

To devote such a place to such a purpose must have seemed, to the few who then knew it, a satire on nature. One of the loveliest spots on the face of the earth was turned into a sort of terrestrial hell, for the confinement and punishment of the most daring and desperate criminals. It only added to the horror, that some of those who were transported thither were sinners of a much milder type—not a few of them victims to a savage code which public opinion would not now tolerate for a moment. No wonder that of the convicts some became desperate, many mutinous, not a few murderers; whilst others, succeeding in escaping the rifle of the sentries, became bush-rangers, and opened a new and horrible chapter in the annals of English life, matchless for ferocity, cruelty and courage, except amongst the brigands of Italy or Greece.

Almost all traces of that state of things have long since passed away. Some excellent roads and other public works, some romantic and horrifying legends, and, thank God! some beautiful facts of moral reformation and subsequent prosperity and respectability, are all that remain of those former but not better days. To-day Sydney, seated queen-like on the shore of her beautiful harbour, is the capital of the widest and wealthiest of the Australian Colonies. Originally, indeed, Sydney was the seat of British Government for the whole Continent; but out of the vast territory which then was called New South Wales, Victoria, South and West Australia, and Queensland have been carved. Yet, in all the natural elements of national well-being, the old colony fully holds her own, and not a few think her still pre-eminent.

In population New South Wales is still a little behind her young and vigorous rival Victoria. But she is gaining rapidly in the competition; for, whilst in the last decade the population of Victoria increased only seventeen per cent., that of the Mother Colony grew forty-eight per cent.; and there can be no doubt with which the ultimate victory will lie. For the area of Victoria is very limited, and the land almost all taken up, whilst New South Wales has a vast and virgin territory which cannot fail to attract a large immigration.

Victoria could only hope to rival New South Wales by maintaining a manufacturing supremacy analogous to that of England amongst European nations. Her statesmen avow that their protectionist policy is devised for the encouragement and consolidation of their own manufactures. But New South