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PART III.—OUR JUBILEE YEAR.

CHAPTER I.

GENERAL REVIEW.

Good Seasons and General Prosperity.—Land Settlement and Immigration.—The Sugar Crop.—Gold and Other Minerals.—Reduction in Cost of Mining and Treatment of Ores.—Vigorous Railway Extension.—Mileage Open for Traffic.—Efficiency of 3 ft. 6 in. Gauge.—Our Railway Investment.—The National Association Jubilee Show.—The General Election.—The Mandate of the Constituencies.—Government Majority.—Practical Extinction of Third Party.—Labour a Constitutional Opposition.—Federal Agreement with States.—Federal Union Vindicated.

During the half-century of Queensland's existence she has never experienced a more prosperous year than that of her Jubilee. Not only have the seasons been good, the rains well distributed though in some parts light, but prices of staple products have been high in the world's markets. The increase of sheep, cattle, and horses has been unusually large this year; the clip of wool has been highly satisfactory both in respect of quality and market value; the yield of butter and cheese has been above the average; and crops generally have been remunerative to the farmer. The wheat crop at the time this chapter is being written promises well, the area showing a considerable increase upon last year, while prices are certainly above the average. Trade and commerce have consequently been brisk and sound, and nearly all classes of the community have participated in the prosperity that has prevailed. Settlement upon the land has progressed by leaps and bounds; immigrants have begun to flow into the country in encouraging numbers, and, with few exceptions, the new arrivals have found a market for their labour at wages contrasting favourably with their earnings in the mother land.

Of all staple products sugar alone shows declension in yield this year, but that arises, not from the season of 1909, but from the unprecedentedly severe frosts of the previous year. Yet, despite the lessened yield of cane, the sugar-growers do not complain of bad times, nor is their outlook discouraging.

The gold yield has continued to fall off, but that is partly due to the prosperity of the pastoral and agricultural industries, which have attracted both capital and labour that under other circumstances would have been employed in prospecting for the precious metal. Silver and the base metals have also exhibited a shrinkage in output, but that is explained by the low prices which have ruled since the American crisis of two years ago. Two of the great mining companies in Central Queensland—the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company and the Great Fitzroy Copper Mining Company—have both had a prosperous year, having found in simultaneous mining for gold and copper abundant scope for enterprise and energy; and improved methods of raising ore, as well as constantly lessened expense of treatment, have made the prospect for the future reassuring. Large profits are being made to-day in the treatment of the less rich but more abundant ores, which could not have been utilised even ten years ago except at ruinous loss. It is now recognised that a well-organised laboratory is as essential in the equipment of a great mine as a corps of skilled miners or a range of smelting furnaces. Hence it is that the mining outlook is encouraging, and that in the opinion of scientific experts the industry in Queensland has scarcely yet passed the infantile stage.

It is natural that in accordance with the progressive spirit of the times the Government should have induced Parliament to authorise the expenditure of much more than the recent average amount of loan money in the construction of railways and other public works. No less than eleven railways, as stated in the Commissioner's report recently published, have been under construction this year. These lines are expected to be completed within a few months, so that nearly 4,000 miles will be open for traffic before the close of the financial year. Besides this large mileage for a population of 568,000 persons, 446 miles of other railways and tramways, more or less under the control of the State, are available for public traffic. Being of the same gauge as the State railways, they have been the means of developing large areas and materially improving the position of the Government lines. Thus the length of railway which will be open for traffic before 30th June, 1911, will amount to 4,320 miles of the standard 3 ft. 6 in. gauge, which will be equal to the traffic of a comparatively dense population. The increased breadth of rolling-stock has been found to conduct with comfort without imperilling the safety of passengers, and by the use of heavier rails and more powerful engines the carrying capacity of the narrow-gauge lines has of late years been greatly increased.

The Commissioner puts the total cost of our railway system on 30th June last, including £1,139,405 spent on lines not yet open, at £24,534,727. The total authorised outlay is, however, given as £27,221,805, so that at

(a) As indicative of the progress made in the local manufacture of railway stock, it may be mentioned, on the authority of the Commissioner, that one Brisbane engineering firm has this year completed its 100th locomotive for the Department.
the rate of expenditure of last year the balance unexpended will enable
construction to be continued for over two years. The net revenue available
for the defraying of interest accruing on capital for the financial year
1908-9 was £883,610, (a) equal to £3 7s. 6d. per cent. The mean rate of
interest payable on the total public debt of Queensland, which includes
much stock bearing more than 3½ per cent., is £3 14s. 1d. per cent., so that
our railways may be deemed almost directly reproductive; and, what is
still more satisfactory, they are rapidly improving in net earning capacity.
As every extension adds to the volume of traffic, apart altogether from the
added value given to Crown lands by providing them with railway com-
unication, every inducement is held out to maintain a vigorous policy of
construction. There is every reason to believe that in a few years our
railway system will be the greatest and most stable of all contributors to
the Consolidated Revenue; and when it is recollected that forty-five years
ago there was not a mile of railway or tramway open for traffic in Queens-
land, the progress made in providing transport facilities is brought out in
bold relief.

One of the most noteworthy events of the Jubilee Year was the
thirty-fourth exhibition of the National Agricultural and Industrial Asso-
ciation. This exhibition is the occasion of the most generally observed
holiday of the year in the metropolis, and attracts thousands of visitors
from all parts of Queensland, and many from the Southern States. It
has come to be regarded as the annual meeting-ground of friends from
widely separated localities. Year by year the attendance of visitors has
grown, and the interest taken in the display has increased. This year
special efforts were put forth by the council of the Association; and,
fearing that their own resources would prove unequal to the strain, they
applied to the Government for a jubilee grant. But the Government refused
to do more than provide jubilee medals for certain classes of successful
exhibitors, and enter some splendid exhibits from the State farms and
others illustrative of the mineral wealth of Queensland. They held that to
accede to the request would be to supply a precedent for similar applications
from kindred associations in provincial towns, and that one of the glories
of the metropolitan exhibition is that it is a self-supporting, self-reliant

(a) Treasury figures. The Commissioner's figures differ somewhat from those of the
Treasury. In estimating the percentage return the Railway Department takes into account only
the expenditure on open lines, whilst the Treasury bases its calculations upon the expenditure on
all lines, and charges the Railway Department with its proportion of loan deficiencies and flotation
charges.
institution. The sequel proved the correctness of this view, for the exhibition far exceeded all predecessors in magnitude, and gave a handsome profit to the National Association, which richly deserved such a reward for months of self-sacrificing work.

The official opening was attended by unusual pomp and ceremony, the Governor-General of the Commonwealth, the Earl of Dudley, performing the task of declaring the exhibition open. His Excellency took advantage of the opportunity to impress upon the people of Queensland the urgent need for a vigorous immigration policy if the country is to be successfully developed and its well-being maintained.

To attempt a detailed description of what was not inappropriately termed "Our Jubilee Carnival" would be beyond the province and the scope of this volume. When it is mentioned that the exhibits numbered over 8,000, the magnitude of the undertaking will be realised. It will be sufficient to mention a few salient points. For example, there were no less than 1,580 exhibits of live stock; and as, in the case of sheep and cattle, an entry often included pens and not single animals, the provision made for this attractive and paramount feature of the show was taxed to its utmost capacity. These pastoral exhibits represented stock yielding more than a moiety of the £14,000,000 worth of annual exports; and the industry connected with grazing stock on the natural pastures of the country not only employs much labour and contributes largely to the revenue of the State directly in the shape of Crown rents and railway freights, but it assists the Treasury indirectly in many other ways. The magnificent display of stud and pedigree stock and their products spoke volumes for the value of the indigenous grass crop which costs nothing to raise and only wire fencing to protect.

Among the exhibits was a trophy of that world-commanding product, wool, of which the value exported from Australia in 1908 is given in the Federal Treasurer's Budget delivered in August last as £22,914,236. The Commonwealth returns do not differentiate between the various States, but, assuming the average value of the fleece to be the same throughout Australia, the value of Queensland's share of the clip was about £5,000,000. Another product which has the world for its market is cotton. Of this article there were three splendid exhibits—one from West Moreton, in Southern Queensland; another from Rockhampton, in Central Queensland; and the third from Cairns, in Northern Queensland. Nothing save the cost of labour in picking prevents cotton being classed among the staple products of our State, and it is hoped by experts that as families upon the
farms increase this difficulty will be removed. The Cairns exhibit was of Caravonica cotton, a variety of the valuable Sea Island species, concerning the extensive cultivation of which the most sanguine anticipations are expressed. In agricultural products emulation was greatly stimulated by the district exhibits, of which there were five, and on the whole they were superior to any that had ever before been shown in Queensland. Almost every product of the temperate and torrid zones appeared among the exhibits, though, of course, many of them are not yet being cultivated on a commercial scale. Among the most prominent of those of commercial value may be mentioned sugar, butter, cheese, hams, bacon, wheat, maize, fodder crops, potatoes, pineapples, and citrus and deciduous fruits, in all of which the displays were a revelation, not only to visitors from other parts of the continent and oversea, but also to many of our own people. The same may be remarked of the magnificent exhibits of gold, copper, tin, coal, and other minerals, which form so large a proportion of our wealth-producing exports. Statistics relating to the production and export of these commodities will be found in the appendices to this volume, and need not be further referred to here. Another attraction meriting special notice was the collection of gems and precious stones, the industry represented by which is at present struggling against the want of access to profitable markets; but the great interest aroused at the Franco-British Exhibition of last year by the magnificent display of Queensland gems is calculated to remove this disability, and to place the industry on a prosperous and permanent footing. The great variety of foods manufactured in Australia was another feature of the display, while in the machinery section the entries surpassed any previous exhibition in Queensland. Consequent upon the removal of border duties and the adoption of a uniform tariff, Queensland has suffered keenly from the competition of the Southern States. Statistics abundantly prove that some of our nascent manufactures have been checked seriously by such competition, although these losses are being gradually compensated for by gains in the form of enlarged free markets for products in which Queensland is safeguarded by natural conditions; but even freetraders must admit that our protective Customs duties are stimulating what are called native manufactures in a surprising degree, and that year by year Queensland and the Commonwealth at large are becoming less dependent upon the outside world for the products and manufactures which are essential to the existence of a civilised nation.

Politically, 1909 has been rather a trying year, but the result of the general election on 2nd October seems to give promise of better things in