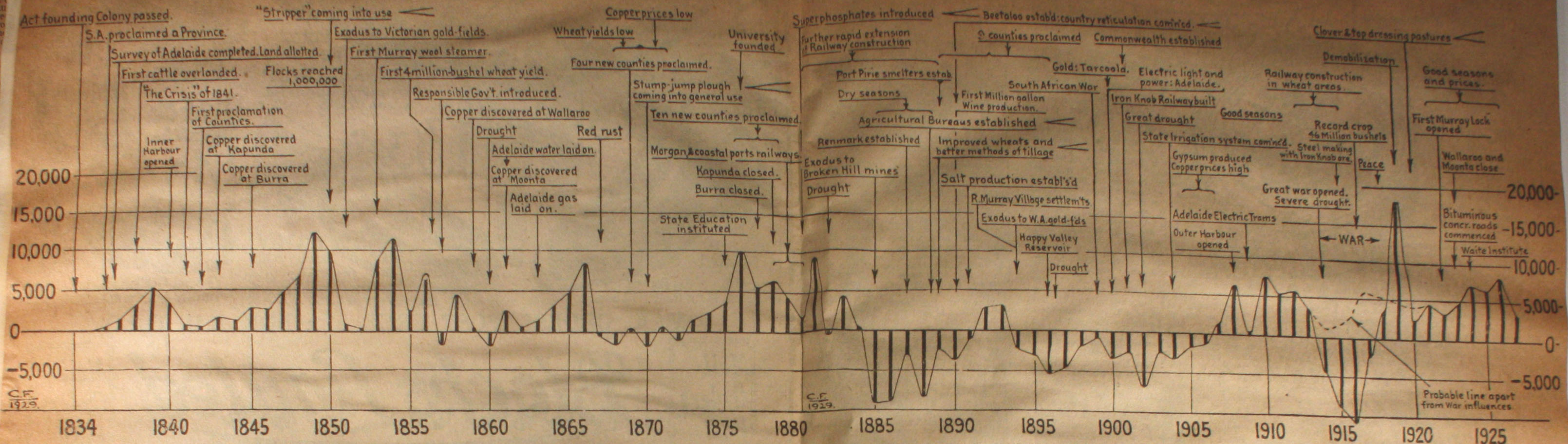


THE "PROSPERITY GRAPH" OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



At the meeting of the Royal Society of South Australia on Thursday evening, the acting president, Dr. Charles Fenner, read a paper entitled, "A Geographical Enquiry into the Growth, Distribution, and Movement of Population in South Australia, 1836 to 1927." This paper is an example of modern geographical study, tracing the influence of cause and effect throughout the history of the State. In the course of the paper the question of settlement, agricultural and pastoral production, mineral discoveries, manufactures, transport, communication, research and invention are dealt with separately, and other influences and inter-actions shown on the growth and movement of population. The concluding portion of the paper deals with what is called the "Prosperity Graph" of South Australia, which shows in one long curving line, from 1834 to 1927, the ebb and flow of prosperity in the State. This graph is here reproduced. It is based on the principle that when the State is highly prosperous there will be a continuous introduction and absorption of population from other countries, while in adverse years not only will immigration cease but there will be a tendency for our own people to leave the State. The black columns in the graph, when above the line marked O, show in thousands the number of people from other countries who were absorbed into the population of the State. When the black column is below the line marked O, it shows the number of people in thousands who left this State to seek their fortunes elsewhere. The highly disturbing influence of the war years will be seen from 1914 to 1919, but a dotted line has been drawn to show how these figures would probably have run had the war not intervened. The story told by the graph is full of hope. It indicates our remarkable recuperative powers, and shows that adverse and prosperous times come in cycles, and that there are, on the whole, many more prosperous years than adverse ones. From the year 1886, when the population of South Australia poured away in thousands to Broken Hill and later to Western Australia, there was a period of nearly twenty years during which there was not only no addition by immigration, but this State was actually a centre for emigration, pouring out thousands of its best manhood to enrich other countries. From 1907 onwards, the story is quite different. These have been a series of remarkably prosperous years. The conclusion reached by the writer from his careful study of the geographical factors involved is that the latest years of prosperity are due not altogether to good seasons and to high prices, but to the cumulative effect of a good system of transport and communication, a unique system of water supply, the application of up-to-date machinery and methods in agriculture, the wise provision for scientific research, and the application of its teachings, and in general an adequate adjustment of the people and their products to the climatic and geographical conditions of the country in which we live.