

# OUR STATE'S BEGINNINGS.

## Mr. Price's New Book.

"The foundation and Settlement of South Australia, 1829-1845," by A. Grenfell Price, M.A., F.R.G.S. (F. W. Preece, Adelaide).

"If you'd seen these roads before they were made, you would bless the man that made them," says an old English local verse, famous on account of its "bull," of a kind more generally associated with Ireland. Similarly, if one would see Adelaide before it existed, one should go to Mr. Price's new book. He has taken full advantage of the new light thrown on our local history, the Archives Department of the Public Library in Adelaide, having recently collected and made available an immense number of public records and private journals. In England, Professor Mills and Mr. R. J. Rudall have opened up and analysed the South Australian records in the Colonial Office. Mr. Price has drawn on all of these sources, and acknowledges help from the York Gate Library, the Commonwealth Parliament, and other collections. How local people of intelligence can help is shown by a sentence in the preface: "Mr. Clive Hambidge, of the South Australian Survey Department, drew attention to a collection of early papers in the Land Office, which the writer found contained many documents hitherto unknown, including very valuable memoranda, plans, and letters of Gouger, Light, Sturt, and other leading founders and colonial officers." The main story of the foundation of South Australia is well known. Very interesting is it to get behind it, so to speak, and see the historic event of December 28, 1836, through a mist of "wire-pulling," financial difficulties, and jealousies—always jealousies. For here, just as in early Sydney of half a century before, men were touchy and self-important and ready to quarrel over the foundations, to an extent that seems almost incredible to us who know only the stately and completed edifice. Says Mr. Price:—

When the Buffalo sailed in July, 1836, the outlook was a gloomy one. In England an unbusinesslike Board of Commissioners was attempting to gain the complete control of a complicated scheme based on an almost unworkable Act of Parliament. To the colony were sailing three expeditions. Light was proceeding with an insufficient surveying staff to carry out a task humanly impossible in the allowed time. The company's vessels were bound for an unsuitable location where they were, in the first instance, to engage in an unprofitable industry. Hindmarsh and Fisher, with divided authority, and a bevy of untrained and quarrelsome officers, were voyaging to reproduce in the colony those unhappy squabbles whose foundations had been so firmly laid in England. It is true the geographical basis of the movement held out more hopeful prospects, but the new British province of South Australia needed to offer great advantages of environment if the colony were to survive the pangs of its birth.

### Locating Adelaide.

That touch about the geographical basis is highly characteristic. It would seem a faint matter for consolation, in face of the other difficulties; but Mr. Grenfell Price was a geographer before he was a historian. From the beginning he has made it clear that the Great Rift (of which our two gulfs and Lake Eyre are the main features), with the Central Highlands, and finally the valley of the lower Murray, caused parts of the coast to be determined on. Sturt's great boat voyage down the Murray made the choice certain. As every one knows, Port Lincoln had supporters, and so had Kangaroo Island. Then the vicinity of Cape Jervis came into a prominence that it has hardly equalled since, the whole desire being to preserve communication with the Murray, while the Adelaide hills were considered a terrible bar, to be surmounted only either to the south or the north. The Encounter Bay district was looked at and condemned as a capital site. In various examinations of our gulf, the Port River, the Onkaparinga mouth, and even the little Patawalonga, had attracted notice, and, as every one knows, the last-named witnessed the first official landing and the proclamation of the infant province. The British Parliament had done its bit, the Duke of Wellington having as usual been prominent in the discussion in the House of Lords, and our Foundation Act had become law in August, 1834. Now the settlers were on the new soil, under a dual control which led to various troubles, and the matter lay in the hands of Colonel Light. Mr. Price accepts full responsibility for the conclusions he has reached upon study of the documents, and considers that after 80 years "there is no longer any necessity to withhold information which may assist posterity . . . to praise or blame." Thus the original Kingston unexpectedly appears as something like the evil genius of the piece. If he was a competent surveyor, then his contemporaries united in slandering him grossly, and his fidelity to Light, whose chief assistant he was, is not above question. The early commissioners, by their absurd instructions to examine carefully about 1,500 miles of coast, and then to survey (in the technical sense) any land that seemed good for towns here or there, and all this within three months before the settlers arrived, "exposed Light to a reputation which helped to harry him

to an early grave, and added immeasurably to the quarrels which racked the infant settlement. Worst of all, they did much to create that land problem which was the chief cause of the bankruptcy of the colony and the failure of the self-supporting system."

### Human Nature.

Mr. Price has the air, in fact, of turning a searchlight on an ant-heap. It may be a shock to one's recollections of various pioneers whom many still living, can remember as venerable and respected men beyond the range of ambition; but a moment's thought will show that young men willing to emigrate to an utterly unknown land could hardly be doing it "for their health." There was, as a fact, a general desire to buy land cheap and sell it dear, and meanwhile to enjoy some official position with a salary, this not being held at the moment any bar to private speculation, especially as the salaries given were miserably inadequate. Ready cash had been badly needed if the expedition were ever to come here at all. Thus it was claimed at the moment, baldly, that in London "candidates for office who became purchasers of land were considered to possess a priority of claim;" and, picturesquely, that "Torrens is weak enough to appoint Jack Ketch, if he would take £1,000 worth of land!" The position of Judge was given by the Colonial Office to Sir John Jeffcott, "bankrupt and duellist," says Mr. Price tersely. A quaint letter of one, Brown, is given here in facsimile, showing a typical quarrel over the naming of the streets, in May, 1837. Admiral Hindmarsh "brought a pocketful of royal and naval heroes. He will meddle, let the trifle be what it will! When he got to Duncan and Howe we divided, and Grote and Wakefield reign in their stead. This nearly settled the question, and we came off with only Malcolm and Tynte and Strangways. I am rather ashamed myself of having any hand in this business, but votes are wanted, or it would have been a journal of our Governor's life and adventures."

### Starting Progress.

Then comes the brisk and bold forward policy of Governor Gawler, and the stern retrenchment practised by Governor Grey. One of the most valuable services done by Mr. Price is in re-establishing the reputation of Gawler. "It is significant in the history of this unfortunate Governor that those who have had the greatest knowledge have gone furthest in vindicating his policy. Rudall, who minutely examined the letters of defence, has so strongly justified Gawler's policy as both necessary and expedient that a change of historical opinion is already apparent. The usual superficial view is found on examination to confuse the occasion with the causes of the disaster." The volume ends with 1845, when things were settling down again in the direction of progress. Through all the chronicle, The Register occupies an important position, with its then Editor, Stevenson, "though something of a firebrand," rendering splendid service to the cause of agricultural education, and urging that the soil of the Adelaide plains is capable of producing anything, as against the pessimistic views of those who either were bad farmers or had used unsuitable seed. In minor details, it is pleasant to read of "Albert Town" coming into existence as a residential suburb, being the first firm land on the city side of that swamp which Port Adelaide then was. Or of those who tried to get a bullock cart southward to Encounter Bay, but only "penetrated to Noarlunga." The book is full of such points. It presents in readable style the results of a marvellous amount of research and the wonder is that Mr. Price has been able to spare time from his own profession for the compiling of it. He adds a page or two of grave advice for the future. "The thought-

ful will find much in this story to turn their attention to the problems of today." In particular, he asks why the fertile south-east should still be so cut off from Adelaide, and "permitted to drift to the economic control of another State," while the great arid north "diverts attention from those regions where nature offers more bounteous returns." And he thinks it well for South Australians to "remember Sturt's dictum that Victor Harbour would be the port of the River Murray when commerce was sufficiently advanced."

## AUSTRALIAN DEVELOPMENT.

### DR. H. HEATON'S LECTURES.

LONDON, May 8.

Dr. H. Heaton, M.A., of Adelaide, is giving seven lectures on "The economic development of Australia," at Cambridge University. Already he has delivered the same course at the London University. This is the first time that such courses have been given at these universities.

Recently Dr. Heaton lectured on Australian topics at the universities of Birmingham, Manchester, Leeds, and Southampton. He has been invited to visit Oxford, Toronto, and Alberta.

## MUSIC AND EDUCATION.

Professor E. Harold Davies briefly addressed the members of the Rotary Club, at their weekly luncheon on Friday, upon the subject of the South Australian Orchestra and music in general. He explained that the orchestra had attained the fifth of its existence, and it was to men like those present that he looked for support. "It is not a money-making concern," he said, "because if it had been I would not have dared to address you upon the subject. We knew from the beginning that it would not be so, but music is becoming more and more a part of our national life. I appeal to Mr. W. T. McCoy to bear me out in the statement that music is now playing a big part in the education of our children. As an illustration of the generous support given it by some persons, I would like to say that Mr. Eastman (of Kodak fame) bequeathed £750,000 to the establishment of a Conservatorium of Music in Rochester, America."

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## MELBA AND THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN ORCHESTRA.

From "NON-UNIONIST":—On Wednesday evening Dame Nellie Melba attended a rehearsal of the South Australian Orchestra. The name of this organization is of general significance; therefore I wish to ask Dr. Harold Davies why one choral society was asked to be present, to be introduced to Dame Melba, and the other societies—mixed and male voice—of the city ignored? Is it because the Bach Society has become a partner in the Conservatorium-cum Tramways Trust-cum South Australian Orchestra-cum Musicians' Union combine? It looks very like it.

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## EDUCATION.

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The Minister of Education (Hon. L. L. Hill) stated yesterday that his department was drawing up an education scheme, which, after being submitted to the Cabinet, would be incorporated in the Governor's speech. The Labor movement stood for free education for everyone from the primary school to the University; but a Labor Government must cut their coat according to their cloth. The medical and dental inspection at least twice of all school children would be a strong feature of their education programme, but at present he was not in position to say how large a medical and dental staff would be engaged. The department had but one medical officer (Dr. Gertrude Halley) for examining school children, and although she worked hard she had examined only 4,000 out of 83,000 school children. At this rate of progress it would take twenty years to examine all the school children in the State.

Asked if any provision was being made for the examination and special treatment of the feeble-minded, the Minister declined to discuss details, but hinted that their claims would be considered.

Summarising the Government's proposals in regard to education under four heads, the Minister stated them to be as follows:—

- (1) A vigorous policy of providing school accommodation.
- (2) Extension of free education to all children from the primary school to the University, all school books and requirements to be free.
- (3) The establishment of free technical and agricultural colleges.
- (4) Additional medical and dental inspection and treatment free.



THE REV. WALTER F. WEHRSTEDT, The present rector of St. Paul's.

### The Present Priest.

The present rector is the Rev. Walter F. Wehrstedt, who began his work in the parish in 1921, after having spent 11 years as rector of St. James's Church, West Adelaide. Mr. Wehrstedt was born in Adelaide, and in his youth was educated at the North Adelaide Public School, and St. John's Grammar School. It was at the latter institution that he won a scholarship entitling him to a course at St. Peter's College. From there he went as St. Peter's Old Collegians' Scholar to the University of Adelaide. He graduated in 1899 with first-class honours in mental and moral philosophy, and second-class honours in classics. He also won the Howard Clark Scholarship for English Literature, the Roby Fletcher Scholarship for Psychology, and a South Australian Government scholarship. After graduating, Mr. Wehrstedt returned to St. Peter's College as a master, and later, after a year at St. Barnaba's College, he was ordained deacon, in 1902, and priest in the following year. His only curacy was with Dean Young, at Mount Gambier. He was for a year priest in charge at Petersburg, and rector for four years at Lyndoch. He was appointed to West Adelaide in 1910.

## MERLE ROBERTSON.

### PIANOFORTE RECITALS IN ADELAIDE.

Miss Merle Robertson, the well-known Adelaide pianist, accompanied by her manager (Mr. H. J. Larsen), returned to Adelaide by the express on Sunday after a brilliant season in Sydney. She gave seven concerts in the New South Wales capital, and all of them attracted large and enthusiastic audiences. Among the patrons was Lady Forster and Lady de Chair (wife of the Governor of New South Wales, and by whom she was presented with a beautiful bouquet and congratulated on her success). Miss Robertson was entertained several times at the State Government House, where, on one occasion, she was the chief guest at a dinner party. The Director of the Sydney Conservatorium (Mr. Arundel Orchard) was so delighted with her playing that he engaged her to return in August to perform with the State Orchestra. The press criticisms of Miss Robertson's pianoforte work were of a high standard. At the Adelaide Town Hall to-morrow night she will give her first recital of the local season, which will also include performances on Thursday and Saturday next and Monday, May 19. A Sydney critic writes:—"Merle Robertson is one of the finest pianists Sydney has heard for many long years. Three of the player's own compositions captured the ear, and the Syrian dance and the Viennese waltz evoked a thunderstorm of applause." To-morrow evening she will present, in addition to Bach, Beethoven, and Chopin, a suite of poems by herself and a modern group including the famous Schultz-Evler concert piece on the beautiful Blue Danube waltz. The boxplan and tickets are at Allan's.