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NEW HOMES IN SOUTHERN SEAS.*

WHEN Bishop Berkeley, about to set out on his romantic mission to Rhode Island, pointed to America as "Time's noblest offspring and its last," he little thought that a fifth continent then lay all but undiscovered which should dispute the palm with America as the noblest and last offspring of Time. We do not enter here on comparisons, but accepting the phrase Austral-Asia as descriptive of this fifth continent, we may, at least, apply to it one of good Bishop Berkeley's expressions, "The fifth shall close the drama with the day." It would seem that the future of this vast group of islands, the largest of which is a continent little less than the whole of Europe, is so grand, that it has been reserved by Providence as the closing scene of the world's history. If we may use the term, the author of history has kept these reserves of territory on which to play out the last act of the world's drama. America may be destined to be the outlet into which the overflow of Europe is to pour itself, but this archipelago, lying off the coast of Asia, and reached, as it were, by regular stepping stones from China to New Zealand, evidently points to some great purpose in the future, —such a bringing together, for instance, of the civilisation of the extreme East and West as we have only a dim conception of at present. Sir Charles Dilke has already familiarised us with the term, "Greater Britain." We are accustomed now to think of Australia and New Zealand as something more than colonies, and much more than mere possessions or dependencies. They are reserves, as we have said, where the English race is to plant itself out, and having first given its own stamp to these regions, open its gates at last to welcome in other races, such as the Chinese, which we cannot mix with at present, lest the baser should deteriorate the nobler race. It is a true instinct which sets the English working man at present, whether in California or Queensland, to oppose a large immigration of Chinese labour. If the law of selection of the fittest means anything, it is especially applicable to colonisation. Was Beaumont thinking this when he spoke of our land as

"Sown, indeed,
With the richest, royallest seed,
That the earth could e'er suck in
Since the first man died for sin"?

This rich and royal seed is now sown out over the mainland of Australia and the adjacent islands of New Zealand, which, though Dutch in name, are English in fact. New Guinea and the Fiji Islands are next marked for occupation, and, perhaps, ultimately, Borneo and Celebes, and by that time, which is not so distant as some think, it is possible that the floodgates may be opened to China, and its teeming millions let loose to mingle with ours. A glance in any case at a chart of the South Pacific will show that Australia and the Archipelago lying between are only spurs thrown out by the adjacent continent of Asia. The long peninsula of Cochin China and Siam is only divided by the Malacca Straits from Sumatra, which, in its turn, almost touches Java and Borneo. Celebes and New Guinea are the next links in the chain, when we reach the Gulf of Carpentaria and the north coast of Australia. New Zealand, which is an outlying island system a thousand miles off in mid-ocean, is in reality linked on to North Australia by a long stretch of shoal water, nowhere more than two hundred fathoms in depth, while beyond New Zealand we sheer down submarine precipices, which bring us at once into the normal depth of the Pacific, which averages from 3,000 to 4,000 fathoms. Chartography thus comes to confirm the first surmises of geography, that the fifth continent, as we call this island system, is in reality an appendage of Asia, and that the term Austral-Asia is as exact as it seems indefinite. It is remarkable that while to the eastward the Pacific is almost entirely destitute of islands, there is an unbroken belt of ocean nearly two thousand miles wide, forming a mighty barrier between Australia and the continents of North and South America. Thus, to quote Mr. Wallace, whose suggestive work on the subject we have now to notice:—

A little to the south of the tropic of Capricorn, islands almost wholly cease in the Central Pacific; but, going westward, we meet with the important New Zealand group, and, farther on, the island-continent of Australia, with its satellite Tasmania, closely connected with New Guinea, and the other Malay Islands. It thus appears that all the greater land masses of Australasia form an obvious southern and south-eastern extension of the great Asiatic continent, while beyond these the islands rapidly diminish in size and frequency, till in the far east we reach a vast expanse of unbroken ocean.

Mr. Stanford, the well-known map publisher, has for some time had in preparation a series of works which are based on Hellwald's encyclopædic work, "*Die Erde und ihre Völker.*" Hellwald, who is the Ritter of his day, has massed together a body of descriptive information which leaves little to be desired, and yet so rapid is the growth of our dependencies in the South Pacific, that much of Hellwald's account of Australia and New Zealand would, to the English reader, seem meagre and out of date. The department of Australasia, was, therefore, put into Mr. Wallace's hands to revise, and this revision has been so extensive, that it amounts to rewriting the work. As he tells us in the preface, with every wish to utilise the translation of Hellwald's book as far as possible, he has been able to do so only to the extent of little more than one-tenth of the present volume. A list of authorities quoted plainly proves this. It would be strange, indeed, if Englishmen had to fall back on a German geographer for materials with which to write a description of our own possessions. As a matter of fact the explorers have been all Englishmen, and the authorities are writers on the colonies, whether missionaries like Taylor, or travellers like Stuart and Wills, or popular writers like Trollope, Dilke, and others too numerous to mention. This edition, in a word, under Mr. Wallace's competent hands, is a work on the colonies which no library can be without. It is, indeed, indispensable to the intelligent settler, who, unless he means to take a leap in the dark, should know where he is going to, what is the climate, soil, and productions, and what special advantages each particular colony holds out. On this matter let us add he cannot be too careful what guide he selects. Unless he is omnivorous, and able to devour all that has been written by everybody, and then to make a digest for himself, he must be careful not to trust himself to any one official directory, however carefully compiled. Official handbooks to the colonies are sadly one-sided; the colours are laid on too freely, and the unfortunate emigrant has only to learn the drawbacks when the first rush of home sickness is on him, and when he is on the disappointed stage. Hence it is that so many return home to spread evil reports of the colonies, which are only counteracted, if at all, by the more favourable reports of travellers like Mr. Barry or Mr. Clayden, whose

* Stanford's Compendium of Geography and Travel. Based on Hellwald's "*Die Erde Und Ihre Völker.*"
Melanesia. Edited and extended by A. R. Wallace, F.R.G.S., author of "*The Malay Archipelago,*" &c.
London: Edward Stanford. 1879. Price 21s.

letters to the *Daily News*, afterwards collected into a pamphlet, we cannot speak too highly of.

At present then, when there is quite a rush to the colonies, and when at all the colonial agencies in Victoria-street the reply is the same, that their lists are full and no more free passages can be given, we can see that such a work as this is particularly opportune. It deserves to be widely read, and since a guinea book is beyond the means of the majority of intending emigrants, we should desire that some abridgment of it, omitting the description of the Archipelago and those islands outside the field of emigration, were prepared for the use of those who are thinking of settling either in Australia or New Zealand.

As our remarks are chiefly intended for this class, we shall limit our notice of Mr. Wallace's work to those observations which will be useful to readers who have the thought of a new home before them. Such may feel satisfied that they are in the hands of an experienced guide who will not mislead them by the glowing reports of a mere emigration agent. In the first place it is a noteworthy fact that, although visited first by French navigators, later on by the Dutch and Spanish, and last of all by the English, this nation alone has established itself in Australia, and claims undisputed possession of all the mainland. On this subject Mr. Wallace makes an acute remark, to the effect that other less far-seeing peoples felt little inclination to make permanent settlements in a country which produced neither marketable slaves, nor spices, nor apparently any of the precious metals; nothing, in fact, but rich pasturages. Hence, while gold was here actually discovered in 1851, drawing universal attention to this region, as it had to California a short time previously, other nationalities found that it was too late to form independent settlements anywhere on this continent, which had already been either permanently settled by the enterprising Anglo-Saxon race, or else formally declared to be attached to the Crown of England. This is very true, but it omits one important particular, a happy accident for which we deserve no great credit, and but for which Australia never would have been settled at all. It was as late as 1788 that Botany Bay was selected as a convict station, where we could draft off the scum of our population. It was this convict settlement which was the real beginning of our Australian Empire, just as Venice grew out of the runaways from the mainland, after Lombardic invasions of the sixth and seventh centuries had made North Italy well-nigh uninhabitable. It was only as late as 1770 that Cook discovered and explored the East Coast of Australia, and, in fact, skirted the whole coast from Gippsland, in Victoria, as far as Cape York, and thus made known to the world the extent and outline of the Australian

continent. So little was known of the interior of Australia during the first twenty-five years of our occupation of Botany Bay as a convict station, that it was only in 1813 when a summer of severe drought made it very important to discover new pastures, that three colonists succeeded in passing the Blue Mountains, and reached the valley of the Fisk River and the fertile Bathurst Plains. Soon after the Macquarie River, flowing to the north east, led its explorers to a marshy tract, which was supposed to confirm the theory of an inland sea. Passing over the explorations of Hume, Sturt, and Mitchell, the journeys of Eyre and Sturt in the desert interior, through a region which was made up of alternate stretches of sand and the dreaded spinifex—a thorny grass which cut the feet like a knife—we come to the fatal expedition of Burke and Wills in 1861. The loss of these gallant explorers has been a gain to Australian discovery, as so many expeditions were sent out for South-East and West Australia, either to bring them relief if alive, or to bring back their remains if dead. That circumstance more than any other has led to the opening up of the whole interior, and, at last, to the establishment of a chain of telegraph-posts right across the continent from Adelaide to Port Darwin. The establishment of numerous stations along this line where permanent water and food supplies could be obtained, offered a tempting base for new explorers. We may now give the general result of these explorations in Mr. Wallace's words:—

The Interior of Australia.

The western half of Australia has thus been traversed in three nearly parallel lines about 300 miles apart; while various shorter explorations have made known large portions of the intermediate country. The southern and northern coasts are also fairly known; and we are forced to conclude that nearly half of the entire continent of Australia is uninhabitable by Europeans. Nowhere else, perhaps, on the globe do we meet with the strange phenomenon of a dense vegetation combined with an aridity equal to that of the Sahara. For the traveller, the country is worse even than the Sahara. For hundreds of miles at a stretch the sandy undulations are covered with the dreaded spinifex, or porcupine grass, which renders it impossible to walk without painful precaution. Again, for hundreds of miles is found the dense scrub of dwarf eucalyptus, covering the ground like the rods of an osier bed, ten or twelve feet high, hindering all view of the country, and rendering it necessary literally to bore one's way, like a mole, underground. Then come acacia scrubs, which add the annoyance of sharp prickles to those of the other kinds. Mr. Giles tells us that horses dread the *Triodia*, or spinifex, like a pestilence. The constant pricking of this grass causes raw and bleeding swellings round their feet; and to escape from it they will prefer to force their way through the densest scrubs, where the ground is soft, and the spinifex does not grow. Here they rush along, tearing the coverings off their loads, and frequently forcing sticks between their backs and their saddles; then comes a frantic crashing through the scrub, loads are forced off, and horses are lost sight of, and it may take hours or days to recover them. Nor do the travellers escape, for their clothes get torn and ripped to pieces, and their bodies scratched and often seriously wounded. Sometimes stinging ants abound to such an extent that

the wearied explorer can get no rest. However hot and tired he may be, he dare not lie down in the shade, but must remain exposed to the sun, or lie on the heated soil, in order to escape this torment. In other parts the whole country is a mass of angular stones, over which the traveller has to pass for days together, without finding a spot of easier ground; while in some districts loose sand is heaped up in ridges, like the long swell of the ocean, and appearing almost as interminable. Often, after passing days without water, when at length it is discovered, it turns out to be undrinkable brine, or it exists in such small quantity as to be insufficient to supply the wants of both men and horses for a single day. Again, the extreme uncertainty of the climate and rainfall renders it impossible to depend on the accounts of previous explorers in the same district. Where water is at one time abundant and herbage luxuriant, there may be found a year or two later a burnt-up desert. The lake described by one traveller may be found an expanse of baked mud by his successor; while, where one marched over grassy plains, another may be stopped by inundations which cover the whole country.

Exploration, for mere discovery's sake, has now done its work in Australia, and the rest may be left to the unaided expansion of agriculture and commerce. So many outlying stations are already occupied, and the overland telegraph affords so admirable a base of operations, that every spot available for settlement will be found and occupied quite as quickly as desirable. The work that has been already done in so inhospitable a country and so trying a climate is little less than marvellous; and the story of Australian exploration, with its episodes of heroism and martyrdom, affords a convincing proof of the undiminished energies of our countrymen in their southern home.

A comparison of Australia with other colonies shows us how vastly more important it has become than any or all our elder possessions. In fact, it appears that while Australia exports nearly £20 per head, Canada exports only £4 7s. per head, while the value of the gold exported in the quarter of a century from 1851 to 1876 amounts to the enormous sum of £223,000,000. With regard to the scenery of New South Wales, the following brief sketch will suffice:—

Scenery of New South Wales.

The scenery of New South Wales cannot, on the whole, be termed beautiful, owing to the monotony of the vegetation, the vastness of the plains, and the frequent aridity of extensive areas; yet it contains certain features of remarkable beauty. First among these stands Port Jackson, the harbour of Sydney, which, for variety, extent, and picturesque combinations, rivals, if it does not surpass, the celebrated harbour of Rio de Janeiro. Mr. Anthony Trollope—a man not given to enthusiastic praise—speaks of it as “so inexpressibly lovely that it makes a man ask himself whether it would not be worth his while to move his household gods to the eastern coast of Australia, in order that he might look on it as long as he can look at anything.” Some of the estates and pleasure-grounds on its shores, he adds, are perfect. They leave nothing for the imagination to add. Less known, but almost equally remarkable, is the scenery of the Hawkesbury River, which surpasses in natural beauty the finest parts of the Rhine. Govat's Leap, on the route from Sydney to Bathurst, is a ravine or chasm of unsurpassed grandeur, and it possesses a waterfall superior to the Staubbach. The district of Illawarra, about 40 miles south of Sydney, is remarkable for its picturesqueness in rock and ravine and the almost tropical luxuriance of its vegetation; while many parts of the mountain ranges are grand and imposing.

Turning to New Zealand we have, if possible, a still more astonishing tale of

progress by leaps and bounds. The colonisation of these islands was only attempted on a small scale as late as 1839, when a first batch of emigrants arrived under Colonel William Wakefield, who had authority to purchase land and select a site for the first settlement. Wellington was selected as the first spot, and 1,200 emigrants arrived before the end of the year. In 1843 the population was 13,000; in 1854, 32,500; in 1860, 80,000; in 1865, 190,000; in 1871 it had risen to nearly 267,000, and in 1877 it amounted to about 400,000. The drawback to New Zealand at present is that it is divided into nine provinces which have long maintained a local independence similar to that of the separate states of the American Union, but since 1875 these local governments have been merged in one united colony, and the nine provinces are now termed provincial districts, and are divided into 63 counties for purposes of local government. We may sum up the present position of New Zealand under the following description, which is taken from the latest and most accurate statistics:—

Present Position of New Zealand.

New Zealand possesses a constitutional government similar to that of some of the Australian colonies. It consists of a Governor appointed by the Crown, an Executive Ministry, and a Parliament of two Chambers. The Legislative Council consists of 45 members appointed by the Crown for life. The House of Representatives consists of 88 members—32 for the North Island, 52 for the South Island, and 4 Maori members—the term of office being five years, and the members being paid £157 10s. each session for expenses. The qualification, both for voters and candidates, is a £5 country or a £10 town rental, or a freehold worth £50, so that it amounts practically to household suffrage.

Education is admirably provided for in this colony. By an Education Bill, just passed, public schools are provided, a capitation fee of ten shillings per child being paid, or £2 for a family. State aid is also given to national and denominational schools. The higher education is of a superior kind, and most liberally endowed. There is a university, with a royal charter, whose degrees rank as equal to those of English universities. The Canterbury College has an endowment of 350,000 acres of land, judiciously selected in various districts, and producing a rental of several thousands per annum. In addition there are other landed endowments for education, including elementary and science schools, a museum and library, a college of agriculture, and a normal school for the instruction of teachers. At Dunedin there is a university, or more properly a college, on which 200,000 acres of land have been settled, while the buildings have already cost £30,000. There is also a school of art, a boys' and girls' high school, and district grammar schools, besides atheneums and public libraries in almost all the country towns and villages. In the provinces of Wellington, Nelson, and Auckland, there are also colleges affiliated to the University of New Zealand, with ample provision for elementary instruction. This general dissemination of knowledge will assuredly produce good fruits in a people able to conduct their own affairs with skill and discretion, and gives promise of a bright future for what has well been termed the Great Britain of the south.

Religion in New Zealand is altogether free and independent of State control, except that all ministers are registered, so that they may legally perform the marriage ceremony. The Church of England is the most numerous in adherents,

having 172 churches. It has six bishops, residing at Auckland, Napier, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch, and Dunedin. The Presbyterians rank next in order, having 125 churches. Then follow Roman Catholics, Wesleyans, and in very much smaller numbers almost all the other sects and religions professed by civilised people. Dividing the population into Protestants and Roman Catholics, which together include the great majority, the former number 243,761, the latter, including the Greek Church, 40,412, while Chinese and other pagans amount to 4,764. The numbers are according to the census of 1874, and have since materially increased.

Such a tale as this has only to be known to decide many waverers to make the final plunge and exchange the old country for the new. Here we are crowded out, and all classes, from the agricultural labourer upward, find themselves beaten out of time in the struggle to live, and, in many cases, sinking in the social scale. There is only one way to ease the pressure and reduce the competition. The Malthusian doctrine of discouraging early marriages which even Dr. Chalmers did not disapprove of, and the later attempt of Trade Unions to restrict the output, and so artificially keep up wages, have equally failed. We have only, then, emigration to fall back on, and the signs of the times seem to point to this as the only relief from the state of congested capital and chronic pauperism into which we are fast subsiding. The relief is in our own hands if we have the good sense to apply it, and seeing that there is "no right but ignorance," works of this kind are specially acceptable at present. They help to familiarise us with our own possessions, and teach us that for some generations to come there are outlets for our surplus population if we have only the sense and spirit to avail ourselves of them.