

## MISCELLANEOUS.

*Written for this Paper*

## OUR AUSTRALASIAN LETTER

HOBART, TASMANIA, February 1st, 1895.—After a series of cottage meetings in one of the suburbs of Sydney, the journey southward was continued, and, on the deck of the S. S. Buninyong, Elders separated with many good wishes for each other's welfare, and pleasurable anticipations of meeting again in Zion.

Sydney harbor, with its numerous attractive sights and innumerable bays and inlets, dispels all feelings of loneliness. After a pleasant two days' sail along the broken and rugged coast, for about five hundred miles, the vessel entered the narrow channel leading into Port Philip during the night. Shortly afterwards the lights of Melbourne and its suburbs were in sight, and the banks of the river Yarra were illuminated with the electric lights for many miles. Early the following morning, Elders G. W. Lewis and J. Stevenson were on the wharf to meet their visiting brother, and the little party were soon wending their way to Footscray, a small suburb, about five miles distant.

Melbourne is acknowledged to be the largest and most beautiful city in the Australasian colonies, and its wide streets, (99 feet) crossing at right angles, and splendid system of electric cable cars, reminds the Utonian very forcibly of the beautiful City of the Saints in Zion's vales. Sixty years ago the present site of this magnificent city was densely covered with giant forest trees. The shaded glens echoed and re-echoed with the cheery music of innumerable feathered songsters, whose varied and bright-colored plumage added to the beauty of the scene. Numerous small streams trickled over their rocky beds, almost hidden by the tall trunks of the eucalyptus and other native trees, and black wattle ferns and vines rendered the thicket almost impenetrable. Undoubtedly the aboriginals were as proud of their forest home, in its primitive grandeur, as colonials now are of the modern metropolis, with its numerous attractions.

In the year 1835 the southern coast of Australia was explored by stockmen from Tasmania, who were desirous of obtaining extensive ranges for their cattle and sheep. A year later their sanguine reports attracted many home seekers to that locality. The population increased so rapidly that the government was compelled to recognize the importance of the growing district, and numerous settlers flocked in from New South Wales and Tasmania. The banks of the Yarra, and the shores of Port Philip, were soon studded with the homes of hardy settlers, and in March, 1837, the colonial governor paid an official visit to the enterprising founders, and named the new city Melbourne, in honor of the then premier of Great Britain—Lord Melbourne.

In 1850, the population of Port Philip district numbered 23,000, of whom three-fourths were from England, and a large proportion of the rest from Tasmania. After a prolonged struggle, the settlers were granted colonial independence; and the new district was formally sep-

arated in 1851 from New South Wales, and named Victoria. About the same time, the news of the gold discovery at Sutter's Fort, California, reached Melbourne, and the young colony furnished its share of eager fortune-hunters, who flocked thither. Many of them, however, returned, disappointed and unsuccessful, and they immediately commenced to search for the precious metal in various parts of Victoria. Government offered a thousand dollars for the discovery of gold, which resulted in the finding of the yellow mineral at Bathurst, Ballarat, Bendigo and Castlemaine, in each of which places, cities were almost born in a day. Melbourne became the great business center, and the chief distributing point for supplies to all these districts, and it has retained the position ever since.

It is now the capital of the smallest but most important of the Australasian colonies, for the area of Victoria is only 87,000 square miles. The metropolitan area contains a population of 400,000 inhabitants. The growth of the city has been almost phenomenal, and the massive and stately structures indicate the enterprising character of the Victorians. Many of the banks and mercantile houses are veritable palaces, and it would be difficult to eclipse many of the architectural designs. It is a pleasure indeed to ride in front of the cable cars, which run to all parts of the city and suburbs. Among the numerous public institutions may be named the public library, art gallery and museum, all of which are located in one of the finest stone edifices in the city. Countless thousands of books, in all languages, and treating on all imaginable topics, may be found classified on miles of shelving arranged around the various rooms and corridors. Passing through the museum and art galleries, the visitor is almost bewildered by the numerous exhibits, and he feels that life is too short to study satisfactorily all the various objects of interest. The botanical gardens, zoological gardens, aquarium and many public parks also contain attractive features, and offer unexcelled opportunities for recreation and pleasure.

The city claims to have within its limits 2,600 factories, in which over forty thousand hands obtain employment in connection with the various industries. Produce of all kinds is very low at present. Wool has fallen to sixpence per pound; wheat two shillings; oats one and threepence; hay thirty shillings per ton; beef is selling from one cent and a half to three cents per pound, and mutton from a penny to three and half pence per pound. It is reported that during last season about five hundred tons of butter per week were exported from Victoria to London, and the ruling prices are from six to ninepence. The frozen meat trade also receives considerable attention, and colonials are, in various ways, contributing largely to the food supply of the mother country.

The Victorians lead the colonies with their sporting proclivities, and a sketch of Melbourne would not be complete without reference to its contiguous racecourses. On "cup day," business enterprises must yield to the interest centered in the great race. The chief topic

in the hotels, trains, cars and on the streets are the prospective winners of the "cup." Flemington racecourse is claimed to be one of the chief attractions of Melbourne. It is situated on Saltwater river, a few miles from the city, and is surrounded by a grassy plateau, and each year the green slopes and enclosures are black with a mass of excited humanity. Over a hundred thousand persons will assemble to see the best thoroughbred horses in the world compete for the richest prize in the world (amounting to fifty thousand dollars.) The grand stands are always crowded with the aristocracy of the colonies, and earls, dukes, baronets, (and at times royalty,) with their fair dames, are often present, and the rich and costly toilets of the ladies, and their enthusiasm in the sport, reminds the spectator of Sir Walter Scott's description of the old English tournaments. Of course, betting is rife, and bookmakers and speculators in the ring fatten on the ignorance of the excited multitude. In all the colonies, gambling is a fashionable vice. "Verax," a talented Australian writer, frankly admits that "gamblers, undoubtedly, colonial men are, but they have been cradled, so to speak, in a bed of excitement, connected with the gold rushes and land-boom speculations, which have fostered the instinct for gambling. Racing, without gambling, would cease to exist, and this fact must be faced and not hypocritically ignored." No wonder, therefore, that colonials are like fish out of water without some exciting sport, hence, in their respective seasons, football and cricket are absorbing topics. It is no unusual thing for ten thousand persons to pay a shilling each to witness a match, and numerous bulletin boards in the cities announce the progress of the game to eager multitudes on the streets. An English cricket team is now touring the colonies; and all classes are said to be interested in the sports, (prince and pauper, parson and publican, priest and people,) and it is rumored that some of the ecclesiastics lay the greatest odds. Even royalty has caught the fever, and the loyalty of British subjects was strengthened recently, when a cable message announced that "Her majesty, the queen, displayed great interest in the matches played by Stoddart's team in Australia." Ahem! Who would not sing, "God save the Queen?" A critical observer of the condition of the people is apt to think that "her majesty's interest" is misplaced. The colonials cannot afford this prodigality, but it is evident that the masses are "lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God."

Crime, depravity and poverty abound in all the cities, and an army of earnest philanthropists are battling against the evils, and endeavoring to rescue the multitude of victims from the haunts of shame. The drink fiend is slaying its thousands, shameless pimps parade the streets day and night, and a serious discussion is now going on how to prevent unfortunate young girls from flocking into the opium dens, there to become the paramours of almond-eyed celestials. Rescue homes, foundling asylums, children's refuges, etc., etc., are very numerous and many sincere Christian workers are striving to mitigate the evils. "Nero played while Rome burned," and Melbournians revel in sports while thousands are crying for bread, and pauperism and vice are rampant.