

1877.

VICTORIA.

REPORT

OF THE

VICTORIAN COMMISSIONERS

TO THE

SYDNEY EXHIBITION OF 1876.

PRESENTED TO BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY'S COMMAND.

By Authority:

JOHN FERRES, GOVERNMENT PRINTER, MELBOURNE.

REPORT.

To the Honorable the Chief Secretary of Victoria.

SIR,

We have the honor to report that, immediately upon the receipt of your telegram of date April 30th, informing us of our appointment as Commissioners, we conferred together as to the best means of carrying out your instructions, and we have attended daily at the Exhibition in the performance of the duties entrusted to us.

The Exhibition was opened by His Excellency the Governor of New South Wales on the 10th of April, and the attendance of the public was unprecedentedly large. Very tempestuous weather occurred in Sydney for several days prior to our appointment ; and, as the annexe, in which most of the articles sent from Canada and the United States were shown, was not impervious to the rain, we found on visiting the Exhibition for the first time on the 1st of May that some of the goods had been removed, and that others had suffered damage from the storm. We were, therefore, precluded from seeing this portion of the Exhibition under favorable circumstances. We have, however, attempted by the exercise of greater diligence to overcome as far as may be this disadvantage ; but notwithstanding that every facility has been given us in the prosecution of our enquiries, we still feel some regret in not being able to make our Report as full and satisfactory as we could desire.

The Exhibition just closed is the annual Metropolitan Show of the Agricultural Society of New South Wales. Tasmania and Queensland have separate courts in the main building ; and there are collective exhibits from Hawaii and Japan. Owing to the strong representations made by Mr. Augustus Morris, the Executive Commissioner for New South Wales to the International Exhibition held at Philadelphia last year, the Dominion of Canada has been induced to make a large exhibition of their manufacturing industry ; and the representative Commissioners for that colony at Philadelphia were also instrumental in forwarding to Sydney several important contributions from the United States of America. Under these circumstances the present Exhibition assumes the character of an intercolonial, if not of an international display.

The live stock, which form one of the principal attractions of the Exhibition, had been removed before we received your telegram. The annual collection in Sydney of most of the best pedigree stock of New South Wales invests the exhibitions with special interest in the eyes of the colonists, and attracts people from all districts of the interior to the capital. The traders take advantage, therefore, of these opportunities to exhibit samples of their importations, and especial prominence is given to agricultural implements of all kinds. The goods sent from Canada and the United States of America constitute the most novel and important feature of the Exhibition, and to these we have more especially directed our attention.

CANADA.

The Government of Canada have commissioned the Honorable John Young, Mr. Flemming, and Mr. Brown to act in the interest of manufacturers who have sent goods from the Dominion to this Exhibition, and also to report upon the resources of Australia and upon the openings which may exist for the interchange of commodities.

Upwards of one hundred and forty exhibitors, chiefly residing in the province of Ontario, have sent samples of their manufactures, and we have been very favorably impressed with the variety and general excellence of their goods. Great progress has been made by Canada in most of the arts and industries of civilized life, and we find that many articles which have hitherto been imported into Australia exclusively from the United States are precisely similar in material, style, and workmanship to those now sent for inspection from Canada. We are informed also that many of the goods imported from the United States are really the produce of Canadian workshops, and that, in the event of a direct trade being established between the Dominion and Australia, such goods could be supplied at a cheaper rate than now. In the whole range of agricultural implements there is observable sound material, faithful work, and great adaptability to the requirements of Australia. A few only of these we may mention. A power straw-cutter (Cat. No. 18) has a simple and ingenious arrangement of the bed-plate which keeps the straw evenly under the knife; the IXL combined reaper and mower (Cat. No. 24) is constructed in a simple and effective manner for heavy work, the liability to damage being reduced to a minimum; the meadow lark reaper (Cat. No. 27) is a beautifully balanced machine and would be most efficient on cleanly farmed land; a hand straw-cutter (Cat. No. 26), which, by slicing the straw diagonally, reduces the labor of the operator and lessens the strain upon the knife. Various other implements were in great number, and all appeared good of their kind. There was a large supply of well-finished carriages of various shapes and descriptions, and there were also some waggons, one of which (the Farmer's waggon, Cat. No. 34) is a great improvement upon such vehicles as are used by agriculturists in Australia, being superior in point of lightness, strength, and capacity for the carriage of grain. The carriage-builders of Canada also send a large supply of hickory and other strong light-woods specially suited to their trade, and the collection of carriage-making materials was on the whole very satisfactory. The timber forests of Canada constitute one of the great elements of their wealth, and in a large measure account for the unprecedented activity which her people have shown in ship-building. Canadian lumber is largely exported from New York. The samples of fine flooring boards, doors, laths, pickets, palings, &c., shown here, will compare favorably with similar articles produced elsewhere, and, as Australia must look to North America for this description of building material, there is special interest in the opinion of the Commissioners from the Dominion, to the effect that the immense forests of Canada will yield us our best and cheapest supply. The furniture sent from the Dominion consists almost entirely wholly of black walnut and bird's-eye maple. The workmanship of many of the articles is very superior, and the prices are low. The dark color of the black walnut gives to unpolished furniture made of that material a sombre appearance as compared with Australian cedar and pine, to which the colonists are most accustomed. Tubs, buckets, and other descriptions of woodenware shown here are of excellent quality and moderate in price. The assortment of brassfounders' ware and of plumbers' plated goods (Cat. No. 109) was quite equal to anything we have seen imported from any other country, and the edge tools and builders' hardware are generally good. The samples of salt are also very superior, although the higher rates of freight from Canada would probably prevent their importation. The building slates shown do not represent the best production of Canada. The boots and shoes are in most cases well made, but the styles are mostly such as are not worn in Australia. The woollens are of good serviceable qualities, and there is a large assortment of articles suitable for domestic requirements which Canada seems well able to supply.

We cannot fail to admire the great enterprise which the manufacturers of Canada have shown in seeking a market for their goods in Australia, and also the discrimination which has, upon the whole, governed their selection. We cordially appreciate, moreover, the friendly disposition which the Government of the Dominion have manifested in their endeavor to promote commercial intercourse between the people of Canada and the dependencies of Great Britain in this hemisphere.

THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

The collections of edge tools sent by some of the principal makers in the United States could not well be surpassed, and the saws sent by a firm in Philadelphia formed the best exhibit of that class of goods yet shown in Australia. There were three or four large exhibitors of locks and door furniture, whose goods were generally strong and elegant in appearance, some of the kinds being of a novel and ingenious construction. A large assortment of scales for weighing all descriptions of merchandise is shown by the Fairbanks Company; and the Gould Manufacturing Company have sent a highly finished and numerous collection of pumps for household, manufactories', garden, fire, and ships' use. The cotton manufactories of the United States contain upwards of nine millions and a half of spindles, and fabrics from about one-fourth of the manufactories have been represented in the various styles of cotton goods; some of these appear to be especially designed for cold latitudes, and are therefore unsuited to this market. With regard to the cotton goods generally, it is claimed on the part of American manufacturers that they are free from those adulterations which have been adopted by other manufacturers to make the goods appear heavy and firm in texture, and that the test of actual wear shows them to be purer, thicker, and stronger in quality. The seamless bags are strong, and well suited for the carriage of grain. Several samples of oilcloths and paperhangings are shown by different firms. The texture of the floorcloths is generally lighter than those imported from England, and the patterns are smaller, and the colors brighter. The exhibits of nails, screws, bolts, and builders' hardware, were of very good quality. Of agricultural implements one of the most serviceable, as well as novel, is the post-hole digger, whose use is sufficiently indicated by its name; it is a handy, inexpensive tool, which will be found of great use, in pastoral country, or wherever much fencing is required.

The collection of exhibits from Honolulu consists chiefly of raw produce—rice, coffee, and sugar.

THE AUSTRALIAN COLONIES.

Among the principal features of that portion of the Exhibition reserved for New South Wales is a comprehensive display of mineral specimens by the Government Department of Mines, and of wool from the different districts of the colony. Several samples of agricultural produce are also shown, and the manufacturing activity of the colony is fairly represented. Tasmania is represented by Mr. T. C. Just, and Queensland by Messrs. L. A. Bernays and Mr. John Fenwick. Tasmania shows some very excellent samples of hops and agricultural seeds, and prominence is given to the iron and tin ores of the colony. The Queensland court was specially distinguished by the superior exhibit of sugars of all grades, fibres, and vegetable products, showing the suitability of the northern colony for semi-tropical agriculture. Victoria had not the advantage of any special allotment of space, but some of her more enterprising manufacturers made a very creditable display of the skill and

productive power of the colony, the excellence of their goods being sufficiently attested by the full share of premiums awarded to them. Several products of Victoria have found a ready sale in New South Wales, and it will probably be to the interest of our manufacturers to give greater prominence to their goods. For the want of pre-concerted and timely effort, Victoria did not occupy that position which its pre-eminence in population and progress in the industrial arts might have commanded.

We have been struck with the magnitude and importance of the Exhibition which we have been commissioned to visit, and we think it would be advantageous to Australia if, through the co-operation of the different Governments or through the agency of the Agricultural and Industrial Associations which exist in the several colonies, exhibitions of a similar character could be held in the capitals of each of the colonies during successive years, or at periodically recurring intervals of longer duration. These occasions would enable the people of each colony to compare the progress and resources of all the others with their own, and, by stimulating industry and increasing trade, would bind the colonies closer in the bonds of mutual interest and helpfulness. They would bring together many of the most thoughtful, far-sighted, and energetic men from different parts of the continent; and the Exhibition, wherever held, would for the time being become not merely the arena for the display of the arts and industries of the colonies, but a focus of intellectual activity upon social and sanitary science, upon agriculture and cognate topics, which would exert a wide and most beneficial influence. In this, among other ways, the colonies would do well to encourage intercourse and strengthen amity, to foster and intensify that national sentiment which should characterise peoples who are one in race, language, religion, and Government, and who, we hope, are destined to be for ever united in one grand Australian confederation.

In conclusion, we acknowledge with pleasure the facilities afforded to us by the Honorable the Colonial Secretary and the Manager and Secretary of the Agricultural Society, and our thanks are in a more especial manner due to the Commissioners for Canada for their courteous attention.

We append copies of the official catalogue, and other documents pertaining to the Exhibition.

We have the honor to be,

Sir,

Your most obedient servants,

ROBERT HARPER,

R. ROME,

JOHN K. SMYTH.

Sydney, 10th May 1877.