees duly labelled " Moorpark," and

would pay the high price asked cheerfully enough, in the assurance that they were planting the trees that would yield the biggest and best fruit for the future. No doubt of the results occurred to them till three or four years later, when, after they had brought the trees to semi-maturity with great labour and expense, they found that perhaps 10 per cent. of the trees were Moorparks and the remainder a miscellaneous lot of cheap stock, perhaps not even budded to any particular variety and producing fruit quite unsuited for drying purposes, or, in many cases, not even fit to sell as fresh fruit, if indeed transport and a market could be found.

Of course there was no redress, for by the time they discovered the cheat the man who had sold them the trees had "swiftly and silently vanished away." This imposition meant at least three years' loss of crop, and at the time that, coming after years of work and disbursement, returns were grievously needed.

Mildura was a blessing to the market gardeners. They got rid of all their useless stock of all kinds at fabulous prices. Always ready to oblige, they carried with them large stocks of labels, so as to have no difficulty in providing purchasers with any variety of tree they might desire, with the utmost promptness. Thus, ungrafted seville stock had only to be gifted with a label to do duty for special kinds of highly reputed orange trees, and sweet water grape cuttings were similarly transformed into the rarest varieties of the muscatel. This traffic

was carried on quite shamelessly and remained undetected till the ripening of the first crop ; so far as I can learn not one of the offenders was brought to book.

Another class that reaped big advantage from the settlers was the storekeeper. In the absence of a railway, and when the river was innavigable, all goods, including fodder for the horses and stores and provisions of every kind, had to be carted to and from Mildura by waggon over a distance of about a hundred miles from the nearest centre, Swan Hill. This " cost of transport " gave an admirable chance to raise prices of every commodity to ridiculous figures. Needless to say, the storekeepers were long-sighted enough to get in quantities of stores each year before the river closed, and that the 200 or 300 per cent. rise in prices did not go exclusively into the pockets of the carters.

This does not pretend to be a comprehensive list of the difficulties that had to be weathered and overcome by the early settlers; indeed, it scarcely scratches the ground, but we must pass on to a view of the new problems that presented themselves when the settlement had at length emerged into a crop-producing area with a big annual output.

It can be seen easily that those of the original landholders who did pull through to this time were urgently in need of converting their produce into cash, for their reserves of capital had been in most cases quite depleted by much unexpected if necessary expenditure.

By this time also most of the "wasters" had been weeded out, not to say cleaned out, and the balance of the remaining settlers represented a class of men anxious to succeed, if intelligence and hard work count for anything. With regard to these wasters I may mention *en passant* that Mildura acted as a great bait to fathers of unruly sons, for it was advertised as a strictly "Prohibition Settlement." In a way this was true: there were no public-houses, and the sale of liquor was dropped on heavily when discovered; but the clubs were licensed to sell liquor, and there were scores of "sly-grog" shops dotted over the settlement; and for those who preferred it, five minutes' row in a boat would take them over the Murray River into New South Wales, where any amount of liquor could be obtained without let or hindrance. The early days were so fruitful of drunkenness that Mildura achieved a furious reputation for intemperance—a reputation that it has not yet succeeded in living down. Judging from Mildura experience, one can say truthfully that "the more the prohibition, the greater the drunkenness." But to return to the fortunes of our fruit growers!

In common with the rest of "The Red Book" promises, the selling prices of all varieties of dried fruits were found to have been enormously overestimated. Each settler was his own salesman, and each found it imperative to effect sales at once. Melbourne and Adelaide merchants were besieged with offers of fruit. This brought down prices from

the 5d. or 6d. per pound, confidently expected, to 1d. per pound or even less. They had to accept this, or fail to sell their fruit, and the sums received scarcely paid for the cost of harvesting and selling expenses. No severer blow could have been dealt, for the slump of prices put all question of raising mortgages out of the question, and many men left the settlement penniless, abandoning the holdings on which they had expended several years' work, besides their whole capital. These holdings remained abandoned for years. Nobody had sufficient confidence to take them over, even with all the improvements. Some of them studded with lines of dead trees can be seen to-day in outlying parts of the settlement. Of those men who hung on scarcely one had a penny piece, and they eked out such an existence as they could, on any credit they could get from the storekeepers, and any wages they could earn by working for the Chaffeys in road-making, channel-concreting, land-clearing, and even manning the pumps.

Then the Chaffeys went insolvent in their turn, and were forced to pay their workmen by means of orders on the irrigation office. This requires some explanation. The water rate for each acre of land was 30s. annually, payable in quarterly instalments. Therefore as the Chaffeys were working the water supply they could count on receiving a cheque from each settler every quarter. Supposing the settlers were unable to pay, the Chaffeys could of course refuse to supply more water, or if the

payments got into arrears they could foreclose. Neither of these courses would have been good policy, for the first would be virtually to close the settlement, and the second could have been of no advantage to them in the absence of buyers for land. They got out of the difficulty thus: "Come and work for us," said they to the settlers, "and we will give you receipts for each day's work you do, which receipts will be received subsequently by us in lieu of payments for water rates." It was a fair proposition, and was accepted promptly; and in a very short time these "orders" were practically the only "money" in the settlement; and business transactions were everywhere carried on through this medium.

Unfortunately, it opened up the way for still more chicanery on the parts of sundry dishonest persons. The expedient was all very well for the Chaffeys, and so far as the payment of contracts was concerned it was well for the settlers too; but they had other payments besides water rates to make. Their food, fodder, and general expenses had to be provided for, and last, but not least, labour; for although in off seasons they could find leisure to go out and work for wages themselves, there were many times when they had to remain on their own land, and required hands to help them to complete pressing work. In absence of coin, payment for all these things was offered and accepted by the passing of these "orders."

So long as settlers or persons having water rates

to pay, presented these orders in the irrigation offices, they were, of course, honoured at face value; but the mischief arose when persons without land, or settlers in want of money or wishful to pay their bills, were left with these orders as a last resource. True, the storekeepers were willing to negotiate them in payment, but at a substantial discount. They said that the risks they took in negotiating the orders were too great to justify a full cash equivalent, either in money or credit against accounts, and, with one or two notable exceptions, discounts of from 25 per cent. to 50 per cent. were exacted. Were it not for one fact, their fear of risk could not have been considered unreasonable, and no exception could be taken to their having safeguarded themselves in a measure against loss; in view of this fact, however, their risk was non-existent, and the large discounts they exacted amounted simply to robbery. And as several of these gentlemen laid the foundations of quite nice little fortunes out of this traffic—fortunes which, I believe, they have since completed—it must have been a very lucrative form of robbery. It certainly had one advantage over other kinds of robbery—that it was not an indictable offence. This is the fact.

I have mentioned that most of the investors in Mildura property were Englishmen. Now, many of these Englishmen simply bought as an investment, without having any intention of going to live in the place. They entrusted the care of their

interests to various agents living in Mildura, and remitted moneys to these agents from time to time to be expended on their properties. One of the regular items of expense was water rates, and for this purpose large sums of money came into Mildura every quarter and were handled by the agents.

Now, so long as the water rates were paid duly, it mattered little to the people in England whether they were paid with the money they sent out for the purpose or otherwise. The Chaffeys, too, were equally well satisfied, or, rather, had to be equally well satisfied, if they were paid in cash or in their own orders. If these orders were at a discount it was manifestly to the agents' advantage to pay their employers' liabilities with orders rather than in cash—clearly they stood to pocket the difference, if they could get sufficient orders. Hence the advantage in beating down the price given for orders, and hence the elimination of risk in accepting them in payment for goods or debts. The man who could get 500 one pound orders together by paying anything from 10s. to 15s. apiece to the original owners, could go over the road to an agent for English property owners, and be certain of making a profit of a few shillings on each one. Of course it was very neat, but to take advantage of such circumstances of financial stress and misery as existed at that time in Mildura, and in such a way, can only be written down for as unmitigated a piece of blackguardism as one is likely to find in the annals of dishonest finance.

That Mildura as a settlement pulled through despite all these cruel trials and at last came to real prosperity, speaks volumes for the tenacity of the brave men who made this possible ; speaks still more for their wives, who shared every hardship ; and it speaks most for the intrinsic value of that industry that was able to show its great value in the end, after overcoming so many initial handicaps.

# CHAPTER XV

## MILDURA—CONTINUED

Several causes combined to raise Mildura out of the depression that held it prisoner. The Chaffeys' rule came to an end in the liquidation of their company, there was a Government Commission, and, *mirabile dictu*, railway communication was eventually provided with Melbourne. A general financial straightening out followed, and confidence was somewhat restored. Substantial protective tariff against the import of foreign dried fruits, combined with the formation of a Fruit-growers' Co-operative Society, renewed credit in a measure, and made it possible for the settlers to carry on, armed with some weapons at least, against general exploitation.

By this time, too, the orchards and vineyards had been reconstituted with stock true to name, and people had learned to recognise the kind of land most suited to vines and trees respectively. All the other difficulties had been overcome more or less in similar manner, and if Mildura could not claim to start again with an absolutely clean slate, at least she was out of the experimental stage.

The high protective tariff having freed settlers from any fear of foreign competition, they were able to raise their scale of prices for Mildura productions; and, having combined together and chosen a committee of men to speak for all of them, they were able to dictate terms to the selling agents and ensure getting paid for their fruit.

In due course this organisation, which was named the Australian Dried Fruits Association, became very strong; for, as it included all but half a dozen of the settlers, who refused to join from personal motives, it controlled practically all the dried fruit made in Mildura; and with this power it fixed prices each year for each variety of dried fruits and instructed the agents to sell only for these prices to the public.

So long as A.D.F.A. prices were just within the figure at which agents could import with respect to the duty, the will of the settlers was law. And it goes without saying that the highest possible prices were fixed and extracted from the public.

For several years good crops and high prices brought a great deal of money to the settlement, and great prosperity reigned. Unfortunately very little of this money found its way into the pockets of the original settlers, for few of these men had been able to carry on until this time. Their highly improved properties had passed into the hands of newcomers at ridiculously low figures, and they themselves, glad to get rid of these obligations, had either faded out of the settlement or become

labourers to the newcomers at a daily wage—the technical experience they had gained making it easy enough for them to get jobs in this way. Those few who had, by some marvellous means, succeeded in retaining possession of their land, were so crippled with mortgages, liens on crops, and debts to storekeepers, that all their profit went to paying interest at the rate of 7 or 8 per cent., and gradually to decreasing the principal of the debts.

The newcomers, entering into possession of properties which were the outcome of years of labour and colossal expense, for a few pounds, and just at the time when a lucrative market had been established, were, of course, highly delighted. Certainly they had a chance that does not occur very often anywhere. There was little hard work to face, for their predecessors had seen to it that improvements and general laying out were of the best: all they had to do was to carry out the routine work, harvest their crops, and draw nice big cheques shortly afterwards. It is scarcely surprising that they could refrain from boasting of their good fortune.

Not content with pouring out a tale of huge profits into the ears of all listeners, some of them even went to the length of writing letters to the Melbourne press. By this means public attention was again focussed on Mildura, and eyes of cupidity watched the rise of prices and studied the growing output.

When making their boasts, these people forgot that they were engaged in a protected industry in

a Labour country. For the sake of their own pockets it would have been wiser had they kept silent about their prosperity, and refrained from boastfully publishing the highest returns given in a bumper year from a picked property as being illustrative of the average returns from all Mildura land. Without doubt there was splendid prosperity, but their pæans grossly exaggerated it, and resulted in directly and constantly lessening profits.

In taking the public into their confidence they informed Labour of all the details of their financial domestic economy. That these details were grossly exaggerated mattered little to Labour; it was enough for their purposes to have figures endorsed by some settlers; it gave them their opening.

"If you are making such enormous profits," said they, "it is only fair that we should participate in these profits, for, after all, you must have our help to grow and harvest your fruit. In fact, you must raise our wages." Their wages were raised, then they were raised again, and then they were raised again. Still they are not satisfied. They believe that fruit-growers are all wealthy men, and wealthy men are merely made to be bled.

In an industry such as fruit-growing, and especially in such an inaccessible place as Mildura, Labour always has the whip hand. It is quite easy for them to wait until the fruit is ripe, and then say to the grower, "We won't pick your crop for you unless you pay us an extra shilling a day." What can the grower do? He cannot afford the

time to send down to Melbourne to procure substitutes, without counting the excessive cost of such action; he cannot afford to let his crop go unpicked, for he only gets one crop a year, and his income is entirely dependent on it; so he is held in a cleft stick and has to give in. Labour knows all this, and takes full advantage of the position. From five shillings a day eight or nine years ago wages have now risen to eight and ten shillings per day of eight hours—eight shillings is the minimum—and, in addition, all overtime has to be paid for at special rates: despite Labour protestations the increased wages have not resulted in more work per day per man, rather the contrary. Thus one result of their "rejoice with me" ebullitions has been practically to double the cost of handling in a few years, and with every prospect of the wage bill increasing still further in the near future. Needless to say, the selling price of fruit has not risen at a corresponding rate: but this point is discussed later.

Such a state of things is not in the good interests of the industry, especially as the settlers cannot afford it. Mildura of to-day presents a curious paradox: the settlement as a whole is prosperous, whilst the individual settlers are not so. It is a fact that over seventy per cent. of the landholders have their land mortgaged up to the hilt, their next year's crop is anticipated by liens, and every advantage of long credit from the storekeepers is availed of by them.

This seems unbelievable, but it is the truth. Here is the reason.

After passing through so many hardships, Mildura fruit-growing had acquired a reputation of uncertainty which prevented wealthy people from investing their money in it: at the same time so much money was already sunk there that the settlement could not be abandoned. If wealthy people were "shy," sales of land were exceedingly difficult to effect; indeed, in many cases the sum that could be realised by a sale at market price would not serve to clear off debts on the property, much less leave a balance for the settler.

The only hope, therefore, for either settler or creditor was for the settler to remain on and work the property in the hope of times improving. Meanwhile his interest bill each year snapped up a large portion of his profits. Still, he had a sporting chance of paying off the debts in time, and in the interim the creditors had to be satisfied by drawing good interest on their money. A bad season put off any chance of their recovering their money for a while, and sometimes it meant even advancing more funds to enable the settler to carry on, and thus avoiding for themselves a forced sale, and inevitably dropping a lot of money—or taking the land over and working it themselves, which they were by no means inclined or fitted to undertake.

So any sort of a sale was welcomed by the creditors so long as they stood to recoup some of their money a little earlier by it. Thus, where a settler owned

land worth £1,000—and at the same time owed £1,000 on it to various financial firms—he had to pay £70 or £80 out of his income in interest every year before he could hope to lessen the principal of his indebtedness, and in a bad year it was problematical if he could meet even the interest—which, in this case, of course, had to be written down to swell the debt principal, and in its turn raised the interest bill for the next year.

In a case like this, if a stranger came along with £200 or £300 and wanted to buy the land, the financial firms were quite prepared to oblige him if he agreed to pay £1,100 for it, putting down, say, £250. They let the original owner retain £100, which he was very glad to get, as he was freed from all further responsibility at the same time, and they were then in the position of having regained £150 of their original loan, whilst still retaining full power over the land, and the new holder, until such time as he repaid the £850 remaining debt.

In due course a new man would arrive and offer £1,150 for the property, putting down £300 cash. This would suit the owner admirably, for he would pocket the £50 rise in price and recoup his £250, in addition to having had the use of a large property for perhaps a couple or three seasons, by the outlay of a paltry £250. The mortgagees would be equally satisfied, for they had again lowered their risk £50 by the transaction, and were in precisely the same position as regards retaining a hold over the property as before. In this way tempting small

capitalists with easy terms of purchase, and raising the price of the land each time, they managed to get their mortgages into safer proportions on each bit of land.

Of course it raised the price of land to a fictitious figure, but the brunt of that would not have to be borne by them. Their position was getting safer every day. Thus the small man was utilised to retrieve the financial position of the mortgagees, and he was in pocket over the transaction. Many men have done quite well by this unofficial kind of partnership with the financial firms, and £1,000 to £1,500 profit out of a series of these deals spread over five or six years has left them very well satisfied.

Such opportunities of money-making are, however, becoming increasingly rare every year, for, since the mortgagees feel themselves safe, having reduced their risk in Mildura to a minimum, there is no temptation for them to " boost up " the price of land further. Indeed, the purchaser of a £1,000 block to-day has to put down at least £600 cash deposit before they are prepared to finance the balance. This is again inviting the rich man to invest, which he is not likely to do in large numbers just now, as the price of land has reached too high a figure. The figure is fictitious, and does not represent the value of the land; and in the absence of motive from financial firms to bolster up the prices, there is bound to be a slump : indeed, it has already started. The present-day settlers will bear the brunt of this,

and find great embarrassment in carrying on till they can find purchasers for their properties. Meanwhile the financial firms are on velvet.

It must be explained that these firms are the banks and the packing houses, and that they work together in most of these land transactions. Thus the bank lends money on a mortgage, whilst the packing house lends on the coming crop. Both of them having reduced their loans to settlers to safe dimensions, each retains power over the land and crops respectively. Thus the settler is compelled to do all his financial business through the mortgaging bank, and send his fruit to the packing house to whom he has given a lien on the crop. It is a most lucrative arrangement for everybody but the settler, who is compelled to do precisely what he is told, and pay whatever is demanded without question. Neither, whilst he is in their debt, can he compel the prompt rendering of account sales for his fruit, which, by the by, is a very significant point. Thus it often occurs that, having harvested a crop and delivered it to the factory, he has given goods more than sufficient to liquidate his debt to the packing house, and were the money promptly credited to his account he would be out of their hands. The account sales, however, are not rendered promptly, and being in want of ready money, he has to go back to them and obtain advances on the security of the fruit already in their hands for sale. In this way he is still paying interest on his original debt to them until such time as they choose to sell the

fruit, besides interest on the new debt they have been forced to contract. So, when the time does come that account sales are rendered, he still finds himself in their clutches and is compelled to send his fruit there the following season, willy-nilly. *In this way final account sales have sometimes been withheld for over two years.* This is not the entire tale of packing houses and financial methods in Mildura, but it will serve to show the extent of their hold over settlers. The fact that there are six large firms, besides several small private ones, engaged in this packing business, shows that it is considered sufficiently lucrative.

Other causes also are militating against new people coming in to buy land at this juncture.

I have already pointed out that the people who wrote jubilant letters to the press succeeded in attracting public attention to Mildura, and that they forgot whilst making their boasts that theirs was a protected industry. They did not succeed in removing the popular prejudice against Mildura, but they did renew confidence in the dried fruits industry. Investigation showed that every one of the Mildura products, until then popularly supposed to be capable of production in Mildura only, were quite easily turned out in many other districts where both land and water were cheaper, and the position less isolated. And so hundreds of acres of all varieties of fruit for drying have been planted in all directions. These orchards are just coming into bearing now.

Whilst the dried fruits output was confined to Mildura and its sister settlement Renmark, in South Australia—which was started by the Chaffeys at the same time as Mildura, and has been through just the same vicissitudes—the whole output could be sold in the Commonwealth at the highest protected rates fixed by the A.D.F.A. When, however, the output exceeds the Commonwealth requirements, it is a different matter.

With the exception of a few minor products which still command high prices, this point has now been reached. Australia now produces enormously more dried fruits than she can consume, and each year, as the new orchards mature more, the excess will become greater.

Remembering that foreign-dried fruits made by cheap labour are only just kept out of Australia by £28 per ton duty, and that even by adding this £28 per ton to the world's prices and exacting it from the public, Mildura fruit growers have only just managed to keep their heads above water, it is easy to appreciate the impossibility of exporting this excess production. The prices received by doing so would not pay for the production. This has been proved experimentally times without number, when wages were much lower than they are to-day.

All possibility of exporting being out of the question, other means have had to be devised to utilise the surplus production and keep up the prices of fruit as high as possible.

As the new settlements have sprung up the A.D.F.A. has absorbed their members into its organisation, and has thus succeeded in averting any recurrence of the disastrous methods of cut-throat competition in vogue in the early days. It has kept abreast of all increased production, and still fixes the prices of all fruit growers in Australia from year to year. This increased output has, however, placed them in a difficult position. Were they to lower the prices heavily all round, it would still fail to overcome the difficulty of disposing of the surplus, and any stimulating effect produced on purchases owing to the lowered prices could be only temporary, and after the novelty of cheapness had worn off a large proportion of each crop would still remain unsold.

The only useful expedient was to find another use for dried fruits irrespective of the demand for household purposes. They discovered this expedient in the distillery. It was found that excellent brandy could be made from raisins, currants, and sultanas, the staple crops of Mildura, and a distillery was accordingly put up. This method has undoubtedly overcome any difficulty in disposing of the surplus promptly, but the prices given by the distillery are hardly better than can be got by exporting, and any advantage over the latter method exists merely in having a handy and certain market for any amount of fruit and in receiving prompter payments.

The difference of prices for the same fruit, subject to annual fluctuation, are as follows :—

Fruit sold to the distillery realises £18 to £20 per ton net to grower.

Fruit sold to the public realises £35 to £45 per ton net to grower.

Having found and adopted the distillery, the next question was whose fruit was going there and whose was to be sold in the usual market. Here again the A.D.F.A. was called in to settle the matter. Its scope is enlarged, for besides fixing prices as formerly, it has now to estimate each year the Commonwealth requirements of each variety; find out how many tons of each is produced in the whole of Australia; work out the ratio between the two sets of figures, *i.e.*, discover the probable surplus with respect to each variety, and, having worked out the percentages of the whole crops that the surplus represents, command that each settler shall send so many per cent. of each variety to the distillery, which percentage, of course, carries little, if any, profit. The A.D.F.A. is still able to maintain high prices for the other portions, which are sold through the usual channels, but this portion is doomed to dwindle down every year.

In 1913 the surplus of currants constituted nearly half of the crop; and in 1914 it is likely to be considerably more. Each rise of the surplus naturally lowers the net price to the grower, and nobody knows how far the surplus will rise. It is a very bad look-out for the present growers. Need-

less to say the prices of labour will not go down; indeed, when such a contingency was mooted, Labour threatened to remove the protective tariff and settle the question once and for all by crushing out the industry.

Reviewing the position, there seems small hope of any large holdings surviving. If prices continue to fall and wages keep on rising, as both are bound to do, the time will come when the labour bill cannot be met.

Still, the industry is too vital to be abandoned, and if wages cannot be paid, the only alternative is to dispense with labour. If this cannot be done on the large holdings, they will have to be cut up into small holdings; and the owners of these small holdings will have to do all their own work save the actual harvesting.

Profits will go down to a low figure, and in a few years' time one may say that the owner of a ten-acre block has bought himself into a permanent job of £100 a year, more or less, according to the seasons.

The banks and packing houses are fully alive to the trend affairs are taking, and perceiving rocks ahead for the big landholders, are reducing their mortgages enormously. One bank in Mildura, I am told, has recently withdrawn £60,000 worth of loans to settlers, and the local manager is forbidden to lend any more money to anybody on the security of land.

Nothing can stop the advent of the small grower;

the same principle is working all over Australia, and everything conspires to help it on. Nor will the price of land remain for long at the present fictitious figure. It has already commenced to fall, and will continue to do so until the capitalisation is in proportion with the lowest prices to which fruit will fall, and these one has no means of discovering yet. It means that very heavy losses will have to be faced by the present landholders, and there is little doubt that most of them will be compelled to leave, more or less ruined, like their predecessors. The ones who can sell their holdings before the scare comes, may count themselves fortunate.

This cheapening of properties cannot but have a deteriorating effect on the class of settlers attracted. When the Chaffeys opened the settlement, English gentlemen predominated amongst the inhabitants, but most of these passed away after a few years, and their places were filled with Australians. Very few of these men remain now, and those who do have married Australian wives, embraced the rude country customs, and have become scarcely recognisable from the labourers amongst whom they work. This social corroding has been helped on by every vicissitude that served to put labourers in possession of land, and the advent of each small shopkeeper who was attracted by prospects of fruit and country life. The few Englishmen remaining who have retained a grip on the old conventions and habits of their homes, deplore the lamentable condition into which Mildura society has drifted. It

is destined to drift still lower. The class of people arriving now consists of illiterate "cocky farmers," and these in their turn will give way to all classes of labourers, who have saved up sufficient money to buy themselves into a few acres. There is very little culture now: soon there will be none at all.

For every pound made by Mildura settlers during the last twenty years, five pounds has passed into the pockets of labour, and another five into the pockets of the financiers. Not a single settler, either past or present, has succeeded in making more than a very modest competence. The only rich people in the place, without counting those few living there for the dry climate and possessed of independent means, are counted amongst the storekeepers and packing-house owners; and the former of these are not more than moderately well off—bad debts have taken good care of that.

The only people who have consistently profited and led easy lives are the labourers. And these have drawn high pay for every hour's work done in the settlement without sharing any of the anxieties or discomforts. At the present rate of wages it is better to be a labourer than a settler.

As to the quality of Mildura products, I can give a little praise and a little blame. Without doubt much greater cleanliness is exercised in Mildura than in other countries in all the processing to which fruit is subjected; and the public can be sure of buying perfectly wholesome and fresh fruit; but for the rest, comparison is all against Mildura.

The quality of raisins, sultanas, and currants is inferior to the foreign articles, inasmuch as the skins of the Mildura fruit are like leather and cannot be eaten. This is probably owing to the extreme climate and the vines have found it necessary to grow a stronger protection for their berries to guard against the terrific heat and scorching winds. The same objection applies to most of the oranges, always excepting some excellent Washington Navals, which appear to become acclimatised much better than other varieties. Dried apricots are, I think, as good as can be grown elsewhere, with the advantage of being cleaner, but prunes and dried figs are uneatable.

Before closing this chapter and passing on to miscellaneous subjects, I should like to reiterate that this picture of Mildura will serve as a truthful guide to conditions existing in most other country districts in Australia. True, the same problems have not to be solved, but there are others equally difficult. Against the Mildura concreting problem one can cite the universal fear of drought in non-irrigation districts: against seepage one can balance floods: the rabbits wax equal or greater ravages in every other agricultural pursuit, for they are all-pervading in Australia; moreover, the cost of wire-netting fences for protecting Mildura properties from them is a mere trifle compared with the outlay for the same purpose on stations and in wheat country: the nursery gardens have their counterparts in the seed merchants and cattle and horse

dealers: long-credit storekeepers and easy mortgages are a national institution, and Labour is as omnipotent as in every other isolated country district. Then Mildura, in common with all other protected industries, is assured of enormous prices for at least a percentage of its produce, which gives some help towards meeting Labour demands. Other districts that deal in products that have to be sold against competition of the world's markets are without even this advantage. If Mildura's trade is being choked, so is everything else. That Mildura is worth little proves that other places are in the same predicament. The lack of rich men is a conspicuous feature of Australia, and is due to the Socialistic influences corroding every business and occupation.

Other districts have not had the advantage of an English community leaving their society for some years, and, above all, Mildura got her railway when she needed it most.

This lack of railways is perhaps the greatest deterrent to progress in Australia except the Labour problem. With one or two negligible instances, there are no private railways in Australia, and railway construction is persistently looked upon as a national monopoly. National monopolies are notoriously run for revenue purposes merely, and Australian railways form no exception. Not only are there not half enough railways, but those in existence are run disgracefully. In wheat-growing districts farmers have to wait several months for

trucks to carry their produce to market, and every year one reads of hundreds of tons of wheat being spoilt all over the country by rain through lack of shelter provision at the railway depôts. These lost crops spell failure for the farmers as often as not, and yet nothing is done to improve the service. Were foreign companies allowed to come in and run the existing services, and given a free hand to construct new lines, all this would be changed; but Australians believe that they have the best railway service in the world, and would not be persuaded that any advantage could accrue to them personally in handing over the reins to really progressive firms, possessed of money to carry out their schemes. It is the same dog-in-the-manger policy that leads them to exclude black labour, and in both cases the whole evil consequence falls on themselves.

Mildura is more favoured than other places. What must the other places be like?

## CHAPTER XVI

### EVERYDAY LIFE OF SETTLERS

MILDURA has served to exemplify the type of Australian country district, and a description of the everyday life of her settlers will give an equally good idea of the general conditions found anywhere else, and in any other horticultural or agricultural occupation. Concerning these conditions, if any comparison were to be drawn as to the minor details, it would be found that Mildura is generally the better off. The life is less arduous, once all improvements on the property are completed, and the social life is more varied and holds more attractions than in other places. That details of actual work are different, and that the Mildura settler is occupied with very small areas really makes no difference; essentially it is the same outdoor life, whether growing grapes or wheat, breeding sheep, or dairy farming.

First and foremost it is an absolutely outdoor life, and in every respect a healthy one. Save for three or four months in the winter it is possible to live entirely out of doors, and indeed even the cold of these months does not deter everybody from "sleeping out" all the year round. It was probably

this magic word "outdoor life" that acted as a lure to so many Englishmen twenty years ago, and the freedom from office restrictions reconciled them to accepting many other discomforts.

On this score the life is ideal. Being out of doors all the time and getting any amount of exercise makes all the difference to one's health, and headaches, chest trouble, and general malaise hold little sway amongst settlers. Life becomes a regular picnic: but before becoming a fruit farmer one should decide if obligatory and perennial picnicking is agreeable. It has the advantage of Nature over Art, but some people find Art much more comfortable. Reverting to the habits of primæval man may be amusing for a time, but some natures find it inexpressibly tedious, after the first novelty has worn off, and soon began to crave for a more normal, civilised existence. Perhaps the most fascinating point is the absence of people in authority over one. Every landowner is absolutely and entirely his own "boss." He can start work in the morning whenever he feels inclined and "knock off" just when it suits him. If he wants an afternoon off to play tennis there is no one to say him nay, and the necessity for possessing a good stock of grandmothers and maiden aunts for use on important occasions has ceased for ever. There are no restrictions on his leisure save his own common sense. Save during irrigation and harvest times—after all, but a short period of the year—he is never tied down for a specified number of hours every

day. Even when he is in financial straits this personal liberty regarding choice of hours is not curtailed. And now for the work itself.

The new year is generally held to begin immediately after completion of all harvesting operations of the grape crop. In an average year this occurs on about April 10th. By this date all the fruit is dry and in the factory, the drying plant has been washed, mended, generally overhauled, and put away under cover, and the decks are clear for next season's tasks. The balance of April, May, and till about June 10th, in all two months, may be considered the slack season.

So our settler can start his year with a holiday. If he has any money he can go right away for a change, and forget all about fruit-growing for a few weeks. As he very rarely does go away at this time it may be inferred that he has not got any money. Never mind, the cooler weather is commencing, and he can console himself with unlimited free literature from the Carnegie Library, which is far and away the best institution in Mildura. He is disappointed sometimes by finding pages torn out of interesting novels, but soon learns that vandalism of this sort is applauded by Mildura immorality-mongers, and that he must make no complaint. A little investigation of the books in the library, however, leaves him satisfied, for there are many excellent biographies and books of travel, besides good translations of many of the old Classics; and last, but not least, all Balzac's works—volumes that seem to be

too much of the natures of "tomes" to risk rigid inspection from the severe ones of the nimble scissors.

In his spare time he will sometimes find exercise for himself and his horses by ploughing up any waste land he possesses or rents, and planting wheat or oats on it in the hope of lessening his fodder bill later on in the year. This is rather in the nature of a gamble, as he cannot irrigate any crop land without enormous expense, and has thus to depend on the very insufficient rainfall to mature the crop. Sometimes it will pay him well, but often the crop fails completely from lack of moisture; however, he does not mind very much, as it cost him nothing beyond the cost of the seed and his own trouble.

Beyond knocking down a few of the biggest weeds with a shovel or "slaker," and raking them up and burning them where they are very thick, there is no more work to do until the vines are in a condition for pruning. If there is any trellissing, uprooting sick or unpayable trees, or anything else in the nature of extra work to be done, it is a different matter, and this slack time is fully occupied. And if he is very hard up he sometimes undertakes jobs of this sort for neighbours, and adds a few pounds to his income by temporarily becoming a labourer.

By the middle of June the real work begins, and for a few weeks he is kept hard at it. All the land must be ploughed up deeply to sweeten the soil and

admit free access to the winter rains. Manure is drilled in at the same time in order to stimulate the next crop, and then the pruning has to be attended to. If any replanting is necessary, June, July, and August are the months in which all vine and deciduous trees must go into the ground. When the settler finds it necessary to do as much of this work as possible himself, from motives of economy, it often takes a great deal of fitting in, and means hard work and long hours to get through in time, especially so in very dry seasons when there is a mid-winter irrigation to attend to besides all the other jobs.

It means a great rush to complete matters by the end of August, and the earlier they are finished the better it is for the crop prospects. Assistance has often to be sought to finish the pruning, and this generally means that the job is badly done.

I must explain that the methods of vine and tree pruning are almost scientific in their demands, and that one careless pruning leaves its bad effects for several years both on the actual plant and on the crops. Remembering the attitude of Labour to Capital, it is not surprising that they care little for results. The only way to secure good work either as regards quality or quantity is to take a pair of seccateurs and work alongside the man. Then he cannot loaf quite all the time, and one can check any flagrant mistakes in his methods.

After the pruning he has to go round the property with a horse-rake to collect all the vine

prunings; these he puts into big heaps and burns, unless he wishes to grow a lot of "rooted" vines for next year's sale, in which case he cuts off all the best of the canes into lengths and plants them in rows in a convenient spot, of course burning the refuse.

If he has any olive trees, the berries ripen in May and June—sometimes hanging on as late as July. These must be harvested promptly, as they do not hang on the trees long after they are ripe. Then, when there is an acreage of oranges and lemons, picking has to be done in July and August. This is all additional to the routine work which must not be interrupted, and thus adds a lot of supervision to the other tasks of our settler. Certainly he does not mind this if the orange crop is a big one, for he is then gathering in good money, paid in prompt cash, which will materially lessen his anxieties for the rest of the year.

Everything must be in readiness to take the first irrigation early in September, and this means that the ground should all be ploughed up again immediately after the pruning. Often there is no time to complete this, and part of it has to be done afterwards. The actual irrigation, too, requires some preparation. Each property is furnished—at its own expense—with "head-ditches" running along the highest side of the land. These ditches are supplied with water from the main irrigation channels which pass by the property. Unless some supervision were exercised over the water it would

all run down to the lowest point on the property and create a flood without irrigating the higher land, so some kind of control has had to be devised to secure even soaking over the whole area.

The head-ditches are placed at right angles to the rows of vines and trees, and are themselves slightly on the slope. Thus, water entering at one end of the ditch, always the highest end, travels the whole length and to the other end by the force of gravity. Small exits, corresponding to taps, are provided in the ditch opposite each row of vines, and when the ditch is full of water these taps are opened one by one. It is a matter of very nice adjustment to secure uniform streams of water running down each row, for, of course, the pressure is different in each stream, as the water travels further from the entrance of the ditch and decreases in volume after feeding each exit. The ditch itself is receiving a constant flow from the main channel, and this is supposed to remain at a constant pressure till the irrigation is finished. That it does not do so exacts still further watchfulness on the part of the man in charge, and means constant fiddling with the taps. When an even flow through all the exits is obtained, means has to be found to keep each stream of water rigidly alongside the row of vines or trees to which it corresponds, and prevent it from breaking over to the right or left. This is achieved by leading each stream into a deep-ploughed furrow running parallel with each row and cut as near up to the head-ditch as possible;

these furrows have to be made immediately before each irrigation : the process is called furrowing out.

Irrigation can be the easiest job for the settler or it may be the most heart-breaking : this depends entirely on how well or badly the land was graded (*i.e.*, levelled) in the first place. When this has been well done and there is a nice even slope, the water need only be "set"—*i.e.*, an even flow obtained in each furrow, a job taking perhaps a couple of hours more or less, and then all the trouble is over. To walk down with a pipe in one's mouth and a shovel on one's shoulder every six hours or so just to see that everything is alright, is all that has to be done. In fact, the land practically irrigates itself, and in three days the water can be shut off, having irrigated the land perfectly, and without having caused any hard work at all.

With a badly graded piece of land it is quite a different matter. Here there are hollows and rises to be overcome, and it is a matter of exceeding difficulty and "bullocking" hard work to water the land at all. When there is a hollow the water rushes down through the furrows until it gets to the bottom, where it is stopped by the rise and causes a flood. If the rise is higher than the head-ditch, furrows have to be dug through it by hand. When this is completed after enormous toil, it is found that the water at the bottom of the hollow has flooded badly and broken all the furrows, and it is then a matter of very great difficulty to complete the irrigation at all. These rises and hollows can

be marked and levelled off to a certain extent afterwards, but there will always be trouble where the first survey and grading was unsatisfactory. In cases of this sort, the work of irrigating takes two or three days longer than on well-graded blocks.

Perhaps the worst specimen of land to be irrigated is a sandhill. The difficulties here are of a different sort. On account of the steep slope to irrigate, one has to water with a very small stream, or the water would simply run over the top of the ground and cause a flood at the lowest point. Often, too, there are two slopes to deal with simultaneously—I mean the side of the hill itself is on a tilt, besides the slope down the hill. Here the furrows are always broken away, no matter how small the stream, and the water, running across from furrow to furrow, gaining volume with each furrow it incorporates, soon causes a break-away very difficult to catch.

At this time of the year the hot weather is just commencing, and consequently the sun-power has to be considered. Where irrigation is depended on for all moisture, and there is some considerable time between waterings, it is of the utmost importance to keep the moisture in the land as long as possible. The sun bakes the earth and causes a network of cracks to appear all over the surface of the part on which the water was directly applied (*i.e.*, the furrows), therein being different in effect to falls of rain, which cover the whole surface uniformly, and when evaporation is not so great. Unless some

measures were taken promptly, a two or three days' spell of hot weather would be sufficient to draw out the major portion of the water by evaporation and leave the ground hard and dry. Directly the land is dry enough for horses to stand on, therefore, it is necessary to run over it with a "cultivator" and churn up the surface. This destroys the sun-cracks, and provides a kind of powdering blanket through which evaporation acts very slowly.

Prompt cultivation after each watering is one of the most important tasks of the settler, and must be carried out scrupulously at the right time if successful crops are to eventuate. Of course, it means going over the ground many times every year, and this is one of the largest differences between work in Mildura fruit-growing and other agricultural occupations carried on in districts dependent on the rainfall for its moisture. In Mildura there are small acreages to be ploughed, disc-harrowed, and cultivated over and over again every year, and in the other places large acreages with only a fraction of the work per acre. In both places the actual operations of ploughing, etc., are the same.

Another large difference is in the weed scourge. Where there is no irrigation, weeds can generally be exterminated in a short space of time, and once free of them it is easy to keep so with a minimum of work. Not so in Mildura. With each irrigation the water brings hundreds of millions of seeds into each acre of land, and they grow with extraordinary

rapidity and vigour. Therefore, having completed the moisture-preserving cultivation, our settler has to tackle his crop of weeds. This necessitates the use of one of several different implements. If, as often happens, they are very bad at this time of the year owing to non-completion of the spring ploughing, an implement called a skim plough is brought into requisition. This machine consists of a heavy frame carrying two exceedingly strong knives set at an angle. By holding the handle and putting the weight of the body on them when it is in motion these knives can be kept three or four inches under the surface of the ground, and cut off at the roots every weed in their path. This is a fairly rapid means of clearing the ground, for the implement covers a strip of three feet or three feet six inches in width, and as much as five acres can be covered in a day with a strong team of horses. This implement is especially valuable, as its work almost approximates to a ploughing at depth.

Where the weeds are not so bad more ground can be covered by affixing a knife to the cultivator in place of the usual tines. This contrivance covers a wider strip of land, and a larger area can be dealt with each day; but it will not cope so readily with strong weeds and has the additional disadvantage of caking the subsoil into a hard pan, which interferes with effecting even irrigation. It is, therefore, not much used except immediately before an irrigation, when the ground is already fairly hard, with the idea of killing off the last of the old crop of weeds

and preventing them from growing to a height of three or four feet before they can be dealt with after the irrigation.

One other useful implement is the disc-harrow, which is invaluable for killing the young crops of weeds before they are more than a foot high. Besides this, it has much the same effect as a cultivator in breaking up the surface, the only disadvantage being that it tends to pack the land too tight.

By constant and judicious use of these implements the land can be kept both free of weeds and in good tilth; but the efforts must not be relaxed for a fortnight during the summer months, or the crop would be endangered.

Where they fail to be of use is under the trellised vines. Until a few years ago the trellisses had to be weeded by hand three or four times every year. It is still a matter of great worry and expense, but in a lesser degree. An implement called a horse-hoe has been devised which, in skilled hands, can be used with great effect. It has a short knife set at an angle which the operator can push in and out of the trellis as it is drawn along by a single horse. It requires a great deal of skill to avoid injuring the vines with cuts, but if one is content to leave a margin of safety and be content to go over the ground again by hand, the horse-hoe does more than half the work, and that in a very short space of time.

By the beginning of September, therefore, he will have got everything in readiness for the irriga-

tion, and immediately afterwards has busied himself with cultivation and weeding. This carries him on to the beginning of November, when he has to take the next irrigation, which is, of course, followed in its turn by the same routine.

Meanwhile, other details have to be attended to from time to time as leisure can be found. Shortly after the first irrigation the vines commence to come into leaf, and by the middle of November they are in flower. This is a critical time for the settler, as his hopes of a good crop are entirely dependent on the success of the "setting" of berries. It is his object to do all that is possible to eliminate adverse conditions. True, he cannot do much, but all possible precautions have to be taken.

One cause of bad setting, or berries falling immediately after setting, is disease on the vines, such as "oidium" or "ancracthnose." Before the berries have matured it is difficult to detect the presence of these diseases, so preventive measures of spraying with certain washes and sprinkling the vines with sulphur are very popular. Few settlers nowadays consider themselves safe without having done one or other of these operations, and many settlers habitually spray twice and sulphur three times every season. It is time and money well spent.

Then all currant-growers have to find time for "cincturing." It was found in the early days that currant crops invariably failed to mature, the berries dropping to the ground at every setting

season without any apparent reason, whilst the vines were to all intents and purposes absolutely healthy. No reason for this was discovered for a very long time, and some people coming to the conclusion that currants could not thrive in Mildura uprooted all the vines and planted something else. However, somebody introduced the practice of cincturing, which has been in use in Europe for centuries, and from the time it was generally accepted in Mildura there has been small complaint of lost crops from this cause. "Cincturing" means cutting away a small strip of wood right round the stem of the vine. There are several methods of performing this operation, but the results are said to be nearly the same in each case. Furnished with a strong knife, the operator sits or kneels on the ground and cuts a circle at a convenient spot right round the stem of the vine, taking care that the cut is not more than one-eighth of an inch deep. At a distance of from one-tenth to two-tenths of an inch from the first cut, he then makes a second and similar cut, and lastly cleans out the wood between the two cuts. This is the whole operation. Some people contend that the first cut is sufficient, others are content to do the operation roughly with a small saw, and others insist on putting a bandage of rag round the wound. However, opinions on these different methods are much divided, as are they on the precise moment of growth at which the operation should be performed. The net result, however, is to stop the flow of sap for a time, and

allow the berries to attain size and strength to resist its force for a few days. It is curious that the stronger the vine the more danger of its crop falling, but the success of cincturing seems to prove this point. Whether a single or double cut, bandage or uncovered, late or early, be the best method, will be found out in course of time no doubt, and meanwhile the operation is quite effective by any method. Currant-growers are the only people affected by cincturing, for all the other varieties of vines grown in Mildura set their crops naturally. The general time of cincturing is about the second or third week of November, and this often occurs simultaneously with the second irrigation.

Besides this, the vines require other attention. The whole acreage has to be gone over two or three times every season, and in the case of young vines more often still, to remove all the lower growth or "suckers." This is important, as suckers are of no use, either for giving crop in the first season, or providing fruit wood for the next season: all they do is to rob the useful part of the vine of food, and to a certain extent imperil the crop.

Simultaneously with this is a light summer pruning, or "topping" as it is generally called. In rich soil the vines are apt to make very heavy wood growth to the detriment of the crop, quite useless "streamers" of 10 ft. to 15 ft. are produced in profusion, and all these have to be cut away or shortened considerably with a sharp knife. This

applies to all vines, and has to be done two or three times every year.

Then all trellised vines have to be tied up to the wires carefully. If the young growth is left free it is at the mercy of every wind, and much of it gets broken, besides making all work with the implements most difficult to do. So the settler has to go round with little pieces of twine and tie up the canes in handfuls, a most tedious task.

The third irrigation comes along in January, and after this preparations must be made for the harvesting, which commences at the end of January or early in February, according to the season. Growers of apricots and peaches have already been hard at it ever since Christmas.

Once the harvesting has started, cultivation and weeding, etc., are abandoned for the year, and the properties at once start to grow a crop of weeds from 4 ft. to 6 ft. high; but dealing with them comes into the next season's work, and cannot be considered for the moment. The harvest takes up every minute, and cannot be postponed.

## CHAPTER XVII

### EVERYDAY LIFE OF SETTLERS: HARVESTING THE FRUIT

Some account of the harvesting and drying of fruits may be of interest, and I will describe the operations briefly.

Commencing with vines, Mildura has the three staple varieties: currants, sultanas, and Gordo Blancs (*i.e.*, "fat white," from which are made the pudding raisins).

Currants are the easiest to process, and ripen the first, so I will start with them. A gang of men or women are furnished with knives or grape scissors, a piece of sacking (generally called "hessian") to put under the vines to catch any loose berries, and a number of large tins capable of holding about 20 lbs. of fruit each. They split up into pairs, and each pair takes one row of vines, one going on each side. Their task is simply to fill the buckets as speedily as possible, using care to pick only the ripest fruit.

It must be said at this point that constant supervision has to be exercised if they are working on day wages, to ensure any work being done; or if they are on piecework (*i.e.*, so much per bucket) to see that they do not pick unripe fruit or damage the

vines. Even with one man supervising the whole time, the hands find means to loaf a large part of the day, and it is nearly impossible to persuade them to pick the ripe fruit and leave the unripe on the vine. The trouble is that is matters nothing to them if they give satisfaction or not. Their minimum daily wage is 8s., and it is their avowed object to do as little for this 8s. as they possibly can. When there is no supervision, the waste of fruit is shocking. They find it too much trouble to use the hessian, and consequently hundreds of bunches fall to the ground and are wasted. Not content with this, they find it amusing to pelt each other with large bunches of fruit, and do so whenever they are left alone for a moment. All this is not thoughtlessness, but they do it purposely, through the malice of class hatred. Every bunch wasted is "one up" to them against their employer.

As the buckets are filled, a man with a trolley comes down and takes them away to the drying ground, leaving a load of empties behind him with the pickers. The description so far will serve equally for sultanas and gordos, as picking methods are the same in all cases. The only differences are that currants ripen unevenly, and have to be gone over twice or even three times; whereas sultanas and gordos are generally left till the fruit is dead ripe, and one picking serves to strip the vines; also that currants grow in much smaller bunches, and therefore take considerably longer to handle in the actual picking.

Arrived on the drying ground, we find another gang of men, more skilled, and receiving from 9s. to 12s. a day.

They have hundreds of wooden trays on which they spread out the fruit. Several types of wooden tray are in use, from the old-fashioned 3 ft. by 2 ft. to the 3 ft. by 4 ft. and the 3 ft. by 6 ft. modern types. The two latter kinds are considered the best, as they are easier to fill, and take less handling. They are formed of boards dovetailed together, and furnished with cleats at the ends, so as to allow an air space between the planks and the ground when the trays are put out singly, or between it and the next tray when they are put one on top of the other.

On receiving the tins from the carter, the men empty out the fruit on to trays, piling the trays one on top of the other, until they have a stack of about fifteen high. The spreading has to be done very carefully to avoid breaking the fruit. Once on the trays there it stops for a fortnight or so, when it is nearly dry if fairly hot weather has been experienced. To finish it off they empty the fruit on to large sheets of hessian laid on the ground, and in the full sunlight. Allowing it to stay there for a day or so results in all the smaller berries being as dry as chips, and the bigger berries not quite dry. To even it all up the fruit is tossed into a heap in the middle, and covered up and shielded from the sun with the four corners of the sheet, and allowed to "sweat." In one or two days this process is

complete, and all the berries are in the same stage of dryness, and have only to be emptied into large "sweat boxes," and carted to the factory, where they are put through a machine which frees them of all their stems, grades them into sizes, and drops them into 56 lb. boxes, ready for the merchant and shopkeeper. Once at the factory, the settler's responsibility is at an end, and all these processes described after are seen to by the factory hands.

This method of drying currants on trays built into stacks is called "shade-drying," and is generally admitted to turn out by far the best sample. There are other methods, however, which claim to minimise handling, and thus lower the expense.

One is to lay the trays of fruit out in the sun straight away, and refrain from stacking them. Certainly it dries the fruit in half the time, with the tremendous advantage of freeing the trays quickly to be used for another lot of fruit; but the sample of fruit is not nearly so good, having no "bloom" on it, and being full of red and discoloured berries. And the rapid drying invariably causes the fruit to lose too much weight, which is, of course, a loss to the grower.

These objections are even more applicable where the fruit is spread straight on to hessian, as is the practice of many men. It results in a wretched sample of fruit, and besides that incurs great risk of spoiling, or even losing everything in case of bad weather. When the fruit is on solid trays these

trays can be stacked up, and the sides covered up with other trays, and the fruit is quite safe from any ordinary rain; but it is impossible to cover several hundred large sheets of hessian. In case of the rain the fruit simply has to get wet, and from this reason, in a wet year, hundreds of tons of mildewed fruit are put on the market for human consumption, which should really be destroyed or used as pigs' food. As it is a protected industry, settlers have no fear of competition from the better Greek currants, and the difference of price between grades of fruit offers little inducement for them to strain to produce a first-class sample, if the outlay to do so is higher. The public has to buy what they make or go without altogether. The advantage of the hessian system is to save enormously in the handling —in a dry season this saving is actually more per ton than could be gained by making the best grade of currants, besides greatly lessening the work, and in the fact that outlay on plant is very much less a consideration of great significance in Mildura.

Yet another method has been devised during the last three years, and is gradually coming more and more into general use. It is the rack. Quantities of wire fence netting are obtained and fixed in tiers on a permanent structure of heavy wooden posts and cross pieces. A canvas movable roof and side pieces are added, and it is claimed that after the first expense of installation, racks combine the advantage of stack drying on trays with the cheapness of the hessian method. As regards cheapness and

safety, the contention is already proved, but up to the present no rack-dried currants are equal to the best shade-dried tray fruit. Possibly more experience will remedy this. In course of time, when all the wooden trays in existence now are worn out, racks are bound to take their place, but as yet they are by no means universal.

The treatment of sultanas and gordos is somewhat different. Their skins are immensely tougher than those of the currants, and unless artificial means were employed, it would require too long a time to dry them. The means used is to dip the berries into a solution of boiling water and caustic soda. This cracks the skins all over ever so slightly, and when exposed to the sun afterwards, evaporation of the juice proceeds without interruption. This "lie" is used for both sultanas and gordos, the only difference being that it is much stronger in the latter case, as the gordo skin is very tough indeed. Beyond this, all the rest of the operations for the two varieties are identical.

Racks have been tried for these fruits, but with very doubtful success. There is danger of the caustic acting on the wire netting and poisoning the fruit slightly, and the condition of being in tiers robs all but the top fruit of adequate sunlight, and this is essential if a good colour is to be obtained. Up to the present most growers favour retaining trays for this portion of the crop.

Arrived on the drying ground the fruit is unloaded at the "dip," a contrivance of two large

iron tanks set above and bricked in with firebars and a chimney. Both tanks are filled with water kept on the boil by a fire underneath, and in one of them is added the caustic soda. This tank is used for dipping the fruit into, whilst the other supplies a reserve of water always on the boil for replenishing purposes. The " dipman " is responsible for the subsequent colour of the fruit, and must know to a nicety how strong or weak to make the solution. Careless or ignorant dipping can ruin the fruit at once, so the settler generally does this work himself.

Having mixed the solution to the correct strength, and dipped a few isolated bunches to make sure that no mistake has been made, the work begins. The tins into which the fruit is picked are perforated with a number of small holes, and the fruit can therefore be dipped without removing it from the tins, for by submerging the tin and contents for a moment, and then withdrawing it, all the water drains away through the perforations in a few moments. So rapidly can this be done that one man often dips 700 or 800 tins a day, which means over five tons of green fruit or about one and a half tons of dried fruit. It is not a pleasant job, however, as there is the fire to keep up, and the water to replenish constantly, besides being in the caustic fumes all day, as well as having to endure the high temperature of the summer weather, which is no joke by itself.

As he dips the tins, the dipman puts them on to

a stand just alongside, where they drain off the last drops of "lie" before going further. The barrow-man next takes charge, and wheels them—or pushes them if a trolley line is installed—down to the trays, which are laid out singly in long lines on the ground. Here await the spreaders, who empty the fruit on to trays, leaving the tins to go back to the dip to await the carter who carries them back to the vines. Having spread the fruit carefully, nothing more has to be done till it has turned colour, which takes from three to six days according to the weather. Then it is necessary to turn it upside down, so as to bring both sides under the influence of the sunlight. This is done by throwing it on to sheets of hessian. Once there the treatment does not differ to that of currants. In due course it is thrown up into heaps, rubbed about by hands or with rakes to loosen it from the stems, if it seems at all sticky, and finally thrown into boxes and carted away to the factory.

I have made little mention of weather conditions so far, but it must be understood that a successful drying season demands very hot days for a couple of months: 90° to 95° F. is the ideal temperature, with hot nights, and a complete absence of rain or dew. Each fall of rain causes much extra expense in stacking up or covering the fruit out of danger, besides stopping all progress till it is fine again. When there is long continued rain, much of the fruit simply goes mouldy, both on the vines and drying ground, and more of the balance is most

questionable. The harvest is a very anxious time, and every grower heaves a sigh of relief when he sends off the last load to the factory.

Currants, sultanas, and gordos are the staple crops of the settlement, but a few words about some of the side-lines may be written.

Table raisins or muscatels are also prepared from the gordo vine, and they form the cream of the crop. Special pickers are told off to cull picked bunches from the best vines. These bunches are freed of their blemished berries, and are laid carefully on trays in the sun without being dipped. It takes as long as six weeks sometimes to dry them, and they entail a great deal of trouble in every way. On no account must a drop of rain reach them, or they are irretrievably ruined. They have to be turned most carefully by hand, bunch by bunch, if the bloom is to be kept on them, and the cost of packing them in cartons with ribbons and crinkly paper is very high. Then there is not a ready market for them in Australia, and the thickness of their skins precludes any chance of exporting to compete with the superior European article, without mentioning the comparatively low price paid in other countries. Altogether, few people make these muscatels twice. It is too much trouble, and there is so little profit.

Apricots are more widely grown, but these, too, require so much processing, and labour is so expensive, that they are gradually going out of favour and giving place to vines. In the picking season there

is no rest day or night. They all ripen up at the same time, and directly they are ripe they drop on to the ground. The whole picking is condensed into a few days, and one requires a large number of hands to cope with the smallest crop. As soon as they are picked they have to be "pitted" (*i.e.*, the stones cut out of them): until quite recently the only method of doing this was by hand, but now an American claims to have perfected a pitting machine which will perform the work many times quicker. So far as I am aware it has not yet been tried in Mildura, but if it proves successful the apricot grower will have one harvesting problem the less to solve. Directly they are "pitted" they are rushed into the sulphur house, where they are treated with sulphur fumes for some hours, after which they are ready for the trays, and can be dried in the usual manner.

Pears and apples go through much the same process, but prices in their case scarcely warrant the expenditure of labour and trouble, and consequently very few lots of these come to the market from Mildura.

Figs and prunes are grown, dried, and packed by a few enthusiasts, and in odd cases the former are surprisingly good, but there is no market to compensate for the difficult processing when the foreign article can be bought so cheaply.

Olives, too, are the reverse of paying. Pickling has been tried without much success, either as to quality or price gained, and now the few trees left

in the settlement are just harvested for the oil. There is an oil factory in Mildura which purchases the fruit for £8 a ton, and it costs £3 a ton to harvest them. As the average crop is from one to one and a half tons per acre, it will be seen that there is not much inducement to plant trees. The methods of harvesting are very crude. It is found that picking by hand takes too long, so sheets of hessian are laid under the trees, and the trees are beaten with long sticks. This gets off the fruit, but is scarcely good for the trees.

Peaches, too, used to be dried in much the same way as apricots, but it is not considered worth while nowadays, and any crop is generally disposed of as fresh fruit. There is very little profit, but it eliminates much worry and detail.

Certain kinds of grapes, unsuitable for drying purposes, nearly all the pears, figs, and plums are also sent away fresh. The heavy freight charges take away much chance of obtaining high prices for any of these unless they can be got on to the market before fruit comes in from other districts not so far away from a centre, and few settlers like to take the trouble to procure cases, pick and pack the fruit, watch the markets, and then cart it to the station, with problematical profits only in view. It interferes too much with the routine of the harvest proper, and often there is no attempt made to utilise fruit from these miscellaneous trees. Growers say that they lose more by being absent

from supervising the men than they could gain by harvesting these fruits.

The citron crop is a different matter. It matures in the middle of the winter, and requires no tedious processing, whilst the returns come along in a few weeks. Owners of a few acres of naval oranges can count themselves fortunate, for there is no better property in the settlement. The oranges are cut off one by one with a pair of seccateurs and placed in a sweat-box. If the settler can sell them himself he has to pack them in proper fruit cases and despatch them by rail, otherwise he carts them in the sweat-boxes to the factory, where they are packed and marketed at his expense. In any case, this crop is the easiest of all to handle, and is generally much more lucrative than any dried fruit.

Lemons are picked in precisely the same way, but most of them are sold locally to a biscuit, cake, and fruit canning company. Prices are at so much a ton, and are less than half as good as those paid for oranges. Still, the crop comes in at a convenient time, it can be harvested with a minimum of trouble, payments are cash, and there is always the possibility of the lemon crop failing elsewhere, when high prices can be obtained by sending to Melbourne. Altogether lemons are not unpopular.

It will be seen that the settler's life is by no means a slothful one, for even if he does not do the majority of these tasks himself—as most of them do—he always has to see that other people do them instead, which is every bit as fatiguing.

When he keeps no permanent workman on the place, he has the live stock to look after too, and this is a very great tie. The horses must be fed very early every morning if they are to do a good day's work, the cow has to be milked twice every day, the fowls also want constant attention.

Altogether, fruit-growing exacts plenty of penalties to compensate for the freedom from office life. It is a very hard life, and it is no high road to fortune.

If only there were cheap coolie labour, how different everything would be! Instead of a life of strenuous and never-ending manual labour, without hope of adequate reward, it would evolve into a charming occupation, full of interesting detail, quite suitable for the retiring years of city men, public officials, and people of cultured tastes. As it is, few people of this kind remain, and every year Mildura appeals more to brawn than to brains.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### EVERYDAY LIFE OF SETTLERS—CONTINUED

DESPITE the enormous amount of work that has to be done during the year, it must not be supposed that settlers have no interests of a lighter kind. Entertainments of both public and private genre are in constant vogue all the year round. It is this that makes Mildura such a favourite place for visitors in the winter months. They are surprised at the choice and variety of amusements to attend, and affirm that no other country place in Australia can compete with Mildura in this respect. It is really wonderful how self-contained the place is, and how high is the standard of amusements considering the isolation from any centre, and lack of contact with cultured people.

First, we have the clubs, of which there are four. One of these is a boys' club, strictly teetotal in character, and of very curious membership. The others comprise the Mildura Club, which was formed in the early days by the first English settlers, and until a few years ago was kept fairly select; the Settlers' Club, which is affected chiefly by the rougher settlers, who could not gain admittance to the Mildura Club, and who have not yet

forgiven the slight, the least wealthy of the shopkeepers, and a majority of the skilled labourers; and lastly, the Working Man's Club, with a membership almost exclusively of labourers.

None of these clubs approximate in any way to one's idea of an English club, either with regard to membership or management. Probably they were never intended to, and for this reason : in the early days Mildura was a " Prohibition " settlement, and with the exception of possessing one " Colonial wine licence " it is so still. This means that no wine or spirits can be sold over a public bar in Mildura. To meet this difficulty the early settlers started the Mildura Club, for there was no embargo against clubs selling liquor. The result is that, in the absence of restaurants, hotel smoking-rooms, and public-houses, where liquor could be obtained, settlers do all their drinking in the clubs. More than that, drinking has become the chief *raison d'être* of all the clubs, and one can well imagine the results. True, there are reading and writing rooms, but few members ever set foot in them; they just make a bee-line for the bar. One must expect no courtesy or refinement in these clubs, and one is a good fellow only when ready to " shout " unlimited drinks. Saturday night is the weekly " beano," and a large proportion of the members are carried into their buggies at 11 o'clock, and their wives drive them home and put them to bed. The Mildura Club reminds one of a third-class drinking saloon, while the Settlers' and Workers'

Clubs are positive infernos. It is not considered bad form to get drunk in these clubs; if it were, there would be very few members left. This drunkenness is greatly accentuated by the introduction of commercial travellers as honorary members. Of all classes in Australia, the most horrible, disgusting, and blatant are the commercial travellers. To let them into semi-respectable clubs, give them *carte blanche* to behave as they like, get drunk as they like, and make other people drunk as they like, can only result in the club coming down to their level. The clubs have come down to their level. If drinking must be done, and it seems to be indispensable to the human race, at least let it be done in the right place, and a gentleman's club is certainly not the right place.

Still, it would be exceedingly inconvenient to do without them, as they act as useful rendezvous, and the bulk of one's business can be transacted there, personally or over the telephone. Besides this, there are stables where one can tether up one's horse and trap whilst visiting or shopping in the town, and the reading-rooms possess illustrated papers and magazines, besides writing-tables. Altogether, the advantages quite outweigh the lack of tone, and country districts without clubs—and there are many—most certainly miss many conveniences.

By avoiding the bar-room at certain hours of the day and refraining from much intimacy with the members, one gains more than one loses by

membership. One other point about club mismanagement should be mentioned, however, as it is in connection with the licensing laws of the country, and must, therefore, affect all Australian clubs.

Nobody under 21 years of age is allowed to be either a member or an honorary member. This is quite reasonable, and is, I believe, a rule everywhere else, but the point that seems absurd is that nobody under 21 is allowed inside the club premises, even as the guest of a member, whether he drinks or not. Even grown-up men cannot enter as guests unless they are given an honorary member's admittance card; this is, of course, got over easily in the latter case by the single signature of any two members, one proposing and the other seconding him; but it completely excludes juniors from even sitting in the club. This is very inconvenient in the country in case one has a boy guest, for coming into town from a distant part of the settlement one often has business to transact, or letters to write, which take some time, and the boy has to sit outside in the buggy. It was explained to me that this law was made "to discourage juvenile drinking." Such an excuse is simply an admission that Australian clubs are drinking saloons first and foremost, and that the Australian *jeunesse* must be exceedingly precocious, not to say vicious, in the opinion of legislators. To the Englishman it seems simply the height of inhospitability.

The licensing laws have another bad effect, and that is to prevent all chance of getting decent hotels

in Prohibition districts. In Mildura it is quite impossible to get a dainty or well-cooked meal anywhere outside one's own house. Such hotels as do exist cater almost exclusively for the shifting commercial traveller population, and are in every way rough and dirty. Once grant a wine and spirit licence, and there are a dozen firms ready to step in and build a large up-to-date hotel, which would be a great acquisition to the settlers, besides making it possible for visitors to stay in the place with a certain amount of comfort. Doubtless, too, such an hotel would tend to lessen the bare-faced drunkenness, as it would be more directly under the police control than are the clubs. The narrow-minded and hypercritical Methodist element, however, succeed in warding off any improvement in this matter, and are likely to continue so to do for some considerable time to come.

A few hotels in other parts of Australia, which have licences, are quite excellent, even if they just miss being first-class. It is amusing, however, on staying at the largest hotel in Melbourne to be told that they have to send out to a pub next door every time a bottle of wine or glass of whiskey is ordered; but so it is. Prohibition is a very popular word in Australia in more connections than one, and it is a pity perhaps that the only result of its constant restriction is to stimulate the use of prohibited articles.

Returning to Mildura and its amusements once more, we see first the moving picture show. This

gives performances three times a week during the summer and twice a week in the winter months. So successful was it that a rival organisation started in competition. I mention this to illustrate a curious fact in Mildura. Let one man start anything, and make ever so small a success, whether it be with an orchestra, a picture show, a tennis club, an amateur theatrical company, and what not, and within two months somebody else will start a rival organisation and take away half the performers or patrons. The result is that they compete for some months, and then both gradually fizzle out altogether. I have seen this occur again and again. However, the first picture show has had a splendid success, besides being a great boon to the public, and let us hope that it will prove victorious in its struggle for supremacy. The roller skating rink is another case in point. No sooner did one appear and win the public favour than another one started and divided the limited business. It is a great pity.

Amateur theatricals, too, are in great favour, and Mildura is blessed with much real talent in this way, besides possessing a man who would not disgrace himself were he to act in a West End theatre, and who is always ready to stage-manage performances. Such ambitious pieces as the "Mikado," the "Yeomen of the Guard," "Pinafore," etc., have all been produced under his direction, and exceedingly artistic performances they were too. Mildura people were not content with this, how-

ever, and got up other companies under less able and cultured leadership. Their efforts were invariably ridiculous.

The same story is told of orchestral and concert ventures. One energetic man will get an orchestra together, hold practices weekly for some months, engage singers from Melbourne, and give a successful performance. And then at the next practice half his musicians are absent. They have joined a rival orchestra.

Nevertheless, a winter rarely passes without some really excellent amateur theatrical performance, and one or two passable concerts given entirely by local talent, and much amusement is to be gained by attending the rehearsals and practices.

Hospital and church bazaars constitute another mania, and are the joy of the women and despair of the men for weeks beforehand.

So are dances. Every winter provides at least a dozen private or subscription dances, attended religiously by both the young and old of both sexes. Great trouble is taken to make them enjoyable, and the labour is not expended in vain.

Cricket and football, too, have large followings, and very few country teams come off victors in a match against them.

Tennis and golf are also great attractions in the winter, and the standard of play is simply amazing.

Whist-drives, chess clubs, Shakespeare societies, Scotch nights, Masonic functions, choir practices, ladies' riding parties, Sunday-school picnics, etc.,

etc., are all on top for those that desire them. So Mildura can fairly claim to cater for all tastes.

Religious people have a choice of five churches to attend, and there are several benefit societies and lodges, all of which boast large membership lists.

Of other important sports clubs one can mention the rifle, swimming, and rowing clubs, which are all patronised well, and the rifle club counts some of the best shots in Australia amongst its members.

Turning to the settler in his home, one sees a totally different picture. All save a few houses are absolutely primitive in construction and design, whilst of conveniences there are none. This may seem curious after reading a list of his hobbies and amusements, but the truth is he cares very little for his home. The climate has taught him to live out of doors, and he prefers to expend his pocket money in paying subscriptions assuring him some amusement than in building and furnishing a comfortable house. As he cannot afford both, he takes that which he prefers. The house is simply a place in which to eat, sleep, and dress; it has no sentimental value whatever. So long as it keeps the rain out and provides head-quarters, nothing more is required of it. The visitor is astounded at the shocking condition of dirt and discomfort he finds people living in. Some houses are little better than pig-styes.

Climatic conditions are responsible for this almost as much as the lack of domestic servants. In England we see plenty of nice women forced to do

their own housework through poverty, but we find their houses scrupulously clean and neat, and they themselves retain their refinement. In Australia it is different. Other influences are at work to destroy any pride in enthusiastic housekeeping. Let us look at some of them.

The first is the great heat. It is difficult to convey the real meaning of an Australian heat wave to English minds, as nothing of the sort is ever experienced at home. The nearest simile I can think of is the second room of a Turkish bath. The air simply bakes everything. Merely to sit still in a chair causes profuse perspiration, any motion whatever takes supreme effort, and half an hour's exertion draws away every drop of moisture in the body. After that the skin is drawn quite tight and becomes as tough and yellow as parchment. People carry round water-bags with them and take long draughts at short intervals. Conditions of this sort often last for over six days before the "cool change" arrives, bringing with it cold rain and heavy wind.

When a north wind occurs in conjunction with a heat wave, conditions are at their worst. It is like the blast of a furnace and rages continuously for days. The Mildura soil is very friable, and after a few weeks without rain all the roads and lands under cultivation are covered with a couple of inches of thin powdery dust. The north wind seizes this dust and whirls it about in clouds till the whole atmosphere is permeated with it. It penetrates everywhere, and to clean a house during

the progress of one of these dust storms is simply waste of time, and when the cool change does come there is very little inclination to face hard work with a scrubbing brush. To clean up the house properly would take a couple of days' hard work, and the only desire is to get a little rest, and to recuperate in anticipation of the next "hot burst." Besides, these dust storms are of constant recurrence throughout the summer, and to remove the dirt properly after each one would approximate to performing half a dozen spring cleanings during the year. There is enough or too much routine work with the clothes washing, cooking, bed-making, and washing-up, etc., that has to be done whatever the weather conditions be, to allow many people the necessary energy to undertake this besides. Consequently dirty houses are the fashion.

Once arrive at the stage of tolerating a dirty house, it is not long before all tidiness and method ceases. The dirty dishes and cooking pots are left till there are no clean things in the house, and then a few are washed up as absolutely required for meals. Ditto the clothes and household linen. Cooking falls off in quality, and a taste for tinned things grows up. And lastly comes loss of self-respect in cleanliness of personal attire. The mornings and till late afternoon are dragged through with tousled hair, dirty linen, and a wrapper: and dressing is only attempted on the arrival of a caller or before going out. Children are allowed to run about quite naked, and are

brought up in an atmosphere of squalor and untidiness. These causes and effects are not peculiar to Mildura. Melbourne, Adelaide, Sydney, besides all country districts, have their heat waves, hot winds and dust. And servantless women admit unaffectedly that they only clean up their houses immediately before their monthly "At Home" day.

Other causes of discomfort and misery are ants, flies, and mosquitoes. The numbers and pertinacity of these insects can scarcely be realised till an Australian summer has been experienced in a country district. Ants can be kept under if scrupulous cleanliness is observed, and if the ant-hills outside the house are sprinkled occasionally with kerosene; but sugar, jam, condensed milk, and dirty dishes left uncovered act as irresistible magnets, and the house soon becomes a happy breeding place for them.

Ditto with the flies: dirt augments their numbers enormously, but no amount of cleanliness or fly-proof doors and windows will prevent them getting into the house. They breed freely all through the country, and in the summer are all-pervading. New arrivals, unused to their pertinacity and sticky adhesiveness, are driven nearly mad by their attacks. Australians, however, seem to have become used to them, and endure six or seven of them in their eyes and crawling over their faces with the stolidity of Arab children. It is useless to kill them, for there are thousands waiting

to take the places of the dead ones. Where there are fly-doors and windows, the pest can be minimised by shutting up the rooms once or twice a day and spraying the atmosphere with a powder called "Insectibane." This stupefies them for a while, and they fall on to the ground, and can be swept up in hundreds and burnt. It only brings respite for a little while, however, as they buzz round the doors in swarms waiting to get inside to shelter from the heat out of doors, and insectibane has the disadvantage of covering everything in the room with evil-smelling dust which is most difficult to remove. The problem is generally solved by Australians in learning to endure the flies.

Mosquitoes are equally trying. They are nearly as numerous as the flies, especially after rain, when there are any stagnant puddles, and just outside houses where the washing-up water is thrown habitually out of the back door, affording admirable breeding spots for them. Where there is no mosquito netting they swarm into the rooms at night and prevent all chance of sleeping. Australians are inured to them and scarcely notice their bites. I have seen a dozen mosquitoes engaged simultaneously in biting an Australian's arm, without his taking the slightest notice. An Englishman, however, becomes blistered on arms, neck, face, and ankles. Living in an Australian country house not fitted with fly-proof doors and plenty of mosquito netting, or in a dirty house, even if protected, simply approximates to sharing the

plague of Pharaoh. Mice, beetles, hornets, blue-bottles, etc., are all more prolific and troublesome than at home: the only insect that is quite absent is the English wasp. For some unaccountable reason this has escaped introduction to Australia, and the inhabitants can consider themselves fortunate in escaping this pest at least.

When settlers are married, some of these discomforts become less, without doubt. The cooking, washing, and household work is done after a fashion, even if its constant performance succeeds in brutalising their wives. When they are not married, however, conditions are even more hard to bear. It is impossible for them to live in the township at an hotel, as their properties are generally several miles distant, and they must be constantly on the spot to look after the live stock and be ready to do their work.

So they have the choice of either employing a housekeeper or doing their own cooking and housework themselves. Putting aside the expense of the former expedient, Australian housekeepers are most unsatisfactory. It is their one object to get married, and they spare no means whatever to effect this end. A bachelor is very ill-advised to admit one of these women to his house, whatever her age may be. Inevitably will there be trouble. If he refuses to marry her after a certain time blackmail is resorted to quite shamelessly, and rather than let himself in for a flaunting of dirty linen, he generally gives in. This kind of danger is

certainly lessened where there are two men living together and sharing the expense of a housekeeper, but the work is rarely performed in a satisfactory manner, and the housekeeper becomes offensively familiar.

Owing to the isolation it is most difficult to keep them in their place. When nobody passes for days at a time perhaps it is impossible to refrain from conversation on a footing of equality, and constant conversation at that. It generally devolves into permitting her to preside over the meals, share the sitting-room, and even act as hostess when there are visitors. If these things are not conceded she quite reasonably complains of loneliness, and will not stay. It creates an entirely false position, which ends up disastrously as often as not. Needless to say these housekeepers are not received by the married women of the district, and this fact is constantly cited as a grievance against the employer. After experimenting a few times with housekeepers most men decide that even the discomforts of doing the work themselves are preferable. The prevalence of men living alone thus has caused the coining of a new word in Australia : that word is "baching" : and the word expresses vividly, if crudely, the ugly life it gives a name to.

Few unhealthier forms of existence can be imagined than "baching" in Australia : save in exceptional cases, long indulgence in it brings disastrous results in every way. The presence of women always acts as a restraining, if not a refining,

influence, and however rough the life may be, certain habits of civilised life are retained. Where their presence is non-existent, all these things gradually cease to be practised. Little habits of personal fastidiousness, restraint in language, and all the things that are essential to social intercourse, are dropped one by one, and the "bachelor" returns practically to primitive savagery. Many cases could be quoted in Mildura alone where men have gone mad after two or three years of the isolation of "baching." Unless a hobby such as literature, music, writing, or what not, provides a mental stimulus, the life approximates to solitary confinement in a badly-run prison. The only companions are to be found with the horses and dogs. Work is ceaseless, for everything has to be done by our solitary, well or ill, if he wishes to live.

Getting up in the morning at perhaps 6 o'clock to feed his horses, he returns to the house, lights the fire and cooks himself some bacon and eggs, which, together with a pot of tea and some bread and butter and jam, provide his first meal. If he is a methodical man, he will wash up the dishes, clear the table, and sweep out the room, and even make his bed and tidy the bedroom, but this is generally put off till later. After a hurried smoke he goes out and puts the horses into harness, and is hard at work with them or with a shovel until 11.30, when he comes down for lunch. The horses claims first attention, and have to be fed, watered, and in the hot weather even sluiced with buckets

of water, if the work has been exhausting. Having seen to them, he is free to go down to the house. Here the fire or Princess stove has to be lit again, as tea is the greatest craving. The butcher and baker have called during the morning, and, acting on instructions, left in a note pinned to the door, have left meat and bread respectively. The meat finds its way into the frying-pan, and a rough meal is despatched hurriedly.

There is no time to waste on washing up, as work presses, and by one o'clock the house is again vacated. Another solitary spell at horse or hand work takes the clock round to five o'clock, which is the signal for knocking off. Water and feed for the horses having been provided, he can take a short spell. A cup of tea is a great refresher, and heartens him up for the household work awaiting attention.

Wood has to be cut for the fire, water carried down from the channel, or, if there is a tank, drawn up and put in a convenient place; a fire put on for boiling water; the dirty dishes washed up; and the house cleaned up for the evening. All this must be done before there is leisure for cooking or having a bath, and by the time everything is completed and he sits down to a meal it is nearly eight o'clock.

The evening has to be put in as well as possible with a book, tobacco, and fire in the winter, which is pleasant enough; or in fighting the mosquitoes and watching the thermometer in the summer, which is simply misery. Before going to bed, at

eleven o'clock or thereabouts, the horses have to have their last feed, and the dishes washed up, and wood and water put ready for the morning.

This is the procedure if our solitary is to "bach" comfortably, but often the multiplicity of tasks get on his nerves and he leaves them undone as long as possible. Thus the bed is made only when there is a change of sheets, washing-up is deferred until there are no cups, plates, or knives and forks left, the place is rarely swept out, and soon it becomes an evil-smelling and unwholesome kennel where he passes an uncleanly, unhappy, and mind-killing existence. Occasional journeys into town to replenish supplies form the only change of idea, and evenings spent with friends the only comfort he ever experiences. Long solitude, however, has made him uncomfortable in other people's society, and conversation is most difficult to take part in. Other society than his own seems strange, and manners of any sort are irksome. He does not want to be polite to people, and their talk is difficult to understand and answer. His outings get gradually rarer and rarer, and simultaneously visits to the club become more frequent. Drink loosens the tongue and overcomes the awkwardness acquired of solitude; he drinks. Every time the township is visited he carries a good internal as well as external supply of liquor back with him. It serves to wile away the time.

Where there are two men "baching" together it is not quite so bad on the score of loneliness, and

the household tasks can be divided, but it is not easy to find a suitable camp-mate in Australia, and living with an uncongenial companion in such circumstances is appalling. In any case, "bach-ing" becomes a groove, and it goes ill with the man who cannot escape from it.

Escape is generally effected by matrimony. Let us examine this aspect of the question.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE QUESTION OF MATRIMONY

A TIME of desperation is reached in the life of every man engaged in " baching " when he feels that he can endure it no longer. Something must be done to gain a little comfort and companionship. Hunger, too, speaks vigorously, for it must not be imagined that bachelor fare is particularly inviting. He craves for the sight of a table-cloth and properly laid table instead of the scratch feeds he gets himself on tin plates and bare table. Any change that could give him this would be welcomed with open arms. Any price would be low if well-cooked food could be substituted for the unhealthy tinned things he has eaten for months or years. The necessity for home comforts is paramount.

There seems no chance of " making a break." There is still a big mortgage to be worked off, besides heavy interest to pay. Debts on the property put aside the chance that a sale would clear him a little nest-egg. He must stay on and see the thing through, and this means years of labour ahead.

Leaving Australians to work out the problem as

best they may, it is not difficult to see the effect on Englishmen.

Used generally to comfortable English homes, "baching" soon becomes a perfect horror. All the considerations mentioned above occur to them, and the case seems hopeless unless they are willing to marry. Probably they would be content to do this if it were possible to bring out an English girl for a wife, but small thought convinces them of the impossibility of this. It is bad enough to find themselves tied irrevocably to a labourer's life for years to come without seeking to degrade a nice English girl to the rank of general servant as well. The cruelty of it is too great to inflict on a fellow-countrywoman. And then they could not endure marrying an Australian girl. It is a difficult problem. The pity of it is that gradually "baching" brutalises them into losing temporarily all sense of proportion. They have not seen an English girl for so long. They forget the value of gentle birth. And if they do not, they are convinced that they will never get home again or that it will be years and years before they succeed in doing so. They cannot bear to go home without having made their fortune. And then they are miserable men. Why should they not have a little happiness and comfort before they grow old? After all, social distinctions are all nonsense. Anyhow, they have done with them for ever. They will never see England or their own people again. She may not be the kind of girl their mother would be willing to engage as

a scullery maid, but she can cook, and is very unhappy at home. He has not done any good for himself—well, he will try to justify his existence. Why shouldn't he, anyhow? She is quite good enough for him, and he does want a clean house again. Her people are really dreadful, but she does look up to him and admire him. Then she is used to the miseries of the life, they do not seem miseries to her. He will have a home of his own. Another girl would want luxuries he cannot afford to give. She does not know what luxury means. His friends are impertinent to try and stop him. It is none of their business. They are actuated by unfriendly motives. They need not call if they don't want to. He is going to be very happy, and she is going to be very grateful to him for marrying her. Of course, she is not very well educated, but that will come in time; it will be delightful devoting the evenings to tutoring her . . . and a hundred other like arguments. He always marries her, and she is always a dreadful girl of the lower classes, quite unsuited to be the wife of an educated man.

He is disillusioned within a week, of course, but the only thing to do is to make the best of it. He finds very few advantages. She does not make him the good housekeeper he imagined she would, and he finds himself with nearly as much housework to attend to as he had whilst "baching." There was never any question of love in his act, although he may have tried hard to deceive himself into

thinking that there was; and, of course, she knows this. It was merely fatigue and misery. And she never lets him forget it.

Perhaps time might instil mutual respect if it never achieved mutual comprehension, but her relations take away all chance of that. In marrying her he saddled himself irrevocably with these people. His wife cannot be blamed altogether. She does not understand him; she yearns for her accustomed surroundings, and resents his disliking her mother and father as a priggish and stuck-up attitude. She insists on their visiting her as often as possible. Often they practically live in the house. This destroys all joy of life for him, and after a while he turns them out. Sufficient cause for a breach is caused by this action, and there are constant quarrels. Everything becomes sordid and they both curse each other.

Then come the children. More cause of friction: for each wishes to bring them up according to their own nationality. The woman always wins. To see his sons and daughters growing up into the ordinary type of Australian child is the last straw. He can do nothing to prevent it. There is not sufficient money to send them to be educated at home: besides, the woman would never permit this. She has developed a strong hatred of everything English and cultivated, as she divines her husband's unexpressed scorn of her, and knows that he regrets the day of his marriage to her as the real end of his life.

That is what it comes to. He has committed social suicide. No matter how much money he made, it would be impossible to take her home to his people, and after a certain age the children would be equally a disgrace to his relations. England will never see these men again. In their marriages they embraced another nationality, and no power on earth could restore them to their old surroundings.

It is often a puzzle to English people as to how these marriages can come about. Mésalliances occur in England sometimes, everybody knows, but there the girl possesses some attraction of charm or physical beauty. Such attributes do not seem to be necessary under Australian skies. The life itself is so ugly that people lose perception of the beautiful—companionship rather than fitness is the necessity, flesh and blood before culture.

The same reasoning tells why Englishmen choose the working girl rather than the Australian lady. The working girl is a working girl, pure and simple; she neither possesses nor pretends to possess culture. The difference between her and an English girl is infinite, and that is how she wins the game. If the life is so terrible for an English girl, it will certainly take her complete antithesis to find a fit person to endure it: who but an untutored working girl, native to the country, more likely to be that fit person? Australian ladies are also the complete antithesis of the home woman in another way: and therefore they have little

attraction. Their ways of life have been described in a previous chapter, and it can be understood how repellent is the idea of matrimony with them to an Englishman. If they have culture or refinement, it is of an Australian brand, and are quite incomprehensible to a man used to English life in nice circles. They profess the most admirable codes, and do perfectly dreadful things. Their standards, modes of life, and hobbies are incomprehensible to people of any other race, and when marriage occurs life is a series of misunderstandings and bickerings. Sooner than take a parody of a lady, he will pick a good, clean working girl. The disadvantages of the one are as bad as those of the other. One other point only before closing this subject. The children of the working girl are precisely the same as those of the Australian lady. This is a point to ponder over.

## CHAPTER XX

### THINGS ENGLISHMEN MISS IN AUSTRALIA

VERY few inquiries are made as to how one's every-day wants and necessities are catered for, but it is a subject of great interest and one that should be studied to a certain extent by every intending emigrant.

Referring to Australia as a whole, I will give a short list of things dear to the heart of Englishmen that are lacking in Australia.

First there is the appearance of the country. England may not be beautiful in her manufacturing districts, but it takes no long journey to find charming country nooks where nature gives rest and pleasure to the eye. Freshness can be seen and felt at almost every season of the year. Not so in Australia. The landscapes are quite barren of either interest or charm. Sitting in a railway carriage and passing through six hundred miles of country one fails to detect one spot of beauty. Their show beauty spots, the hills outside Adelaide, Ferntree Gulley, and Healseville near Melbourne, Daylesford in the country, and hundreds of other places are absolutely ugly and commonplace. I have motored from Mildura to Melbourne, thereby pass-

ing from top to bottom of Victoria, and failed to find one single pretty spot. On the return journey I went a different route for many miles so as to visit alleged beauty spots. There were none. The country was uniformly bald and dreary. In six years' residence I have not seen one pretty landscape in Australia. Journeying on the Murray River steamers one sees millions of dead trees, a dirty gray colour, bereft of all leaves. Everything looks dirty and unkempt, the outlook is mournful and grave-like. The trees in existence are mostly gums, and they have leaves nearly brown in colour, and dead-looking in texture. Such scenes as this awaken enthusiasm in Australia. "How superbly beautiful!" they exclaim. Bunkum. Even the "beautiful Sydney Harbour" is much overrated. Had it not been talked of and advertised by Australians until everybody is tired of its mention few people would be much impressed with it. Now it is a duty to rapturise if Sydney people's suffrage is desired.

There are plenty of other harbours equally "beautiful," and many more infinitely prettier.

Hills, rivers, hedges, and fields certainly exist, but what a contrast they present to those of other countries. There are hundreds of square miles of country as flat as a billiard table, and relieved merely by bare ugly sandhills. The vegetation is uniformly drab and unlovely, whilst real green simply does not exist. The acreage of holdings is so large, and labour so expensive, that no attempt

is or can be made to give a "kept" appearance to anything; and this, together with other reasons, such as the extreme sun-power and lack of rain, prevent the creation of pretty gardens.

Beyond the Botanical Gardens at Adelaide, which are certainly well kept and give a good show of flowers at certain seasons of the year, and a few beds in the Melbourne and Sydney Gardens, there is no joy in any public gardens; whilst a well-stocked British garden is the privilege of the extremely wealthy or the keen enthusiast. Even expenditure and energy cannot succeed in making gardens to satisfy European eyes.

Then all the lawns are quite brown the year round. This is perhaps the worst loss of all to the eye. One yearns to see and lie down on a fresh green velvety lawn during the hot summer evenings. One yearns in vain. English grass will not stand the climate, and one finds the lawns sown with buffalo grass seed, and the result is a field of hard stubbly unyielding growth, as unlike any preconceived idea of a lawn as it is possible to imagine.

Similarly hedges are rarely trimmed, fences are of rough ugly timber badly put up, and roads are overgrown with coarse, dirty-coloured weeds.

It is useless to go through the whole list of deficiencies of any natural beauty in the country, as it is everywhere alike. There is no beauty to admire, and there is no rest for the eye. All Englishmen of any artistic perception feel this lack most keenly.

The next point is the lack of adequate water supply and the freshness of such water as is obtainable. Save where there is a river or in the large towns everyone is dependent on the rainfall for their drinking water and household supply. This is caught from the iron roofs and is stored in tanks of from 600 to 2,000 gallons capacity. When the rainfall is good there is plenty of water, but after a few weeks or months of drought the water supply presents a great problem. Often supplies have to be carted for several miles in horse or bullock drags at great inconvenience and expense, and when carted have to be used with great frugality. The quantity for bathing is restricted to a bucketful, and sometimes even this cannot be spared.

The wretched quality of the water is largely responsible for the national habit of inveterate drinking. It is impossible to drink the water plain as it is so nasty, and recourse is had to boiling it. True Australians drink tea at every meal, and as often as they can get it between meals. Very likely this accounts in some measure for the badness of their teeth. Meat and tea taken together cannot but induce indigestion, and indigestion is said to ruin the teeth. This habit of tea drinking is unavoidable, and everybody falls into it sooner or later. If it does not entirely destroy the horrid flavour, at least it renders the water free from typhoid germs.

At the best there is always much inconvenience. Very few houses are fitted with windmills and over-

head tanks, and without these things it is impossible to lay the water on to the houses. It has to be drawn up in buckets and carried to the house by hand. Water for hot baths is prepared laboriously by boiling it in kettles over the kitchen range, or at best is obtained by bath heaters, which are always getting out of order.

Carrying water to the house is a daily task that must be performed, and one that is always irksome in the extreme.

As regards food, the supply is equally bad. Meat is not to be compared in quality to the home variety, for the simple reason that fodder is not so good. Instead of green, juicy grasses the Australians have to feed their cattle on brown, dried-up fodder, and it is small wonder that most of the meat is tough and flavourless. Fish are impossible to procure up-country, and indeed on the seaboard there is very little choice. Of river fish Murray cod is the only eatable variety, and this is coarse and tasteless. Of deep-sea fish one can quote only the whiting and flounder as being worth eating. Sole, turbot, herrings, mackerel, and salmon or any other of the good fish do not visit Australian waters, and can be procured only in tins.

It is the same tale with game. Grouse, pheasants, partridges, etc., are seen only in the city restaurants, and that through the medium of board-ship cool storage.

Fruit and vegetables are exceedingly difficult to procure in most country districts unless one grows

them oneself, and taking an average the quality is extremely poor compared to that grown in less severe climates. Even milk is hard to get in some districts.

To get any variety in fare, recourse has to be had to tinned things, of which enormous quantities are used all over Australia. Whether or not this is healthy I leave for medical men to decide, but I can say that it is most tedious as a diet, besides being extremely expensive.

Putting on one side such articles as meat, tea, fruit in some districts, sauces and preserves, and a few other things, all other articles of diet are considerably more expensive in Australia than they are in England, besides being invariably of a worse quality. It is not too much to say that living is twice as expensive where any variety in diet is called for. Anything out of the ordinary run is classed as a delicacy, and charged for at astounding rates. To live at a reasonable figure, therefore, entails a very restricted diet. The Australian workman lives quite comfortably on 10s. a week, a fact I have had opportunity to observe constantly on my own property; but he does this by his ability to live almost exclusively on meat and bread, both of which articles are quite cheap. Not only is a varied diet expensive to the point of prohibition, but it is not easy to obtain even if one is ready to pay the prices demanded. A first-class dinner cannot be obtained in more than six restaurants or hotels in the whole of Australia.

Wines, too, are very expensive, as their manufacture is protected, and there are few really good brands locally made. Tobacco of all sorts is one-third more expensive than in England, and only a few stereotyped brands are imported. Australians as a race smoke plug tobacco, which they cut up by the pipeful as they require it. The cigarette smokers are quite content with Virginia cigarettes at 2s. 6d. a hundred, and the quality of these cigarettes is not so good as the similar priced article in England.

Choosing a few more things at random, one can mention the lack of comfortable houses, first-class concerts, theatres, or music-halls—in Australian music-halls one is not even allowed to smoke—good cooking, a sense of humour—no Australian can see anything amusing in English *Punch*—good clubs, and, lastly, hospitality.

This last requires some comment, as Australians boast perpetually about their hospitality. It is perfectly true that they will go to any amount of trouble and expense to fête any visitor of importance, any "personage," or anybody who they think "worth while." Englishmen carrying letters of introduction from well-known people at home have often been deceived on this point, and have put down to genuine hospitality what is really nothing but self-aggrandisement.

Let them come out *incognito* and they will find it a very different matter. They will find themselves the recipients of the most meagre entertain-

ment, if, indeed, they get any at all. When there is any paying to be done the Australian looks the other way, and he generally gets out of obligations by giving a general invitation to visit him "at any time and take pot-luck," a most embarrassing method that cannot be taken advantage of on a short acquaintance.

I am not blaming Australians for not according indiscriminate hospitality to strangers, but I do blame them for boasting that they do so.

One could catalogue many more things that are very different from English ideals or lacking altogether in Australia, but enough has been said to show that Australia is a much rougher and less charming place to live in than England, that many necessities are classed as luxuries, and that most luxuries are non-existent.

## EPILOGUE

HAVING read over the foregoing pages again, I am satisfied that I have given a perfectly fair and truthful account of Australian conditions as they exist to-day. It would have been easy to frame biting criticisms on many subjects that I have dealt with and on others that I have not mentioned, but such an action would have laid me open to a charge of bias that I was anxious to avoid. By restraining myself in the main to facts rather than to expressions of opinion, I have left conclusions to be drawn by the reader. And as these facts admit only of one kind of conclusion, perhaps my methods are justified.

I may be permitted, however, to give one word of advice to Englishmen before closing : it is this—if you do elect to go to Australia, and if you are possessed of any money, leave your money behind you in England. Spend at least two years in the country in somebody else's service before you decide to buy land of any description. Occupy that two years in learning the industry of your choice as thoroughly as may be, and in studying carefully the general condition of the country.

If you buy land immediately you will assuredly

lose your money; if you leave your money behind you in England it will be awaiting your return at the end of the two years. If the two years has not been sufficient to prove the unsuitability of Australia, by all means cable back for your money—you will deserve to lose it.

# APPENDIX.

## THE RURAL WORKERS' UNION OF AUSTRALIA.

### LOG OF HOURS AND RATES FOR AGRICULTURAL, VITICULTURAL, FRUIT-GROWING, MARKET GARDENING, AND DAIRYING INDUSTRIES.

#### Agricultural Industry.

*Hours per week*, 48, to be made up as follows :—

7.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on five days of the week ; one hour for dinner each day ; 7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

#### Rates.

| | Per Day. |
|---|---|
| Binder, Stripper, and Harvester Drivers ... ... ... ... | £0 10 0 |
| Or £2 10s. per week. | |
| Stack-builders and Thatchers ... ... ... ... ... | 0 15 0 |
| | Per Week. |
| General Harvest Hands ... ... ... ... ... ... | £2 5 0 |
| General Farm Hands ... ... ... ... ... ... | 1 15 0 |
| Ploughmen ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2 0 0 |
| Drill Drivers ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2 0 0 |

All workers not classified in this log to be paid at General Farm Hands' rates.

Ploughmen, Drill Drivers, and General Farm Workers, who are employed for a less term than four weeks, shall be paid 6s. per week in addition to log rates.

The foregoing rates include board and lodging. Where board and lodging are not provided, 16s. extra to be added to log rates.

Provided also that where Harvester, Stripper, Binder, Drill Drivers, or Ploughmen attend to their own teams after usual working hours 7s. 6d. per week in addition to log rates shall be allowed to cover such work, which shall not be considered overtime.

*Overtime Rates.*—Time and a quarter for first two hours worked after 5 o'clock p.m., then time and a half.

#### Grain Carrying and Stacking.

*Hours per week*, 48, to be made up as follows :—

7.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on five days of the week ; one hour for dinner each day ; 7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

#### Rates.

| | Per Day. |
|---|---|
| Carriers and Stackers ... ... ... ... ... ... | £1 0 0 |
| Truckers ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 0 10 0 |
| Carriers only ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 0 15 0 |

*Overtime Rates.*—For all work performed after 5 p.m. and before 7.30 a.m. on ordinary days, time and a half ; for work performed on Sundays and holidays, double time.

## Sugar Industry.

### Mill Work.

*Hours per week,* 48, not more than eight hours to be worked on any one day (or night in the crushing season) continuously, without overtime rates being paid, or more than eight and three-quarter hours in the slack season on five days of the week, namely, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and 12 o'clock on Saturdays.

### Rates.

| | Per Week. |
|---|---|
| Sugar Boilers | £3 16 0 |
| Rope Mender, Tent Mender, Punt Gauger, Storekeeper, Overseers, Grab, Clarifiers | 3 0 0 |
| Men in charge Fugals | 3 0 0 |
| Men in charge Filter Press | 3 0 0 |
| Gear Riggers | 3 0 0 |
| Rake | 2 18 0 |
| Horse Drivers, Triple Effete, Jelly Fugal Hands | 2 15 0 |
| Water Tenderer | 2 15 0 |
| Punt Stringers, Clutch Hands, Megass Loft, Sugar Weighers, Filter Press Assistant, Clarifier's Assistant, Truck Men, Sugar Boiler's Assistant, Bag Sewer, Coal Trimmer, Lime Station | 2 14 0 |
| Punt Cleaners, Juice Well, Watchmen, Sweeps | 2 10 0 |
| Youths, under 18 years | 2 2 0 |
| Other Employees, not classified | 2 14 0 |

### Special Rates.

| | Per Hour. |
|---|---|
| Chipping and Cleaning Boilers, Unloading Coal, Stacking and Loading Sugar, Breaking down and Trucking Sugar, Cleaning Molasses' Tanks | £0 1 6 |
| Cleaning Triple Effetes on Sundays | 0 3 0 |
| Cleaning Furnace Flues on Sundays | 0 5 0 |
| Cleaning Subsiders | Double Time |

If men are ordered to be ready for work at a certain time and the employer is not ready to commence, single time to be paid until the commencement of work.

Abolition of contract work in and about sugar works.

Improvement in sleeping accommodation, not more than two beds in a room with all bedroom requisites. A caretaker to be appointed to attend to the sleeping apartments.

Improved arrangements in the kitchen and dining-rooms; one class only.

Kit system to be abolished. Ration system to be abolished, and table to be kept like and in the same style as a boarding-house, charging 13s. per week for board.

Casual employees, who are engaged for a less term than four weeks, shall be paid 6s. per week in addition to log rates.

## Field Work.

### Sugar Cane and Sugar Beet Cultivation and Harvesting.

*Hours per week,* 48, to be made up as follows:—

7.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on five days of the week; one hour for dinner each day; 7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

RATES.

| | Per Week. |
|---|---|
| Cane Cutters ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | £3 0 0 |
| Ploughmen ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2 14 0 |
| Cane drawers, tram line ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2 15 0 |
| Cane drawers, if helping to lay and lift the tram line ... ... | 3 0 0 |
| Cane drawers, drays, one horse ... ... ... ... ... | 2 12 0 |
| Cane drawers, drays, two horses ... ... ... ... ... | 2 15 0 |
| Cane planters, clippers, and strippers ... ... ... ... | 2 10 0 |
| Beet, topping and thinning ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2 8 0 |
| Youths, under 18 years of age ... ... ... ... ... | 2 2 0 |
| Other workers ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2 8 0 |

Casual workers, who are employed for a less term than four weeks, shall be paid 6s. per week in addition to log rates.

*Overtime Rates.*—Time and a quarter for first three hours after usual time for ceasing work; between the hours of 8 p.m. and 7.30 a.m., time and a half, and on Sundays and holidays.

CHAFFCUTTING.

*Hours per week,* 48, to be made up as follows :—

From 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on five days of the week; one hour for dinner each day; 7 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays; two "smokes-ho," fifteen minutes each, on forenoon and afternoon of each day. Provided further that after 48 hours have been worked in any week Overtime Rates to apply. Time occupied in moving and setting plant to count as working time.

RATES.

| | Per Day. |
|---|---|
| Engine-drivers ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | £0 12 6 |
| Or £3 per week. | |
| Feeder ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 0 12 6 |
| Or £3 per week. | |
| Bag-sewer ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 0 10 0 |
| Or £2 15s. per week. | |
| Bagger ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 0 9 0 |
| Or £2 10s. per week. | |
| All Other Employees ... ... ... ... ... ... | 0 8 0 |
| Or £2 2s. per week. | |

The foregoing rates include board and lodging; where board and lodging are not provided, 16s. extra to be added to log rates.

*Overtime.*—For all work performed in any week after 48 hours, time and half the time.

CORN-CRUSHING, COMPRESSING, HAY, STRAW, OR FODDER.

*Hours per week,* 48, to be made up as follows :—

7.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on five days of the week; one hour for dinner each day; 7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

RATES.

| | Per Week. |
|---|---|
| General Workers ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | £2 10 0 |

The above rates to include board; where board is not included, 16s. per week above log rates.

*Overtime Rates.*—For all work performed between 5 p.m. and 7 p.m. time and a quarter; from 7 p.m. to 7.30 p.m., time and a half.

### Threshing Grain.

*Hours per week*, 48, to be made up as follows:—

From 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. on five days of the week; one hour for dinner each day; 7 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays; two "smokes-ho," fifteen minutes each, on forenoon and afternoon of each day. Provided further that after 48 hours have been worked in any week Overtime Rates to apply. Time occupied in moving and setting plant to count as working time.

### Rates.

| | Per Day. |
|---|---|
| Engine-driver ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | £0 12 6 |
| Or £3 per week. | |
| General Hands ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 0 8 4 |
| Or £2 5s. per week. | |
| "Chaffy" ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 0 10 0 |
| Or £2 10s. per week. | |

The foregoing rates include board and lodging; where board and lodging are not provided, 16s. extra to be added to log rates.

*Overtime.*—For all work performed in any week after 48 hours, time and half the time.

### Market Gardening.

*Hours, 48 per week*, work to cease at 12 noon on Saturdays.

| | |
|---|---|
| Rates per week, with board and lodging ... ... ... ... | £1 15 0 |
| Where board and lodging are not provided ... ... ... | 2 8 0 |

Casual workers, who are employed for a less term than four weeks, shall be paid 6s. per week in addition to log rates.

*Rates of Overtime.*—For all work performed beyond 48 hours in any week, 1s. 3d. per hour.

### Viticultural and Fruit-growing Industry.

*Hours per week*, 48, to be made up as follows:—

7.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on five days of the week; one hour for dinner each day; 7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

### Rates.

| | Per Week. |
|---|---|
| Dippermen, Barrowmen, Carriers-out, Gangers, Lumpers, Pruners, Feeders, Weighers-out, Pressers, Box-makers, and Nailers ... ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | £2 14 0 |
| Other Employees, Male and Female, over 18 years of age ... | 2 8 0 |
| Other Employees, Male and Female, under 18 years of age ... | 2 2 0 |
| Other Employees not classified ... ... ... ... ... | 2 8 0 |

Casual Workers who are employed for a less term than eight weeks, shall be paid 6s. per week in addition to log rates.

*Overtime Rates.*—Time and a quarter for first three hours after usual time for ceasing work; between 8 p.m. and 7.30 a.m., or after 1 p.m. on Saturdays, or on Sundays, and holidays time and a half.

Employees under 18 years of age not to be allowed to work overtime. Provided also that all employees who have to attend to horses after the usual working hours set out above shall be paid 7s. 6d. per week in addition to log rates; such time worked shall not be considered overtime.

### Dairying Industry.

*Hours per week*, 48.

Rates per Week.

| | |
|---|---|
| Milkers over 17 years | £1 15 0 |
| Milkers under 17 years | 1 5 0 |

Board and lodgings to be provided in addition to above rates.

*Overtime.*—For all work performed in any week beyond 48 hours, 1s. 3d. per hour.

Casual Workers who are employees for a less term than four weeks, shall be paid 6s. per week in addition to log rates.

### Butter and Cheese Factories and Creameries.

*Hours per week*, 48.

Rates.

| | Per Week. |
|---|---|
| Foreman | £3 10 0 |
| Engine-driver | 3 5 0 |
| Fireman | 2 15 0 |
| Butter-workers | 3 10 0 |
| Cheese-makers | 3 10 0 |
| Testers and Graders | 3 5 0 |
| Weighers and Packers | 3 0 0 |
| Creamery Manager | 3 0 0 |
| Casual Workers, per day | 0 11 0 |
| Youths, 16 to 18 years | 1 10 0 |
| Youths, 18 to 20 years | 2 0 0 |
| All Workers not classified | 3 0 0 |

Where creamery manager provides horse and cart, 20s. to be allowed in addition to log rates.

*Overtime.*—For all work performed beyond 48 hours in any week, time and a quarter; night work, time and a half; Sundays and public holidays, double time; double time for work performed during usual meal hour.

### Condensed and Preserved Milk and Caseine Industry.

*Hours per week*, 48, to be made up as follows:—

7.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on five days of the week; one hour for dinner each day; 7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

Rates per Week.

| | |
|---|---|
| Minimum rate for employees over 18 years of age | £2 10 0 |
| Minimum rate for employees under 18 years of age | 2 2 0 |

Casual employees who are employed for a less term than eight weeks shall be paid 6s. per week in addition to log rates.

*Overtime Rates.*—For the first two hours, time and a quarter; after first two hours, and on Sundays and holidays, time and a half.

### Cooks.

Rates per Week.

| | |
|---|---|
| To cook for 12 men or under | £2 10 0 |
| For every additional man above 12 | each 0 4 0 |

### Workers engaged Fencing, Clearing, Making Irrigation Channels, Dams, etc.

*Hours per week*, 48, to be made up as follows:—

7.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on five days of the week; one hour for dinner each day; 7.30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturdays.

Per Week £2 14 0

*Overtime.*—Time and a half.

GENERAL.

1. That preference of employment be given to members of the Union, other things being equal.

2. The employer shall provide the employees with good and sufficient housing accommodation, cooking and table and washing utensils, wood and water free of charge. Proper sanitary conveniences must also be provided by the employer.

2A. No child under the age of fourteen (14) shall be employed in the dairying or fruit-growing industry.

This clause shall not apply to members of employer's family.

3. Employers shall pay to each of their employees all moneys due to them at least once in each week. Any employee working only a portion of a week must be paid before ceasing work, for all time worked during that week. Week in this clause shall be from the usual time of starting work on the Saturday morning to the usual time of knocking off on the following Friday.

4. Any aged or infirm worker shall be allowed to make an agreement with his employer to work at a lesser rate than the ordinary rate. The employer shall give the workman a letter stating the rate of wages to be paid and the class of work to be performed, and the workman shall deliver this letter to the Secretary of the Union or local representative thereof, who shall then issue to the workman a provisional permit allowing the workman to start work immediately, and to work pending investigation of his case. No such agreement shall have force till approved of by the Union, and such approval shall be evidenced by certificate under the seal of the Union and signed by the Secretary. No such agreement shall be for a longer period than six months.

5. No sub-letting, sub-contracting, or other similar system shall be permitted unless provision be made in such contract or system that the terms of this log be incorporated therein.

6. Piecework shall be abolished, excepting on terms as provided by this log.

7. All time spent in going to and from work to be included in time worked, and where work is carried on away from homestead, suitable meals and sleeping conveniences for the employees shall be provided by the employer.

8. The registered officer of the Union, or his duly authorised deputy, shall have the right to visit and inspect any farm, factory, or place where it is reported to him that a breach of this log is occurring, and shall have facility granted to him to investigate such alleged breach. These powers are to be exercised only after notice being given to the employer in writing of intent to do so, and shall be exercised with as little interference with the work being carried on as possible.

9. That in the event of the employers adopting this log, or other log approved at conference with the Union by the employers, and registered as an industrial agreement, that the Union will establish in each of the State capitals a bureau where a list of all available employees seeking employment will be kept, and the Union will facilitate the engagement of suitable men by the employers through these offices as far as possible.

10. Overtime rates on public holidays, where not already provided in log, time and half the time.

11. Public holidays shall mean New Year's Day, Anniversary Day, Eight Hours' Day, Good Friday, Christmas Day, Boxing Day, King's Birthday, and any other day proclaimed as such in any State of the Commonwealth (within the limits of the State wherein it is proclaimed).

12. Task system shall not be permitted.

13. All rates in above log are the minimum rates for the respective gradings of employees.

14. That when an employee is engaged, in future, suitable times shall be arranged for his meal hours, allowing at least one hour for each meal. All work done during meal hour shall be paid for at the rate of double time.

15. All payment of wages shall be by cash.

16. Fifteen per cent. in addition to these log rates shall apply to the State of Western Australia.

17. The rating and classification of employees according to the duties performed by them in the various industries as set forth in this log shall be adopted in those industries.

18. Should any employee be employed at higher grade work than that which he is ordinarily engaged for any portion of a day, he shall be paid for such day at the higher rate.

19. Employees attending to horses after the usual working hours shall be paid 7s. 6d. per week in addition to log rates.

20 Permanent employees to be granted two weeks' holiday each year without deduction of weekly wages.

21. Abolition of Employers' Provident Fund.

## THE RURAL WORKERS' UNION OF AUSTRALIA.

TRADES HALL,
CARLTON, VICTORIA,
*October 16th*, 1912.

MR. CHARLES E. JACOMB,
MILDURA.

SIR,—I am instructed by my Union to forward to you herewith Wages List and schedule of conditions of work of members of my Union in your employ (or in the employ of members of your association), which have been adopted by the Union as being a fair and reasonable minimum of wages and proper conditions of work.

I would be glad if you will inform me within fourteen days whether you are agreeable to adopt the log of wages and schedule of conditions of work in respect of members of my Union employed by you (or employed by members of your association), as failing your consent to adopt such, it is the intention of my Union to take proceedings under the provisions of the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Acts, in order to obtain an award regulating the wages and conditions of work of the members of my Union, the present conditions of which are causing grave discontent and unrest amongst my members.

Thanking you in anticipation of an early reply.

Faithfully yours,

D. L. MCNAMARA,
*General Secretary.*

## RURAL WAGES AND CONDITIONS.

### HOW THE PROPOSED SCALE WILL AFFECT THE FARMER.

### THE CASE FOR THE WORKERS. CANDID STATEMENT BY AN EXPERIENCED FARMER.

At a recent meeting of farmers held at Traralgon (Gippsland), an address was delivered by the secretary of the Rural Producers' Association (Rev. C. W. Wood), at which he attacked the log of wages submitted by the Rural Workers' Union.

At the conclusion of Rev. Wood's address, a local farmer, Mr. J. English, took the lecturer to task for what he termed misleading state-

ments made during the address: the following report is taken from the local paper:—

Mr. English contended that farm hands were underpaid. Ploughing cost would only work out at 3s. 6d. per acre under the log. Farmers should realise that they must pay better wages.

Mr. Bolding interjected that Mr. English had told him he had to give up farming because the labour question had him beaten. (Loud applause.)

A heated argument ensued at the back of the hall, and some personal remarks passed between the parties concerned.

Mr. Wood said Mr. English did not know what he was talking about. There was nothing in the log to compel the ploughman to touch the horses, and even now there were farmers who had to harness and unharness the horses for their ploughmen. If a man only worked three days in a week through wet weather he had to be paid a full week: but if in the next week he was asked to work a few hours extra he had to get paid overtime. Mr. English admitted dairying could not be run on a 48-hour week, but would not join in the association because he was not much in the dairying. He had no time for such men. (Loud applause.)

Mr. English said it was a pity Mr. Wood was not a little less personal. He had been one of the largest suppliers at the butter factory for years. He was satisfied that for years past the butter industry could not pay large wages by manual labour, but with the introduction of machinery it could. When butter was 6d. a lb. farmers had to pay £1 and keep: now when it was 1s. 3d. they didn't want to pay any more. *He said no man had benefited more by Labour legislation than the farmer.* (Interruption.)

Mr. English said much more, but owing to the interruption it was impossible to report him.

Mr. Wood said he had no desire to be personal, and was very sorry.

Mr. English: I am very sorry I wasted my time on the likes of you. (Interruption.)

Mr. English then hurriedly left the hall.

Mr. English subsequently wrote the following letter, a copy of which appeared in the Rosedale *Courier* and the Traralgon *Record*:—

"As I attended the recent meeting in Traralgon without notes, and without being prepared to speak, I may not have made it clear why I hold the opinions I then expressed. There are two explicit points in connection with the farm workers' demands—(1) Can a farmer pay the wages asked on a farm worked on the eight-hour principle with a payment for overtime? (2) Are the wages asked justified?

### What it will Cost.

Having considered the matter, I decided that it might be some instruction to farmers and others interested to have it pointed out to them the actual cost of them if the wages asked for are granted, feeling sure that few farmers in this district have given the matter any consideration. On the first point I say 'yes' emphatically, for working a team 48 hours per week at the wages asked the cost per ton of hay for the labour computed on a crop yielding 35 cwt. per acre will cost the employer not more than 12s. per ton. It must be borne in mind that the demand is for £2 14s. 6d. per week, made up as follows:—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Wages | ... | ... | £1 15 0 |
| Food | ... | ... | 0 12 0 |
| Allowance for attendance to horses | ... | ... | 0 7 6 |
| | | | £2 14 6 |

In the harvest it is often necessary to work overtime, and so to allow for that I have taken the basis of the harvest work right through at 1s. 3d. per hour. My estimate is made up on the basis of working a four-horse team as follows: A three-furrow plough cutting a 10½ inch furrow will do an acre in about three hours, say, fifteen acres per week; cost per acre for ploughing, 3s. 8d. A six-leaf set of harrows will do about two acres per hour; cost for harrowing, say, 6d. per acre. A four-horse drill will do about ten acres in eight hours easily; say, 1s. per acre for drilling. Rolling, 9d. per acre. Striking up furrows, 3d. per acre. Driver of reaper and binder, one acre per hour, 1s. 3d. per acre. Two men stooking to do one acre per hour, 2s. 6d. Carting, six men for one hour each acre, 7s. 6d. per acre. We thus have:—

| | s. | d. |
|---|---|---|
| Ploughing, per acre ... ... ... ... ... ... | 3 | 8 |
| Harrowing, per acre ... ... ... ... ... ... | 1 | 0 |
| Drilling, per acre ... ... ... ... ... ... | 1 | 0 |
| Rolling, per acre ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 0 | 9 |
| Striking up furrows, per acre ... ... ... ... ... | 0 | 3 |
| Binder driver, per acre ... ... ... ... ... ... | 1 | 3 |
| Stooking, per acre ... ... ... ... ... ... | 2 | 6 |
| Carting in and stacking, per acre ... ... ... ... | 7 | 6 |
| Total ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 17 | 11 |
| Unforeseen contingencies and loss of time ... ... ... | 3 | 1 |
| Total ... ... ... ... ... ... ... | 21 | 0 |

### Demands only Fair.

Thus we have a crop which, if it averages 35 cwt. per acre, works out at a cost of 12s. per ton for the labour. Will any reasonable man say the industry cannot afford it? This estimate is based on the working of my own farm, which is very undulating. On level country the cost will be less. Are the wages justified? On the present ruling rates for labour I say undoubtedly, because the rate now asked for, viz., 35s. per week and keep, is now practically the minimum for any man's work, and a rate that is recognised by all public bodies, including our shire council. The extra 7s. 6d. per week is for looking after the horses, and if farmers will only consider the question they will realise it is absolutely just.

Right through the recent address the tone was one of exaggeration of facts based on misrepresentation. It was represented that the ploughman was asking for £3 7s. per week, but it was concealed from the audience that the rate was based on a 70-hour week for the worker, and also omitted to mention the fact that for several months in the year there is not enough daylight to work 70 hours per week. This was a fair sample of the whole business, and when I said the wages could be paid for the 48 hours, instead of the lecturer showing I was wrong, he became personal and 'had no time for men like me.' He evidently knew nothing of the subject he was talking about, and apparently those listening to him had never worked out how the wages would affect them.

### A Better Class of Worker.

I think it is high time the working farmers of this community realised that trade unionism has done more for the primary producer in this country than probably anything else. Were it not for the very much improved standard of living prevailing among the workers of the 'white world' our produce would not realise anything like what it does. Another phase of the question is that if a rate of pay for farm work equal to that

for other labour is not recognised we can never expect a good class of man to do our farm work, but will have to depend on a similar class to what we now have largely composed of rejects from other callings and of wanderers whose sole idea of happiness is an attempt to quench their thirst.

With the wages that have been paid in the past for farm labour, men had no chance to marry and settle down with a prospect of rearing a family in comfort, and until farm workers are in an assured position that they will be able to do so, we cannot hope for the position to be improved. The wages for and conditions of labour must be made on the farm so that a farmer can teach his sons how to farm properly and know then, that no matter what adversity comes in his way, if he has to work for others he will be paid as well as if working at any other occupation. It is obvious that for some time past a great number of the farmers generally have sent their families to work at anything but farming, having recognised it better for their own children to work at something where wages and conditions were better than on a farm, but some people appear to think that other people's children should work for them at comparatively low wages and for long hours.

### Wasteful and Costly Methods.

One question raised by the lecturer was if the eight-hours system was in force a dairy man would not be able to get his crop grown without getting special labour, evidently not knowing that if special labour were got on the co-operative system it would be considerable advantage to those dairy farming to have skilled labour employed for the purpose. As one who has conducted dairy farms and seen the methods of others in this district, I say the system that has been followed by many of getting their dairy hands to do their farming is wasteful and costly, and unsatisfactory both to the farmer who employed the worker and the worker who thus had long hours forced on him.

When I was dairying, if I wanted a crop put in, I found it much more profitable to put a team on and keep it going until the work was done, and I propose to show that where men only require comparatively small areas of, say, from ten to fifty acres, put in crop, that by co-operating they can pay the wages demanded, have their employee only work 48 hours per week, give him a half-holiday on a Saturday, and at the same time have the work done promptly, the crop put in at the proper season, better crops by allowing the land to fallow, and, as compared to the past system of working, save money.

### Co-operative Working Urged.

The system at present obtaining on every dairy farm that I know is to have two or four horses feeding all the year round, whether working or not, and most of the time not working, and a complete farming plant idle for the greater part of the year. There is nothing to prevent four or more dairy farmers co-operating and providing a four-horse team and necessary machinery, engage a good man, let him go to each farmer for a week or two in his turn, and do the ploughing. When there is sufficient ploughed for the summer crops, and to fallow for the following year's cereal, it will be time to sow the summer crops, then the harvest of the cereals will come on.

After that the fallowed ground will want working; when that is finished it is time to sow the cereals, and by that time ploughing can be started again. If the dairy farmers will study this out, I am quite satisfied they will see I am right, and it will be to the advantage of many of them to co-operate. The one man will do over 200 acres per year, allowing for lost time when shifting, if kept going regularly, and they will soon find

they can pay a good man 10s. per day and still be saving money; and judging by my own experience, the 10s. per day will find the good man. Otherwise I have been quite satisfied for many years, and I think every dairy farmer agrees with me, that the actual work of looking after the cows and the milking machines must be done by the dairy farmer's own family. For a few years there will be large holdings where the employment of outside labour may be necessary, but with the advanced land policy that we have it is only a matter of a few years when the large dairy farmer, like the big squatter, will disappear.

### Farmers' Children will Benefit.

One matter that the association lecturer emphasised was the obligation for the sons of pioneers to protect the homes their fathers had secured for them, but he forgot to mention that if the good wages that are possible now were paid at that time for labour there would have been no necessity for the parents to make other provisions for their children than to rear them decently until 15 years of age, at which age any healthy and decently-reared child is now quite independent of his parents, and also that if a lad starts out at, say, 15 years old with the wages that will have to be paid when the award of the Arbitration Court is made for farm workers, he will, if a reasonably thrifty person, be able when 25 years old to buy a good farm through the Government and stock it without any parental assistance and be in a position to marry and rear a family in comfort, knowing that, when reared, they can do as he has done—provide for themselves.

No one recognises better than I do what we owe to the original selectors, more especially as I can claim to be one of them, having selected in Jerralang about thirty-four years ago, and cleared a very large part of the land by my own labour, and I think I can fairly claim since then to have cleared and cultivated more timbered country than any other two men in this locality with advantage to the district and profit and satisfaction to myself.

### The Proof of Personal Experience.

Some people may say that anything can be proved by figures, and the estimate I have given for the cost of labour to produce a ton of hay will not work out in practice. To those the best answer that I can give is to invite them to inspect my farm at Hazelwood, where, to the knowledge of my neighbours, I have had only one four-horse team and one man to work them since last October, except to harrow 130 acres. Since October 1st, 1911, one man has ploughed, drilled, and struck up the furrows for 170 acres of crop, harrowed 40 acres twice, drilled 55 acres close to Taralgon, cut last year's crop and stacked it, helped to cut it into chaff and carted a good deal of it, assisted with last season's wool carting, shifted the cutter and engine several times, has had four weeks' holiday, two weeks on full pay and two weeks without pay, and has not worked more than 48 hours per week with his team except at harvest time. His pay is 6s. 3d. per day all the year round and an extra 10s. per week in harvest time, a four-roomed cottage free of rent, free milk, butter, eggs, firewood, and a quiet buggy horse exclusively for the use of himself and family, and other advantages that I need not enumerate. The result appears mutually satisfactory. He works diligently while he is at it, takes an interest in his work, and appears satisfied. I hope to see before long many other farm workers so situated. The basis of his pay and treatment is such as I would like my own son to receive if he ever has to earn his living as a farm worker.

### Short-sighted Opposition.

The position that is taken up by a section of the farmers of to-day appears just as stupid as the action of the workers when machinery was introduced. It is well known they broke the machinery because they were afraid it would deprive them of their living. We now realise it is the machinery that enables the improved conditions of labour and higher wages to be paid.

At the present time a section of the employers seem to think because 15s. to 20s. a week was the ruling price of wages in this country for farm workers anything over that is concession, forgetting that the much higher standard of living that obtains with every section of the community, and also the fact that the higher standard of living is just as reasonable and desirable for farm workers as those in other occupations, and when the wages in every other calling rule high, it cannot be expected a good man will follow farm work unless he is equally well paid. It seems to me to be a case of—

'Not one looks backward,
Onward still he goes,
Yet ne'er looks forward
Further than his nose.'

What applies to the cost of the production of hay applies equally and proportionately to the cost of producing grain, with this advantage in favour of grain, that over the greatest part of the Continent the harvester has replaced the binder, and when the harvester is finished the grain is ready for market. Apart from the worker being paid a reasonable price for his labour, based on the rate of wages paid in other callings, there is another matter of vital importance to every farmer, and that in raising the wage for farm labour equal to other callings the standard and status of the worker will also be raised. It is at present an admitted fact the great difficulty is in getting a good man to do the work.

### Cost of Direct and Indirect Labour.

I ask how can farmers expect to get good men if they do not pay the same rate of wages and give the same conditions of work for the labour they require directly on the farm as they pay for all the labour they indirectly employ? I ask any farmer who is interested in the question to go through his expenditure for, say, the past five years for the goods, clothing, machinery, vehicles, timber, cost of building, and the many other outgoings he has had to meet to provide him with what he required, and I venture to say that for every £1 he has paid for labour directly employed he has paid two, three, and in many cases four times as much for the indirect labour he has employed. All the labour he has employed indirectly has been paid for at a rate equal to, and in a great many cases exceeded by, the rate now asked by the farm workers.

Surely if the labour required indirectly can be paid for at a higher rate, the man he employs to produce the wealth that pays all the others should get an equal share. The gentleman who was lately instructing the farmers here spoke of threshing peas and digging potatoes to prove his case, as if this class of labour had to be done by manual labour only, but concealed the fact that there is now efficient machinery to do both kinds of work. The latest improvement for threshing peas is a steam thresher doing work quite equal to hand threshing, and the potato digging machine seems to be an admitted success.

### A.W.U. Award Justified.

I have had some experience of the award of the Arbitration Court through my shearing shed, and am quite satisfied the award was just. If anyone doubts that let him go to any shearing shed when in full work, and he will realise there is no idle bread eaten there or money paid that is not well earned. The one weak spot in the award, in my opinion, is that the employers got piece-picking treated as unskilled work. The result is there is no inducement for piece-pickers to become efficient, which is a considerable loss to the wool-growers. It is to be hoped short-sighted farmers do not succeed in getting a man who is competent with a four-horse team and to look after the machinery that is in his charge properly to be treated as unskilled.

If good work is wanted good money must be paid for it, and if I get some of the opponents of the farm workers' demands to think for themselves I will be more than repaid for the trouble I have taken to put my views and the result of some of my experiences on paper.

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