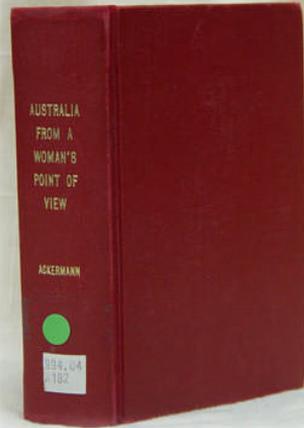


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**AUSTRALIA FROM A
WOMAN'S POINT OF VIEW**
By **JESSIE ACKERMANN, F.R.S.G.S.**

WITH SIXTY-FOUR PLATES

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AUSTRALIA

FROM A WOMAN'S POINT OF VIEW

CHAPTER I

SOME GENERAL REMARKS

*"Thou hast in thy confines many a haven
Where peace and plenty reign from year to year,
Where lines on fair white brows are never graven
By lonely days and nights of lonely fear.*

*"Where dance and song are never out of fashion,
And life is an eternal, gracious Spring:
Where Honour is a creed and Love a passion,
And every true man is of himself a King."*

KENNETH MACKAY.

AUSTRALIA, to many, is still an undiscovered continent. Formerly the position of the island left it far off the regular highways of commerce. So meagre was the knowledge of its possibilities, so uninviting its apparent prospects, so scanty the openings of a business character, that inducements to visit the country were few indeed, until the discovery of gold brought the famous immigration of early years. This led to a new and enlarged interest in the country, and great was the influx of people, chiefly men, which followed.

When one fully realises the extent of natural resources, the opportunity of creating a distinct

CHAPTER IV

THE PEOPLE OF AUSTRALIA

*“ From gross delights and selfish aims,
From souls that love whate'er is mean,
From every thought that mars or shames,
Keep Thou our waking manhood clean.”*

KENNETH MACKAY.

IN most countries the population is a matter of natural increase. As peoples are a reflection of the locality in which they are born, a race is as much the product of a country as trees are of the soil. Students agree that the geographical position, climate, landscape, and, in fact, the soil itself, because of what it produces, are all woven into the very fabric of peoples, producing that indefinable whole summed up in the word temperament. It therefore holds that, in general make-up, they must be in harmony with other features of nature about them. Types of people are but so many expressions of physical geography.

The Greeks wrought what they did, not because they were Greeks, but because of the particular situation and conditions of Greece. The Spartan women were a phase of development, not because they were born in a country called Sparta, that might have been anywhere, but because Sparta is where it is. The word “call” expresses it better, perhaps, than any other. The “call” of a locality gets

CHAPTER VI

LIFE IN THE BACKBLOCKS

*“ But a people rot in the lap of ease,
And trade, be it all in all,
Breeds the canker-worm of a fell disease—
The germ of a Nation's fall.”*

KENNETH MACKAY.

THE “Never-Never” is the Soul of Australia. This is where failure kills, or success is writ large; where weak women are made strong, and courage finds birth in a single day of struggle; where Hope chases the shadows of Despair that lower and often settle upon the heavy grind of daily toil. So hard is the struggle that only a woman's heart may cry it out. Her soul would shrivel if her faith failed. The blowing sands of the “Never-Never” have made women brave to endure. The sweeping fires which threaten property and life have armed them with almost superhuman strength. The howling winds, which roar about the house, hammering and beating at door and window until no spoken word within can be heard, bring no terror to her heart which is stayed on Him “Who calmed the waves on Galilee.” Soul meets soul in the battle—a battle in which women would go to the wall did not the hand of Nature restore a balance at her very feet in those kindly voices which compel a forgetfulness of woe-swept senses. Morning always comes after a night of storm.

CHAPTER VIII

MEN IN AUSTRALIA AS HUSBANDS AND FATHERS

*"This life is but a chapter in a story,
A minor phase in an omniscient plan,
A fleeting prelude to the changeless glory,
That awaits the coming perfect man."*

KENNETH MACKAY.

MUCH space in these pages is given to the status of women and girls of Australia, because of their classification in political life and the many opportunities and obligations which fall to their lot. The position of men in all countries is practically the same, while that of women changes with the spirit of the times, until it is now taken as the criterion of national progress. It has been said: "A country will never rise above the status of its women."

To state the condition of women in Australia and relate their activities in no way discounts men, or gives the impression that the sterner sex is either the submerged or subdued half. It merely reflects the spirit of a new order of things. Men have always, throughout human history, held a recognised place. It has never been challenged, disputed, or claimed by women. So great an innovation as citizenship for women has in no way readjusted their sphere, nor is such likely to be the case. In relation to matters dealt with in these pages, men have gone the usual way of men the world over. This being so, there is

CHAPTER IX

MOTHERS, CHILDREN, AND THE BIRTH-RATE

*" All things are bright to you, baby mine !
For the world is very fair, and no echo of despair
Comes to fill your heart with care, baby mine.*

*" All lips have smiles for you, baby mine ;
For earth's sadness or its gloom, there is neither place nor room,
When a life has yet to bloom, baby mine."*

KENNETH MACKAY.

WE may sum up the shortcomings of the women of Australia in regard to their citizenship, point out their weaknesses as a whole, run up against their points and angles with evidences of the collision, but it must be said that they are royal mothers. Many of them, as such, reach the ideal standard ; remembering, of course, that there are exceptions to this statement, and very many of them.

It is impossible to " toe these women to the line " with the mothers of other countries, for the reason that the setting here is unique. It has no parallel elsewhere.

Mothers of all classes are overworked. This is one situation which cannot be overcome by the possession of money. It all revolves around the cruel lack of domestic help. The entire supervision of the house, often the housework itself, including the washing, devolves upon the mother. Then there is the care of the children : the making and

CHAPTER X

THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE PEOPLE

*“ Grant us, O God, the Right Divine,
That steadfast steers its course by Thee,
So that our lives as lamps may shine,
To guide Australia's destiny.”*

KENNETH MACKAY.

RELIGIOUS alarmists are numerous, and are an unfettered menace to the country. They fairly wallow in lamentation over any sign of unquenched fires or unbounded future woe. The “ eternal punishment ” dogma so fascinates them that to limit future misery would rob them of their chief joy of heaven. They are dying off gradually, although slowly, and for some time will still put forth like a hardy annual which neither cold nor heat blights or kills.

To a normal, sane mind the religious unrest of Australia is the most hopeful sign of progress. With every phase of life bounding onward, it would mean spiritual decay and a victory of the material were the people to sit like so many graven images under the false preaching which, at most, was merely spiritual pap for sucklings when the race was young and wrapped in superstition.

Australia cannot afford to lag behind in this general move toward a knowledge of God. The whole world, both Christian and non-Christian, is in the throes of a great religious unrest. There has been

CHAPTER XX

HOW WOMEN GOT THE FRANCHISE

*“ When shadows gather round our pathway, sweet,
Remember, lest your spirit faint and fail,
How out beyond, where sky and forest meet,
After long quest, you found ‘ The Holy Grail.’ ”*

KENNETH MACKAY.

IN the Conservative countries, which are emerging from the “ old order of things ” into constitutional forms of government, the great question is, “ What shall we do with our women ? ” At other times men were wont to say, “ We will never understand women.” They may not understand them any better to-day, but thinking men know full well that the enlarged influence of women must be reckoned with as a vital factor in all human affairs.

Woman is now a real world-problem because her new position has brought her into close competition with men in every walk of life. The economic value of women to the nation is involved in modern development. How best to utilise this force to the advantage of the home, and for the good of the country, is now the chief concern of thinking men. The situation throughout the world resolves itself into the same question. “ How may we locate women in this oncoming new civilisation without rendering her advancement a loss to home, and a detriment to her sex and the race ? ”

CHAPTER XXII

SOME LAWS RELATING TO WOMEN AND CHILDREN

*" We prate of chivalry. Laud those who live
The pain and care of Motherhood to face,
The while we steadfastly refuse to give
Them equal rights to shape our coming race."*

KENNETH MACKAY.

As in other countries, the women of Australia, generally speaking, are alarmingly ignorant of the laws under which they live. Few, indeed, have the slightest knowledge of even their legal relation to their children; and as for their status, it is as unknown to them as the most remote foreign subject.

Although women have been made equal with men so far as voting is concerned, the most appalling inequality in their legal status obtains in every State of the Commonwealth. This is observed in regard to punishment for given offences, as well as in provisions made by some of the States for the housing of offenders against the law in the case of State wards, and especially in relation to the conduct of women in public places. There are offences for which a policeman puts his hand upon a woman and brings her to account for her deportment before the law; while a man, guilty of similar conduct, merely acts up to the privileges which are granted by men to men.

If a girl with painted face and brazen mien

CHAPTER XXVI

EDUCATION OF GIRLS

*"I would that each of you could understand
How much the future of this unshaped land
Lies in the hollow of your youthful hand."*

KENNETH MACKAY.

It is impossible to make a general statement about the education of girls in Australia. The matter so largely depends on the point of view of parents, especially the father who must pay the bills. Public schools up to a certain standard are free. A silly idea prevails in some quarters that to take advantage of this splendid process of development appears to be accepting charity, and indicates a niggardly spirit in sending children to free schools. It is the supreme duty of the State to prepare children for intelligent citizenship. That these schools should be open and free to all is a matter which does not require discussion. As all property-holders contribute by taxation to the upkeep of the system, there can be no ground upon which to make the charge of trying to "get something for nothing," which is so often heard in regard to well-to-do people whose children are pupils at public schools.

In most of the State schools a girl is required to attend until she is fourteen years of age. Later movements depend wholly on circumstances. If the services of girls are required in the home, or

CHAPTER XXVII

THE BUSINESS GIRL

*“For at last I saw my pathway lay
Where men and women bend beneath life's yoke,
If so be I might help to bear the stroke
That falls upon the backs of such as they—
If so be I might make a heart glad
That now for aught I know is lone and sad.”*

KENNETH MACKAY.

As the population of Australia is composed very largely of well-to-do working people—but workers, nevertheless—it must follow that vast numbers of young women are engaged in business. Most girls positively refuse to take up domestic service as a calling, although it offers more than double the money to be earned in factories. The lack of domestic help is so keenly felt that the arrival of every ship from England is closely watched by hundreds of housewives, in the hope that maids may be obtained from among the immigrants. The number is so small that it has made no appreciable difference in the ceaseless demand. In one office 284 applications were lodged, and thirty-nine positions were filled.

There is a growing contempt for housework. The reasons for this have been so frequently discussed that it is sufficient merely to state the fact and mention that the chief objections are the length

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