

(February 23, 1914.)

Australia.

BY SIR THOMAS TAIT, OF MONTREAL.*

AT a regular luncheon of the Club held on the 23rd February, Sir Thomas Tait said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—Thirty minutes is but a short time to pay a visit to the other side of the world, and Australia is a large subject to cover in the time at our disposal. My reasons for selecting Australia as my subject to-day are, first, that it is always well to speak on a subject that you know more about than most of your audience, and second, that I think it desirable in these days that citizens of one part of the British Empire should know something about other parts of the Empire. The time at my command being so short, I shall therefore without any further preliminary remark than to thank you for the invitation to address you to-day plunge at once into my subject, and with that optimism characteristic of the plunger trust that we shall emerge better informed about Australia.

I say advisedly "better informed," for I suppose you to-day, as I had ten years ago, have but a hazy knowledge of that country. I well remember, when the matter of an appointment in Australia was broached to me, seeking the *Encyclopædia Britannica* to find out in what part of Australia Melbourne was situated. Under these circumstances, it will, I fear, be necessary to present you with a rather dry dessert of facts and figures, but of course you are at liberty to add such liquid refreshment to this dry diet as may be at your disposal.

The figures I shall give are for the year ending the 30th of June, 1912, as those are the latest comparative figures available.

Australia has an area of approximately 3,000,000 square miles, of which you will be surprised perhaps to learn over one-third is situated within the tropics. It is the largest island and the smallest continent on the globe. Its area is greater than that of the United States exclusive of Alaska. It is four-

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fifths the size of Canada, three-fourths that of Europe, and it constitutes more than one-fourth of the area of the Empire. East and west it runs twenty-five hundred miles, and north and south two thousand miles.

Western Australia is the largest state, constituting one-third of the whole. Queensland is about one-fifth, South Australia one-eighth, New South Wales one-tenth, then follows little Victoria, and then the island state of Tasmania. But there is a large area left which is not yet a state, known as the Northern Territory. Last, but not least, there is the new Federal Capital site Canberra, comprising about 100 square miles.

Physically, Australia is like most of the other continents, in that there are coastal ranges, and that the country slopes back from them to the great interior, a large part of which is but little above the level of the sea, and in some places below that level. Countless ages ago the interior of Australia was a great ocean, covering 1,500,000 square miles or about one-half of the present continent. There are no great rivers, although the Murray, with its tributary the Darling, is one of the longest rivers in the world; in the Spring there is a large volume of water in it, but very little water reaches the sea, and indeed during part of the year no water reaches the ocean, more being taken up by seepage and evaporation than is received.

The Australian continent extends from Lat. 11 south to 38 south. To make apparent to you what that means I may say that in the Northern Hemisphere it corresponds to the region stretching from the north end of South America to, say, Washington. But you must remember that in the Southern Hemisphere the seasons are the opposite to those in the Northern Hemisphere: January and February are the mid-summer months, July and August are midwinter; and the farther north you go the hotter it gets. The northern part of Australia is not suitable for colonization by white people. At sea level, there is no snow, and no frost in Australia proper, but on the higher mountains there is snow in the winter time.

The climate in the large cities I may describe to you by saying that Brisbane is like Florida, Sydney and Adelaide like, say, Savannah, and Melbourne like San Francisco. The heat in the great interior is intense, due to the small rainfall, and the refraction of the sun's heat from the surface of the ground. Australia, speaking generally, is one of the driest countries in the world,—I mean in the matter of rainfall. (Laughter.) There is under ten inches of rainfall over one-

third of it, and over a considerable area under five inches of rain, per annum. Over more than half of Australia the rainfall is less than 15 inches. There are of course parts of Australia in which there is an ample rainfall as for instance in Victoria, and generally speaking, the coastal districts. In the north, during the monsoon the rain is phenomenal.

The population is about 4,500,000 people; an increase during the past ten years of 700,000. In density of population Australia compares with Canada as 1.57 is to 1.93 inhabitants per square mile. One of the striking features of the population of Australia is that 95% of the people were born either in Great Britain, Australia, or New Zealand. The non-European population, including that of the half castes and aborigines, is 72,000. Australia never had a dense population of aborigines, and after the advent of the white people it rapidly disappeared. Perhaps what was said of the Pilgrim Fathers when they landed in New England might be said of Captain Cook and his companions: "First they fell upon their knees, and then they fell upon the aborigines." (Laughter.)

Just at this moment I would like to mention the restrictions placed upon immigration. They have been greatly exaggerated: the only restriction is that the immigrant must be able to write from dictation fifty words of a European language, and that of course no criminals, no people of established bad character, and no mentally or physically incapable people, are admitted.

The proportion of males in Australia and New Zealand to the total population is greater than in any other country; but notwithstanding that, or perhaps because of it, women are given the vote; so it is no longer a case of "one man, one vote," but "one adult, one vote." (Applause.) While it may bring me into dangerous waters, I may without expressing an opinion on the question of woman suffrage at least, say this—that the women of to-day are undoubtedly better qualified to exercise the franchise than the men were when they were given it; and that in all those matters that affect our homes and our personal life, that is, all matters except such as divide political parties, such as protection and free trade, women are as well qualified as men to judge, and are likely to take more interest than men—I refer to such questions as education, the liquor traffic, health, the care of the infirm and of the aged and children, the wellbeing of the working classes, and so forth. (Applause.)

A noticeable feature regarding the population is the proportion living in the cities, and the size of the cities. Sydney

has a population of 700,000, Melbourne 600,000, Adelaide 200,000, Brisbane 150,000. As to the States, New South Wales has the largest population, 1,600,000; Victoria has 1,300,000; the two together constituting two-thirds of the whole population. Queensland has about 600,000; South Australia about 400,000; Western Australia about 300,000; and Tasmania about 200,000.

On the 1st of January, 1901, the States federated, under the title of the Commonwealth of Australia. There is a Governor-General, appointed by the King from Great Britain; a Senate of thirty-six members, six from each State, three from each State retiring every three years; and a House of Representatives, of seventy-five members, elected from the States on a population basis, the minimum representative for any State being five. It was supposed that the Senate, being elected by the people of the State as a whole, would prove to be a very conservative body; but the contrary is the case.

As regards State government, each State has a Governor from Great Britain appointed by the King, and an Upper and a Lower House, the members of the Upper House being appointed by the Crown in New South Wales and Queensland, and in the others being elected; in the Lower House, needless to say, the members are elected, on a population basis in all the States.

There is left the Northern Territory, formerly belonging to South Australia, but taken over by the Federal Government on the 1st August, 1911, the Commonwealth assuming its debts, and agreeing to build a north and south transcontinental railway.

It may interest you to know that the Federation of Australia is on a different basis from that of Canada. In Canada certain specific powers were left with the Provinces, and everything else went to the Dominion; in Australia certain specific powers were given to the Federal Government, and everything else was left to the States. I think the Canadian method has proved the better. (Applause.)

The chief production of Australia, as you all know, is wool. The average annual value of the wool exported during the past five years was \$130,000,000. Australia has more sheep than any other country in the world, nearly 100,000,000. Argentina being next with Russia a close third. It may surprise you to hear that Australia grows nearly 100,000,000 bushels of wheat per annum.

Australia has been making great strides recently in the production of butter; over 200,000,000 pounds being now made there, and over \$23,000,000 worth exported annually. This is largely due to the supervision the Governments exercise

over the butter factories and over the grading of export butter. The State also supervises the cold storage warehouses at the ports and the refrigeration on the ships, so that the buyer of Australian butter knows he will get what he purchases. (Applause.)

What first made Australia prominent in the eyes of the world was its production of gold. Up to 1911 it had produced \$2,650,000,000 worth, of which little Victoria produced over half. Australia also has copper, silver, lead, tin and iron mines, and large and excellent coal deposits in New South Wales. It also exports frozen mutton, rabbits, hides, skins, and wine—good wine.

The total trade of Australia is over \$690,000,000, as compared with that of Canada, \$890,000,000 for the same year; that is, with a little over half the population, Australia had three-fourths the total trade of Canada. (Applause.) The imports per head are the same as those of Canada, \$70 per annum; but in exports Australia leads the way, with \$80 per head, as compared with \$50 for Canada. The total trade is thus \$150 per capita in Australia as compared with \$120 in Canada. Strange as it may seem in Australia and New Zealand the wealth per capita is greater than in any other country in the world, with the exception of one or two.

The customs tariff is about the same as in Canada: on dutiable goods 28%, and on all goods including free goods 17%; the percentage of free goods, both in Canada and in Australia being 35% of the whole.

They have a preferential tariff in favor of Great Britain, a reduction of about 5% in the rate, that is, say 20% against British goods, as against 25% against the rest of the world, or a difference of about 25%.

An interesting financial feature is that the Commonwealth, which was constituted in 1901, is practically free of debt as yet. (Applause.) The issue of notes by the Commonwealth, instead of by the banks less the reserve of gold, which had to be retained gave the Commonwealth between 25 and 30 million dollars for nothing, this with an abounding revenue from customs and graduated land tax, postal and excise revenue and revenue from other sources has permitted of a large expenditure for Public Works and Defence Purposes, and for administration without incurring much, if any, public debt.

But when we turn to the States, we find a different condition. The public debt of the States amounts to the enormous sum of \$1,355,000,000, or \$300 per head. This money has been expended mainly for railways, telegraphs, telephones,

waterworks, irrigation, harbour and purchase of land for closer settlement. The net profit from the States Public Works pays interest on the whole of the State loans, which is just under 4%. (Hear, hear, and applause.)

Now as to railways: the total mileage is 18,653, of which the States own about 17,000 miles, the balance being private lines, half of them being for general traffic and half for special purposes. We have a greater variety of gauge in Australia than in any other country; about half of the lines are 3 feet 6; about a quarter of them 5 ft. 3, about one-half 4 ft. 8½ in.; and a few are 2 ft. and 2 ft. 6. The State expenditure on railways amounts to \$800,000,000, on which a profit equal to 4.13 per cent. is earned or over \$5,000,000 in excess of the interest charges. The freight charges per ton per mile are higher than in Canada, but the average haul is much shorter. The rate per passenger mile is about the same as here unless suburban traffic is included, when it is lower. A transcontinental railway, about 1,000 miles in length, is being built east and west, by the Federal Government under an agreement with South Australia; and as before mentioned under an agreement with the same State, a transcontinental railway is to be built north and south. On the east and west line an interesting experiment is to be tried owing to the small rainfall and the scarcity of water, namely, the use of internal combustion locomotives.

The railways are constructed and operated largely in accordance with British practice; they are mainly owned by the States, and administered by Commissioners. Therefore the proposition was most interesting to a man brought up on Company-owned railways built and worked in accordance with American practice. My observations lead me to think that while British railwaymen have something to learn from American railwaymen, the reverse is also true, and that as traffic grows more dense in America, for instance in New England, many British practices and methods will be adopted here to cope with the conditions.

A striking feature of Victoria's railway traffic is the enormous suburban business done at Melbourne: in and out of the central suburban station at Melbourne every day pass about 200,000 people, and 1,500 trains arrive and leave that station every day. The average fare is 5 cents per passenger, and the average passenger journey is 5 miles.

Australia and New Zealand were for many years in advance of the rest of the world in social and industrial legislation. The great aim of the legislation of that character has

been to extend the reasonable comforts of a civilized community to those engaged in every branch of industry, and to care for those who are infirm and old and poor. (Applause.) While those countries were formerly in advance in this class of legislation, many of the civilized countries of the world have been following, and in some instances have even gone ahead. Australia has excellent factory laws—well observed. These, with minimum wages and regulated working hours, have done away almost entirely with sweating, and have been conducive to the prevention of injury and to the health and general welfare of the working classes. You would be pleased to see the conditions under which the working people of Australia work and live. (Applause.)

Australia has old age pensions, but not as yet compulsory insurance against sickness and unemployment. And they do not feed their school children. There is a maternity allowance, under which every woman who has a child receives, I think, £5 for each child, and under which \$3,000,000 was paid out for the year. There are minimum wages, which are almost necessary if sweating is to be prevented; but, strange to relate, one result of the minimum wage is an increase in unemployment, for if an employer has to pay a minimum wage he is only going to keep men who are worth it. (Hear, hear.) The remedy for that, to my mind, is to set up some tribunal to determine the value of such unfortunate men and to allow the employers to pay them something less than the minimum wage. (Applause.)

They have the eight-hour day in Australia. Perhaps here I might give you the creed of the Australian workingman: "Eight hours to work, eight hours to play, eight hours to sleep, and eight bob a day." (Laughter and applause.)

In no country in the world has there been more legislation to prevent industrial disputes than in Australia and New Zealand, but notwithstanding this, there are more strikes there in proportion to their industries than in any other country. It may be said, therefore, that compulsory arbitration is not a success. But I think the difficulty is, the legislation does not go far enough. The assets of the employer are get-at-able should he violate the law, but those of the employee are not. It is impossible to put a thousand men in jail, and to put the leaders in jail makes martyrs of them. New Zealand is, I understand, contemplating legislation which will go a long way, in my opinion, to overcome the difficulty and prevent industrial strife. This legislation will provide that the funds of the Unions shall be reported to the State, and that they

shall be attachable in case of violation of the law to the extent of £1,000 or more, and that each striker shall in addition be fined to the extent of £10.

Australia has been wise in not applying its industrial legislation to its primary production,—I refer to grazing, dairying and farming,—on which it relies for its prosperity. Nearly all the land was granted or taken up at small prices in the early days for sheep raising, and to-day there is, generally speaking, not much free land of good quality obtainable. A sheep station, as they call it, of thirty or forty thousand acres employs but ten or twelve men, except during shearing, when shearing gangs go around, and produces only wool and sheep. The same area under cultivation would produce grain and fodder, etc., as well as sheep and wool, and would support hundreds of families. Therefore in order to provide good land for immigrants and others desiring to settle on the land, and to have the best use made of the land, the States have passed legislation to enable them to resume land at a price fixed by arbitration in case of failure to agree. With the idea of inducing the subdivision of large landed estates the Commonwealth Labor Government has passed a graduated land tax measure under which the more valuable the estate the higher the rate of taxation. Also an absentee land tax, that is an extra tax on land owners who do not steadily reside in the Commonwealth. I may say that the policy of the subdivision and close settlement of lands has been accompanied by very satisfactory results.

The great problem of Australia, however, is the northerly part, lying within the tropics. It is unsuitable for colonization by white people, and is a constant invitation to the black, yellow and brown people who exist in millions to the north to come and take it, for there is practically no population there, and it will never be well populated by white people, for they cannot work in the fields and thrive or bring up healthy children in that country.

Australia has come to the fore lately in the matter of defence. (Applause.) First, as to the land forces. Lord Kitchener was invited to come to Australia and recommend a scheme. He sent before him General Kirkpatrick, a son of our dear old Sir George, to gather information for him. General Kirkpatrick then returned with Lord Kitchener and assisted him in writing his report, and he was then appointed to carry out Lord Kitchener's recommendations. He has done splendid work, and has now been appointed to a most important position in India, namely, Director of Military Operations.

In Australia under the Kitchener scheme, which became effective on 1st January, 1911, lads from twelve to fourteen years are Junior Cadets, who must be trained ninety hours per annum. From fourteen to eighteen years, Senior Cadets, who must train for four whole days, twelve half days, and twenty-four night drills per annum. From eighteen to twenty-five years, Citizen Forces, who must have sixteen whole days' training every year, of which eight at least must be in continuous camp. At the 30th June, 1912, including rifle clubs and cadets, the forces numbered 168,000; and there has been considerable augmentation since then.

As to the navy. In 1890 Australia and New Zealand agreed with the British Government, in consideration of certain vessels being stationed in Australian waters they would contribute \$630,000 per annum towards interest and upkeep. In 1893 the agreement was changed to provide annually \$1,000,000 from Australia and \$200,000 from New Zealand. In 1909 Australia decided to replace the squadron provided by Great Britain under the agreement just mentioned, and asked Admiral Henderson to recommend a scheme. That scheme called for a total expenditure spread over about twenty years of about \$200,000,000 with an annual outlay for upkeep of about \$24,000,000. Australia undertook to provide one unit of this scheme forthwith at an estimated cost of \$18,750,000, and an annual upkeep cost of \$3,850,000. This unit was to consist of one battle cruiser, three light cruisers, six torpedo boat destroyers and submarines. Of these, there have been built in England and are in commission the battle cruiser, two light cruisers, and three torpedo boat destroyers and submarines, leaving one light cruiser and three torpedo boat destroyers to be built or, more correctly speaking, assembled in Australia. I regret to say, that the cost of the ships to be built in Australia has been considerably greater, and the time of construction considerably longer than was expected.

The total estimated expenditure on defence for the year 1912-13 was \$27,000,000, of which the navy's proportion was \$7,500,000 or about \$1.70 per head of the population. The expenditure of Great Britain for the defence of the Empire on the seas is \$5 per head for every man, woman and child. Australia, on the same basis, would contribute \$22,500,000, and Canada \$40,000,000, per annum.

In my opinion, the provision and maintenance of a navy in Australian waters strong enough to cope with any important power is too great a burden for that country. (Hear, hear.) And in any event I question whether ships stationed

in those waters, three or four weeks distant from where the battle to determine the command of the seas will probably be fought, would be of much value in the defence of the Empire on the seas. (Applause.) I would like to make a few observations on this subject, not from the point of view of Canada and Canadians only but from that of the whole Empire and all its people. (Hear, hear.) Apart from a negligible few the people of the British Empire—no matter their ancestry or their race, irrespective of their politics, and regardless of their religion,—in my opinion, desire the maintenance of the Empire—(Hear, hear, and applause.)—if for no loftier reason, than their own individual interests and the general advantage of their respective communities. For to my mind there is much to lose, and, so far as I can see, nothing to gain, by the breaking up or dismemberment of our Empire. (Applause.) The maintenance of the Empire, with all that that implies, including freedom to make our customs tariffs, and conduct our trade as we please, depends, I submit, on the supremacy of the Empire's naval forces against any probable combination that might be arrayed against them. If my premises are correct, and I submit they are, then, if our naval forces are not in that impregnable condition, it is the duty and to the interest of all parts of the Empire and all their peoples to do their share towards placing them in that supreme position on the seas to which I have referred. (Applause.) And to do it as quickly as possible. (Hear, hear, and applause.) That is the important point—time, for it takes nearly two years to build a Dreadnought. If the naval forces of the Empire are not sufficiently strong to maintain the command of the seas, then each part of the Empire should determine what is the utmost it can do towards attaining that position, and regardless of all other considerations should endeavor to obtain the greatest possible result in that direction in the least possible time, and to continue to do so until the Empire is absolutely, beyond the peradventure of a doubt, supreme on the seas against any probable combination that may be arrayed against it. (Applause.)

Again I emphasize the importance of time, and leave this part of the subject with these words—"as much as possible, as soon as possible." (Applause.)

We have now emerged from our plunge into the subject of Australia. I trust the addition to your lunch has not proved unpleasantly dry or unpalatable. I hope that it has been the means of increasing the knowledge of at least some of you in reference to Australia. I can assure you all of a

most hearty welcome and boundless hospitality should you visit Australia. You will find there a country to be proud of and worthy of its position as one of the brightest jewels in the diadem of Dominions which form so important a part of the crown of our magnificent Empire. You will find there an intelligent, progressive, resolute, resourceful, and in every way fine people. A people who honor the same traditions, hold the same sentiments and have the same aspirations as yourselves. You will find fellow citizens who like us will not be found lacking if the call should come to rally to the defence of our great British Empire. (Applause.)
