

A
STATISTICAL ACCOUNT

OF THE

SEVEN COLONIES OF AUSTRALASIA,

1897-8,

BY

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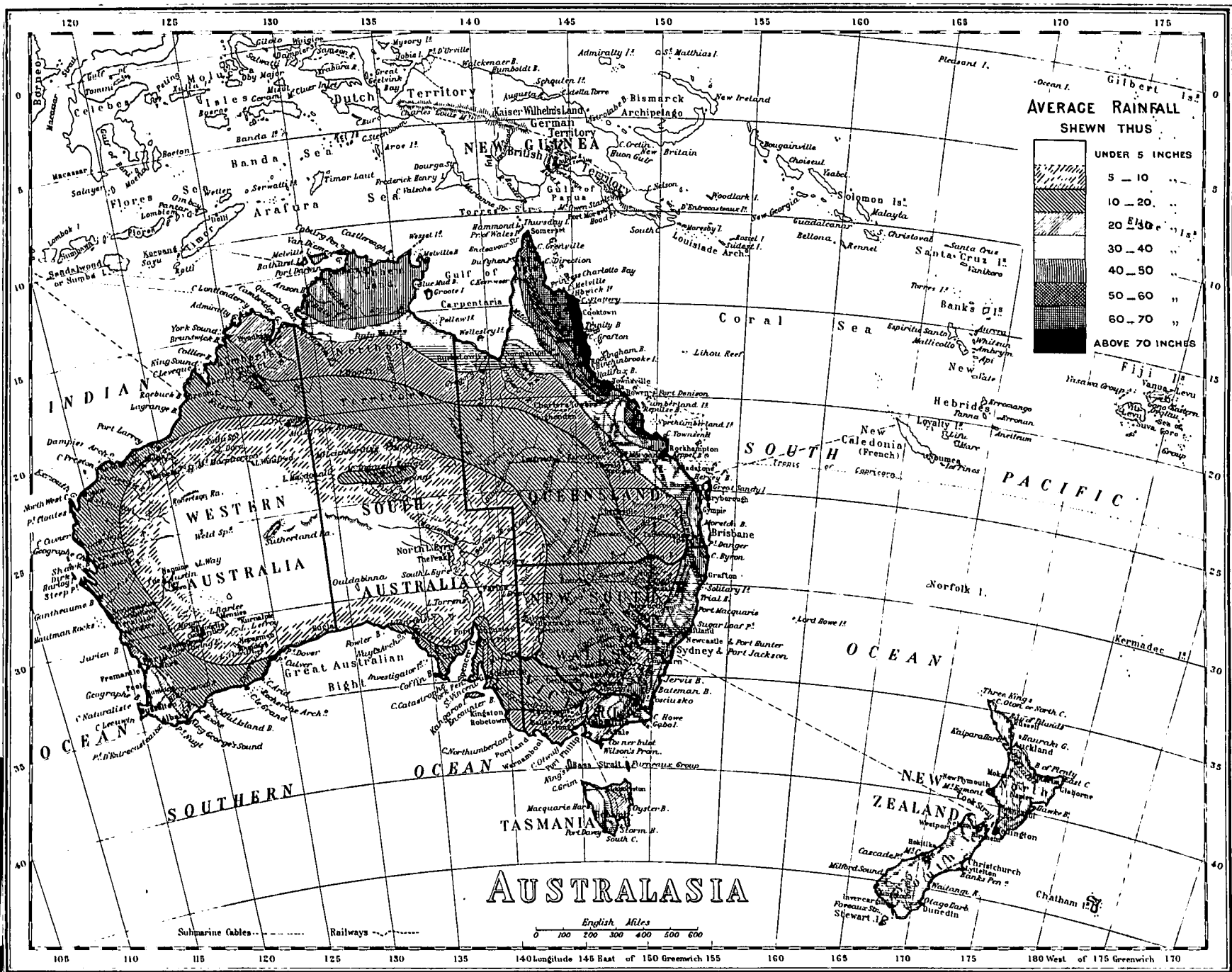
GOVERNMENT STATISTICIAN OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

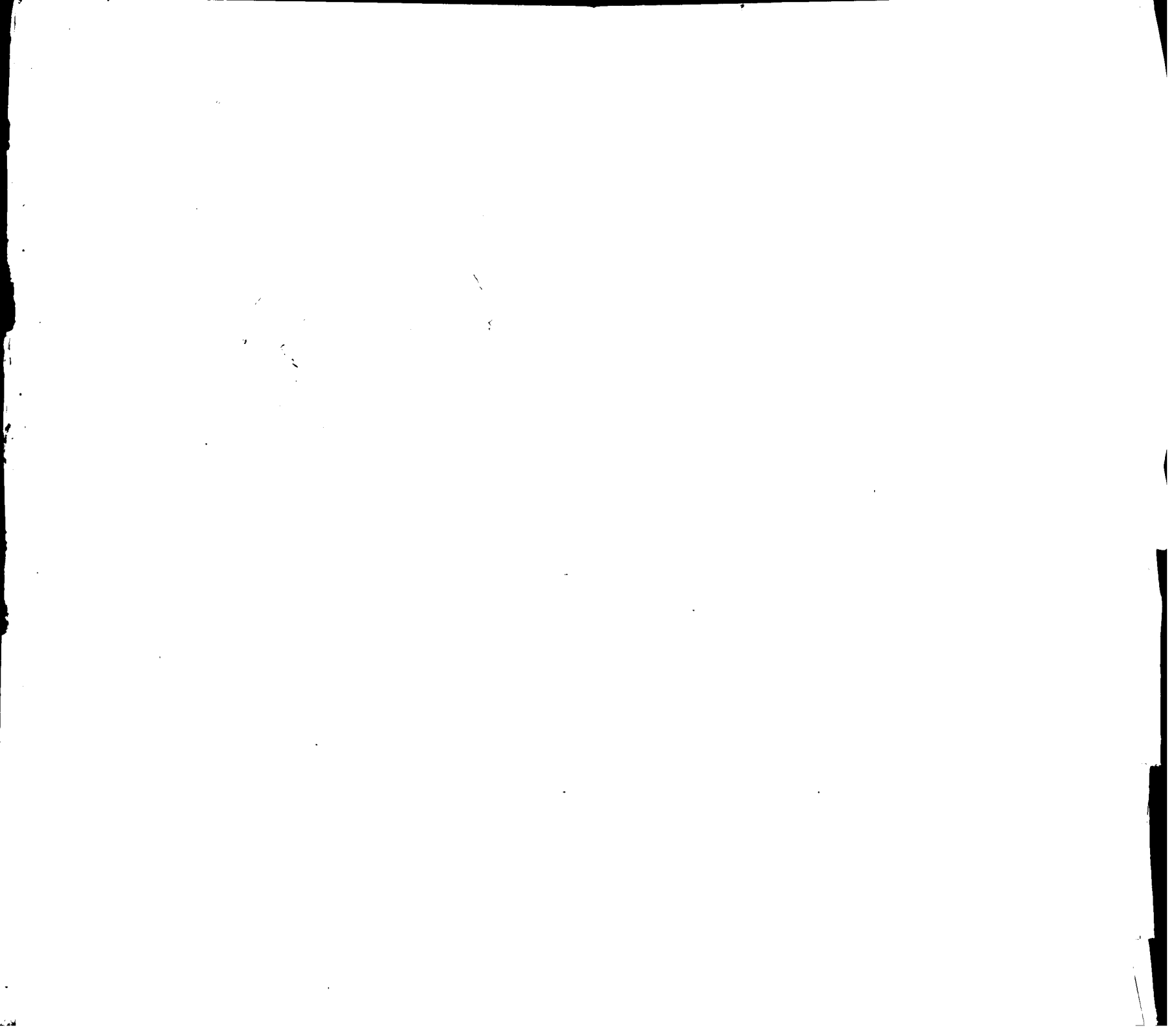
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PREFACE.

THE following pages aim at giving an idea of the progress and present condition of the seven colonies of Australasia, such as may be gathered from an account of which statistics are the basis. The information given extends back, in some instances, to the very beginning of settlement; but, as a rule, the year 1861 has been made the starting-point of the comparisons that serve to illustrate the text, as that year was the first in which a census was taken after the acquisition of responsible Government by all the colonies except Western Australia, and also because it virtually marks the beginning of the present system of Australasian colonisation, which began to take shape after the subsidence of the excitement following on the great gold discoveries of the fifties.

At the beginning of the year 1861, the population of Australasia, excluding the uncivilised native races, numbered 1,221,274, which is less than that of New South Wales at the present time, and but little greater than that of Victoria. The increase of population from 1861 to 1898 has been at the rate of about 3·53 per cent. per annum. During the greater part of this period the country largely gained by immigration; indeed, the stream of population was fairly well maintained until the close of 1891. It is a noteworthy fact that the years of the greatest prosperity of Australasia have also been those when the country received the largest accession of population from abroad; and though it cannot be said that the influx of population brought prosperity, it can fairly be assumed that the stream of immigration which was induced by the prosperity of the colonies tended to keep alive and stimulate the conditions without which national progress would have been impossible. The following is a statement of the population at the beginning of the years stated :—

1861	1,221,274
1871	1,898,871
1881	2,730,312
1891	3,785,133
1898	4,410,151

The Australasian people are mainly of British and Irish origin. Of the 3,762,410 persons whose birthplaces were ascertained at the census of 1891, 2,561,865 were of Australasian birth, while 589,683 were natives of England and Wales, 274,583 of Ireland, and 175,734 of Scotland, and 18,354 of other British possessions. The natives of Continental Europe and the United States numbered 101,689, and the Chinese, 40,502. Excluding the Chinese, who are not permanent settlers, and who do not intermarry with the general population, it may be claimed that over 95 per cent. of the population of the seven colonies are of British or Irish birth or descent.

The conditions of life are more favourable in Australasia than in any other country. The excess of births over deaths is somewhat less than 19 per thousand inhabitants. For the United Kingdom, it is a little over 11 per thousand; while the average European rate hardly reaches 10 per thousand.

The tonnage of shipping entered from and cleared for Great Britain and other ports outside of Australasia has very largely increased:—

	tons.
1861	1,076,856
1871	1,279,416
1881	3,153,087
1891	6,457,050
1897	7,337,494

Equally rapid has been the increase in the intercolonial shipping entered and cleared:—

	tons.
1861	1,751,628
1871	2,950,488
1881	5,790,458
1891	11,022,485
1897	13,973,126

In point of trade, Sydney is the fourth seaport of the British Empire, being exceeded in the value of its imports and exports by London, Liverpool, and Hull; Melbourne ranks sixth, following Glasgow, which is below Sydney. In the matter of tonnage entering, both Sydney and Melbourne stand very high, but not so high as in regard to the value of their trade.

The value of exports and imports is greatly relied upon by statisticians as giving a measure of a country's progress. The external trade of Australasia—that is, the value of imports and exports taken together—was :—

	£
1861	35,061,282
1871	39,729,016
1881	64,554,678
1891	84,651,488
1897	83,678,859

The fall shown between 1891 and 1897 is due to a decline in values, and not to a decrease in the quantities of goods exchanged. The decline, however, has been over the whole period, as will be seen below. The figures represent the value of a like quantity of exports in various years, the prices of 1897 being taken as equalling 1,000 :—

1861	2,233
1871	1,929
1881	1,609
1891	1,236
1897	1,000

It will be seen that what would have brought 44s. 8d. in 1861, 38s. 7d. in 1871, 32s. 2d. in 1881, and 24s. 9d. in 1891, brought only 20s. in 1897.

The trade between the colonies suffered also from the fall in values, but the volume was well maintained. The imports and exports, taken together, were :—

	£
1861	17,166,925
1871	29,745,068
1881	37,156,289
1891	60,114,797
1897	54,422,247

From the earliest days wool has been the great staple of Australasia. The wool clip is nearly all exported, and the total for each period was :—

	lb.
1861	84,636,800
1871	216,394,365
1881	378,738,600
1891	707,253,639
1897	625,411,345

Australasia is eminently a pastoral country. It contains nearly one-fourth of the sheep of the world, as well as more cattle and horses in proportion to the population than any other country, while the numbers of its flocks are still increasing :—

	Sheep.	Cattle.	Horses.	Swine.
1861.....	23,741,706	4,039,839	459,970	362,417
1871.....	49,773,584	4,713,820	782,558	737,477
1881.....	78,063,426	8,709,628	1,249,765	903,271
1891.....	124,547,937	11,861,330	1,785,835	1,154,553
1897.....	103,511,108	12,159,780	1,933,607	966,201

The total value of pastoral property, excluding land devoted to grazing, is £237,438,000, while the value of stock alone is £114,854,000. Australasia has long maintained with Europe a trade in preserved meats, but the more important industry of chilled or frozen meat was initiated in 1882. The value of meat products exported was:—

	£
1881.....	349,928
1891.....	1,725,322
1897.....	3,018,412

The description of the export was :—

	Chilled or Frozen.		Preserved Meats. lb.
	Beef. cwt.	Mutton and Lamb. cwt.	
1881.....		9,980	18,817,200
1891.....	155,616	1,150,730	16,415,821
1897.....	618,186	1,809,167	37,147,240

Dairying for export is also an industry of recent establishment, and one which has the promise of a great future. The growth of the trade may be gauged from the following figures, showing the export of butter to the United Kingdom :—

	lb.
1881.....	815,841
1891.....	7,440,577
1894.....	34,297,627
1897.....	30,248,493

The area devoted to the plough has increased nearly sevenfold since 1861 :—

	Acres under crop.
1861.....	1,337,548
1871.....	2,683,204
1881.....	5,560,513
1891.....	6,790,462
1897.....	9,015,364

If to the land under crop be added that laid down under permanent artificially-sown grasses, the area would be more than doubled. The grass lands sown during the same years covered the following areas:—

	Acres.
1861.....	203,672
1871.....	922,811
1881.....	4,348,742
1891.....	8,112,485
1897.....	10,623,827

The principal crop is wheat, which covers more than half the area in cultivation, exclusive of sown grasses. The following figures, which include permanent grasses, relate to 1897-8:—

	Acres.
Wheat for grain.....	4,673,754
Oats.....	750,683
Maize.....	345,236
Other Grain Crops.....	101,952
Potatoes.....	146,360
Vines.....	59,361
Hay.....	1,909,861
Other Crops.....	1,028,157
Permanent Grasses.....	<u>10,623,827</u>
Total.....	19,639,191

Though exporting in an average season not more than 9 million bushels of wheat, Australasia ranks sixth amongst the export countries of the world.

The present annual yield of the mines may be set down at £16,000,000, and the average for the last forty-six years has been somewhat over eleven millions sterling a year. From 1852 to 1897 there has been a total production of £519,238,840, thus made up:—

	£
Gold.....	399,381,186
Silver and Silver-lead.....	27,215,916
Copper.....	28,536,981
Tin.....	17,946,072
Coal.....	41,985,917
Other Minerals.....	4,172,768

The production at various periods was:—

	£
1871.....	11,543,000
1881.....	11,063,000
1891.....	13,450,690
1897.....	16,042,383

The value of the produce of the mines, fields, farms, forests, and workshops for 1896-7 averaged £26 14s. 9d. per head of total population. In previous years this figure has been greatly exceeded. The following are the total values of production for the years named :—

	£
1871	56,439,000
1881	87,606,000
1891	117,604,900
1896-7	114,460,000

The fall from 1891 to 1896-7 is due to a fall in prices, as the actual quantities produced have largely increased. Distributing the return for 1896-7 under the generally recognised branches of production, the value assignable to each was :—

	£
Agriculture	22,778,000
Pastoral Industries	35,150,000
Dairying, &c.	10,833,000
Mineral Production.....	13,844,000
Forests and Fisheries	3,034,000
Other Industries	28,821,000
Total	£114,460,000

Compared with the population, the primary production of Australasia is not exceeded, or even closely approached, by any other country ; and in regard to total value is surpassed only by the United Kingdom, France Germany, Austria, Russia, Italy, and Spain in Europe, and by the United States of America.

The revenue of the governments of the seven colonies exceeds £31,000,000, which is nearly one-third of that of Great Britain and Ireland, although the population of the colonies is hardly more than one-tenth. In Australasia, however, practically all the railways belong to the State, and the revenue from this source is about £11,000,000. The total public revenue was :—

	£
1861	6,186,440
1871	9,269,765
1881	20,512,233
1891	29,911,930
1897-8	31,272,588

The principal sources of revenue may be summarised as follows :—

	£
Taxation—Customs and Excise ...	8,967,386
Other.....	3,185,843
Railways and Tramways	10,675,300
Posts and Telegraphs.....	2,510,753
Public Lands	3,598,936
Other Revenue	2,334,370
Total	<u>£31,272,588</u>

The public debt of the colonies is very heavy, averaging over £52 per inhabitant; however, the greater part of it was incurred for the purpose of providing funds for the construction of railways and other revenue-yielding works. The following shows the use to which the borrowed money was put :—

	£
Railways	134,998,411
Water Supply and Sewerage	21,317,940
Telegraphs and Telephones	3,947,823
Other Works and Services	60,141,089
Total	<u>£220,405,263</u>

The annual interest and charges upon the public debt amount to £9,357,000, while the net revenue obtained from works constructed from loan funds is about £4,228,000, leaving a net liability of £5,129,000 per annum. The increase of Australasian indebtedness may be traced in the following figures :—

	£
1861	11,899,951
1871	39,040,871
1881	95,965,582
1891	193,962,687
1898	231,135,445

The deposits in ordinary banks and savings institutions now reach a total of £128,303,360, which, however, is somewhat smaller than in 1891, owing to losses and withdrawals consequent on the financial panic of May, 1893. The total deposits in all banks were :—

	£
1861	16,067,584
1871	28,833,761
1881	72,203,796
1891	138,402,730
1897-8	128,303,360

The increase over the whole period has been marvellous, and the accumulation of £29 per head is not equalled in any other country.

Australasia now boasts railways open to the extent of 14,587 miles, nearly all of which are the property of the State. The length of line just mentioned is equal to 1 mile to every 211 square miles of territory, and to every 304 inhabitants. Compared with population, Australasia is better served than even the United States, and equally served with the Dominion of Canada. The mileage open was :—

1861	243
1871	1,135
1881	5,526
1891	12,405
1898	14,587

Equally rapid has been the progress of telegraphic construction, but the following figures must be accepted as approximate only :—

1861	4,100
1871	12,800
1881	29,428
1891	44,855
1897	49,266

The number of messages received and despatched in 1897 was, in round numbers, 9,500,000, or 2·2 per inhabitant. In the United Kingdom the average is 2·1. No other country approaches these figures.

The facilities afforded by the Post Office are very largely availed of. About 216,000,000 letters and post-cards, 104,000,000 newspapers, and 45,000,000 packets are annually carried—figures which, when taken together and compared with the population, are largely in excess of those of any other country; but in the matter of letters alone Australasia is surpassed by the United Kingdom and the United States.

In regard to social condition, there has been a very material improvement in the population of these colonies. From 1861 to 1896 population increased between three and four-fold, while serious crime, as evidenced by convictions in the Superior Courts, has only increased one-fourth. The spread of education has been very marked. Out of

every 10,000 children between 5 and 15 years, there could read and write in :—

1861	4,637
1871	5,911
1881	7,058
1891	7,565

If the marriage registers be turned to, still more convincing testimony to the spread of education will be found. Out of 10,000 persons married, the illiterates were :—

1861	2,460
1871	1,349
1881	538
1891	220
1896	161

and even of the present small residuum of illiterates, the larger number were not born in Australasia.

The foregoing figures illustrate some of the phases of Australasian progress dealt with in this book. The general plan adopted in previous editions has been followed in the present issue. The reader's attention is directed to the appendix, which comprises a set of tables corresponding with the various sub-divisions of the work, and forming a synoptical view of the progress of each colony since 1861. In some cases these tables contain later particulars than it was found possible to embody in the text.

T. A. C.

Sydney, September 27, 1898.

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