

THE MYSTIC NORTH.

And the Lure of Gold.

A Little-known Mineral Belt.

There has always been a mystic lure about what years ago Professor David described as the Dead Heart of Australia. Tragedy is writ large in the efforts made to lay bare the secrets of Nature in the great lone land; but the motor bids fair to accomplish what horse and camel failed to do in the days long sped.

The overland trip to Darwin which is being undertaken this morning by a viceregal party, comprising Countess Stradbroke (wife of Earl Stradbroke, the Governor of Victoria), Capt. Neville Fraser, Capt. Keppel Palmer (Private Secretary), Capt. Burcham (A.D.C.), and Dr. Herbert Basedow will tend to direct additional attention to the latent mineral resources of Central Australia, and the tour of Vilhjalmar Stefansson and Mr. L. Keith Ward (Director of Mines in South Australia), who will also be on the north-bound train to-day, will do likewise. The Governor of Victoria was to have accompanied the viceregal party, but political uncertainty is delaying him in Melbourne for a few days. However, he expects to overtake the other members at Alice Springs. Transport will be in three specially equipped Ford cars. This trip through from Oodnadatta to Darwin is becoming quite a popular winter tour. It is only a few weeks since the Chairman of the Broken Hill Proprietary (Mr. H. G. Darling), the Hon. W. Duncan, M.L.C., Mr. Essington Lewis (general manager of the Broken Hill Proprietary), and Mr. Tom Mears, of Melbourne, went through, and then, of course, there have been several other parties during the last 12 or 18 months.

"Mountains of Gold."

Than Dr. Basedow few are better acquainted with the country. "There has always been a mystic lure about that great lone land," he said on Wednesday. "It goes back to the earliest days, and the earliest settlers, when blacks were wont to drift into the townships with specimens of goldbearing stone, and spin tales of mountains of gold. Port Lincoln identities still recall the early stories of fabulous riches. Among others whose attention was attracted was Mr. R. T. Maurice, who equipped two or three expeditions, and went out with Mr. W. R. Murray. They certainly found traces of gold in certain parts of the lower Northern Territory. On top of that "Old Earle," a prospector, brought to Adelaide from the same region some green-looking matrix containing native gold. On these reports several private expeditions went out, but with disastrous results, several white men and Afghans losing their lives in attacks launched by blacks. Meanwhile the specimens brought to Adelaide by "Old Earle" were submitted to Mr. H. Y. L. Brown, and the Hon. L. O'Loughlin (Minister of Mines at that time) had a well-equipped expedition sent out. Quite a romance attached to those early rumours, but, said Dr. Basedow, unfortunately the exploratory ventures had mostly their tragic side.

Tanami and Elsewhere.

Continuing his resume, Dr. Basedow said the Government party dispatched, as the result of Old Earle's story, comprised Messrs. L. A. Wells, F. R. George, himself (Dr. Basedow), and a number of prospectors. They set out with 20 camels, and headed for the south-west corner of the Northern Territory. They found abundant evidence that that part of the country was auriferous; in fact, the indications were so promising that later on Mr. F. R. George was given charge of an expedition to follow up the discoveries further afield. Mr. George, however, met with disaster. His party was attacked by aborigines, and two men were seriously injured. The prospectors had to hurriedly retreat to Alice Springs, where Mr. George succumbed. Mr. W. R. Murray continued the work of the expedition for a while. About the same time the Laurie brothers discovered valuable evidence of the occurrence of gold at Tanami, which was directly north of the region located by the Adelaide party. Following upon that discovery Mr. Alan Davidson undertook his Central Australian Prospecting Expedition, and at several points found very promising indications of the existence of the noble metal and other minerals. Scarcity of water made it necessary for him to leave his finds and hasten back to the line. In 1903 Waino's Depot was discovered, and resulted in a great rush.

Gold, Mica, and Rubies.

As regards the nature of the country, Dr. Basedow said the area consists of highly metamorphosed slaty and schistose rocks, carrying scores of lodes, which occur in fissures within the schistose rock, especially on the lines of aqueous intrusions. The lodes consist of quartz

and gossan. Even in the Arltunga district some of the formations have carried up to 3 oz. of gold a ton, but nowhere have they been tested to any depth. Immediately north of the MacDonnell Ranges there is another range of ancient rock intruded by granitic magmas, which contain enormous lenticular bodies of mica. At times the mica measures up to 2 ft. or more in diameter. The mica has been mined more or less spasmodically. The high cost of transport and the shaking up in transit has gone far to kill an industry which, however, must revive when railway facilities are pushed further north. In the same area there are the so-called ruby fields. For miles one can ride along the river beds of the Hart's Ranges over the garnets and so-called rubies, which have been disintegrated out of the schistose rock. In the early days there gems were brought to Adelaide by the bagful, and the market was swamped by over supply.

Barrow Creek.

Between Hart's Range and Van Treuer Range northwards to the Tanami district the country is practically terra incognita. As evidence of the unknown and unexplored wealth of the country, Dr. Basedow referred to the discovery last year by William Garnett at Barrow Creek of a virgin mineral formation consisting of two major lodes, one of which is over 600 ft. long and up to 25 ft. wide. The parallel formation promises to be of similar dimensions. These are only 17 miles from the overland route, yet for years had escaped notice, because they were covered by a protective desert scum of ironstone, which made the lodes to outward seeming the same as the other areas for some distance around. A chance discovery of this nature indicated what might lie further afield. The lode formation at Barrow Creek goes about 47 per cent copper at the west end, and 45 per cent lead at the east end, and over the whole length it contains at least 20 oz. silver to the ton right at the grass roots. The other formation consists of a huge deposit of oxide of copper, mixed with superficial ironstone. The "find" was typical of all arid regions, and by means of the protective scum it assumed the same outward appearance as the enclosing bedrock. This formation has been tested to a depth of about 30 ft., and the value of the ore is increasing, and there is no doubt in the mind of Dr. Basedow that it is destined to become one of the historic mines of the north.

Railway Facilities Wanted.

Chatting generally, Dr. Basedow said there were many mining properties other than those he had briefly referred to, and he hoped to live to see the day when the potential mineral wealth of the centre of Australia would be the moving and determining factor in the construction of the North-South railway line. The White Range goldfield he stressed is a huge low-grade proposition, which merely awaits railway communication to bring it to the producing stage. Cartage at present is something like £17 10/ a ton from Oodnadatta to Alice Springs, and that goes on top of a railway freight of about £9 a ton, so the tremendous handicap to mining progress can be easily imagined.

Dr. G. H. Burnell has been appointed surgeon for the night clinic (female section) at the Adelaide Hospital, during the absence of Dr. Rischbieth on leave.

In the Executive Council on Wednesday Dr. F. N. LeMessurier was appointed an honorary commissioner to enquire into and report upon matters pertaining to the question of babies' hospital administration and children's welfare work in the United States of America, whether he will proceed shortly.

Mrs. A. E. V. Richardson is staying at the Grand Central Hotel. Mr. Richardson will arrive later to fill his new appointment as Director and Professor at the Waite Research Institute.

THE CARE OF DEFECTIVES.

An injustice would be done to the Committee on Social Efficiency were it allowed to pass out of existence without a word of commendation on its valuable labors. Appointed nearly two years ago at a public meeting to consider the question of mental deficiency and the duty of the community with regard to it, and more particularly to secure, if possible, the endowment of a clinic at the University for the further study of the subject, the committee in disbanding has been able to give an excellent account of its stewardship. Its primary object, the establishment of the psychological clinic by public subscription, remains unaccomplished, but this is a small matter, seeing that its work will largely be done by the Education Department through the joint instrumentality of Dr. Gertrude Halley and a specially trained psychologist from the mother country. That the entire ground will be covered by this arrangement is not for a moment suggested, and while it has the concurrence of Dr. Hone, who has done so much to awaken public interest in the subnormal element of the population, he is exercised as keenly as ever over the necessity of inoculating medical students with a deeper knowledge of intelligence tests and of supplementing it with post-graduate training. But in this matter, as in so many others, the aphorism holds good "ce n'est que le premier pas qui compte," and the committee may take credit for having done not a little to bring the question of feeble-mindedness into the field of practical action. It is an evidence of what may be achieved by voluntary effort in a good cause when there are citizens unselfish and public-spirited enough to make it.

When the committee was constituted South Australia, like other States, was laboring under the reproach of having no machinery for discovering the extent to which sub-abnormality was represented among the population. Last year in two of the eastern States there was a call on their Governments by deputations for the registration of mental defectives. It is a work that might very properly be undertaken by the National Government, as it is in America, where the Central Bureau of Education has for years been accumulating statistics which show that the proportion of "unfit" to the general population is not less than four per thousand. Were the proportion in the Commonwealth the same, Dr. Hone has shown that we must have in South Australia 2,000 persons who cannot be described as insane, but yet are mentally defective from inheritance or accident. In Australia as a whole, it is believed that, including the certified insane, there are approximately 27,000 to 30,000 mental defectives. Many of these are wandering about without the slightest supervision or control, and it is notorious that the gaols are peopled by no small percentage of the mentally enfeebled type. Pending a national survey covering the whole population in each State, the Education Department of South Australia could not have reached a wiser decision than to inaugurate, as it has now done, a preliminary survey of the children under its jurisdiction, especially in the larger schools, in order that data may be acquired for the supervisory operations of Dr. Halley and her psychological assistant. In dealing with its schools the State is laying a solid foundation for the work still before it of grappling with every phase of a problem which is engaging attention in all lands. There never was a time when any community could less afford the burden of maintaining its unfit members than now; and as universal testimony is agreed that "morbid inheritance" is responsible for the greater proportion of cases of mental deficiency, the burden, unless it is removed by drastic measures from the shoulders of the community, must necessarily be a growing one. For it is incontestably demonstrated that in the large majority of cases the deficiency is transmissible, so that its prevalence must in time have a serious effect on the aggregate mental capacity and vigor of the whole population.

In Britain Dean Inge regards the peril as such as to explain in some degree the growing movement for birth control, the

hard-working, educated classes of the community being unable to sustain the double burden of properly providing for their own families and defraying through taxation the huge cost entailed by the propagation of their own kind by the unfit. But birth control alone only means a restriction in the numbers of the fit, whose places therefore are taken by the feebler stock, a process which it is suggested had not a little to do with the decline and fall of not a few civilisations now extinct. The examination and classification of youthful sub-normality means the beginning of a perception by the public of the extreme gravity of the problem, and may come to mean the inauguration of experiments of a far-reaching kind. The Commonwealth has happily seen the danger of allowing its mental defectives to be recruited from outside, and under the Immigration Restriction Act immigrants of this type may be repatriated to their own countries should their malady be discoverable within a certain period of their arrival. It is not at all unlikely that the States of the Commonwealth may adopt a similar procedure with regard to each other, prohibiting encroachment on their territories by mental defectives from other parts of the Commonwealth and returning them when discovered, as they now do habitual criminals. Though a beginning may be made with the children, it is impossible to stop there, and the problem of the defective adult must be faced. In South Australia so far are we from its solution that in default of other accommodation Minda has had thrown upon it the care of its inmates after their attainment of adult years, a responsibility never contemplated when it was formed two decades ago. To let these unhappy people loose on the community is of course unthinkable, and their removal to the Mental Hospital is almost equally out of the question. There remains the solution adopted in other countries of providing a farm colony, where the obligation to do such work as their condition fits them for would be combined with all the personal liberty for which they are qualified. A site for such a colony has been found at Blackwood, but the Minda authorities find themselves hampered by lack of funds. The segregation of the unfit being as much a public duty as that of the insane, there is a clear call on the State not to leave the matter in its present unsatisfactory position.

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THE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY.

A SUCCESSFUL YEAR.

The annual meeting and smoke social of the Pharmaceutical Society of South Australia were held at the Grosvenor, North-terrace, on Thursday evening. The president (Mr. E. F. Grist) occupied the chair. In his annual report the president said the society had accomplished a useful year's work. Through the sudden death of Mr. W. H. Porter, Australian pharmacy had lost a splendid worker. Mr. Porter was elected to the council in July, 1919, and to the Pharmacy Board in December of the same year, and except for a brief respite of 12 months he served on the board and council continuously. As a final examiner he took a keen interest in the work of the students, and at the time of his death was president of the Pharmacy Board. The educational side of the society's work had been well maintained. No fewer than 75 students were in training, of whom 23 were taking final lectures during the present year. It was found necessary to transfer the final lectures to the University, and provided a large and suitable room was available it was the policy of the council to link up pharmaceutical studies in South Australia as closely as possible with the University. It was to be hoped that in time to come the University would establish a degree or diploma in pharmacy. A forward movement among the students was started in December, 1923, by the formation of the Adelaide University Pharmaceutical Students' Association, which had the hearty support of the University and the council, and members were urged to encourage the students in every way, as they were assisting to maintain the status of pharmacy in South Australia. The membership of the society on June 30 stood at 105, against 125 the previous 12 months. The Commission on National Health Insurance visited Adelaide, and data was obtained from a number of members which enabled the committee of the society to tender evidence of a convincing nature. The report of the commission was awaited with interest. A competition was held during the year, and the medal presented by the president was won by Mr. Harry Wearne. There would be another similar competition during the ensuing year.

On the motion of Messrs. F. J. Heron and G. C. Parker, the report and financial statement were adopted.

Officers elected:—President, Mr. E. F. Grist; members of council, Messrs. H. U. Moore (treasurer), M. C. Moore, F. J. Heron, G. C. Parker, W. Fisk, K. O. Fox, and O. H. Walter (secretary); auditors, Messrs. W. T. McGeary and R. E. Guenther.

Final diplomas, obtained at the March examinations, were presented to Miss Hazel M. Bland and Messrs. H. A. Bullock, J. D. Garrett, and J. Wurdle.

A musical programme was submitted by Messrs. W. G. Hurst, David Lyall, Alex. Crawford, and D. Connor.

CHEMISTS OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

Conjointly with the forthcoming conference of the Science Association in Adelaide in August, the Australasian Pharmaceutical Conference will be held at the University of Adelaide. It is 16 years since the conference last met, and it is expected that delegates from all the States of the Commonwealth and from New Zealand will attend. A comprehensive agenda is in course of preparation, and the conference will begin on August 25. It is expected that the deliberations will continue until August 30.

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