

Melbourne--Headquarters of the New Commonwealth

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MELBOURNE, Australia, April 15.—For the next year at least Melbourne is to be the capital of Australia. The Parliament of the new commonwealth will meet here in May and here the premier and his cabinet have already established their offices. They are to organize a new government and to aid in the selection of a permanent national capital for Australia. Melbourne is making great preparations for the opening of Parliament and it is collecting all sorts of statistics showing that it is the biggest city on earth.

And, indeed, it is magnificent. There is no country in Europe nor state in the union but would be proud to own it. It has about 500,000 people, 100,000 houses, 5,000 streets and as fine public buildings as any place of its size on the globe. It lies at the bottom of eastern Australia, near where the river Yarra empties into the Bay of Port Phillip, having an excellent

harbor. You can walk for six miles along its wharves and count forty bridges crossing the Yarra and other streams in the city and suburbs. The Yarra is so deep that steamers of 8,000 tons, drawing twenty-three feet, can come right into the town, while ships of 10,000 tons and upward anchor at the mouth of the river, a little below the city.

Strictly Up-to-Date Town.
It would surprise many Americans who think they have the only big things on earth to come down to Australia. Take the city of Melbourne. It is not as old as Chicago. It is younger than any town of its size in the United States. It contained five wooden shacks and eight turf huts in 1837, when Chicago was incorporated as a city. It has now 500,000 people and is one of the richest towns of its size on the globe. It has 20,000 business buildings, 500 schools, 300 churches and more than 1,100 hotels or saloons. It has 1,000 acres of racecourses, about a dozen foot ball and cricket grounds and 110 parks, public gardens and reservations. It has 100 miles of streets paved with wooden blocks. Its tramway system has cost about \$8,000,000; its harbor improvements \$10,000,000, and its sewerage system and water works about \$15,000,000 each. In the greater Melbourne there are seventy postoffices, sixty telegraph offices and eighty public and private libraries. One of the public libraries has 300,000 volumes and another has 40,000.

Melbourne has the finest public buildings of Australia. As the capital of Victoria it has the great colonial offices and in addition the city buildings and town hall. These structures cost, all told, about \$20,000,000. The town hall alone cost \$1,000,000. Built of white freestone, with a foundation of bluestone, it stands on the corner of Collins and Swanston streets. In the very heart of the city. It is the home of the mayor and city officials, including the council, but it has also a great amusement hall, which will seat 2,500 people, where public entertainments can be given at cost. Anyone can rent the hall from \$50 to \$125 per night, and concerts have the advantage of the great organ, the largest south of the equator, and until recently the largest of the world. This organ cost \$35,000. It has 4,300 pipes and seventy-nine stops. The city keeps an organist on a salary to play it twice a week for the amusement of the people, and any Thursday or Saturday you can drop in and listen to the music for an hour or so free of charge.

Town Run for the Citizens.
The Australians believe that their towns should be run for the citizens, rather than for the corporations. The tramways are owned by the government. There is one section of the racecourse to which all are admitted free of charge and thousands of laboring men are to be seen there with their families on Saturday afternoons. There are all sorts of public institutions, such as museums, picture galleries, baths and technical schools. There is a working-man's college which has several thousand students and there are numerous night schools. The city keeps up an aquarium and a good zoological garden. It has about 6,000 acres set aside for parks and pleasure grounds and its citizens have many organi-

zations and clubs for outdoor amusement. The Melbourne Cricket club, which was founded about the time the city was begun, now numbers more than 3,000 members. It keeps twenty men busy to care for its property, paying out salaries for such purposes of about \$350 per week. Already more than \$500,000 have been spent on the present cricket ground and it is said to be the finest of its kind in the world. It comprises nine acres, of which four and a half acres are used for playing.

At the Melbourne Races.

I wish I could take you out to one of the grand meetings at the Melbourne racecourse. The city claims to have the finest racing park in the world. It is known as the Flemington racecourse. It has an area of about 300 acres and the track is a mile and a half in length. The whole 300 acres, except the grandstands, stables and track, is covered with a lawn of a thick velvety green. The tracks are two, one running inside the other, one fitted up for steeplechases and the other for running and hurdle races. The grounds are equipped

with the latest improvements. The horses start at the rising of a wire moved by electricity, and there are all sorts of patent improvements as to timing, etc.

At the great races, such as the Melbourne cup, hundreds of thousands of people are present and the sight is one worth coming to Australia to see. The inside of the ring is given up to the people who pay nothing whatever. The grandstand, built on a hill at one side of the course, has first-class seats, which cost \$2.50 each, and directly behind it on the hill itself are equally good places, which you can have for 52 cents each. In either of these situations the spectator has full view of the horses for the whole distance. He need not lose sight of the race for the tenth of a second, and is just where he can see the horses come in at the finish.

I have frequently attended these races. They are held every Saturday afternoon during the season, when you may see thousands of well-dressed men and women in the grandstand and on the hill at the back. I was surprised at the dressing both of the women and men. The girls wear as good clothes as their American sisters, and the men are far better dressed than their brothers of England. Nearly every one bets, the girls putting up their money as well as the boys. The crowd includes the public officials, the judges and even the preachers, though I will not say that I saw the latter make extravagant bets.

"Is that big building a hotel?" I asked.

"No," was the reply, "I don't think it's an hotel, and still I heard the other day that its owners had bought out the right to sell liquors and so it may be an hotel after all."

"But what is it?" I asked.

"It is a big coffee palace."

"And what is a coffee palace?"

"Oh, you know," said the man, "you can't sell liquors in a coffee palace. A coffee palace is where they keep everything that belongs to a proper hotel except the bar. An hotel is place where liquors are sold, without the liquors it can't be an hotel."

"What do you mean by the owners buying out the right of some poor hotel?"

"That is a part of our liquor option law. Only so many places are licensed, and if a new place wants to start up it has to buy out one of the old licenses or wait until there is a vacancy. Our laws will not permit saloons. Liquors can be sold only at public houses or hotels, but many of the hotels have only one or two bedrooms to rent and their chief business is in running the bar. The charge is from \$75 to \$250 per annum, although some places are even less than these amounts."

Drunkenness in Australia.

Notwithstanding this I find that bars are more frequent here than in America. The man who wants a drink can get it in any block, and if he is an Australian the chances are, nine out of ten, that he wants it. I have never seen a place where drinking is more common and where so many people keep themselves well soaked. The chief drink is Scotch whisky, and the customary way of drinking it is to mix it with water and sip it. A great many drink whisky with their meals, and treating, or, as they call it here, "shouting," is common. The man is thought to be mean who drinks alone, and in the smoking rooms of the hotels you may see men sipping and drinking together from dinner until bedtime.

One of the surprising things is the little account that is taken of drunkenness or drinking. No one seems ashamed of having contracted the habit, and I have heard many men refer as nonchalantly to their having been drunk as you would to having taken your dinner.

Not long ago I was riding on the railroad in company with three Australians who were evidently old friends. One of the men said: "You see how much fatter I look. That fat comes from temperance. I have taken on flesh since I stopped boozing. I used to drink five bottles of gin every week right along and often much more. About six months ago I tapered off and at once began to fatten, and since then I have gained two stone in a month." The other gentlemen joined in like stories of themselves and friends. They kept up the conversation until the train stopped at a station, when they all went out for a glass of whisky and soda.

One of the worst features of the liquor traffic in Melbourne and other Australian cities is that the drinks are dispensed by women. One of the chief professions for females is that of barmaid, and the prettier girl the greater her custom. The Melbourne girls are especially beautiful, and the town has the reputation of having the prettiest barmaids of Australia. They are paid fixed wages and they have their regular hours. Some of them are very bright, and nearly all charming, so that it is no wonder that the men like to come in for a chat and a drink.

Business in Australia.

Melbourne is one of the best business cities of Australia. It has a number of rich men and its people are great spenders. They are fully as well dressed as the New Yorkers, and the most of them live up to their incomes. The town has good stores,



FEDERAL COFFEE PALACE, MELBOURNE.

and lots of them. There are 1,100 groceries, 1,000 fruit stores, 600 butchers, 400 tobacco shops, 300 laundries and more than 300 bakeries. There are 500 lawyers, 300 doctors, 300 preachers and 600 confectioners and pastrycooks. It takes 800 dressmakers to make clothes for the women of Melbourne and there are 400 tailor shops for the men. The city has a large number of insurance companies, real estate companies and 140 banking institutions. Its chief banks have branches in the state of Victoria and in all parts of Australia, and it is to a large extent the money center of the country.

Some of the stores are large. Some are called universal providers, taking the place of our department stores. All have good displays in their windows and all advertise in the spreadeagle American way. One bookman boasts of having 1,000,000 books in his shop and fills the newspapers with his poetic effusions as to his goods. This is called the Book Arcade. It is a sort of a department store, in which books are most prominent. It sells also stationery, candy and pictures, and you can get a tooth pulled or your photograph taken while you wait.

Many of the large stores are in arcades running from one principal street to another. In the summer the sun is very hot, and these arcades protect the shoppers.

Opals Are Cheap.

Among the most interesting stores are those selling jewelry, for they give you an idea of the wealth and luxury-loving tendencies of the people. There are quarts of diamonds and pearls exposed in the cases and the windows are decorated with rings, brooches and precious stones. Among the most common of jewels are opals, which come from Australia. They may be seen everywhere. I verily believe I have handled a half bushel of them during my stay

in the country. They are sold set and unset and are cheaper than with us, but the better stones bring good prices. An opal the size of a small pea costs \$3, while for \$15 you can get one full of fire as big as your sweetheart's thumbnail. As a rule the stones are sold by weight, at so much per carat.

In walking through the business streets you see many curious signs. There is one "John Jones Fellmonger." That is a fur store, as you can see from the possum, platypus and other skins in the window. The shop next door has the word "Draper" above it. That is a dry goods store, while the sign "Ironmonger" on the building over the way shows that it is a place for selling hardware. The druggists in Australia are called chemists, and a drug store is a chemist shop. Lumber dealers are "timber merchants" and the lumberman is called a "timber getter."

Yankee City of Australia.

Melbourne makes me think of an American city. It is called the Yankee city of Australia and its people are considered the most enterprising and venturesome of all south of the equator. The Americans flocked here during the gold excitement of the early '50s and many of them stayed and bought property. Some of the finest business blocks are owned by Americans; for instance, that of the Equitable Life Insurance company of New York is the best office building here. The people pride themselves on being like the Yankees. I have been frequently asked if the town did not remind me of home, or whether we have anything better of the same kind in the United States.

A great many fortunes have been made in Melbourne in real estate. The romance of its speculations of this kind is similar to that of New York and Chicago. The island of Manhattan was bought of the Indians for about a peck of beads, buttons and trinkets; Chicago could have been once purchased for a pair of old boots. The site of Melbourne, including 600,000 acres about it, was originally bought of the Australian aborigines by John Batman for forty pairs of blankets, forty-two tomahawks and a few knives, scissors, looking glasses and shirts. The same ground is worth more than \$100,000,000 today. The man who bought it, however, was not allowed to retain it. His claim was disputed by others, and a few months later the governor of Australia came down from Sydney and laid out the town, selling the lots at auction.

Auction Which Made Bidders Rich.

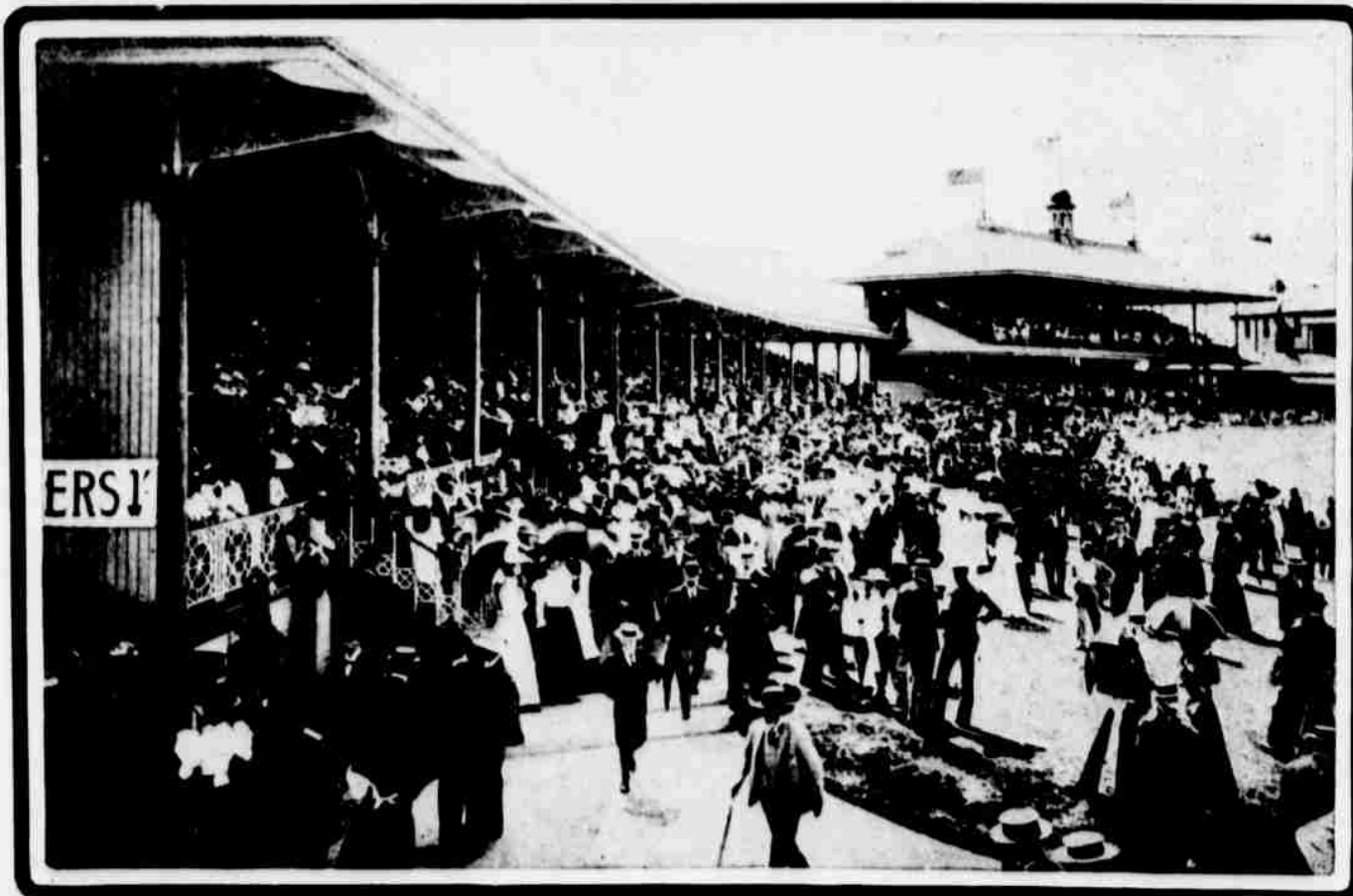
That auction made the fortunes of its highest bidders. There were only 200 men present, and nearly all bought city lots. Each lot was half an acre. The first sold for \$150, and another for twice that. One block of ten acres netted \$2,500.

That block is now worth at least \$15,000,000, and the other lots increased in about the same ratio. The net proceeds of the day's sale were less than \$20,000, and the same land today is worth at least \$40,000,000; that is, it has increased just about 2,000 fold, which is certainly a fair profit in these days of 2, 3 and 4 per cent per annum. The auctioneer was a man named Hoddle, who worked on commission. His fees for the sale were about \$285, and he took them out in land. He was awarded two lots in Elizabeth street, which he lived to see worth \$1,250,000. That was certainly one of the times when money talked, for Hoddle must have received in the end at least \$1,000 for each jerk of his diaphragm in crying the bids.

FRANK G. CARPENTER.



ON COLLINS STREET, MELBOURNE.



SCENE AT THE MELBOURNE RACECOURSE.