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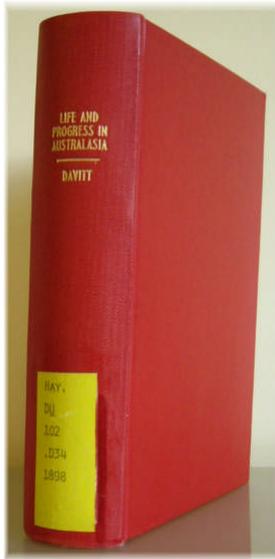
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LIFE AND PROGRESS
IN
AUSTRALASIA

BY
MICHAEL DAVITT, M.P.

AUTHOR OF
"LEAVES FROM A PRISON DIARY," ETC.

WITH TWO MAPS

METHUEN & CO.
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LONDON

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CONTENTS

PART I.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
Throwing the wrong man into the Suez Canal, and a moral	1
CHAPTER II.	
En route for Coolgardie—Albany and its aspirations—The country on the way to Perth—Guildford and its surroundings—First look at the little capital on the Swan river—Direct for the Goldfields—Northam—The "Bush," its silence and wild flowers—Southern Cross—Its departed "boom"—A combined graveyard and reservoir—Coaching through the desert bush	4
CHAPTER III.	
Opposing views on the Coolgardie goldfield—Considered as part of an auriferous Australian belt—Considered on its merits—The value of location <i>v.</i> intrinsic worth—How "location" properties are boomed—A London illustration—How the field has been injured by over-speculation—Some examples—The evil of over-capitalisation—The field on its trial—The Government water-supply scheme	10
CHAPTER IV.	
Visit to the "Londonderry" and "Bayley's Reward"—Off to Hannans—A bishop and the dust—Water <i>v.</i> whisky—Visits to the "Great Boulder," "Lake View," "Hannan's Brown Hill," and other Kalgoortie mines—Back to Coolgardie	15
CHAPTER V.	
Coolgardie Politics—The Club—All "agin the Government"—Miners' discontent—Establishing a "Goldfields National League"—A physical force party—Hope in Mr. Chamberlain—A flattering invitation to the author, who selects, for once, to be on the side of Government—A Press campaign makes "revolution" unnecessary—Irishmen as prospectors and politicians	19
CHAPTER VI.	
Impressions of Perth	23
CHAPTER VII.	
The Western Australian Legislature—The Constitution—A Conservative Parliament—"The Seven Families"—The Brothers Forrest—Parties—What Home Rule has done for the Westralian people—An amazing anomaly—Loyalty <i>v.</i> taxation—"Protecting" consumers—An astounding revenue—Labour influence and organization—How to rationally demonstrate—Impressions of Fremantle—Its hopes and prospects—Summary of Westralian resources and industries—Its land and settlement.	25

CHAPTER VIII.

	PAGE
The Aborigines—The efforts to protect them—Bishop Gibney's experiences—His exposure of their treatment—Their women and children—Shootings by settlers—Recent murders of natives—Their fate as prisoners—The story of Bishop Salvado—The civilized natives at New Norcia—How they are employed and paid—Their love of music—How the Bishop's "damper" was made—Native savage traits—Ode to a gin—A native love scene—How an Irish Attorney-General stopped the "potting" of Aborigines—Herbert Spencer on missionaries, Bibles, bullets, and colonizing civilization	33

PART II.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

CHAPTER IX.

From Albany to Adelaide—"South Australia" as a misleading name—Romantic origin of the colony—A landlord Utopia, and what became of it—From Gibbon Wakefield to a Progressive Legislature	41
--	----

CHAPTER X.

Impressions of Adelaide—A beautiful city—Views from Mount Lofty—Municipal taxes on land values—How the destitute are provided for	45
---	----

CHAPTER XI.

The constitution of South Australia—The franchise—The most extensive Parliamentary constituency in the world—The Legislative Assembly—Strange customs of the popular chamber—The speeches—Parliamentary parties—The rise of the South Australian Labour Party—Its solidarity and Parliamentary work—Its programme—Impressions of the Labour members—Liberal and Conservative parties—The stamp of men in them—Australian "Knights"	49
--	----

CHAPTER XII.

Land taxation—The Taxation Act Amendment Act, 1894—Making the pace for other colonies—The incidence of the Land Tax—A tax on absentee landowners—Had Henry George followed Gibbon Wakefield—Freehold Tenure and the Torrens Act—The general land system of the colony—Arbitration in trade disputes—A State bank for Industry	56
---	----

CHAPTER XIII.

Impressions of the country on a journey from Adelaide to Broken Hill—The rich Adelaide plains—Kapunda and its industries—Agricultural and pastoral lands—Scarcity of water—Want of enterprise—How the scrub is cleared—A pleasant chat with travelling school children—Visit to an Irish farming centre—No rent grievance!	62
--	----

CHAPTER XIV.

Broken Hill and its silver mines—Impressions of the town and the mines—The discovery of the silver lodes—What they have produced—Prospects—Treatment of sulphide ores—Silverton	66
---	----

CHAPTER XV.

Other industries—Area of the colony—Debt—Railways—Protection—Climate—Death rate—Crime—A good general record—Summary of South Australia's features	69
---	----

PART III.

THE MURRAY RIVER LABOUR SETTLEMENTS.

CHAPTER XVI.

	PAGE
Origin of the Labour Settlements—How to reach them—A seventy miles' ride through the "Bush"—The late Inspector of South Australian Schools—Renmark—An ideal location for fruit growers and unemployed poets	73

CHAPTER XVII.

Lyrup—The Pioneer settlement described—Its members—They tell the story of the migration—How they have progressed—How the semi-Communitistic principle has worked—Rules of daily labour—No money—All for the association—A common fund and common store—The arrangement with the State—The limit of the experiment—Rocks ahead—Individualism <i>v.</i> Collectivism—Chances of success—Views of the women—What the settlers have done—Religious visitors	79
---	----

CHAPTER XVIII.

Pyap: "The Statesmen's Camp"—Its membership—Their labours—An election of trustees—How it was carried out—Oratory and work—Impeaching a committee—Some reflections upon millennium builders—An original method of balloting—Theory and application—Woman suffrage not recognized	88
---	----

CHAPTER XIX.

New Residence Camp—A Cornishman's views of "Commonism"—The settlement described—A failure—Moorook Camp—Dock labourers as settlers—Kingston Camp—How they managed their election—Some interesting customs—A Communist midwife and her views of the Labour settlements—Murtho—A single tax camp—Waikerie Camp—Troubles and secession—The Bachelors' Camp, Ramco—Gillen and New Era Camps—Records of failure	95
---	----

CHAPTER XX.

Review of "the big experiment"—Present position of the settlements—Their work and indebtedness—Amount of money advanced by the State—The rules governing the camps—The opportunity offered to the workers, and the use made of it—Impressions and some suggested reforms	104
--	-----

PART IV.

VICTORIA.

CHAPTER XXI.

From Adelaide to Melbourne—The Customs barrier—A Free Trade bull and Protectionist principles—"The Cabbage Garden" colony—Impressions of Melbourne	111
--	-----

CHAPTER XXII.

Australians at home—How they live—Cost of living—Influences on the moulding of physique and character—Sport and work—Women—Compared with Americans—Alleged Australian excessive drinking habits—The charge investigated—Tested by observation and statistics	118
--	-----

	PAGE
CHAPTER XXIII.	
Culture and education—"Jackeroo" critics—What has been done for Australian education—State and Catholic schools—Democracy and religious teaching—The Darwinian <i>v.</i> Christian theories of liberty—The conflicting principles of secular and sectarian instruction—The State and the parent—Majority and equity—The Referendum invoked in the matter of Scriptural lessons in the public schools of Victoria . . .	123
CHAPTER XXIV.	
Colonial Federation—The trend of Australian feeling—"Loyalty"—Irishmen and the sentiment, "Home Rulers, free to be loyal"—Her Majesty and Mr. John Dillon—A union of pictures, if not of hearts—Arguments against federation—Conflicting interests—A premature movement—Where the Antipodean Washington is to be . . .	130
CHAPTER XXV.	
Some anecdotes—Mayors and lectures—A mayor's definition of a "learned gentleman"—A bimetallist "bloke from Great Britain"—A mayor and the Gaiety Girls—Irish policemen—"Revenge for Sedan"—English and Irish electioneering morals—Two instances of poetic justice . . .	134
CHAPTER XXVI.	
The Victorian Constitution—The Melbourne Legislature—The advantages of being an Australian M.P.—Payment of members—Political parties . . .	141
CHAPTER XXVII.	
The leading Protectionist colony—Labour leaders and protection—Mr. Trenwith—Some of the fallacies of protection—Arguments <i>pro</i> and <i>con</i> —Protection a proof of national power—An anti-climax to capitalist aims—A minimum wage law—How it operates—A bold stride towards Collectivist methods of organized industry—The alliance between Labour and Liberalism. . .	145
CHAPTER XXVIII.	
Victorian land legislation—Influence of Irish ideas—"Back to the land" policy—What the State is doing to encourage the occupancy of land—Provisions for Labour colonies—Village settlements—State advances for agricultural industry—A home- stead protection law . . .	150
CHAPTER XXIX.	
A trip through the centre of Victoria—Geelong—The country to Ballarat—The famous Gold Camp—The Eureka Stockade episode—How an Irish rebel becomes Speaker of the Assembly—Impressions of Ballarat—Ararat—Gold-seeking and lunacy—The Ararat Asylum—Maryborough and its gold mining—Some interesting features of Victorian gold industry—Bendigo and its mines—Deep sinking and its results—Other industries . . .	155
CHAPTER XXX.	
The Bendigo Benevolent Asylum—How the Australian poor are cared for—No "Workhouse" degradation—A humane and enlightened system—Eliminating the pauper—"Charity" and wealth—A means of class ascendancy—What the pauper helps to prop up in Ireland—A novel method of State aid—Taxing amusements and sports for the support of the destitute—Gold-mining prospects in Gippsland . . .	163
CHAPTER XXXI.	
Echuca—Kyneton—The climate of Victoria—The colony's industrial development—Its amazing output of gold—Impressions of the scenery of Victoria . . .	169

PART V.

NEW SOUTH WALES.

CHAPTER XXXII.

	PAGE
From Melbourne to Sydney—Australian railway gauges—Albury and its aspiration—Country life in New South Wales—Wagga-Wagga—An ideal convent—Sketches of the Riverina country—Opossum hunting—Exterminating the kangaroo—Juneecootamundra—Life in inland towns—Banks and pastoralists	173

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Some talks with shearers—Their industry, and how they live—Camping in the "bush"—The Shearers' Union—Murrumburrah—Yaas—An ideal spot for a labour colony—From Yaas to Goulburn—The Wattle tree—Goulburn to Sydney	180
---	-----

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Approaches to Sydney—"Our Harbour!"—Various opinions—John Mitchel's and Sala's views—Scenery and patriotism—The Harbour—Impressions of Sydney—Social resemblance to European cities—Poverty and the unemployed	184
--	-----

CHAPTER XXXV.

Sydney's racial mixtures—The "Larrikin" Language	191
--	-----

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Sydney's sensitiveness about its founders—Consolation from the author of <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> —The law and the "criminals" of a century ago—The first visitors to Botany Bay—Victims of the legal savagery of the time	193
--	-----

CHAPTER XXXVII.

Ireland and the infant colony—The crime of a "Thresher"—Refusal to pay tithes—How transportation was earned—A pious Irish Attorney-General's religious indignation against Democracy—"Ninety-eight" rebels welcomed to Port Jackson by Scottish political prisoners—Holt and Margarot—The Scotch martyrs among Sydney's founders—The "Ninety-eight" men try to seize the colony—The floggings which followed—Holt's descriptions—The sterling character of the rebel convicts—Sir Roger Therry's narrative and admiration—The inscription on the lone grave of two "Ninety-eight" men—Captain Eastwick's story of the "Croppies" rising—His testimony to the high qualities of the transported patriots—An honest Englishman's manly views	196
--	-----

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The evolution of self-government in Australia—Scottish reformers and Irish rebels lay the foundation stone—The Wentworth movement—English Chartist and "Young Ireland" teaching—Parkes, Duffy, Lang, Martin—An Australian House of Lords rejected—Subsequent developments—Labour politics—Socialist propaganda eclipses Republicanism	203
---	-----

CHAPTER XXXIX.

The Sydney Legislature—A nominated Upper Chamber—Unicameral system not backed—The Referendum preferred—The Constitution of New South Wales—The membership of both Houses—One man one vote—An "Elector's Right" certificate—Political parties—Protection <i>v.</i> Free Trade—Mr. Reid's Land Tax Bill	208
---	-----

CHAPTER XL.

	PAGE
New South Wales legislation—Domestic programmes <i>v.</i> Foreign policies—Education— The land laws of the colony—How they operate—Provisions for village and labour settlements on the soil—Land administration—Want of local government—Relief of the destitute	214

CHAPTER XLI.

The rise of the New South Wales Labour Party—Political <i>v.</i> Trades Union action—A striking sequel of a great Labour struggle—Friction and division—The legislative work of the Labour Party—The retirement of Sir Henry Parkes—The O'Farrell crusade—Political Nemesis	219
--	-----

CHAPTER XLII.

Over the Blue Mountains—Bathurst and its opinions of Orange—Orange and its views of Bathurst—A squatter country—Wellington—Dubbo—Clearing the land—"Ring barking"—Roads and eucalyptic forest—A country with no use for doctors	225
---	-----

CHAPTER XLIII.

A Squatter's home and opinions—The original of the mail driver in <i>Robbery Under Arms</i> —His views on Free Traders, shearers, and <i>Progress and Poverty</i> —How he (says he) "flooded" Henry George—The colonial landlordism—Cowra—Young—An "old" goldfield—Other industries—John Chinaman—How Young almost spoiled the political fortune of the (coming) universal Postmaster-General	234
--	-----

CHAPTER XLIV.

From Sydney to the border of Queensland—Newcastle—The valley of the Hunter— Maitland—A rich country—Tamworth—The evil of land monopoly—Arimdale— Summary of the resources of New South Wales—Climate—Health—Extent of soil —Cultivation—Pastoralism—Population—Schools—Industries—Asiatic labour—Its economic effect—Proposed Crown Colony in the north of Australia	237
--	-----

PART VI.

QUEENSLAND.

CHAPTER XLV.

Voyage from Sydney to Brisbane—Moreton Bay—Impressions of Queensland's capital— Brisbane and beauty—An old but still "Young Irishman"—The workers' quarters	245
--	-----

CHAPTER XLVI.

The Queensland Legislature—How European law-makers are treated in Colonial Parliaments—How Australian M.P.'s fare in the British House of Commons—The rise of the colony to legislative rights—The Constitution—A nominated Upper House—The most capitalistic Australian Parliament—A Labour Opposition—Story of the Queensland Labour Party—The members who compose the party—Socialistic <i>v.</i> Progressive programmes and policies—How a Labour Ministry would govern Queensland	250
--	-----

CHAPTER XLVII.

Country and goldfields—Gympie—Its mines and prospects—Maryborough and its industries—A future big city	257
---	-----

CONTENTS

xvii

CHAPTER XLVIII.

	PAGE
Voyage to Rockhampton—Where Mr. Gladstone's colony of "North Australia" was <i>not</i> founded—Turtles galore—Rockhampton and the "Tropical Hereafter"—The Separation League—"Centralia"—Arguments in support of a new colony—A probable anti-climax to a Capitalist State—"Sir" George Bernard Shaw rather than Lord Wemyss as Governor of "Laboralia"—Industries of Rockhampton . . .	260

CHAPTER XLIX.

Mount Morgan—The famous "mountain of gold"—Municipality and mine—A shabby public spirit—The discovery of the mine: A romantic story . . .	266
---	-----

CHAPTER L.

Kanaka labour—A visit to the plantations at Mackay—The Government aid to the sugar industry—How the Kanakas are "enlisted"—The planter's version—The (white) labour side—Regulations and precautions—Cost of a Kanaka to an employer—Wages and rations—Their "Marys"—Visit to the Kanaka "Humpies"—Kanaka work—Interviews with Kanakas—The woman's views and wish—The effect of the "enlistment" on the population of some of the Pacific Islands—The Romulus and Sabine story reversed—Traits of Kanaka character—Their honesty—Dreadful mortality—Singular foreknowledge of impending death—The economic aspect of Kanaka labour—Is it necessary to the sugar industry?—The work of a sugar plantation—Nothing that white labour cannot do better than Kanaka labour—The question of profits—The probable solution of the whole difficulty in State assistance to small planters—The hypocrisy of "Christianizing" the Kanaka—The prospects of the Queensland sugar industry—Mackay—Scenery on the way to the Pioneer River—A picturesque country and a picnic . . .	269
--	-----

CHAPTER LI.

Australian scenery like Australian hospitality—Grows better than "best"—The coast scenery of Queensland—A sea of islands—The Barrier Reef—Bowen—A place for a Queensland Paradise—Townsville—"The Capital of the North," and its small opinion of that of the South—Townsville's industries—The Separation movement—The case for the proposed colony—Why the movement has collapsed—Fears of a "Laboralia" . . .	281
--	-----

CHAPTER LII.

Charters Towers, its goldmines and prospects—Other northern goldfields—The Hodgkinson, Palmer, Etheridge, and Croydon—What miners think of these fields—Government aid for development—A promising future for Queensland mining—The mining laws . . .	288
---	-----

CHAPTER LIII.

Queensland Land Laws—Provisions for settling labour on the land—Tenure and other conditions—How the land is administered—The amount of land alienated and the amount still belonging to the State in each of the seven Australasian colonies . . .	295
--	-----

CHAPTER LIV.

Queensland's resources and industries—Pastoralism—Mr. Tyson, "The Cattle King"—His views on women and how they spoil young men—A popular millionaire—The meat-growing industry and the British market—Potential fortunes—Wool growing—Shearers and Pastoralists—The Clermont trouble—A Coercionist conundrum—Industrial possibilities—A soil and climate that will grow anything . . .	300
--	-----

CHAPTER LV.

South Queensland—Ipswich— <i>En route</i> for the Darling Downs—The Irish colonization—What thirty years have done—Greeted in Celtic at Toowoomba—Picture of the town—Social independence—"The Perfect State"—"Queensland rents for Irish landlords would fill Irish workhouses with Inchiaguins"—Over the Downs—A magnificent country—Monopoly falling—"Back to the land," here, too—Warwick—An ideal town—Goldmines "not in it" with land "mines," <i>minus</i> landlordism— <i>Au revoir</i> to Queensland—The colony and independence . . .	305
---	-----

PART VII.

TASMANIA.

CHAPTER LVI.

	PAGE
From Melbourne to Tasmania—Sailing up the Tamar River—Launceston—Rivalry with Hobart—Property franchise in municipalities—Industries and adjacent country—The "Cataract Gorge"	313

CHAPTER LVII.

The John Mitchel legend—The rescuers of the first Irish political "felon"—The alleged breach of parole—The facts of the case—Judged by a possible English instance	317
--	-----

CHAPTER LVIII.

The country between the cities—Boycotting native names—Hobart's beautiful site—Viewed from the Derwent and Mount Wellington—The city itself—Politics and Parliament—Political apathy—Labour inertia—Alleged hereditary obstacle to organization—Historically contradicted	320
---	-----

CHAPTER LIX.

Population—Revenue—Taxation—Cost of Government—State railways—Land and people—Popular education—Tasmanian goldmines—The garden island overlooked by London speculators—What it has produced in mineral wealth—Land laws—Climate—The Australian Riviera	326
--	-----

CHAPTER LX.

"Van Diemen's Land"—Exterminating the Aborigines—Some analogies—The transportation connection—The "Ninety-eight" and "Forty-eight" prisoners—The different treatment—Mitchel and Irish convicts—A harsh opinion—Job Simms's service	331
---	-----

PART VIII.

NEW ZEALAND.

CHAPTER LXI.

A voyage with Mark Twain—A thumb-nail character-sketch of the great humorist—His views on the old convictism—His opinion of Marcus Clarke's book on Tasmanian prisons—Declares it "a great work"—One or two (possibly) old stories—His cure for insomnia	337
--	-----

CHAPTER LXII.

From Tasmania to New Zealand—First impressions of Maoriland—Reminiscence of the Maori Wars—The Bluff—Invercargill—A small municipal Glasgow—The country to Gore—Some transplanted feathered and flora friends—The landscape of Southland—An eighty-mile drive through a fine country—Crossing a river with golden sands—"Fishing" for the yellow metal—Visit to "Gabriel's Gully," the oldest New Zealand gold mine—Sluicing for gold	343
---	-----

CONTENTS

xix

CHAPTER LXIII.

	PAGE
Dunedin—A rich and charming city—The healthiest city in the world—Mark Twain's eulogy—Oamaru—A New Zealand Athens on a small scale—A little city of palaces—Timaru—A peep only at Christchurch	351

CHAPTER LXIV.

A drive to Westland—"Cassidy's Coaches"—The scenery of the Otira Gorge—Greymouth—Approving of (certain) ground-rent landlords	356
---	-----

CHAPTER LXV.

The people of Westland—Their industries—Kumara—Its mines—Hokitika—Output of gold—Forest wealth of the west—Reefton and its mines—Some perils of New Zealand coaching—Crossing Larry's Creek—The cañon of the Buller River—Enchanting scenery—Westport—A coal mine on the top of a mountain	360
--	-----

CHAPTER LXVI.

New Zealand's Capital—Impressions of Wellington—The most progressive country in the world—A fearless Democratic State—Evolution of the existing systems—Changes in the Upper Chamber—The House of Representatives—Maori members—Local Government—Land taxed for municipal needs	364
---	-----

CHAPTER LXVII.

New Zealand school system—Its higher education—Parties and politics—Fusion of Liberalism and Labour—What the alliance has wrought for the workers of the colony	371
---	-----

CHAPTER LXVIII.

The Labour Laws of New Zealand—The Industrial Conciliation and Arbitration Act—How trade disputes are settled—Main clauses of the Act—How it has worked—Recent instances of its success	375
---	-----

CHAPTER LXIX.

The story of the colonization of New Zealand—Gibbon Wakefield again—Cause of the Maori Wars—The results of criminal land-grabbing—Brave but futile native resistance—The Maoris of to-day	383
---	-----

CHAPTER LXX.

New Zealand Land Laws—"Back to the Land"—How settlement on land has been promoted—Protection of homes—Government advances to land workers—Village settlements successful—Taxation of land values—How it operates—Area of alienated and State lands—The working of the "Land for Settlements Act"	389
--	-----

CHAPTER LXXI.

Among the Maoris—Native women voters—An Irish convent among the Maoris—Mother Aubert, her work and medicinal remedies—The country from Wellington to Napier—A city of literary streets—Auckland and its matchless situation—The capital of the North—The unrivalled site—Impressions of the city itself—Buildings—Public institutions—Industries—The goldmines of the Auckland district—Thames and Ohinemuri mines—What deep-sinking is expected to do—Heavy mining expenses	396
--	-----

CHAPTER LXXII.

Summary of impressions of New Zealand—Climate—Health—Scenery—Nationalities—The "native sons" of British and Irish stock—Their future—Industries of the colony	404
---	-----

CHAPTER LXXIII.

Australasia and new homes—The colonies considered as countries for European workers
---	-----------

CONTENTS

PART IX.

AUSTRALASIAN PRISONS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER LXXIV.	
Compared with British prisons—New Zealand	413
CHAPTER LXXV.	
Tasmania	418
CHAPTER LXXVI.	
Queensland	423
CHAPTERS LXXVII-LXXVIII.	
New South Wales	426
CHAPTERS LXXIX-LXXX.	
Victoria	439
CHAPTER LXXXI.	
South Australia	447
CHAPTER LXXXII.	
Western Australia	452
CHAPTER LXXXIII.	
The romantic escape of John Boyle O'Reilly	455
CHAPTER LXXXIV.	
The rescue of the Fenian military prisoners from Fremantle	464

MAPS OF AUSTRALASIA.

POLITICAL	4
INDUSTRIAL	408

LIFE AND PROGRESS IN AUSTRALASIA

PART I.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CHAPTER I.

“THROW THAT MAN OVER!”

LIFE on board a well-equipped ocean liner nowadays, on a long voyage like that to Australia, has been so fully and frequently described in changeless detail that the reading public may be content to take “everybody’s experience” as that of any individual traveller. I will, therefore, spare my readers an infliction of this kind. In addition, I will pass by the Rock of Gibraltar, and even Naples and its bay, with all their wealth of attractive scenery, without attempting the impossible task of saying anything about these places which has not been said a thousand times before. But I must halt for a short time at Port Said, while our ship is coaling. This was my third passing visit to the metropolis of Mediterranean infamies. Ten years previously I was stranded here, awaiting a vessel for the Holy Land, and I explored the place with some tourist friends from America. Our observations and informants enabled us to anticipate the conclusion come to by Kipling that there “ain’t no ten commandments” east of Suez, at any rate at Port Said. According to some authorities, Moses crossed from Egypt to Palestine quite close to where Viceopolis now stands.

PART II.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

CHAPTER IX.

FROM ALBANY TO ADELAIDE

THE journey from Albany, Western Australia, to Adelaide, the capital of South Australia, is always made by sea, and occupies about three days. An overland route is of course possible, as the two colonies adjoin. Such a journey has been made by explorers through the desert-bush. It is not practicable, however, for ordinary travel, there being neither roads nor tracks across a thousand miles of country. The sea route by the south coasts of the colonies is the only available one for the European visitor. The voyage cuts across the Great Australian Bight. Land is not seen after leaving King George's Sound until Cape Spencer, or Kangaroo Island (lying respectively to the north and south of Investigator Strait) come in view. The Gulf of St. Vincent offers a clear passage to the largest ships that come through the strait, and mail steamers with passengers or merchandise for Adelaide come to anchor inside of Largs Bay, about a couple of miles off the shore. South Australia's metropolis is, in one respect (and one only), badly situated. It lies about eight or ten miles back from the coast, and loses in this way the great maritime advantages possessed by the rival capitals, Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Hobart, and Wellington. Even Port Adelaide, which is to Adelaide what Leith is to Edinburgh, can only be reached by small vessels through the shallow waters of the Torrens River, which empties into Largs Bay. Adelaide cannot be seen from the anchorage in the bay. Its position

PART III.

THE LABOUR SETTLEMENTS ON THE MURRAY RIVER

CHAPTER XVI.

ORIGIN OF THE LABOUR SETTLEMENTS

THE traveller in South Australia who is in any way interested in Labour or Unemployed problems, should pay a visit to the Labour Settlements on the Murray river. The journey from Adelaide is one of a hundred miles by rail, and about seventy more by coach through the bush. A week or ten days suffices for the trip, and the experience afforded by such a visit offers generous compensation for the comparatively little trouble involved in the undertaking.

These Labour Villages originated in an unemployed agitation in Adelaide and district in the winter of 1893. Labour became slack, partly owing, I believe, to the cessation of government and municipal public works, and a large number of artisans and labourers found themselves without employment in the capital of a country larger than half of Europe, and with a total population less than that of the single city of Manchester. This scarcity of work alongside of countless millions of unlaboured acres seemed to strike the Trades Council of Adelaide, and some members of the Kingston Ministry, as an amazing anomaly, and an effort was forthwith made to bring such land and labour into effective contact. A committee was formed, Mr. Gillen (since dead), then Minister of Lands, was waited upon and, after discussing various suggestions, it was finally agreed that the Village Settlements part of the Act (584) to amend the Crown Lands Acts could be availed of for the

CHAPTER XXVIII.

VICTORIAN LAND LEGISLATION

IT could not fail to be of much interest to an humble Irish land reformer to find in the Australian colonies marked traces of his countrymen's work in the land laws of these countries. The present "land for the people" laws of New Zealand were the outcome, in the main, of the late Mr. Ballance's efforts when in power, in 1891, to see that principle embodied in legislation. Long previous to this, however, Mr. (now Sir) Charles Gavan Duffy, when Minister of Lands in Victoria, remodelled the land laws of that colony on lines which, if not as advanced as those of his fellow-Ulsterman's labours, were, for the time, a great advance upon anything that had yet been done in any of the colonies to place people and labour upon the soil. Sir Charles describes the scope and character of the "Duffy Land Act," in his delightful autobiography, as follows:—

"The main object of the law was to give increased facilities for the settlement of the industrious classes on the public estate. For myself my design was to make the possession of land as nearly universal as possible, to counterpoise the fact that political power was absolutely universal, and to give a healthy and pleasant pursuit to the large class of diggers who, when they became unfit for that trying pursuit, might become discontented and dangerous to the public safety; and I hoped to see a multitude of my own countrymen, who had been driven from the land in Ireland, find a safer and more prosperous home on the genial soil of Victoria. All the agricultural land of prime quality in the colony, estimated to exceed ten million acres, was reserved exclusively for agricultural settlement. Near the chief towns, goldfields, railway stations, seaports, and other centres of population, agricultural areas were ordered to be surveyed into farms ranging from 40 to 640 acres. These farms could be selected by any person of either sex who was of age and domiciled in Victoria, provided he or she appeared personally before the land officer and made a statutory declaration, equivalent to an affidavit, that the land was selected for his or her own use and benefit, and not as agent for any other person. A selector prepared to occupy and cultivate the land was alone entitled to select, and the Act contained the most careful and elaborate provisions to punish anyone who attempted to evade the law. A selector selecting on behalf of another was liable to a prosecution for misdemeanour, and the person who employed him to a prosecution

CHAPTER LXVII.

NEW ZEALAND SCHOOL SYSTEM

ELEMENTARY education is free, compulsory, and secular in New Zealand. It is generously provided for by the state. At the end of 1895 there were about 130,000 children (not counting Maoris) on the rolls of the state schools. As in some other colonies, school children living near a railway, but at a distance from the nearest school, are privileged to travel free by train to and fro. This provision is also extended to all children under fifteen who attend private schools. The sum allowed by the state for the education of each child amounts to about £3 15s. "for every unit of average attendance." There are additional parliamentary grants towards the maintenance of school buildings, a capitation allowance of one shilling and sixpence "for the maintenance of scholarships tenable in secondary schools," and a grant in aid of inspection. Teachers are well paid. In 1895 there were five teachers receiving "not less than £400 each"; sixty-two not less than £300; two hundred and twenty-two less than £300, but over £200; one thousand two hundred had less than £200, but over £100; while two thousand more teachers, "including 1020 pupil teachers and 190 teachers of sewing," had less than £100 each, as yearly salary.

There are thirteen School Districts in the colony, each having an education board. These districts are again subdivided into smaller school-committee districts. The members of these school committees are elected by the householders. The education board is, in turn, elected by the school committees in each (larger) district. The money voted by Parliament for the schools goes to the boards, which are responsible for its disbursement. Teachers are appointed by the boards, in consultation with the school committees concerned. Inspectors receive their appointments from the boards but carry on their duties under regulations

CHAPTER LXXVII.

NEW SOUTH WALES PRISONS

SYDNEY'S chief prison is that of Darlinghurst, and is within the city boundary. It is as badly situated as it is badly planned for the modern treatment of criminals. It dates from the time when the scaffold, the cat, and the dark cells were considered to be the three sovereign remedies for the repression of crime. New South Wales still clings to these remedies, but does not apply them as promiscuously as a few years ago. There is still a "colonial flogger," I believe, an expert in back scoring, who travels from prison to prison to administer the prison law, but he is not kept as busy now as heretofore. Dark cells are still a strong feature in Darlinghurst discipline. They appeared to me on inspection to be in pretty frequent requisition. Seven days in one of these cells would be calculated to drive an ordinary healthy person half insane. It can, therefore, easily be imagined what the effect of repeated punishments of this horrible kind will have upon bodily and mentally-weakened criminals. This barbarity has been abandoned altogether in New Zealand and Tasmania, and somewhat modified in all the other colonies, except New South Wales. It is a form of punishment which never did and never could produce any good of any kind upon any human being in its application. It might terrorize for the moment, but the after effects on the minds of criminals, mentally debilitating as these were bound to be, would work more in the way of fixing vicious habits by lessening the strength of resistance than in frightening evil-doers out of their indulgence. A prison discipline, no matter how severe, which cannot be upheld without the aids of the dark cell and the "cat" is more a proof of the incapacity of its administrators than of any dogged insubordination in certain classes of criminals.

It is here where a city prison is most at fault. There is no place more unsuited for the successful application of the law's punishment for crime than a prison in the centre of a big palpita-

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- use the "Match whole word" option to eliminate unnecessary items in your results list, e.g. to eliminate all the blacksmiths and tinsmiths etc when you only want the name Smith
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All of this and more may be available in a seemingly mundane book such as a directory. Learn much of the background of life at the time, even if your ancestor is not listed there.