



Illuminated address to His Excellency the Governor of Victoria Sir Henry Loch K.C.B. From the Council of the City of Melbourne, 23 July 1888. *The presentation of an illuminated address was a routine part of the ceremonial progress of a governor around the colony. Even the poorest shires commissioned a local artist to execute a suitable tribute to the sovereign's representative, usually decorated with scenes of the locality or its characteristic fauna and flora. Watercolour, ink, gold leaf, by an unknown artist.*

LA TROBE LIBRARY

# THE IMPERIAL CONNECTION

ON 2 JULY 1888, Fred Coneybeer wrote, 'I got home about 9.30—great excitement today and night'. Coneybeer had spent the Monday evening at a meeting of 'the Executive of the Trade and Labour Consel', where the topic of the hour was Australia's sudden isolation from the world, through a break in both the imperial cables that connected Australia by telegraph to London. 'Both went the same day—great preparations for fear of an attack—I had some gruel and to bed.'

On Thursday 29 June, the physical connection to the heart of the British Empire had suddenly gone dead. The two telegraph lines that ran through Adelaide and Alice Springs to Darwin, and thence under the ocean straits to Banjoewangie in Java, now refused to respond to communications. The silence brought home to Australians the extent of their isolation. 'Australians,' said the *Age*, 'for the moment are as completely cut off from the rest of humanity as if they had been transported to one of the planets.'

For Coneybeer the main consequence of the break was that the newspapers now lacked overseas news. 'Tuesday—worke all day—the paper seems strange now without any cabels—', he observed. The papers were filled with speculation about reasons for the break. The *Adelaide Register* counselled against alarm. There were many possible explanations apart from those 'attributable to the acts of the Queen's enemies'. Perhaps the cables had succumbed to the ravages of sea water, inquisitive turtles or volcanic action on the sea floor.

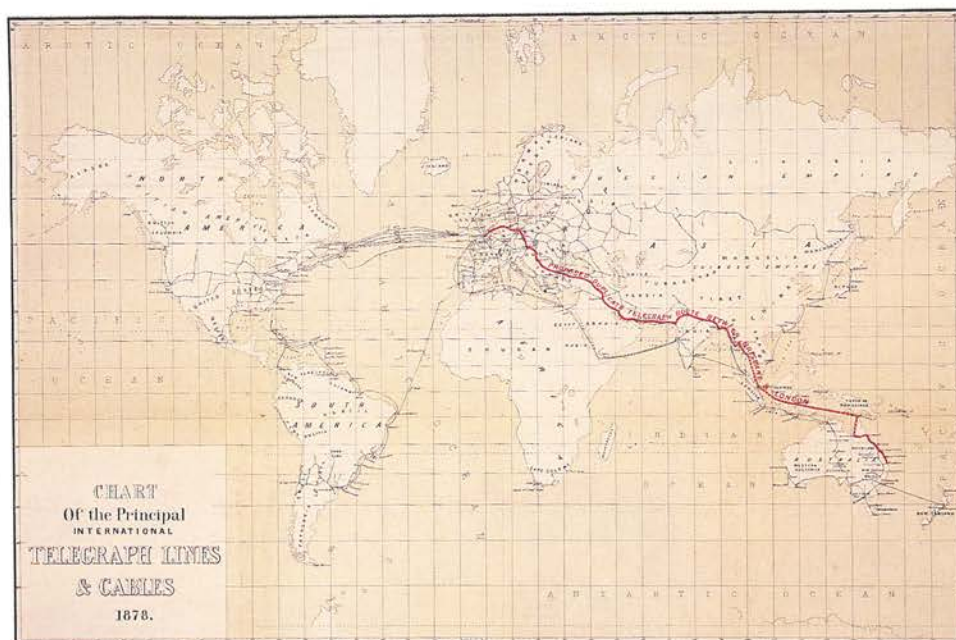
'Wednesday', wrote Coneybeer on 11 July, 'the Cabel is still broken and we are in suspence about it'. Now sober editorials in the *Register* pointed out that an issue of deep concern was involved. The sudden cutting of the cable might well have been 'the silent announcement of a European war', and then 'what would have been our condition in the event of a hostile landing?' Victoria, it was noted,

has regarded the news as a warning to her to set her house in order, but South Australia shows no sign. There may not be the slightest occasion for alarm, but if the time is not now it will be by-and-by, and it is undeniable that we are not prepared for it.



*Sir Henry Loch, KCB, governor of Victoria. Born in Scotland, Loch occupied minor posts in the navy, the army, the civil and diplomatic services before his appointment to Victoria in 1884. Victorian politics during his stay were peaceful. Although not called upon to play a strong constitutional role, with his aristocratic wife Elizabeth he was a popular leader of society.*

LA TROBE LIBRARY



*Chart of the principal international telegraph lines and cables 1878.*

STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA

In Melbourne, military and naval manoeuvres had been set in motion, and the *Age* reported on 'The silencing of the cables', 'The military and naval operations', 'A watch at the heads' and 'Submarine mines in preparation'. The paper also attempted to identify possible invaders, and examined the potential of the Russian fleet, the colonial ambitions of the French and conditions in Asia. On 2 July items appeared on 'The Chinese naval armament' and 'The Russian fleet', followed by more comforting articles on 'The British fleet in the Pacific' and 'British ships on the Australian station'. There was less alarm in Sydney, Brisbane and Perth, but around the country the press began to discuss the need for defence.

The break in the cables brought to the surface many Australian fears. The Victorian governor, Sir Henry Loch, thought of sending all the gold in Melbourne banks to country gaols for safekeeping. The governor of New South Wales, Lord Carrington, mocked the alarmist conduct of the Victorian ministry and remarked of Loch's proposal: 'Is he mad? He may cause a commercial panic.' But there was a feeling that the conflicts of the world could engulf the isolated colonies without proper warning, and that the first indication of war in Europe would be the cutting of the cable.

On 13 July Coneybeer recorded with relief: 'the cable is repaired and we got a batch of telegrams this afternoon—great run on the papers—about seven or eight additions out this afternoon'. It was an anticlimax to find, in the end, that volcanic action had cut the cable and caused eighteen days of silence. The *Sydney Morning Herald* remarked gleefully that 'our neighbours in Victoria have been arraying themselves against the forces of nature, and not against the Chinaman or Russian'. Yet the *Herald* admitted relief: 'We are ... not sorry that nature has been at work, and not enemies', the editorial went on, for 'the risk of isolation that we run at present is very great'.

Australia had been connected to the cable for sixteen years. The first successful transatlantic cable was laid in 1866. An eastern cable had reached out from England to India by 1870 and had finally touched Australia in 1872. Now it took six hours to tap out a message and have it cross the world. But the connection was fragile. From Melbourne to the heart of the empire stretched 22 000 kilometres of

submarine cable and overland wire, only about one-fifth of it in Australia. The potential hazards and complications were immense.

The landline stretched from Adelaide to the Northern Territory, supported by hundreds of poles across the desert. These were maintained by isolated groups of seven or eight men, living in small stone stations, defying nature's storms and marauding Aborigines. Once the cable left Australia it was maintained by the Eastern Extension Telegraph Company, which had become almost as important to Australia as the Royal Navy or the London Stock Exchange. The cable often deteriorated in sea water, and the company had two steamers based at Singapore ready to grapple for broken or corroded lines, which were then spliced. When the line failed, messages had to be carried by steamer between Banjoewangie and Port Darwin, a continual reminder to Australians of the fragility of the link.

Through the cable came the news which secured Australia to the modern world. The news was expensive, at 9s 4d per word for private customers and 2s 9d for press messages to and from Melbourne. Thousands of messages were despatched annually in both directions, with over 50 000 sent from Australasia in 1888 at a cost of about £300 000. The domestic network was linked to the imperial line, and from each capital city a web of wires ran out to make life back of Bourke part of a world empire.

Writing his study *Australia and the Empire* in 1888, Arthur Patchett Martin, once an employee of the Victorian post office and now living in England, considered the impact of the cable on colonial lives.

Australia is now in direct hourly communication with the Motherland by means of the magic submarine cable, and nothing transpires of importance from day to day without its being known within twenty-four hours in the far off Island Continent. Lord Carnarvon asserts that recently, when in Melbourne and Sydney, he could follow the variations of 'home' politics almost as well as if he had been in London.

It seemed like another era, he concluded, when Australians had to wait for their news to be brought by the monthly mail steamer.

The traffic was not all one-way. The mother country had developed an imperial policy that drew on the resources of the colonies and was assisted by fast communication. 'The cable system of the British Empire', declared an English member of parliament, 'is the nerve system of the Imperial organism'. Francis Adams, however, thought that from an Australian point of view the cable might have the disadvantage of actually reinforcing the dominance of imperial culture—inhibiting, for example, the growth of an indigenous national literature. Where, he wondered, were the successors in verse and prose to Adam Lindsay Gordon and Marcus Clarke? Gordon and Clarke 'formed but the brilliant dawn of a cloudy, colourless day. Mail steamer and cable have brought England too close'. But if the cable as a means of communication carried a message of imperial cultural dominance, it was inaudible to most colonial ears. In public discussion, securing fast news from home was an unchallenged good.

In October the line broke again. There were calls for an independent 'all-red' cable connection, which did not cross foreign soil or hostile ocean straits. The matter had already been discussed at the Australian Intercolonial Postal Conference early in 1888. In England the *Pall Mall Gazette* thought that since the Canadian Pacific route had been opened, the answer seemed plain. 'All that is necessary is to lay a cable of some 7000 miles in length from Victoria in Vancouver, to Australia via Fiji.' The cost was high, yet the very discussion of its possibility revealed eloquently the power and extent of the Empire to which Australia was linked.



*Young Victoria, suddenly cut adrift from mother England by the break in the imperial cable, repents his foolhardy assertions of independence as Russia and China, hungry for territory, close in. The Melbourne Punch expresses the outlook of those conservative colonists who clung to the imperial tie. Melbourne Punch, 15 July 1888.*

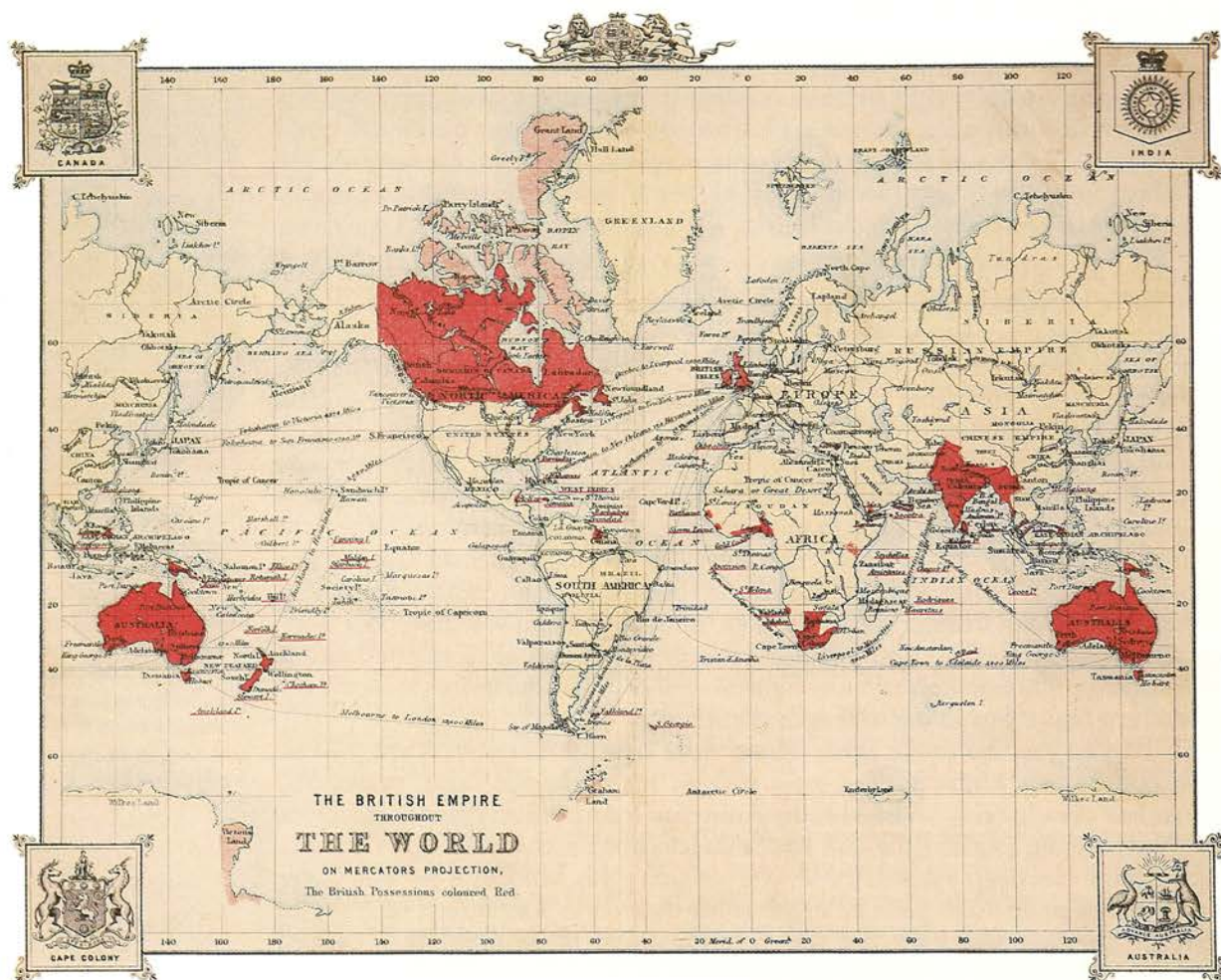
## THE BRITISH EMPIRE

The Australian colonies formed a significant part of one of the four existing, historically layered British Empires. The oldest layer consisted of the plantation colonies of the West Indies, which were now crown colonies of direct rule. Next had come the Indian Raj, a system of direct and indirect trusteeship government. Then had developed the colonies of white settlement. When Britain lost the American colonies in 1776, there began a swing to the east, with settlements in Australia and southern Africa between 1788 and 1815. By 1888 the settlement empire in Canada, southern Africa, Australia and New Zealand occupied a special place in the British world. They were largely self-governing societies composed of migrants; they were independent but loyal. Finally there was the very new empire of protectorates and tropical colonies of conquest, acquired in the scramble for Africa, southeast Asia and the Pacific Islands in the past twenty years.

The various British empires of time and place were unique in the world of 1888. They contained one-quarter of all humanity known to the census takers, some 270 million subjects of Queen Victoria. The settlement societies were large in land area, containing about 28 million square kilometres. But a large proportion was desert or tundra, and they had small populations. The significance of the Australian colonies lay not in their size, but in their economic and strategic position. From the

*The British Empire, 1887.*  
John Bartholomew, Handy  
reference atlas of the  
world, London 1887.

STATE LIBRARY OF VICTORIA





*'John Bull and his daughters.' Proud of their natural endowments, the Australian colonies sometimes felt slighted by Britain's apparent indifference to their protection from the designs of would-be imperial suitors, China, Germany, Russia and France. Melbourne Punch Almanac, 1888.*

1840s a series of acts of the British parliament had granted self-government to the colonies of settlement. Only in colonies too small, such as Western Australia, or too unreliable in relation to native peoples, such as Natal, was this grant withheld. Once they had become self-governing, the colonies were required to pay for their own civil and military administration. Colonists would act more responsibly, so the argument ran, if they had to pay for their own government and defence.

The British had created a new style of liberal empire. Freedoms granted within the movement to responsible government presumed that reciprocal obligations, interests and commitments remained. Greater Britain had been developed by British trade, investment and migration, governed through British parliamentary and legal institutions, infused with British religious and cultural ideas and defended by British naval and military forces. Freedom would produce its own loyalties, thought the liberal imperialist. Kinship, loyalty, economic and defence interests formed stronger ties than the strands of copper wire that made up the cable and periodically needed to be spliced and repaired.

But in the 1880s, as Britain entered a new era of international rivalry, serious strains did emerge. The British could not reverse the movement to a liberal empire of self-governing colonies, but now they required more help from them, in everything from defence to economic matters. 'Greater Britain' was to mean more than a patriotic map with areas of British red on almost every continent. 'Empire' was to mean power and economic resources, not a mere civilising cultural expansion. In 1884 the Imperial Federation League was set up to consider the possibility of co-ordinating the fragmentary liberal empire. One imperial propagandist, Alfred Barry, Anglican bishop of Sydney from 1884 to 1889, wrote in an essay on 'The loyalty of the colonies':

The present phase of relation to our colonies is, I am inclined to think, transitional and therefore critical—not unlike the period in domestic life when the sons of a family are just grown up to manhood, too old and too mature for the discipline and the dependence of earlier days, and yet not properly ready for separation to an absolute independence.



*Government House,  
Melbourne. Watercolour by  
Henry Grant Lloyd, 1888.*  
MITCHELL LIBRARY

In Australia a new sort of nationalism was emerging—an assertiveness of colonial interests and an enthusiasm to acquire a local empire in New Guinea and the Pacific. Dissatisfied with imperial policy in the region, colonial governments, especially in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales, attempted their own international diplomacy. In British official circles this was met with disapproval, but a growing nationalism asserted that what was best for Britain was not always best for Australia. In the centennial year, Australian public figures expressed loyalty to the crown while at the same time declaring the primacy of Australian interests.

In 1887, as we saw in chapter 1, Australians had taken their part in the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria. Less than a year later they were participating in their own centenary celebrations, often in the same places, under the same arches and banners, listening to the same speakers. In 1887 the toasts of loyalty to the crown were widely and enthusiastically proposed. In 1888 the toast was 'Advance Australia'. Australians had no difficulty in reconciling 1887 and 1888. Loyalty to the crown endured from jubilee to centenary. The imperial connection was organic, and therefore open to change and development. Australian society still reflected its British origins, but in significant ways, both material and intellectual, it had developed distinctive features. Even when imperial and Australian interests did diverge, these controversies were depicted as squabbles in a family. The mother country accepted the young colonies as partners in the advance of British civilisation and power. Many colonists still referred to Britain as 'home', while counting themselves to be Australians by birth and sentiment.

The imperial connection had four strands. The first was political, symbolised by the role of the colonial governors. The second was defence. The third was the economic strand of trade, investment and migration. The fourth strand, of culture and kinship, was of uncertain strength, as growing Australian nationalism caused some people to revise their ideas of imperial loyalty.

## GOVERNORS

For most Australians in 1888 'His Excellency the Governor' *was* the imperial connection. The Queen, the royal family and the imperial government were visibly present through the governor and his family residing in the Government House of each capital city. In Sir Henry Parkes's perception the governor was the principal link between the colonies and England. In London the imperialist George Baden-Powell saw the governors as 'the only remaining link binding our self-governing colonies to the empire'. He depicted them as 'merely the conventional, the outward and visible sign of the influences which exercise indisputable force, even though they do lie beneath the surface' of the imperial connection.

The governor played both a formal and an informal role. Constitutionally, colonial governments were still 'Her Majesty's Governments', even if the Queen left appointment and dismissal to her representative the governor. The 'governor-in-council' was still a reality, and the advice of the governor to the colonial cabinet was a crucial feature of politics. Legislation could still be denied royal approval on his advice, and premiers and ministers enjoyed a meaningful relationship with the governor, sometimes of friendship, occasionally of conflict, but never of indifference. What the governor thought still mattered in 1888, because it could form the basis of what the Queen and her ministers thought.

The governor and his family were informally at the head of colonial society, just as Queen Victoria and her own family were at the head of British society. Through Government House passed the colonial elites in a parade of receptions, balls, garden parties, presentations, private audiences and even picnics. The press devoted much space to the opinions and activities of the governor and his family, and listed the names of those who had attended Government House. Speeches by governors were reproduced in full and discussed in editorials, and their arrivals and departures were public events of high significance. The first historians of early New South Wales arranged their chapters according to governors' terms of office. Governors handed out honours, travelled widely and interested themselves in all aspects of life. They opened institutions and social occasions and addressed all sorts and conditions of people.

The most active and engaging of the governors in 1888 was the resident of Government House in Sydney, the young aristocrat Lord Carrington. He worked hard. His engagement diary logged the events of the celebrations in January and hardly slackened for the rest of the year. The question of Chinese immigration took much of his time. In April he made a well-received speech at Sydney University's commemoration day, recognising the 'undoubted national rights of Australia' on the issue, though he disliked the Chinese Restriction Act that Her Majesty's government put through an enthusiastic parliament. On 16 May, his forty-fifth birthday, Carrington read newspaper reports on the debate on the bill, and underlined with his pen the comments of politicians who showed understanding of the reluctance on the part of Her Majesty's government in London to give offence to the rulers of China. When the premiers met in June for a conference on the matter, Carrington had them to Government House for dinner, and they 'settled the Chinese question in the Drawing Room'.

Carrington also pursued the pleasures of an English gentleman. During the summer Lady Carrington and the children went to stay at the summer residence at Sutton Forest in the southern highlands, provided by the colony for governors. He joined them by train for weekends; he and his wife spent much time in the saddle, and he went shooting in the forest, recording one day that he had bagged

Lady Carrington.

MITCHELL LIBRARY



Lord Carrington.

MITCHELL LIBRARY



25 kangaroos. Back in Sydney he often dined at his club and sometimes went to the theatre in the evening. In June he attended the old Etonians' dinner. He was at ease meeting Australians. In August and September the governor toured the outback, noting the effects of the drought and meeting shearers at Dunlop station. He was given a demonstration of a shearing machine and tried his hand at shearing a sheep. In Wilcannia he met the town officials, including the police magistrate Edward Dickens, son of the novelist. At one country hotel he met a party of shearers 'on a bust' and shook hands with the last man standing, the rest being laid out drunk on the verandah. November found him in Melbourne for the Cup, staying at Government House and lunching with Sir William Clarke at his new mansion Cliveden.

The constitutional role of the governors was more controversial than their social role. Much of the tension in the imperial connection was expressed here. Sir Henry Parkes, aware of the danger, had recommended that a 'council of Australia' should be set up in London, comprising Australian representatives who would give colonial interests a voice at the heart of the empire. In the centennial year, the Kitt case in Queensland brought the conflict between colonial democracy and imperial prerogatives to centre stage.

In March Benjamin Kitt of Townsville was convicted of stealing three pairs of boots. Judge Noel sentenced him to three years' penal servitude, remarking that Kitt did not deserve the benefit of an early release under the Offenders Probation Act. When Kitt petitioned the Queensland government to reduce the severity of the sentence, a sad story emerged. Kitt was a first offender who denied the charge, there was some doubt about the evidence and the theft was minor. His pregnant wife had been terrified of giving birth without his support, and although he had been able to return to her for the birth, she shortly afterwards 'lost her reason', and was committed to the Woogaroo asylum where she died. The ministry of Sir Thomas McIlwraith agreed to Kitt's petition, and so recommended to the governor. But the governor, Sir Anthony Musgrave, refused his consent. He took the view that the royal prerogative of mercy should not overturn the verdict of a properly constituted colonial court.

The government pressed its case more strongly, partly out of compassion for Kitt; even more as an expression of the will of a democratic government. Indeed the ministry made it a matter of confidence and sovereignty; they would resign if the governor refused to take their advice. Musgrave dug in. Across Australia much was said on the realities of self-rule and the powers of the imperial government. Did responsible government in 1888 mean full home rule, or not? The issue was temporarily resolved when the secretary of state for colonies ordered Musgrave to release Kitt as an act of mercy. Colonial democracy had been recognised—or so Queenslanders thought. 'The constitutional crisis is at an end', claimed the *Brisbane Courier*. 'The Government have triumphed. Sir Thomas McIlwraith has vindicated the most cherished right of a free people—the right to govern themselves.'

But hardly had the triumph been celebrated when it emerged again. Three weeks later Sir Anthony Musgrave died suddenly. After expressions of sympathy to his family, the press went on to argue that future governors of Queensland should be drawn from men who had appropriate experience in governing colonies of settlement. Musgrave had previously been a 'crown colony' governor, and so, it was said, out of touch with colonial democracy. Some went further and suggested that the colonial ministry should be consulted before an appointment was made. Others argued that the colonial government should actually nominate the governor. On 7 November Sir Henry Blake was announced in London as Musgrave's successor.



Sir Anthony Musgrave. A. Garran (ed), *Picturesque atlas of Australasia*, Sydney 1886–88.



'Sample declined.' Lord Knutsford, secretary of state for the colonies, his stock of suitable appointees depleted, foists the junior and undistinguished governor of Newfoundland on the affronted people of Queensland. Queensland Figaro, 24 Nov 1888.

There was an outcry in Queensland. Issues of consultation and nomination were now mingled with criticism of Blake, who had joined the colonial service only in 1884, and in 1888 had been governor of lowly Newfoundland for only one year. Queenslanders saw themselves as occupying a first-class colony, offering a top salary for an experienced governor. Moreover, Blake was Anglo-Irish, associated with British policy in Ireland, and likely to inflame Orange and Green antagonisms in Queensland. Scandal also lurked behind the issue. With the support of the leader of the opposition, McIlwraith sent a message to London. The cable read: 'Sir Henry Blake's son resides near/at Brisbane. He is out of employment and has lately married a barmaid.'

The matter resolved itself for the moment when Blake resigned before taking up the appointment. Earlier, in July, there had arisen the similar issue of who was to succeed Sir William Robinson as governor of South Australia, and what say the colony would have in the decision. Victoria and New South Wales also joined the debate. A Victorian parliamentarian had declared that in previous decades the Australian settlements were increasingly 'assuming the position of nations, rather than of mere colonies'. Arthur Patchett Martin favoured consenting to the colonial request for consultation. 'Why should not the colonists, under direct supervision of the Crown, have a voice in the selection of their chief official?' he asked. Under pressure also from the New Zealanders and the French Canadians, the colonial office agreed in November to review the situation.

Behind the high drama, an important aspect of the imperial connection was becoming clear. The loyalty of Australians was to the crown, not to the British government. The *Bulletin* certainly argued for a republic, but the weight of public opinion was for independence within the empire, for home rule in the fullest sense. As the Brisbane *Courier* said at the conclusion of the Kitt case, Australia, while loyal to crown and empire,



Sir Henry Blake, the controversial appointee to the governorship of Queensland. Queensland Figaro, 17 Nov 1888.

asks for all the powers within her own territory that an independent State would have, and that these powers shall be exercised at the will of the representatives of the people. And who shall say we are wrong in asking this?

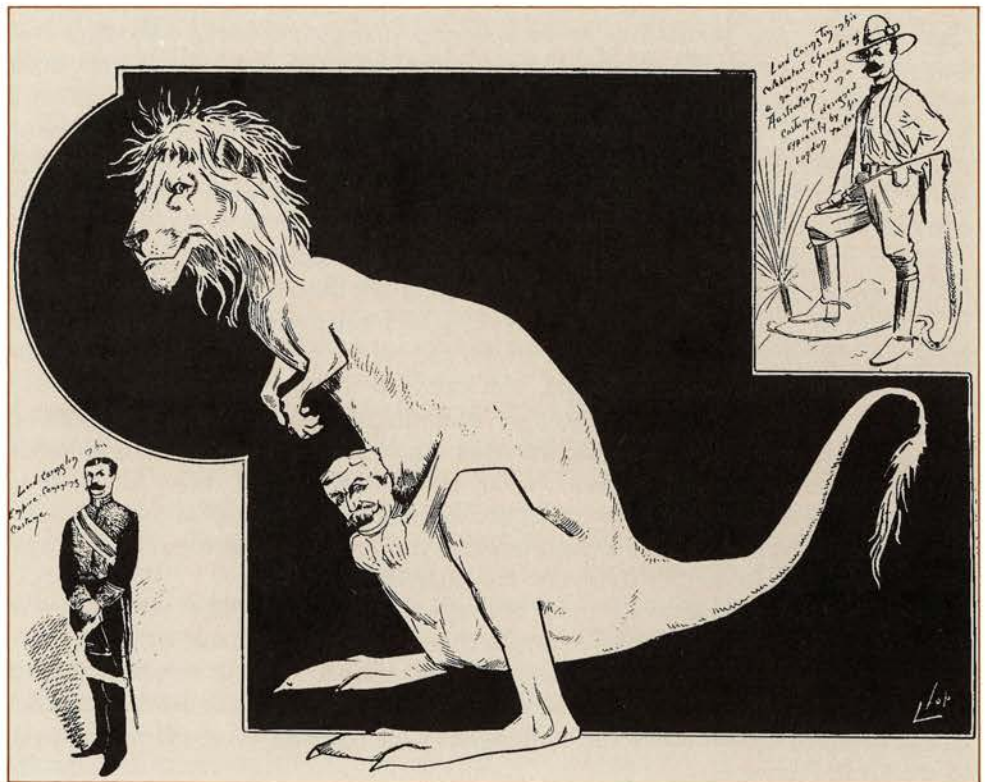
Certainly not the progressive imperialists in London, where it was now increasingly accepted that granting full colonial home rule was the best way to sustain the imperial connection. In Australia the centennial supplement to the *Sydney Morning Herald* stated plainly:

It was well for the struggling settlement, and well for the interests of the Empire, that the imperial authorities, taught by the sharp lessons of the American conflict, adopted a policy of concession. Had another policy prevailed, we may take it for granted that the first centennium of the colony's foundation would have closed amidst circumstances widely different from those we see around us now.

The small and isolated colony of West Australia was being considered as a candidate for responsible government. Objections were raised in Great Britain over the wisdom of granting home rule to this society of less than 45 000 settlers living in a vast area covering over 2.5 million square kilometres, already burdened with a large public debt of more than one million pounds and responsible for many widely dispersed Aborigines. In July 1887, when the draft constitution bill was sent to London, the governor, Sir Frederick Broome, supported it. Later he suggested that if necessary the north could be reserved as crown land for the use of the Aborigines, and that gold discoveries in the Kimberleys augured well for the economic future of the colony.

As the Victorian agent-general in London Sir Graham Berry had already remarked to an attentive audience at the Royal Colonial Institute on the occasion

*'The Kanga-lion, or Lion-garoo.—A Curious Animal Lately Discovered by Lord Car[r]ington. "I consider that the position which I have the honour to hold is not simply that of an Imperial official sent here to represent English ideas and English views in Australia. (Cheers.) I hold that my duty is a far grander one than that. I consider it my duty, as far as I can, to strengthen the cordial relations which exist between the mother country and this fair land, and which are so precious to both."—Governor Car[r]ington at Sydney University Commemoration.' Bulletin, 21 Apr 1888.*



of the Queen's golden jubilee, the imperial connection had become flexible enough to cope with the development of the colonial societies as new nations.

... a feeling of nationality is arising in Australia quite consistent with loyalty to the Crown, but which takes cognizance of Australian interest, even in the distant future; ... The very fact that the connection is a voluntary one, that no force is contemplated to maintain it, constitutes its real charm. There is no friction because there exists no obstruction. The connection is absolutely one of affection, intensified by absence of all needless attempts at control, and solidified by mutual interest. The Colonies trade with England partly in consequence of the political connection, but also because it is best and cheapest to do so. They cling to her power partly because it is their duty, but also because it is the best guarantee for their safety and continued progress.

By 1888 the new conditions of colonial democracy and home rule required governors to voice the opinion of Australians at Westminster, as well as to implement imperial policies. Carrington, the most popular, increasingly associated himself and his family with the life and aspirations of New South Wales. Reflecting on her husband's speeches during centennial week, Lady Carrington noted:

C.C. made the best speech of the week, turning to the people and telling them what England had done and could do for them, and that the cry 'Australia for the Australians' was an accomplished fact *now*; and that if they had not Old England at their back, it would soon be a dream. Everyone complimented him on his speech, Governors and Sir H. Parkes and natives from Australia alike and I felt very proud of him.

## DEFENCE

For all the proud proclamations of nationhood and independence made in January, for all the demonstrations of technological advance and progress planned for the Melbourne Centennial Exhibition in August, for all the demands for colonial democracy, the break in the cable brought home to Australians just how isolated they were, and how dependent on the power of the Royal Navy.

In 1887 a colonial conference had taken place in London. The Imperial Federation League had hoped that it would lead to the building of a strong imperial federation, but the British government and the colonial leaders preferred to dwell on specific points. At the head of the list were questions of Australian defence and Australian ambitions in the Pacific. After some hard bargaining, Britain agreed to supply five cruisers and two torpedo gunboats, based in Sydney, for use in Australian coastal defences. Australians would contribute to the costs, the agreement was to last for ten years, and Britain gave an assurance that the Royal Navy would not be reduced in Pacific waters once the Australian squadron arrived.

This agreement reflected the evolving character of the formal imperial connection. Britain looked to the settlement colonies to play a more prominent role in imperial affairs and the Australians attempted to redefine the connection in a way that would serve Australia's interests. The Australians were beginning to make their presence felt. An English participant at the conference was impressed by the performance of the leader of the Victorian delegation, the young Alfred Deakin

There were arranged on one side of the table the rulers of England, both past and present, and on the other the representatives of the colonies ... who delivered themselves of many platitudes, in excellent language ... with regard

to their loyalty to the Mother Country, and hoping for the success of the Colonies. At last it came to the turn of Mr Deakin, the Chief Secretary for Victoria. He struck an entirely different note. He told us at once what Australia thought of England . . . He told us how we had given the Islands of the Pacific to the French, and Samoa to the Germans, and he told it with such *bonhomie* that we could not help realising that we had before us a real live man.

Deakin was the son of an English father and a Welsh mother, and believed strongly in British culture and the value of the empire. He was also a member of the Australian Natives Association and an Australian patriot. He argued that if the imperial connection was to remain strong, a more active assistance was required for Australian interests in the Pacific. The British prime minister, the cynical tory Lord Salisbury, declined to meet Deakin's demand. Indeed he remarked privately that he found the Australian delegation composed of

the most unreasonable people I have ever heard or dreamt of. They want us to incur all the bloodshed and the danger [in the Pacific] and the stupendous cost of a war with France, of which almost the exclusive burden will fall on us, for a group of islands which to us are as valueless as the South Pole—and to which they are only attached by a debating-club sentiment.

Some problems now at the heart of the imperial connection were demonstrated by an incident in 1888 involving Captain H.T. Wright RN. Wright commanded the gunboat *HMQS Gayundah*, which flew the white ensign, designating its secondment to the Royal Navy's Australian Squadron. Wright was dismissed for inefficiency by the colonial naval authorities under the Queensland Defence Act of 1884. He refused to accept dismissal and appealed to London. Beneath the legal argument over Wright's dismissal and the rivalry of British and Australian officers lay the deeper issue of the control of naval defences in Australian waters. From the British viewpoint, the Royal Navy took its orders from London. From the colonial perspective, here was a plain case of Australians being treated as if they had no say in making a common naval policy. The imperial connection was again failing to reflect the new two-way partnership.

*Defence force of New South Wales. Each colony had its own defence force with volunteer infantry, artillery and cavalry men. In Australia, as elsewhere in the Empire, uniforms followed the British style, with infantry officers in red jackets, artillery in blue. Deviations from this style were creeping in, such as the Australian slouch hat, worn by Victorian soldiers in 1885. Illustrated Sydney News, 24 Dec 1886.*





The departure of the S.S. Orient, by Charles Conder. Conder, an immigrant Englishman, dramatised the relations between Australia and the old country in this painting of a modern ocean liner leaving Circular Quay, Sydney. Oil, 1888.

ART GALLERY OF  
NEW SOUTH WALES

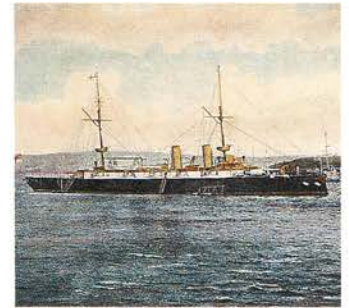
RMS Orizaba.  
MITCHELL LIBRARY



The settlement colonies, led by Australians, had now become an essential part of the economic well-being and security of the British as a world power in the south Pacific. The secretary of state for colonies remarked that the 'whole fabric of the commercial system of the Empire ... depends on a mutually reciprocal relationship', and that a maritime war for imperial interests would endanger 'two-thirds of the sea-borne trade of the world'. The strand of defence, so vital to Australian interests, intertwined with the economic strand. Australians depended on a free flow of trade, investment and migration to connect their regional economies to the world.

## TRADE, INVESTMENT AND MIGRATION

The celebrations of Thursday 26 January centred on the waters of Port Jackson. At first sunlight at 5.18 am and high water at Fort Denison in Sydney Harbour at 6 am, a busy international harbour could be observed. The Orient line's luxury steamer, RMS (Royal Mail Steamer) *Orizaba*, had brought imperial mail, visitors and migrants to Sydney, and was to act as flagship that day for the Centennial Regatta Committee. Less glamorous vessels filled the quays and wharves. The *Cape Breton* had arrived from Glasgow and the *Yarra* from Marseilles, in time for the centennial events. On Centennial Day the *Almeda* and the *Shenwood* sailed for San Francisco, and the *Brilliant* for London. Coastal and intercolonial arrivals on Wednesday were from Eden, the Clarence River, the Manning River, the Mackay River, the Richmond River and Rockhampton; on Thursday from Launceston, Brisbane, Adelaide, Nambucca Heads, the Bellinger River and Newcastle. The gleaming



HMS Orlando, the new flagship of the Royal Navy's Australian station. According to arrangements made in 1887 the Australian colonies contributed to the cost of maintaining, in Australian waters, a squadron of the Royal Navy which had the responsibility of guarding British and Australian interests against imperial claims by other European powers.

MITCHELL LIBRARY

The town pier at Sandridge, Port Melbourne. Most overseas cargoes were handled here. The photograph is by the city's leading photographer, J.W. Lindt.

LA TROBE LIBRARY



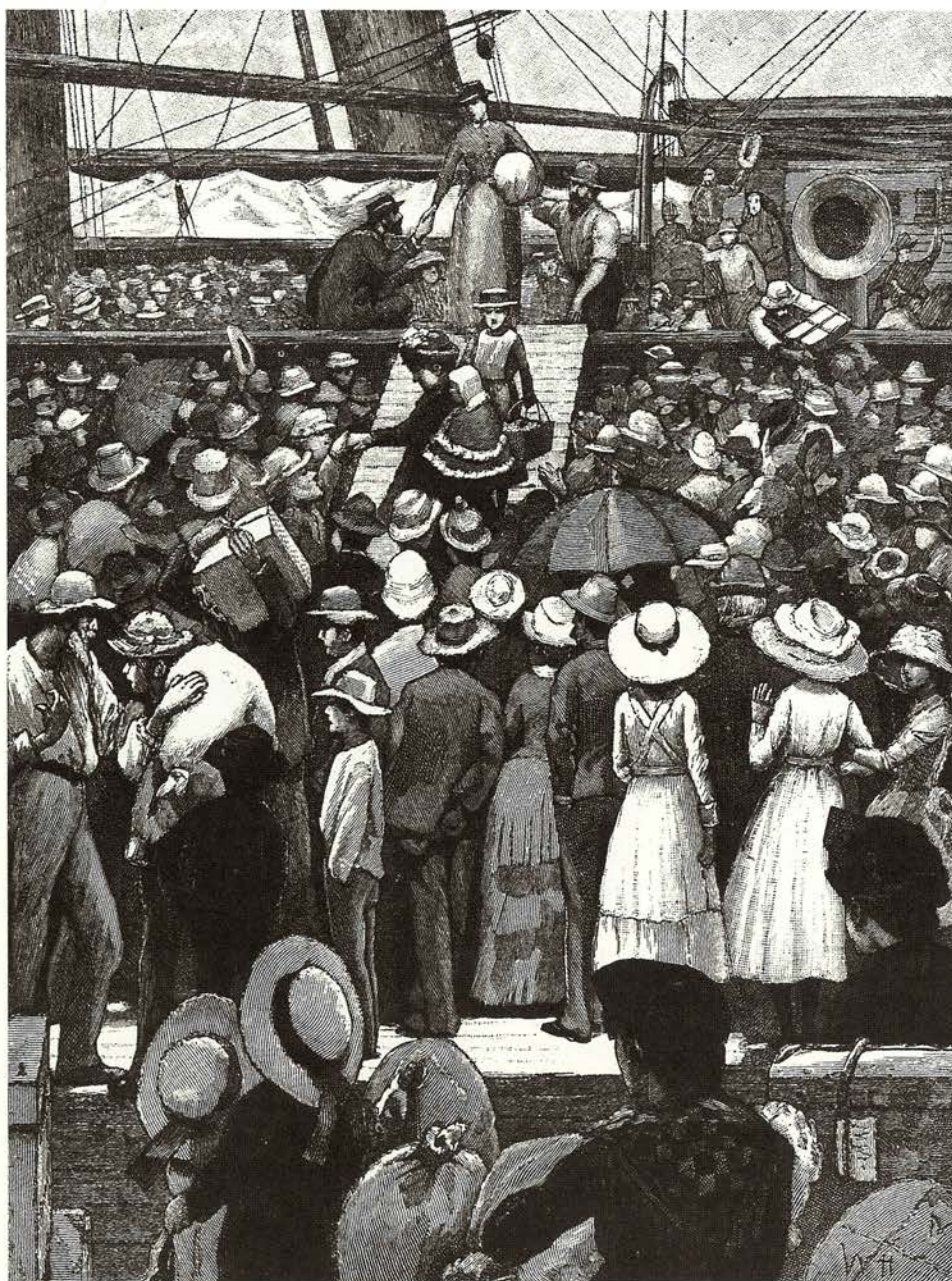
new Victorian government steamer *Lady Loch* had brought the Victorian governor and the *Lucinda* the Queensland governor, to Sydney.

International connections with continental Europe, the United States and Canada were represented in the harbour. A French man-of-war, the *Duchaffant*, rode at anchor near a vessel that created great interest, the Russian corvette *Rynola*. Dominating the harbour, however, were the line of British and Australian naval vessels. Later reviewed by the official party, headed by the New South Wales governor and commander-in-chief of the forces, Lord Carrington, the combined naval squadron was the most powerful statement of the imperial connection.

In 1888 the busiest port in the world was London. Sydney was the fourteenth busiest, Melbourne the eleventh. The ports of each capital linked rural hinterlands with the wider world. Over the last century the Australian colonies had developed as outliers of the British economy. Although located on the opposite side of the world, their economic development was tied closely to that of Britain. Seventy per cent of imports now came from Britain and eighty per cent of exports went to Britain. All overseas borrowing took place in London and nearly all migrants came from Britain and Ireland. Everyone agreed that the strand of trade, investment and migration was still essential. But opinions differed as to whether the pace of economic growth was set by the British or by colonial merchants, investors and governments.

One worrying aspect of the economic relationship was that the total value of overseas exports from the Australian colonies had not increased in the decade. It was £30 million in 1880 and £29 million in 1888. Wool and related products, mainly tallow and hides, comprised 60 per cent of total exports. Practically the entire wool clip was exported, three-quarters to Britain and the rest to Europe. The quantity of wool exported had grown over the decade, but sagging prices cancelled out this increase. Minerals comprised 28 per cent of exports. Other exports included grain and fodder, butter, sugar and timber.

While the value of exports had stagnated, the value of imports had risen from £23 million in 1880 to £37 million in 1888. This sharp increase reflected first of



*Immigrants landing in Queensland. The rapid development of Queensland and the reluctance of people from southern colonies to endure the tropical climate forced the Queensland government to offer free passage to British immigrants. It was the only Australian colony doing so in 1888. Even so, a steady stream of Queenslanders migrated southwards. Cassell's picturesque Australasia.*

all the high level of public and private investment in the eastern colonies, and consequent importation of investment goods, including railway rails, bar and rod iron, fencing wire, tinplate, steam engines and other engineering tools and equipment, and building materials—softwood timber, roofing iron, paint, window glass and slates. Secondly, high incomes in the colonies stimulated the importing of consumer goods. The main categories were woollen and cotton piecegoods and furnishings, hats, gloves and silk goods, a wide range of foodstuffs, and tea, beer, whisky and brandy.

While 70 per cent of imports came from Britain, European manufacturers were starting to penetrate colonial markets. The summer seasonality of the wool clip greatly affected port life, but the flow of imports was much more even. Overseas



shipping companies, not colonial ones, earned the freight. British lines dominated, even though the Messageries Maritimes, a subsidised French line, began regular sailings to eastern Australia in 1883, and the German line Nord Deutscher Lloyd followed in 1887. Direct wool exports to these countries were now increasing.

The growing gap in the balance of trade was filled by overseas borrowing. This was an invisible import of financial capital from Britain. Since 1882 the Australian colonies had absorbed one-quarter of all British overseas investment. Argentina, at a similar stage of economic development, was the other leading borrower. It was overseas borrowing that fuelled the economic boom in the eastern mainland colonies. Overseas borrowing had averaged only £3 million a year in the 1870s, but then increased to a peak of £24 million in 1886 and was still £21 million in 1888. This borrowing financed half of total new investment in Australia (the other half coming from local savings). About 40 per cent of the new investment was undertaken by colonial governments and 60 per cent by private enterprise.

In earlier days colonial governments had obtained most of their funds from land sales and custom duties, but these were not enough and they took to borrowing heavily in London. In 1888 the construction of railways took 65 per cent of government investment; other categories were roads and bridges, water and sewerage works, school and other public buildings. Private investment was channelled into two main areas, the purchase and equipping of outback pastoral properties, and building investment in the cities, especially Melbourne. Railway construction, pastoral fencing and house construction required much manpower; they helped to sustain the demand for labour and so the level of immigration.

Timothy Coghlan thought that capital imports were good if they were invested in 'productive pursuits', but he knew that an excessive import of capital would spill over into speculation, as it had done in the Melbourne land and building boom. The danger was that interest had to be paid on the funds borrowed. In 1888 interest and dividends due in London comprised £5 million on private account and £5.3 million on government account. This total amount of £10.3 million had doubled since 1880, and was now one-third of the value of exports. Would the railway lines now under construction in South Australia, New South Wales and Queensland, justify their costs? Had the Melbourne land boom gone too far? What would happen if British investors turned off the flow of funds?

John McMullen, general manager of the British-owned Union Bank of Australia, pulled back advances in 1888 and E.M. Young, manager of the British finance house the Australian Mercantile Land and Finance Company, was also worried and ordered his colonial managers to curb loans to pastoralists, even if that meant losing business to colonial pastoral finance houses. But the optimists were well in command. H.G. Turner of the Commercial Bank of Australia kept up an aggressive expansion. It was Australian politicians, civil servants, businessmen, financiers and pastoralists who decided how much to borrow in London, how much to invest in the colonies and how much to import. The colonies were dependent economies in the sense that trade, investment and migration were tied closely to Britain, but the choice to maintain this strand of the imperial connection was freely made in Australia.

From the ports Australians conducted their vital export trade; through the ports came the new settlers. In the harbours of the capital cities, immigrants got their first view of the new land. The days of large-scale assisted and free migration were almost over and only a minority of migrants, mainly bound for Queensland, were assisted: 9444 of the 31 725 British migrants who arrived in the centennial year. The ability of colonial governments to turn the tap on and off, according to local demand for labour, had helped to maintain a high level of employment.



Migration had shaped the new society. Over the last thirty years, 40 per cent of population increase had been due to net migration, almost all from Britain and Ireland. Most migrants stayed in urban areas and migration had a considerable impact on the nature of Australian society, reinforcing social and class distinctions. Migrants voyaged in British vessels that were carefully divided by class structures of price and accommodation. A cabin cost the handsome sum of about £50, intermediate accommodation £20 or £30, and steerage £15 or £18.

Of 26 228 British adult migrants, most were working-class men and women. Only 1638 adult males called themselves 'gentlemen, professional men and merchants' and only 34 females described themselves as 'gentlewomen and governesses'. The largest number of men were labourers, followed by clerks and then farmers and miners. Nearly all the women were listed as domestic and farm servants, with a few milliners and dressmakers. They were attracted by the prospect of work, and the hope of a life better than the one they had left behind. They were tied to Britain by birth and culture, but ready to become loyal Australians if the new country could give them a living and a place in society.

From a distant land, by  
David Davies. Oil, 1889.  
ART GALLERY OF  
NEW SOUTH WALES

## AUSTRALIA AND BRITAIN

By the time migrants had reached Australian shores after the long sea voyage, they were ready to believe in a new society filled with opportunities. John Hawley left England, poor and cold, on ss *Austral* in January 1888. His spirits revived on 10

February with 'the first sight of Australian soil this morning'. Williamstown he found to be 'a very pretty place—every house has its little flower garden in the front, [and even] the poorest cottage has its borders of what would be reckoned choice flowers'. Then to Melbourne, 'a fine town', where he enjoyed 'the best dinner I ever ate in my life for 6d'. Finally, late in February he reached the centennial city of Sydney—'a glorious morning and I never saw anything so beautiful as the harbour'.

The hope of breaking old class bonds was for many people as powerful as the hope of acquiring property. When Sir Henry Parkes stood beside Lord Carrington on platforms at the centennial celebrations, he was a symbol of such hope realised. The seventh son of a poor Englishman, Parkes had left his homeland as a bounty migrant in 1839, and had written a poem about his departure, ending

I do not fear but Austral Soil  
Will well repay the ardent toil:—  
I do not fear but I shall find  
Hearts whose greeting will be kind;—  
I do not doubt the sun will shine  
As bright as on that land of mine;  
But still the tears unbidden come—  
Farewell my home—my cherish'd home.

Parkes's toil never yielded a fortune and he faced bankruptcy on several occasions, yet his ascent to public prominence and status was such that he could in 1882 visit his long 'cherish'd home' as 'one of the social lions of the season' in London. The impoverished radical, the sympathiser with chartism and the ideas of the Birmingham Political Union, had risen to power and standing in Australia. In the centennial year he accepted a second knighthood from Her Majesty, writing to Lord Carrington in far from radical terms—'I cannot tell your Excellency how deeply I feel all your expressions of confidence and kindness all through the year which has passed.' The celebrations in Sydney, with their balance of imperial and Australian themes, were his creation. Migration had made the poor and sickly immigrant of 1839 into a major colonial and imperial figure. Migration had finally unmade the original radical in plain Henry Parkes and in September 1888 he despatched troops to the Newcastle miners' strike.

Just as information travelled to and fro along the cable, so the human traffic flowed in both directions. While Britain sent some of its poorer people as migrants, rich and influential sojourners and tourists also travelled out. The governors were the most important and visible, but there were also representatives of financial institutions, banks and shipping companies. Out of Australia flowed a smaller number of travellers to Britain, composed largely of the rich and young men training for professions. Robert Chirnside, whose father and uncle had made their fortune and built a great mansion at Werribee in Victoria, went to Cambridge in 1888. His family lived in Scotland for five years during this time, in their castle in Sutherlandshire. While at Cambridge Robert was kept in touch with events in Australia by his old school friend William Forbes, whose letters told of the Centennial Exhibition, the economic situation, the cutting of the cable and, perhaps most important of all for the exile, the Geelong football scores.

While Australia was a land of opportunity for those of British origin, this new society resisted any integration with the native people. The British advance was met by complex Aboriginal responses in the face of dispossession, which varied from valiant, violent defence to spiritual and metaphysical invocations from the other side of the expanding frontier of settlement. Aboriginal retreat on the land

*'A curiosity in her own country.' Phil May reminds white Australians, determined to defend 'their' country against Chinese immigrants, that the original people of their land have been dispossessed.*  
Bulletin, 3 Mar 1888.



A CURIOSITY IN HER OWN COUNTRY.

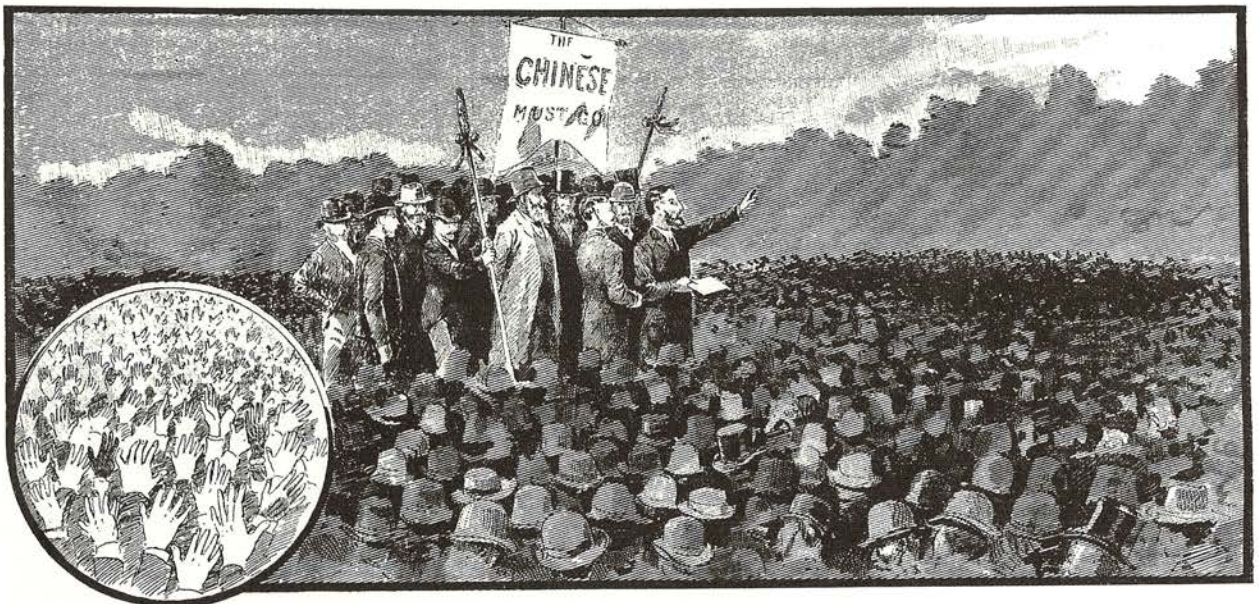
and into an age-old culture was matched by the settlers' sense of exclusiveness as Europeans in the Pacific region, which denied Aborigines the potential to be fellow citizens. The settlers also formed a barrier of disdain and fear against the surrounding native peoples and those from the South Pacific and Asia.

Chinese arrivals were falling in the centennial year, and there had only been 5516 arrivals in the whole decade so far. Around this small group ugly controversy arose. The anti-Chinese agitation of 1888 expressed the dark side of colonial nationalism. On 27 April the vessel *Afghan* arrived at Port Melbourne carrying 268 Chinese passengers, 52 intended for Victoria. They were not allowed to land as a result of government intervention. The *Afghan* proceeded to Sydney, where an Anti-Chinese League organised a huge and excited rally on 3 May. Next day the government of Sir Henry Parkes acted to prevent Chinese people from landing unless they had naturalisation papers. The Chinese Restriction Bill that troubled Lord Carrington was rushed through parliament, limiting entry by a variety of shipping and residential qualifications. By November the Victorian parliament had also passed a restrictive act.

An intercolonial conference had already decided in June that Chinese immigration should be stopped. The matter of the Chinese was 'the burning question of the hour', declared the *Adelaide Register*, and public agitation was as 'widespread and vehement' as at the time of 'the attempt of the Imperial Government to revive transportation to Australia'. The Anti-Chinese League reflected the concern of labourer, miner and entrepreneur that the Chinese brought unfair competition. It also reflected prejudices against people of another culture. More specifically, the agitation had imperial dimensions.

Australian politicians feared that the imperial authorities had no intention of helping to restrict Chinese immigration. In Britain, trade and defence arrangements with the Chinese government were in progress. The migration and labour of Chinese in British territories were also under consideration. Chinese commissioners had visited Australia in 1887, and the anti-Chinese argued that these visits, and discussions between Peking and London, foreshadowed an invasion. In April 1888 there were calls from Australia for the imperial authorities to close off Chinese entry by renegotiating treaties with the Chinese Empire. But the British

*Scenes from the great anti-Chinese demonstration in Sydney, 3 May 1888. Some 40 000 people marched through the streets of the city and later assembled at a mass meeting in the Domain. Town and Country Journal, 16 June 1888.*





*'The toady's dream: a colonial peerage.'* Bulletin, 27 Feb 1886.

government would not be pushed, and reserved its position. At this moment the *ss Afghan* came over the horizon.

By the end of the year the crisis was over, this round of it anyway. On 20 December royal assent was given to the restrictive colonial legislation. But it was given glumly and agitated colonists were well aware that here was a case in which imperial and Australian concerns had not coincided. A deep fear endured that if colonists had not acted to protect themselves, they could have been flooded by Chinese migrants. Australian political leaders also noted the lesson that the imperial government might have been prepared to sacrifice Australian interests in order to further Anglo-Chinese relations. This was not the way to treat overseas communities of kith and kin, who formed the core of the British Empire in the South Pacific.

Despite these divisive developments, the imperial connection had reproduced a British style of society in the antipodes. But it was a particular and unique society. The cable bound Australians to the centre of an empire which had fashioned their values and ideas and institutions, and which had imposed upon them certain rhythms and traditions. But the new society was no replica of the public domain of the old world, and Australians in 1888 refused to make neat political and cultural orientations for the convenience of history. They declined to be either loyalists or republicans and both polar points gained less than a substantial minority.

The voices of the polar opposites had been heard during the jubilee of 1887, when loud and effusive declarations of allegiance to the crown had encouraged some radicals to press for a more independent status. Henry Lawson's contribution to the jubilee celebrations was a call to 'Fling out the flag of the Southern Cross!', the flag 'stained with the blood of the diggers who died by it'. Lawson was to link his nationalism to social radicalism, and by the centennial year he was ready to make his own public statement of loyalty—to the poor. Having 'listened through the music and the sounds of revelry' which had made up 'all the hollow noises of that year of Jubilee', he approached the centenary with a clear eye. In January 1888 he wrote in his poem 'Army of the Rear':

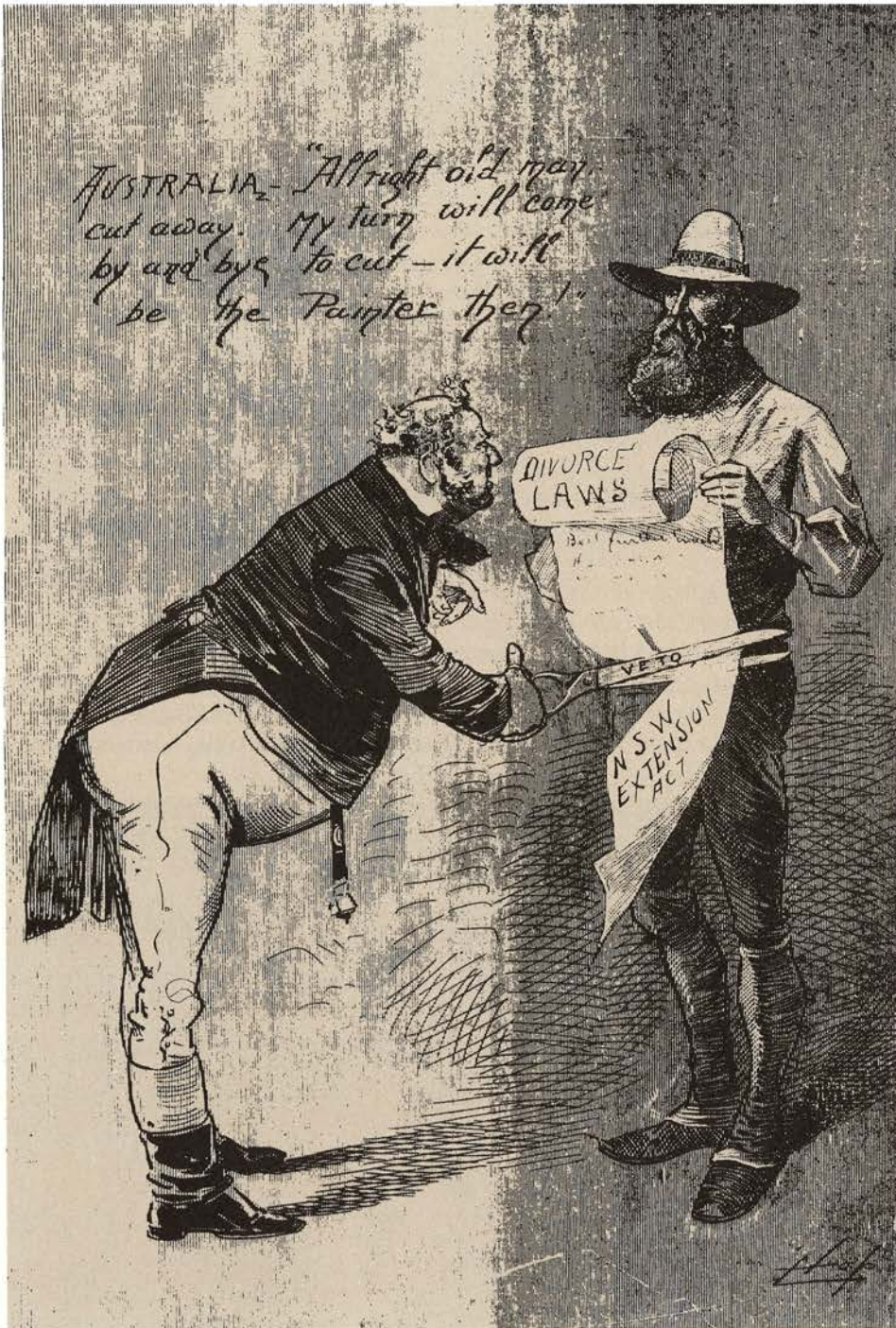
I heard beyond the music and beyond the loyal cheer  
 The steady tramp of thousands that were marching in the rear.  
 Tramp! tramp! tramp!  
 They seem to shake the air,  
 Those never-ceasing footsteps of the outcasts in the rear.

When Lawson looked at the imperial connection, he saw class oppression.

I looked upon the nobles, with their lineage so old;  
 I looked upon their mansions, on their acres and their gold,  
 I saw their women radiant in jewelled robes appear,  
 And then I joined the army of the outcasts in the rear.

Lawson was not followed by the mass of his fellow Australians, whose perception of the strengths and limitations of the imperial connection was more complex. Most people sensed the need for a changing connection to the mother country, giving greater independence while maintaining ties of defence, trade, finance and communication. The colonial nationalism of old Sir Henry Parkes and young Alfred Deakin envisaged a future of change and potential, within a framework of imperial security both military and economic.

The transitional nature of the connection was also illustrated in the area of law and the courts. Australians prided themselves on their independent judiciary and the quality of their increasingly native-born lawyers, barristers, and judges. Yet the legal tradition was founded in British law and procedures, and the Australian



'Another step towards Australian independence.' Livingston Hopkins saw the British government's power to veto Australian legislation, as it did the New South Wales divorce legislation of 1887, as strengthening the movement toward a declaration of Australian independence. Bulletin, 31 Mar 1888.

profession, in form and dress, was a replica of the English, right down to the gowns and wigs worn religiously in humid summers. Technical issues in the area of domestic social legislation suggested how conflicts could arise. Since 1886 New South Wales had been attempting to revise legislation in the area of matrimonial law, largely by expanding the grounds for separation and divorce. The bill failed to gain royal assent in 1887, as it was 'at variance with the established Divorce Law of the Empire'. Wrangles continued throughout 1888 and by the end of the year

the question had still not been resolved. In a year when the Australian legal profession reached towards more independence at the intercolonial conference of judges in Melbourne, a major piece of colonial legislation could still be 'reserved'. Such an action by the imperial authorities was uncommon, but the intervention from London did indicate how imperial and colonial interests could conflict.

A similar story could be told in relation to the Christian Church. There was no established church, but the Church of England enjoyed a pre-eminent position and other churches reproduced British and Irish denominational communities. The people managed to live by an ecclesiastical calendar, hymnal and liturgy based on northern seasons and images. The season of Lent, celebrated in Europe during the lengthening days of spring, was transferred to the Australian church calendar as the days were shortening in autumn. As Christmas hymns celebrated silent, snow-filled nights, the shepherds of the Australian bush sweltered around their drying billabongs.

*'The first Anglo-Australian football match'—Rugby—played at Moore Park, Sydney, on 2 June 1888 between Britain and New South Wales. Ten thousand spectators watched the Britishers defeat the home team by 18 points to 2. The British team was captained by Robert Seddon. Town and Country Journal, 7 July 1888.*

And yet all was not imitation. Just as the laws began to reflect colonial practice in land, labour and commerce, so, too, faithful Australian Christians were starting to be led to prayer by a native-born clergy, and to sing hymns not only ancient and modern but also colonial and Australian. The children attended schools based on English systems, yet studied a curriculum that now gave some attention to Australian geography and history.

In politics Australians reproduced the British model. They operated a two-party system and followed British parliamentary procedures in the form and style of government. But the mutation away from that model was well advanced by 1888, both in terms of the issues discussed and of actual constitutional arrangements. In journalism and literature, colonial and imperial material mixed. Australians could





The sixth Australian cricket team, which toured England in 1888. *Town and Country Journal*, 30 June 1888.

enjoy the latest novelty of the bush poets or follow the serialisation of a new novel by Thomas Hardy. They could attend centennial picnics and sing colonial songs under the union jack.

Australians played British sports and took the greatest delight in contests where they could defeat English teams at home and away. Who cared about defeating the visiting American baseball team in Adelaide in 1888 when the real challenge was to defeat Englishmen at cricket? That had been done famously in 1882 when the London *Sporting Times* grieved that English cricket had died at the Oval and that the body would be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia. The centennial year was a confusing one for imperial cricket. Two separate English teams were playing in Australia early in the year, one invited by the New South Wales Cricket Association and the other by the Melbourne Cricket Club in a spectacular display of unfederal enterprise. In the English summer an Australian team omitting some of the colonies' best players won one of three matches against sides representing England but lost the other two. No cricket match this year seemed a satisfactory trial of strength between motherland and colonies; but as an institution the 'Anglo-Colonial test matches', as the *Bulletin* called them in 1887, were firmly established as a ritual of imperial culture. Migrant and native born alike were British in their love of the game and Australian in the hope that the colonial side would win.

Fred Coneybeer, once a migrant, had no trouble in deciding his identity; 1888 was a busy year in his life, much of it reflecting on the imperial connection, but also shaped by his own interests and society. He was elected to be a senior official in his trade union. He was an avid follower of sport, watching with pleasure when the English rugby footballers were defeated by South Australians and noting in his diary the one victory of the Australian cricketers in England. He helped to organise an anti-Chinese meeting in the Adelaide Town Hall in May. He took not merely a thoroughly Australian, but a distinctly South Australian view of larger political issues. He noted, without irony, in his journal for 24 May: 'Thursday, Queens Birth Day, and also my sister Kate ...' What better Australian statement of the imperial connection?