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*B. Plushett. Revd*  
*from Mr. Pitts*  
*Oct 1863*

INDEPENDENCE

OF THE

RIVERINE DISTRICT

OF

AUSTRALIA.

COLLECTION OF PAPERS AND ARTICLES IN REFERENCE THERETO.

1863

DENILIQUIN, N.S.W.

PRINTED AT THE "PASTORAL TIMES" NEWSPAPER OFFICE.

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INDEPENDENCE  
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A. S. Lang

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RIVERINE COMMITTEE ROOM,

MESSRS. GOLDSBROUGH AND CO.'S STORE,

Melbourne, 13th April, 1863.

THE Committee having determined on reprinting Mr. GIDEON LANG'S Letters and Lecture, as well as some Leading Articles from the *Pastoral Times*, on the benefits of Independence, they would cordially invite the earnest attention of all classes in the Riverine to this Pamphlet, in order that those who attend the meeting on the 28th instant may have an opportunity of judging the matter of Separation for themselves.



19.5.77

## INDEPENDENCE

OF THE

### RIVERINE DISTRICT OF AUSTRALIA.

SHOULD THE MURRUMBIDGEE DISTRICT BE  
ERECTED INTO A SEPARATE COLONY, OR BE  
ANNEXED TO VICTORIA?

#### FIRST LETTER.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE PASTORAL TIMES.]

SIR,—The Melbourne Press has for some time been labouring anxiously to prove that the Murrumbidgee District, with adjoining country, is geographically part and portion of Victoria, and should be annexed accordingly. Though the first choice in the matter is the right of the inhabitants themselves, inherent in them as a British community, the Victorians discuss annexation as if they and New South Wales were the only parties interested; and when they do notice the inhabitants at all, it is to speak of their consent as a matter of course; and it is quite time for us to declare whether we wish our district to be annexed to Victoria or not.

About two years ago there was a movement in the district for its erection into a separate colony, which the Victorians designate as a dodge of the squatters to frighten the Sydney Government. So real and earnest was it, however, that I find on referring to the local papers, that all classes were as nearly as possible unanimous; and on my arrival from England a few months afterwards, a number of leading squatters, when requesting me to head the movement, offered to supply me with ample funds, even for getting a bill through the Imperial Parliament. On the passing of a reasonably just Land Act, I pointed out, that as the danger of the pastoral interest—in other words the whole district—being sacrificed to the prejudices of the city mobs had passed for the time, our government from Sydney would suffice for the present, if our wants and wishes received even decent consideration, and that the movement should cease, which it did accordingly. I am still of the same opinion that it would be better to delay the assumption of a separate government, but every day makes it more palpable that we are politically and geographically isolated from New South Wales, not a portion of it, but a mere dependency, and that, as our population and interests become more intricate and extended, the



distance—700 miles—will make government from Sydney a geographical absurdity. The judges, as did the PREMIER, in visiting us go round by sea to Melbourne, and we by the same way remit our rents to the Sydney Treasury; not a bale of our wool or return chest of tea sees Sydney, which would be to us as Hobart Town but for the revenue she draws without return, and the weary journey of nearly 400 miles to the nearest sitting of her Supreme Court. A railway would not mend matters, as Sydney would tap our river navigation 250 miles from the sea and at its extremity up-stream, while Melbourne taps it in 120 miles in the centre, turning the heavy traffic down-stream. Permanent annexation to New South Wales is simply out of the question, and, since the action of the Victorians has forced us to discuss it, the only question is, whether we desire and will be able to support government as a separate province, or be annexed to Victoria? It is, in the first place, necessary clearly to understand the position, nature, and extent of the country with which we have to deal.

New South Wales at present has a frontage of 650 miles to the Pacific Ocean, and extends westward 600 miles, with the Murray dividing it from Victoria on the south for 450 miles. The country rises gradually from the sea westward to the watershed of the Blue Mountains, which lie northerly and nearly parallel with the coast, at a distance of about eighty miles; the country then descends westward and inland for about 100 miles, and hills and even undulations are lost in the great saltbush plain of the interior.

The boundary line between New South Wales and the proposed Riverine province, which I now submit, we—for I do not act alone in the matter—have drawn with particular regard to character of country and climate peculiar to each. New South Wales retains the sea-coast and mining country entire, also the agricultural land with suitable climate, while the Riverine province takes the saltbush plains; and so purely geographical is the division, that while the pastoral colony takes more than half the entire present area, she takes under 20,000, being less than seven per cent. of the entire population. This boundary, which has a general course between the 146° and 148° long., commences on the Murray, a few miles east of Howlong, and west of Albury, about 146° 40'; by a line thence to the junction of Houlahan's Creek and the Murrumbidgee; thence by that creek to its nearest point to Nurraburra Creek; then by Nurraburra Creek and Cowal Lake to the mouth of Manna Creek; thence by a line to the junction of Bullock Creek and the Bogan River; by that river till it joins the Darling; and then by a line due north to the southern boundary of Queensland.

Nature of the Country.—This gives an area of 440 miles from north to south, and 350 east to west, one immense level, salt-



bush plain, intersected by a few rivers widely apart in their course, but all joining the Murray in the south-west angle. To the north of the Murrumbidgee and of the Murray below their junction, is a block of 100,000 square miles intersected by the Lachlan and Darling only; rivers in winter, lines of precarious water-holes in summer, but capable of being made canals, and so furnishing at once lines for traffic and a safe supply of water. Beyond reach of these the country can be made available only by wells, dams, and tanks, and that probably for stock only; for though splendid pasture, thinly scattered though it be, it is an almost treeless plain, with a climate so arid and siroccos so frequent and blasting, that cultivation even by irrigation appears hopeless. South of the Murrumbidgee to the Murray, the country is different, being intersected by a network of water-courses more minute and elaborate than can be shown on a map, the water crossing from one to another in every direction. Near the Murray, the country, being to a certain extent within reach of the coast rains and breezes, is well timbered, and in course of time may, by systematic irrigation, rival ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia in productiveness and population.

A separate Government is necessary for such a district if only because of its special nature requiring special management for the development of its resources. 1st. Though our summer is long and dry, without even dew, the rainfall is ample though very short, and the flatness of the country gives every facility for its distribution; while our plains are without a drop of surface water for six or nine months in the year, and consequently inaccessible, being some of them twenty days' journey across for sheep. A Government of our own would apply our resources to collect and distribute water, to canal our rivers and open up the plains by forming lines of wells as in Eastern countries; but I need not say, that whether attached to New South Wales or Victoria, we must content ourselves with a miserable dole of our own money, grudgingly given for improvements they neither understood nor appreciated. 2nd. New South Wales and Victoria are mountainous and undulating, and within the influence of the rain and temperature from ocean and mountains, so that they are essentially fit for cultivation, and in disposing of the land it is treated exclusively as agricultural. Our country, on the other hand, is essentially pastoral, and as pastoral land it must be treated and disposed of if the peculiarly heavy outlay necessary for its development is to be incurred. As the well-watered lands of Victoria become crowded, an agricultural population may settle to the north of the Murray, trusting to irrigation defeating the hot winds, and every latitude and freedom of selection must be given to them; but our land law must treat our immense plains as pasture, and of at least equal importance with agriculture, not as a mere sur-



plusage and of no importance, as in Victoria, and, in a modified degree, in New South Wales.

Our Resources.—In 1860, during the agitation for separation, it was estimated, and generally allowed, that the Lachlan, Murrumbidgee, and Darling districts yielded a revenue of £255,000, with a population of 40,836. This proposed boundary cuts off the upper valleys with the agricultural and mining population, and by an analysis of the census of 1861, I cannot estimate the population at more than 20,000, allowing for the large influx during the last two years on account of the displacement of cattle for sheep; the revenue I estimate at £120,000, allowing for the 6,000,000 of acres of back plains taken up or licenses paid for during the last two years. When Queensland commenced her career, she had 25,000 inhabitants, with a revenue of £154,000, and if we must establish a separate Government at once, we are quite able, with about 20,000 inhabitants, and £120,000 of revenue, to do so, particularly as we know that our revenue is increasing every day. The live stock within our proposed boundary are, on a rough estimate, 2,000,000 sheep, 400,000 head of cattle, and 25,000 horses. These are pastured within reach of the rivers and creeks; but during the last two years it has been found that water is to be had everywhere at about the depth of 100 feet, and it only requires labour, time, and capital to make our 98,000,000 of acres available. At an average of six acres to the sheep, which appears a fair and safe estimate, the country would carry 15,000,000 sheep, or with fences 20,000,000; which will give a revenue ample for every purpose of improvement and government.

Objections.—It has been urged in objection to our forming a separate colony, that we have no seaboard, and must ship and import through Melbourne, and that these colonies will be each too small. The shape and size of New Holland, 2200 miles by 1100, make inland states a necessity, otherwise each state must be a strip extending so far inland that, as in our case now, government is practically inoperative. That Melbourne must be our factor and shipping port no one disputes; but such has been the case with Ohio, Tennessee, and other inland states in America, shipping through New York and New Orleans in seaboard states, without the least inconvenience, confederation removing, as it will with us, all difficulties about customs duties. As to size, Virginia, the largest of the states, has an area of 70,000 square miles, while Victoria has 80,000, New South Wales, when divided, will have 142,000, and the inland Riverine Colony 154,000. Victoria has ten times the area of seven of the late United States, and nearly double that of eight more, so want of size can be no valid objection.

To conclude, the special nature of our district renders a



separate government indispensable, as a local government only can or will apply our own resources to our own peculiar wants, and our daily increasing revenue is ample for its support. We will have, as a separate province, every advantage we would have if annexed to Victoria; and I would strongly urge my fellow-residents most strenuously to resist any attempt at annexation, and, if necessary, to petition at once for a separate government.

As our district is almost purely pastoral, and there cannot be one land law for the north and another for the south bank of the Murray, if under the same government, it would be prudent for those who may desire annexation coolly to judge from their treatment of their own pastoral interest what the Victorians were likely to do for ours; but that I shall make the subject of another letter.

Yours, &c.,

GIDEON S. LANG.

Mungadal, Lower Murrumbidgee,  
December 16th, 1862.

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SECOND LETTER.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE PASTORAL TIMES.]

SIR,—In a former letter I argued, that as our district has a special nature, requiring special management for the development of its resources, and is capable of supporting a separate government, therefore we should resist any attempt to annex us to Victoria; and now further, that we should gravely consider whether their land law is of a nature, and has been applied in a spirit, to justify us in placing our purely pastoral district at the disposal of the Victorians.

When the squatters with their flocks took up Port Phillip in '35, it was, like nine-tenths of our district now, a desert. In the land law then in force was embodied the principle common to every civilised community and essential to the development of any country: that the land shall not be the property of the State but of private individuals, each improving it for his own advantage. The principle was there; but in applying it to this pastoral country they made a mistake from which have originated all the complications of the land question since. They treated the entire lands of the colony as agricultural land, demanding such a price as precluded its purchase as pasture, and thereby placed pastoral settlers beyond the pale of the land law, and compelled them to occupy without legal title as security.

This was in the first place modified by an annual "Squatting License," issued by the Sydney Government.



In '48 this tenure was improved by the issue of the Orders of the QUEEN in Council, which gave to the pastoral occupants the right to demand a lease of fourteen years with the right to renew on certain conditions, until the land was actually required.

In 1850, when Victoria obtained separate government, the management of the land was handed over to the colonists by the Imperial Government, with the Orders in Council as the only title and security of the squatters. Their position was then this:—The value of the sheep and cattle with stations amounted to about six millions sterling. This represented—1st. The value given to the land by the Government opening up the country and giving protection. 2nd. The money expended by the squatters in taking up the country and making improvements—at a very low estimate, a million and a-half sterling; and 3rd. The accumulated profit upon this, annually, invested up to 1850 (that is ten years from '39 as a fair average between '35 and '43, during which the country was taken up). That this value represented money and profit invested by the squatters, can be proved by reference to the papers of the day for the following facts:—First, that when there was plenty of country open for occupation (as now in Queensland, where an exactly parallel case now prevails), and store sheep, ready to place upon new runs, were sold at 3s. to 5s. per head, sheep, with stations, sold at from 12s. to 18s.; showing that the outlay, interest, and risk of taking up new country amounted to the difference: second, that sheep, from their introduction by MACARTHUR to 1850, increased at the rate of only 15 per cent. per annum over the colony: third, that during its pastoral existence the exports and imports steadily balanced each other, showing that the aggregate pastoral profit was applied to its extension.

The idea prevalent among the townspeople, that the entire value of the squatting property was so much value taken from the public generally, and given gratis to the squatters, is thus shown to be a delusion. Except the right to occupy and expend their capital upon the land, they received nothing from the public; and if the squatters had not expended the enormous capital which they did, and then lived quietly on their stations, allowing their profits to accumulate in the shape of increase placed upon the run, there would have now been nothing to confiscate. In the same way an actual outlay of at least three million sterling by the squatters, besides accumulated profit during the next ten years, will be required upon our plains unless they are to remain a desert as Port Phillip was in '35.

From the moment manhood suffrage was obtained, all right to compensation even for actual buildings was denied, and in a short time the Orders in Council were repudiated and ignored. Then the squatters realised the terrible blunder committed by the Home Government, who had handed over to the colonists



not only the land but the millions of pounds expended upon it by the squatters under the security of the Imperial Government; leaving, in fact, to the portion of the population not pastoral to decide whether they would allow the squatters to keep their property or take it themselves.

When the gold discovery caused an influx of population so much greater than had been anticipated, a modification of these became expedient, but a total repudiation was as unjust as it was impolitic. Any Government acting with the most ordinary common sense and prudence would have cleared the way for population with as little damage as possible to a great interest like the pastoral. Instead of that, they ignored its existence as a valuable interest, and committed or never checked actual destruction—wanton, because quite unnecessary. In no country, not even France or England, is one acre per head of cultivation required, and the most ample scope for selection might have been given to the *bonâ fide* agriculturist, without material damage to the pastoral interest, and the sites of buildings and improvements necessary to carry on their business, could have been secured them (as a matter of public policy to a great public interest) without a tittle of detriment to individual or public. All was thrown open, however, with one solitary restriction, that a man could select not more than 640 acres, thereby leaving the squatter open to extortion upon every 40 acre block of his run except one square mile; and wherever its position rendered one block necessary towards depasturing others, the opportunity was eagerly seized upon. All property in improvements, even dams and artificial waterholes, was disregarded and treated as if they did not exist, except as a means of extortion, in which the Government, instead of protecting the squatter, zealously competed with the private landshark. As one instance among many: a friend of my own expended £500 upon a sheepwash and reservoir, and when the land was put up for sale the upset price was fixed at 40s. instead of 20s. per acre, avowedly on account of his own outlay; the private landsharks thought it high, and let him have it at that.

Mr. DUFFY's Act is no improvement. The difference is, that instead of extortion in detail (for the *bonâ fide* agriculturist did little harm—where he did, the squatter willingly submitted) as the Government or private landshark saw an opportunity, it is now confiscation by wholesale. Ten millions of acres, representing two-thirds of the pastoral property is being thrown open for a general scramble. This land is given to the first applicant (excepting the squatter himself who is still restricted to 640 acres) and if more than one applies on the same day for the same block it is disposed of by lot. So ruthlessly is this done, that even a home station with every appliance for working a sheep establishment, was disposed of by lot without any advantage



whatever to the owner whose home it had been for more than twenty years, and though the loss to be entailed on the community by his want of means to get up his clip (then close at hand) would be more than the price received for the land. In another case four miles of new fencing went by lot, and the purchasers are now offering it for sale to the squatter with the price of his own fence added. In another case the run of a newly made widow and orphans was secured by a company of moral landsharks, there being no one to secure their interest by getting the ground applied for by deputy, or in other words, by evading the Act. There was, however, one great piece of consideration shown to the squatters which in justice should be mentioned, they were allowed fourteen days to remove their dams and wells, stone fences and stone woolsheds.

The assessment as applied finishes the matter. The rate fixed by the Act is 8d. per head upon the capabilities of the run, and Mr. DUFFY has lately issued a list showing the number at which each run is rated. As a rule the rating is so excessive that 90 per cent. it is said will be appealed against. As a few, among crowds of cases: the whole clip of one sheep station is swallowed up by the assessment; a cattle run which when full stocked never carried on an average more than 3000 is rated at 12,060 head; in another whose greatest number when full stocked was 2000 head, after having 15,000 acres, the best and including all the frontage, cut out of 78,500 for an agricultural area, is rated at 9420 head. A newly appointed pasha once presented MEHEMET ALI with twice the usual tribute from his district, when the old man drily remarked that he did not wish the sheep to be skinned, only to be shorn, and with a polite intimation that the man was an ass, ordered the bastinado. DUFFY's Act takes the very flesh, and bones as well.

The grand result is, that a very large number of the old squatters are utterly ruined, and what is of more interest to the community, the great body of them are crushed with debt incurred either in purchasing land they did not want or buying off extortioners; and now by such rent Government takes away the means of paying interest upon their debt; the Government are in fact drawing into the treasury as income the working capital of the sheepowners, and entailing upon the commonwealth interest in the pastoral property a direct loss of greater amount annually than all the price they get for the land. There is a promise of lease of fourteen years for new runs, but with most restricted compensation for improvements, and this clause is a *finale*:—Clause 121. "No occupier of land for pastoral purposes shall be entitled to compensation by reason of this Act being hereafter repealed or altered."

The Act has been applied to four of the ten millions of acres, and in a few weeks the ruin will be continued on the remaining



six millions, and for what? not to secure a large agricultural settlement, for that is already proved to be a delusion; not to displace the pastoral for a more profitable occupation, for it only takes the land from one sheepowner to give it to another or to an extortioner upon the old occupant. But ruinous as the effect of the Act is monetarily, it is still more melancholy in a moral point of view; as the squatter is restricted to one block, he has to apply for his other lots through friends who have to make a declaration that the application is *bonâ fide* for themselves. This has been almost universal, as the only means of saving themselves from ruin, and has debauched the public morals more in a shorter time than any law that I ever heard of. Evasion of the law by perjury or something remarkably like it, it has made a moral duty, and the vindication of the law by a conviction has been regarded by the very best men as a public calamity, and why is it submitted to? Why is there not a select committee to inquire into the working of the Act, and to ascertain whether any further supply of land is needed for agriculture? Simply because the instructed and propertied classes dare not offer to save the squatters from ruin, even for the public good; they committed political suicide by granting manhood suffrage, and behold the result. WASHINGTON and HAMILTON retained the old conservative constitutions of the different States and carefully guarded them while they lived, and JEFFERSON, when they were gone, introduced, for his own base purposes, manhood suffrage. Victoria has begun where the United States ended, and with the same result, that in any question which interests them the entire power is in the hands of the lowest and most ignorant of the community; not the respectable intelligent artisan, or the sober reading digger, but of the unskilled, illiterate, and improvident mass, which chokes the intellect and self-denial which should be their guide. The result is that the land law has never been discussed on its merits; there has been no public policy, and all that the representatives of intelligence and property have been able to accomplish has been to find out how the minimum of damage to the pastoral interest could be combined with sufficient ruin and damage to individual squatters to satisfy the craving hatred of the mob. The *Argus* lately congratulated itself on the quietude and peace prevailing in the colony, and no doubt "the manhood suffrage" has been quiet, but only because they have all they can possibly ask. If, as they allege, the spirit of the people towards the pastoral interest is so changed that we should so trust them, where is the proof of it? Why is this Act persevered in at the expense of so much ruin and misery, when it is universally acknowledged, except by Mr. DUFFY himself, to be a total failure? The land system has from first to last been so bad, and administered by every successive Government (whether willingly or not is nothing



to us) in such a spirit of indifference or actual hostility to the squatting interest, that to annex our pastoral district to Victoria would be a piece of unmitigated folly.

In conclusion, let me remind the few who may entertain Victorian tendencies, that when the Victorian mob (for the people have been powerless) got the land to dispose of, it was already productive by twenty years' residence, and six millions sterling outlay by the squatters, irremovable, and ready to hand for confiscation. But our plains are still a desert, the six millions sterling are still to expend, and they may depend upon it that if the squatters see even a chance of their money being confiscated and scrambled for, as now in Victoria, at the first demand of Victorian manhood suffrage, they will keep their money in their pockets, and our plains will remain a desert with Deniliquin in the middle of them, a village instead of a capital.

Yours, &c.,

GIDEON S. LANG.

Mungadal, Lower Murrumbidgee,  
December 22nd, 1862.

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### THIRD LETTER.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE PASTORAL TIMES.]

SIR,—In my two former letters I have shown—1st. That our saltbush district has a special nature, requiring special management for the development of its resources, and therefore should have a separate government; 2nd. That our district is almost purely pastoral, that the Land Act of Victoria is adapted to an agricultural country and administered in such a spirit of indifference or actual hostility to the squatting interest that to annex ourselves to Victoria would be folly; 3rd. That on account of the distance we are in no respect part or portion of New South Wales, and as our interests become more intricate and extended our government from Sydney will be a geographical absurdity, and therefore that at some future time separation would be necessary, though in my opinion rather premature unless forced upon us by the action of the Victorians.

I have very naturally been asked what course should now be adopted, and I therefore suggest—

1st. That an Association be formed for the purpose of securing Local Government and a fair share of expenditure in the Riverine portion of New South Wales, to be called "The Riverine Colony Association."



2nd. That a Committee be formed with a branch in Melbourne, to carry out the objects of the Association, with chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and treasurer.

3rd. That all parties resident or interested in the district should be invited to become members, paying a small sum per annum for current expenses; and further, that members in proportion to their interest should, as they did in Queensland, put their names down for such sums as in the aggregate, would enable the Committee to carry the movement to a successful issue even in case of serious opposition from New South Wales and Victoria.

4th. That the Committee should draw up and circulate for signature a petition to the QUEEN in Council, and also to the GOVERNOR of New South Wales, pointing out the special nature and requirements of our district; our geographical isolation from New South Wales and the consequences thereof; and praying first that a local superintendent of the Riverine District be at once appointed; second, that a branch of the Supreme Court, with a resident Judge, of the Registrar-General's Office, Land Office, Public Works, and Crown Lands Office, should be established in Deniliquin; third, that distinct accounts of revenue and expenditure should be kept, and that after paying our share of the general expenses of government the balance should be expended in local improvements; fourth, that if our surplus local revenue is not sufficient for any great public work we may require, that we shall be charged with it, and take it as a portion of our debt when our increased population make a separate government an indisputable necessity; at the same time protesting against being held responsible for any future debt (we need not discuss the past now) incurred by New South Wales unless on our own account.

The advantage of this arrangement would be that we might have a local government at once, instead of waiting for years while fighting the battle of independence, all the time becoming liable for the increasing debt of New South Wales, contributing a very large revenue without any return, and suffering all the disadvantages of a Supreme Court, Land Office, &c., at a distance of nearly 500 miles, twelve days' course of post.

In conclusion, I would most urgently impress upon all concerned the necessity of working steadily and together for our common object, for they may depend upon it that there is now no standing still; they must either get the question settled by being made a separate district or drift into annexation to Victoria.

Yours, &c.,

GIDEON S. LANG.

Mungadal, Lower Murrumbidgee,  
2nd January, 1863.



## FOURTH LETTER.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE PASTORAL TIMES.]

SIR,—Upon two points the inhabitants are unanimous—1st. That we cannot continue to be governed from Sydney; and 2nd. That the pastoral interest of our almost exclusively pastoral district would be ruined, or at the very least most seriously imperilled by annexation to Victoria, and that it should be resorted to only in the very last extremity.

I recommended in my last letter that we should petition the QUEEN in Council to appoint a superintendent under the GOVERNOR of New South Wales, with branches of the different Government offices in Deniliquin, until we had sufficient population to satisfy the Home Government of our ability to support a separate government. We know from experience, that to obtain complete independence will be a matter of years at least, and my proposal appears on deliberate calculation the most expedient, for these reasons:—1st. That while fighting for independence it would secure us the local administration of our affairs, instead of resorting 500 miles to Sydney upon every transaction, however trivial, with any public office, which has become intolerable; 2nd. That we would secure the expenditure in our district of a fair share of our own revenue; 3rd. That we would secure ourselves against further liability for the New South Wales daily increasing debt; and 4th. That complete independence must follow as a matter of course as soon as we have sufficient population to satisfy the DUKE OF NEWCASTLE; every step towards separate administration being a step towards independence.

I find, however, that endurance is at an end; that the inhabitants of the saltbush plains are past deliberate calculation of minor details or losses, and that Sydney mismanagement has so worn out their patience they will have it no longer on any terms. We are unanimous for complete independence, if it is to be obtained in reasonable time; and we must give and take so as to be unanimous in selecting the road and the means to attain it; therefore, if the majority are, as appears to be the case, anxious and determined to separate from New South Wales at once, the course is plain before us, namely—to organise ourselves into an association for that one single and undivided object—the complete independence of the Riverine District.

Our case is so strong, we come so emphatically within the exception of the DUKE OF NEWCASTLE when refusing separate government to Portland, that there is every probability that he may, considering our very large revenue, waive in our favour his objection to a population below 20,000 being independent; but at all events the hardship of our case is so great that we may count upon his at least using his influence to cause branches of



the Government offices to be established in Deniliquin in case of the delay of independence from any cause.

At all events let us act, and not drift like a log at the mercy of every wind, or be sold like a flock of sheep. We have a splendid district and our destiny in our own hands. Let us show that we are fit for the occasion.

I am, &c.,

GIDEON S. LANG.

Mungadal, 20th January, 1863.

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THE DUKE OF NEWCASTLE'S DESPATCH.

Downing-street, Sept. 20, 1862.

SIR,—I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your despatch, No. 63, of the 23rd June, enclosing a petition from certain inhabitants of the western portion of the colony under your government, praying for a separation from Victoria, with a view of its forming, together with the south-eastern district of South Australia, an independent colonial Government.

I request that you will inform the petitioners that I have laid their petition before the QUEEN, and that HER MAJESTY received it very graciously.

You will inform them at the same time that by various Acts of Parliament, and in particular by the Acts 1st and 2nd Victoria, cap. 60, and 13th and 14th Victoria, cap. 59, the territories out of which it is proposed to form a new colony are declared to belong, or recognised as belonging to the existing colonies of Victoria and South Australia. THAT HER MAJESTY HAS NO POWER TO ALTER THE DISTRIBUTION OF A TERRITORY SO MADE, AND THAT, EVEN HAD HER MAJESTY POSSESSED THAT POWER, I SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN ABLE TO RECOMMEND THAT IT SHOULD HAVE BEEN EXERCISED WITHOUT EITHER THE CONCURRENCE OF THE VICTORIAN AND SOUTH AUSTRALIAN LEGISLATURES, OR THE PROOF OF AN INTOLERABLE HARDSHIP AMOUNTING TO POLITICAL NECESSITY FOR SEPARATION.

You will further observe to them that, under present circumstances, the inhabitants of any districts which are considered to be hardly used, would, in my opinion, act wisely in dismissing from their minds all expectation of effecting a dismemberment of the colony, and in applying themselves to secure a remedy for their grievances through the ordinary constitutional methods which, in a free country, are open to them as to all other men



of sense and energy; and that I have no doubt that, by a wise choice of representatives, by a fair appeal to public opinion, and, if necessary, by securing themselves enlarged powers of local self-government, any district of Victoria has in its hands the power of protecting itself from injustice.

I have, &c.,

(Signed) NEWCASTLE.

GOVERNOR SIR HENRY BARKLY, K.C.B., &c.

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#### LECTURE ON THE ADVANTAGES OF INDEPENDENCE.

[PASTORAL TIMES, MARCH 7.]

In accordance with the advertisement in our last issue, on Thursday evening Mr. G. S. LANG delivered a lecture on the above subject. The Masonic Hall was crowded on the occasion, and the speaker was listened to with great interest throughout by the assembled townspeople and squatters. Dr. WREN occupied the chair, and having introduced the lecturer in a few remarks, Mr. LANG said he had hoped that before that, the committee appointed in Melbourne would have been able to have placed before a regular public meeting a complete statement of their population and resources. This, however, they had found very difficult—1st. Because the line of demarcation proposed between New South Wales and this district intersects the Lachlan and Murrumbidgee districts, each of which the census treats as a unity, so that they had found it very difficult to ascertain how much population was upon their side of the dividing line. 2nd. Because the required information was procurable only in Sydney, and it might as well for all practical purposes be in Timbuctoo. Mr. FURLONGE, a zealous and able member of the present committee, was now in Sydney collecting information; and they would no doubt soon be able to make a report to a public meeting in Deniliquin, which would determine their future proceedings. He had thought it due to Deniliquin, as the future capital, and on account of the zeal and energy of its inhabitants on all public matters, to report progress. This lecture would be more a supplement to the letters he had already published than a discussion of the whole question. He should leave it to others to bring forward any arguments they might have in favour of annexation. His opinion was most conclusively against it as impracticable with any justice to these districts, and because as



an almost purely pastoral colony we had no right to place our future fortunes in their power after the spirit of hostility and the stupid blundering they had shown in dealing with their own pastoral interest. He should, however, commence by considering the interest of Deniliquin in reference to Annexation or Independence. The town, from its geographical position, must be the political capital of Riverine Australia. Its mercantile outlet was, and always would be Melbourne, and Deniliquin lies in the way from all parts, and people would by the same journey ship their produce and transact their business with the Government offices. There would be a Governor and staff, Supreme Court, with judges and legal practitioners, &c., central police barracks, emigration depôt, Treasury and Registrar, and all other offices, which would soon be followed by theatres and every other appliance and accompaniment of a government and a capital. People who came upon official business would take the opportunity of purchasing whatever they required, and Deniliquin, in case of our attaining Independence, would not only have a large Government expenditure, but a large trade which would accompany it, and probably a large number of residents from the bush attracted round the Governor and official staff. On the other hand, what would Deniliquin be if annexed to Victoria? For purposes of government their province would be divided into a considerable number of small districts, of which Deniliquin might be the centre of one, with possibly a Circuit Court four times a year; but only possibly, for the Murray people might consider Melbourne more convenient, and then the Lachlan people would propose Hay as the more central. He said Deniliquin, unless the capital of an independent province, must rise or fall as a mercantile depôt, and that, from its position relative to river navigation it would never be. The river navigation had hitherto been of little account, because the boats were unsuitable, and the capital employed too limited. That was being amended rapidly, and to secure a steady continuous trade for eight months in the year they only required to have the rivers cleared of snags. He had always supposed that if cleared the next floods would make the rivers almost as bad as ever, but such was not the case. The floating timber was of very little account; for he had found by examination, in which he was confirmed by Mr. DAVID BOWERS, who had charge of the snaggers, that the real impediment were the large trees which had fallen into the river from the bank and there lie immovable by any flood—as fixed as so many rocks. Comparing their number with that of those now growing, and taking the term of growth of those gigantic flooded gums at 300 years, he should say that the dead timber now incumbering the navigation was the accumulation of 150 years at least, so that when once cleared the rivers would be like a road cleared through a forest. All the



trade of the Murrumbidgee and Lachlan would then go by steamer to Echuca, leaving to Deniliquin the Billabong and Edward only. Mr. O'SHANASSY, it was said had whistled so sweetly of a railway to Deniliquin, as to make some of them dance to the tune of Annexation, but that would not mend matters. The Murrumbidgee squatters would still ship their wool from the woolshed on the river bank rather than send it eighty miles across the plains; and if the railway were carried to Hay they would lose the Billabong traffic by a station there, and their share of the business would be the same as that of Geelong now—the sight of the trains flying past. Deniliquin must either be the capital of an independent province or nothing—a Kyneton without agriculture or a M'Ivor without diggings; and whatever difference of opinion there might be amongst others, he, Mr. LANG, could not see how there could be two opinions among the inhabitants of Deniliquin in reference to the desirability of Independence.

Speaking of Deniliquin as the capital led him to consider the position of Albury and Wagga Wagga, which allege that they are left out through the jealousy of the squatters having any population but one purely pastoral. That was quite a mistake. New South Wales in the first place deserved some consideration, and a sight of the map hanging up on the wall would show what a serious reduction had already been proposed to make in her extent. Further, that after the many futile attempts at separation in Victoria as well as New South Wales, it was necessary, if they were to secure a hearing from the Home Government, to go upon some distinct principle. They had therefore made a clear division between the saltbush plain, which was purely pastoral, and the coast country with its mines and agriculture. By including Albury, known as a first-class wine country and promising to produce wine for the world, and, in a less degree Wagga Wagga, would have been to stultify themselves at once. But if Albury and Wagga Wagga really desired to go with them let them make some demonstration of opinion.

From various letters and articles lately it appeared to be thought that the squatters were terrified at the idea of population coming into the district, arising from the idea that men on stations have the same feeling towards the squatters as the people in Sydney and Melbourne. This was a mistake. There was certainly a large body of men who wandered from station to out-station, seeking work but never working, living upon the hospitality of the settlers they abuse, the hotel-keepers, and upon the men at out-stations who really work. A night never passed without every station having some, and he, the speaker, had had twenty in a night; but besides these there was on every well-managed station a number of steady men who seldom shift, and when they did, only to some neighbour and back again. Between



these and the employers a kindly feeling prevailed, and the squatters could carry any pastoral election through their legitimate influence as employers and educated men. The country would be almost universally pastoral with few towns, and these of moderate size, and the addition of a few agricultural members would be good for all parties. Speaking without prejudice, he, individually, would have no fear of universal suffrage with a six months' residence and register-ticket as now in Victoria, which would exclude the objectionable classes. To ignore the experience of America as well as Victoria and New South Wales, would be folly, and unrestricted manhood suffrage he would oppose as he had ever done, but he had certainly no desire for a franchise that would exclude from a voice in public affairs any man who had shown the ability and self-denial to manage his own, however humble or limited.

When forming a new land system applicable to the peculiar nature of the district, they should avoid as much as possible the antagonistic feelings which prevail in Victoria and New South Wales between the squatters and the general population. Both squatters and townspeople should look to the general good, not merely to their own particular benefit, still less to damaging each other. The squatter must give every opportunity to every industry to settle upon and improve the land by cultivation, while every opportunity and encouragement must be given to the squatter to occupy and enhance the productiveness of the pasture land. There was ample room for every industry, and all—agriculture, pasture, wine, and cotton, everything might be encouraged and fostered not only without interfering with each other, but with mutual advantage if they would only act together and not regard the gains of one as so much loss to the other. He hoped Victoria would be a warning to them all—to the squatters no less than to the townspeople; that the squatters would be prepared to make concessions where needful for the common weal, and that the townspeople would not regard and treat sheep-farming as a crime. In Victoria this feeling was carried so far that in the Act forming farmers' commons, sheep were excluded—the bleat of a sheep was an abomination; and it was only when they found that they could get no mutton, as the butchers had no means of feeding their sheep, that they were admitted by an amendment. Now their antipathy to squatters might not extend to mutton, still they inherited it from the older colonies, and they should as much as possible forget it in dealing with their new government and new circumstances. The practice in New South Wales and Victoria had been to increase the risks and uncertainties of the sheep-owners to a maximum, and reduce their profits and advantages to a minimum, regardless of the fact that the profit which they prevented the squatter gaining individually, was so much lost to



the community collectively. They had the power to do it, however, as the tenants had already sunk their money on the land and could remove it, but here the case was quite different. Only 1,600,000 of the 20,000,000 of sheep the country will support were now upon it—four-fifths of it were still a desert. They had to adopt a system that would induce an expenditure of something like five or six millions sterling in a very difficult country. With such a land policy a great tract of their district must remain a desert, and, without any other, was amply sufficient reason for separating from New South Wales. The principle of free selection before survey was alone sufficient to ruin the country, and as wanton a piece of mischief as an unscrupulous minister could be guilty of to keep himself in power. It would be both wise and politic to give every opportunity for the *bonâ fide* agriculturist to settle upon the land without loss of time, and with a most ample supply of the best land ready to select from; but the present law went so beyond the most extravagant necessity as to entail a dead loss upon the community. The law prevented millions of acres being occupied at all, and so depreciated the productiveness of what was occupied, that pastoral produce was limited to a much greater extent than the whole value of the land sold and its produce besides when in full cultivation. It is a well known fact that in no country had even been cultivated so much as an acre per head; and the statistics supplied by the Registrar-General supplied quite sufficient data for the Grant to act upon if they had desired every interest to be developed, instead of wantonly destroying the pastoral interest to gratify the ignorant outcry of the Sydney mob. The population of New South Wales in 1861 was 350,860, and the acreage under cultivation on the 31st March, 1862, was 297,575 acres. From 1854 to 1861 the average increase of cultivation was 24,034 acres, much of which was no doubt part of the seven millions already alienated. To meet this demand of 24,000 acres the law threw open \_\_\_\_\_ acres, to be selected from; and in three years an additional 130 millions of acres will be thrown open, so that there is 833 times more land open for selection than can be required. That 200 millions of acres would, he believed, carry thirty millions of sheep instead of the seven now. A man went into a settler's paddock, measured off forty acres close to a gangway by which the cattle water in the river; he then impounded five bulls and fifty-two horses on their way to water, levying £5 damages upon each bull, the whole damages being £38 19s. 6d., just £1 0s. 6d. less than the sum total he had to pay for the land in four years!\*

\* Our correspondent at Moama states that on Wednesday last a free selectionist on Parracoota Station, of the name of Main, impounded seven bulls and one cow with calf, laying the damages at £35; fifty-two horses were also impounded, driving and damages charged at 1s. 6d. per head. They were released, the charges being paid under protest, and the matter will have to be decided by a superior Court.—*Pastoral Times*, January 31st.



There was the fact of the special nature of the country requiring special management. This was not very well understood by many who had written very good letters lately on the subject. He thought, from these letters, they seemed rather amused at his comparing the district to Mesopotamia, but a little explanation would make that plain enough. They saw the Billabong, Murrumbidgee, and Lachlan on the map before them without any watercourses marked between; but in reality the country was so level that the rivers spread over these plains in every direction. Experience had shown that the polygonum marshes and blind creeks, which were thought to have neither source nor outlet, were branch channels of the rivers, and in one flood during shearing time the flocks at Mungadal swam four branches of the Murrumbidgee, in thirty miles. He had no doubt but that they would in due time throw these rivers in their floods over all the plains, thus turning to use the enormous supply of water which they had from the mountains, as well as from the heavens. Another speciality was that these immense plains were entirely without surface water, and even when occupied by sheep would be inaccessible unless lines of wells were sunk with every appliance, and men and horses to raise water. The sums required for all these purposes would never be obtained from either Sydney or Melbourne; but if independent they would have ample funds for every purpose. The customs revenue with the population required for present stock of 1,600,000 was £100,000: the country will carry 19,000,000 or 20,000,000; and if the population increased in proportion which—the town population being so limited at present—was likely, the revenue would be £1,000,000; while the rents and assessments would be about another million, making £2,000,000 for an easily-governed population of 200,000 people, leaving probably a million sterling per annum, ample for special requirements, namely, the artificial supply of water to 150,000 square miles of territory, for which nature had done almost nothing. He would take the opportunity of explaining the process of taking up new country on these back plains. Suppose one of them had two blocks, 200 square miles of fine pastoral land, 100 miles back from the Lachlan, which they were about to stock. They could do nothing in summer, but in the first heavy rain they push out with a dray, provisions, &c. Their first operation would be to sink a tank into which they would drain enough water to supply their men and horses for a twelvemonth, and to line this tank they must carry the timber 100 miles, as he (the speaker) had done on the Old Man plain. The next step would be to sink a well for the home station, then wells for the sheep, costing, if the timber was brought from the river, at least £1200, to place their country in the same position as a frontage was by nature. The home station, with woolshed,



store, &c., as well as out-station huts, and wire yards, were then made, most probably also with river timber, and then the usual operations of a sheep station would go on, with a constant expenditure for some years upon wells, tanks and dams. One great difficulty would be the want of timber, which commences on the Old Man Plain, forty miles north of Deniliquin. Instead of plains among timber they had small patches of poor timber, scattered at such distances as very often not to be visible. They might ride from the back of Yangar eastward for seventy miles without touching timber, and in some places the plain formed the horizon to right and left without a sign of tree or bush. One gentleman had to set up a pine tree with a box upon the top of it as a landmark when mustering. It had been found by experience that sheep do well on these open plains, though it was expensive to place them there, and wood must be carted to the shepherds afterwards. Now, the land system they would have to adopt must induce capitalists to overcome these difficulties, and the Sydney cry and practice—"Down with squatters," would mean no squatters at all, but a howling desert without a sheep upon it.

As he had so strenuously condemned the land system of both Victoria and New South Wales, they might perhaps wish to learn what his own ideas were as to a land policy for their Riverine Province. His ideas were much the same as when he published them in a pamphlet, called "Land and Labour," eighteen years ago. His proposal was to apply to pasture land the same principle applied to agricultural land here, and to all land in every other civilised country except the Australian colonies, namely, possession by individuals improving the land for their individual benefit. The agricultural land he had proposed to give for nothing, as free grants to any industrious man who could show that he possessed means to cultivate it, proper precautions in the way of conditions of occupation and improvement being taken against abuse. The squatters he had proposed to charge such a price for the fee simple of pasture land as would have answered every purpose of emigration and improvement. The price was small per acre, but large in the aggregate, and would be enormous if applied now to this district. Several modifications would, he thought, be desirable and expedient now; among them the payment for agricultural as well as pasture land; tracts of agricultural land on a most liberal scale, enough for the probable wants of generations, and in the most suitable localities, should be reserved for agricultural selections. To the squatter he would give a lease of fourteen years, at a rent fixed by arbitration as fair for the land in its unimproved state. During the currency of the lease the tenant should have the power of buying the fee simple of the holding entire (as a whole, not in piece), at twenty years' purchase of the rent. The land should be managed,



not by a Minister, but by a sworn commission as independent as the Auditor-General, who should have the power to resume land at the end of a lease, or to refuse to sell the fee simple; but in case of the land being resumed, the squatter should be entitled to its full value as a squattage, less the value of his sheep—as store sheep—and implements. This would give the agriculturist ample room for choice where it would be his interest to select; it would encourage the occupation and improvement to the utmost of all our pasture land, and would enable us to pay off at par any debt we incurred at five per cent. as rapidly as the country accumulated surplus capital, but without drawing it into the treasury as revenue while still required as working capital, as they had done in Victoria. He pointed out that no one was committed to this as a policy; it was simply his own private opinion.

To secure this independence the main point was to show that they had the means to support a separate Government; and though he (Mr. LANG) had not yet got such exact data as he expected to have on his return to Melbourne, he came sufficiently near the truth to feel satisfied that they had ample means. Mr. LANG then referred to the amount of the customs duties, which he reckoned at present as being £90,000 per annum; and spoke of making arrangements with the South Australian Government in regard to its collection, should Victoria resist any equitable scheme proposed. He then combated the idea that smuggling would be the result of such a course; and showed that that would be too expensive, because exposed to so many risks, to be indulged in with respect to those goods on which the duties would be mainly levied. It was said, he observed, that the Victorians, if we levied customs, would tax their sheep and cattle, but this was all bunkum; the people would not let them raise the price of their beef and mutton. Three years ago the duties payable on goods crossed at Echuca and Moama, as ascertained by Mr. KING, were £40,000, which had been rapidly increasing, and may now be safely set down at £60,000. Albury, which has a large population around it, may be set down at £30,000. Swan Hill, Euston, and Wentworth supply the Darling and lower Murray, besides other places, £30,000; in all, at present £120,000, and without the Albury district, of £90,000. The license and assessment west of our proposed line is £47,000; licenses, back blocks, pre-emptive rights, land sales, publicans' licenses, &c., he had not yet sufficient data to give with certainty; but he had every reason to believe would be another £90,000, which would make a revenue of at least £270,000, including Albury and Wagga, or £227,000 without them.

He hoped that in a few days the Committee in Melbourne would have exact information upon all these points, which would be laid immediately before a public meeting in Deniliquin, when



he trusted immediate and active steps would be taken towards obtaining independence, which he considered the most advantageous for townspeople, as well as squatters. This matter must be treated upon the broad basis of the general good of every interest and class of the population. If the pastoral interest had been a prominent subject hitherto in this discussion it was because their district was almost purely pastoral. There was room for other interests, for agriculture, wine, &c., and he believed cotton; and it would be the object of any Government which might be formed here to develop them all. It must be evident to every one that, whether attached to Sydney or Melbourne, a small portion of our revenue would be expended here; if independent it would all circulate in the district. Imagine the effect of even £200,000 expended here, instead of being withdrawn without any return whatever. Mr. DUFFY's assessment on the stock they would have before many years; £660,000 at five per cent., was equal to a loan of £13,000,000. Why should we give that to be expended in Victoria when we can apply it to our own district, as well as the revenue of £2,000,000 which they would have when stocked. Every advantage to be obtained by annexation to Victoria they would have as an independent province, while government from Sydney was impracticable, and the only wise course they could take was to obtain independence; and if they would only work steadily and together success was certain. (General applause.)

At the conclusion of the lecture the chairman observed that the subject brought forward was one of great importance, and required to be looked at from many points. The meeting would be glad to hear any gentleman who had other opinions to express.

Mr. ROBERTSON, solicitor, after complimenting the meeting for the interest which the large number assembled showed was taken in the matter, said he thought the lecturer had been wrong from the very start. Mr. LANG seemed to think that the Home Government had great power in the matter—that was a mistake; the Home Government could have nothing to say on the matter. They must, in order to separate, have the sanction of the Sydney Assembly. Referring to the proposed boundaries he said the people beyond the Lachlan river had no sympathy with the movement—they had looked, and would always look to the old metropolis. He admitted those residing between the Lachlan and Murray rivers had grievances—they had to pay taxes, and were practically unrepresented. He thought, at the best, that independence could only be obtained after much time had been lost—in fact, when it was too late. Hence he advised them to make the best possible bargain with Victoria. Although Mr. LANG had pointed out the advantages of independence, and referred to what he considered the disadvantages of annexation,



yet he, Mr. ROBERTSON, thought that, even at the worst, the townspeople would still manage to live—they had always done so somehow, and no doubt would continue so to do. They did without seeing the wool go down eight months out of the twelve—why not if they never saw a bale? Independence would excite the jealousy of Albury and Wagga Wagga, and therefore was not desirable. Besides, if Deniliquin were the capital of the independent colony, they would have to erect public and very expensive buildings—where was the money to come from? Better join Victoria, who had already got such in Melbourne, together with a staff of officials, who could at once take charge of the district. They were offered a partnership in a wealthy and able firm, let them seize the present crisis, and make terms. Just say what they wanted. Mr. ROBERTSON then referred to the inconveniences which would attach to the collection of customs dues in an independent colony, and concluded by proposing a vote of thanks to the lecturer.

Mr. LANG, in reply, said, that one of the advantages of independence would be, that the taxes raised would be expended within their own territory; if annexation took place, that money would nearly all go to Melbourne. That was the present grievance with respect to Sydney, and one which they wished to avoid in the future. Victoria—there was no doubt about that—would insist on the 8d. per head assessment; and when the country was fully occupied, that would amount to £660,000, equal, at 5 per cent., to the interest of a loan of £13,000,000. If joined to Victoria they might be sure such loans would be raised, and expended mainly in Victoria. Now he, Mr. LANG, said—Why not expend that money among themselves, and thus make each one the richer? With respect to the Home Government and its power to alter boundaries, he believed that such power still resided in the QUEEN, otherwise a sentence in a late despatch of the DUKE OF NEWCASTLE was without any meaning. Referring to the interest taken by the people in the north in the matter, he said he knew that the residents on the Darling and Bogan were very anxious and willing to support the movement for independence. The difficulties surrounding the collection of the customs he felt, but they were not, by any means, insuperable. He concluded by expressing his willingness to proceed with the discussion, where the meeting disposed to lengthen the proceedings.

It being ten o'clock, the room crowded and the weather sultry, no one seemed anxious to prolong the business, and after a vote of thanks was given to the chairman, the meeting broke up.



## ANNEXATION OR INDEPENDENCE ?

[PASTORAL TIMES, FEBRUARY 7.]

It was a very sad day for Victoria when a number of her "patriots" bought Mr. CHARLES GAVAN DUFFY. Those of his admirers who went on board ship to welcome him to our shores evidently thought that Mr. DUFFY was to regenerate Victoria; and as his Patron Saint is said to have banished certain creatures from the favoured Green Isle, so was Mr. DUFFY, heaven born, to perform miracles in the golden colony. We believe there is not one of her politicians who has more disappointed people than has Mr. DUFFY. He set himself up, on his return to Parliament, as a model of Parliamentary excellence; and endeavoured, from the *prestige* which he had gained in consequence of having been once a member—though a very obscure one—of the Imperial Parliament, to make colonial capital therefrom. Having, through the assistance of his undeniable effrontery, forced himself on the country as a minister, he has been trying his hand at making laws on a subject confessedly the most difficult that any minister can approach. That he has failed—most miserably failed, must now be apparent, even to his warmest supporters; and we venture to assert, and we shall prove it, that he has done more harm to Victoria than any minister under responsible Government since its first introduction. We do not except the unprincipled BROOKE, DUFFY's predecessor, who, for a little popularity, broke through the laws which he, as a minister, had sworn to obey.

Three months ago Victoria was by us regarded as making an attempt to redeem her political position. Her stump orators were retiring from the political arena; they had played out their little game, and it was thus made evident that the public no longer desired to listen to false prophets, and that the only legitimate road to national prosperity was the beaten track of progressive Conservatism. The promised measures for decentralising the Government by giving extensive powers and means to local bodies, and the restriction of the municipal franchise to men of some means, tended to infuse into our minds a joyful hope that *ultra* Democracy in the sister colony had had its day, and that strong efforts would be made to restore public confidence—not a little shaken by HEALES's Ministry—in the stability of her institutions. All seemed to promise well, when, lo! Mr. DUFFY appeared in the foreground with his immaculate Land Act, and in enforcing its provisions in a spirit which the greatest democrat in the Assembly never contemplated, soon broke the thin stratum of progressive Conservatism, so successfully laid by Mr. O'SHANASSY. All the capitalists of the colony, who had invested moneys in pastoral pursuits, got alarmed—not without a cause, and the whole squatting fabric was shaken to its centre. We venture to predict that no minister, under responsible Govern-



ment, ever succeeded in making himself so thoroughly detested, or so unpopular among those whose good opinion is of the most vital importance to a Ministry. It is said that no less than eight or nine hundred appeals will be lodged against Mr. DUFFY's assessments, pretty practical proof, were more required, that the aptitude for "special legislation," which Mr. LANG insists on as necessary in dealing with the Crown Pastoral tenants, is not in Mr. DUFFY. Never was there a more crude or iniquitous measure placed on the Statute Book, and never was there a bad law worse administered. Even the most venomous of the anti-squatters recoil from Mr. DUFFY and his enactment.

We confess ourselves that we have been deceived in Mr. DUFFY; we never had much faith in him, as indeed we had but little in the school of politicians in which Mr. DUFFY graduated; we never believed in "spinal marrow" patriotism. There is nothing in politics to require the sacrifice of any part of the spinal column if the head be sound. One would have thought, after the political vicissitudes through which Mr. DUFFY passed at home, that his head—although once in extreme danger—if properly screwed on, would at all events have developed something politically just and reasonable, even while dealing with a matter so confessedly difficult as the land question; but it is not in Mr. DUFFY. He is still the same man as when sowing discontent in his native country; he is envious of those who successfully acquire independence, or who are on the road to it through legitimate means. If he cannot build up, he can pull down or destroy; and who are so fit subjects for experimenting on as the Crown tenants? Mr. DUFFY hates the Crown and everything connected with it; has he not told us so in the days of his hot youth? And did he not confirm it ere, unhappily for the people of Australia, he first put his feet upon its hospitable shore.

Not only has Mr. DUFFY set all Victoria in a blaze by his outrageous proceedings against the squatters, but he has completely and effectually snapped the chain that promised to bind our districts to Victoria. The progressive conservatism of Mr. O'SHANASSY's Cabinet held out to us strong hopes that our political relationship with Victoria would soon become nearer allied. Despairing of ever attaining justice from the Sydney democratic Assembly, we turned to Victoria with a very large amount of confidence; and we thought, while admiring the energy of her Government, and as we were geographically near that colony we might blot out the Murray boundary, and become Victorians in thought, deed, and action. Everything promised well, when in steps Victoria's evil genius with his confiscating Land Act; and we turned away without the shadow of hope at the projected annexation. Men, clear-headed men amongst us three months ago, who—not likely



to be caught napping—concluded that we might, on certain fair conditions, entertain the thought of annexation, will not now listen to the suggestion. So unpopular has the idea of annexation become that it is rarely broached, and “Independence!” is the cry from the Murray to Fort Burke, from the Lower Darling to the Cordilleras. It is also certain that men have now stepped into the political arena who were never expected to take part in the agitation, and who evince a determination to pursue independence with a zeal and ardour never expected from them. Whether the fire that now blazes so brightly will continue to burn, it is not for us to say. It is, however, clear that we are beginning to realise the importance of our position. It all rests with ourselves. Good often springs out of evil, and if DUFFY’s vagaries should be the means of knitting together a strong party of liberal Conservatives, able to dam up the *ultra* democratic torrent, it were well. We do not like to prophesy, but there is not the most remote probability of Mr. DUFFY trying his hand at making land laws for the territory north of the Murray. This is what Victoria has gained by the patriot which she bought for a few thousands ready cash. Better, far better, had she given Mr. DUFFY five times the amount for changing his course to America, where his quondam friends MEAGHER and MITCHELL have found a home. Victoria has, we fear, lost her chance of laying hold of some of the finest pastoral country in Australia. An extension of her territory northward would have crowned her as the greatest colony in the Australian group; but so long as she submits to be governed by politicians of the BROOKE or of the DUFFY school she must pay the penalty of their crimes, and she will cease to inspire the thinking public with confidence in her stability, or in the permanent justice of her laws.

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### INDEPENDENCE—“WE HAVE NO PORT.”

[PASTORAL TIMES, FEBRUARY 21.]

Of all the arguments used as reasons against our becoming an independent colony, the weakest appears to us to be—that we have no seaboard. We find friend and opponent to independence use this plea—“We shall be hemmed in on all sides,” and having no means of transmitting our surplus wealth to market, we are to be at the mercy of Victoria and South Australia. We shall be shut up or shut in, and the Governments of the colonies named will have us completely at their mercy. Upwards of five years ago, when the settlers met at Deniliquin to declare their opposition to the Electoral Bill which Mr. COWPER was then endeavouring to pass, the petition to the Assembly from



Deniliquin district contained this broad allegation:—"That, in the event of the Bill with the clause for manhood suffrage passing and becoming law, the settlers and residents of the pastoral districts would, in all probability, be compelled to seek in separation that safety which they could not expect from the Government of New South Wales." A large number of settlers were appealed to who resided in different parts of the country as to what were their views in reference to the important step of severance from New South Wales. Considering that this was the first time the matter was seriously broached among the people of the Riverine Districts, the replies, which we at the time carefully perused, were tolerably unanimous as to advantages expected to be derived from separation. Many of the respondents, however, stumbled over the question of the port. "We have no port," said they, "and how are we to get over this difficulty?" The people of Eden, Twofold Bay, taking time by the forelock, immediately, unasked, offered to join us, and unite their destiny with ours; but the physical obstacles between the Riverine districts and Twofold Bay were and are almost as great as between us and Sydney; and Twofold Bay, with all its advantages as a port, is thus denied us. We have a vivid remembrance of one of the replies to the question as to separation: the respondent asked, "Should we not be in the position of a nut between a pair of nut-crackers;" the "nut-crackers" being, of course, New South Wales and Victoria, the Riverine district being the "nut." This quaint reply is deserving of little more than a laugh, did it not express the sentiments of those who think that the want of a port is an insuperable barrier to our independence. The Governments of Victoria and South Australia, through whose territory we alone can despatch our produce to Europe, will put a prohibitory duty on our exports. Why? Will anybody answer us that question; why should our friends across the border refuse to exchange civilities with us? How can the Victorians expect the Murray River Railway to pay if it is not by means of our traffic. The 17,000 and upwards bales of wool which, during the past season, passed through Echuca—according to the returns of the Moama custom-house officer—would be something. Why, at £4 per ton for carriage, this would be £10,000. These 17,000 bales, in all probability, will be 30,000 bales next year, such is the rapid extension of sheep-farming in these districts. And why should Victoria act spitefully towards such capital customers as we are, and shall be, to her? Would it not be destroying the trade of her merchants to throw obstacles in the way of receiving our wool, tallow, hides, beef, mutton, &c.? Would she be mad enough to do this, with no object to gain by such a suicidal policy? On the contrary, does she not show every desire to trade with us, and by expending £600,000 for the extension of the line from



Sandhurst to Echuca, has she not given us a permanent hostage for a close commercial alliance? When this line of railway is finished, is she likely to close it to us? Indignation would possess her people, and we venture to predict that no Government could retain power for a month that would lay on the Assembly table a Bill to tax our produce in a prohibitory manner. The Victorians, by their Parliament have exhibited too much sagacity to justify our expecting any such folly. Doubtless they would prefer that we annexed our Riverine territory to theirs; but failing to secure this, they would soon seek to gain the next best advantage by getting the benefits arising from the closest commercial intercourse on terms suitable to both parties.

Let us however suppose, for argument's sake, that the Victorians became mad enough to quarrel—get sulky, and have no commercial connection with us—we have another source open to us—we have the river Murray. If an insane epidemic should seize upon our nearest neighbours, and they insist on tabooing our territory, would the epidemic be likely to extend to the South Australians? Would they, too, cut us? Have they not for years striven to draw closer the ties of commercial relationship with the residents of our Riverine districts? Have they not for years spent large sums of money in attempting to clear our rivers—Murray, Murrumbidgee, and Darling, and are they no still doing so? Are they not straining every nerve to compete with Victoria for our custom, and is it not to beat the South Australians out of the field that the Victorians are pushing forward with all their strength the Murray River Railway? We have therefore two powerful competitors for our custom, and so far from having no port being a good reason why we cannot become independent, our inland isolation only calls into action the energy of two powerful communities, who exhibit every desire to receive our produce, and who are, as we have said, competing for it.

The day has gone past when such effete notions as our having no port should prove a barrier to independence. It is the want of thought that makes any of our settlers entertain the idea that because we have no port that we dare not seek to govern ourselves. We will not insult them by concluding that the idea can be harboured long in their minds. If we should fail in securing independence it will not be from such a want, or the need of means to maintain a Government; the failure can only result from one cause—the want amongst us of men of action. This, as we have said on more than one occasion, may prove our weakness. It is here we shall break down if we break down at all. If we do not succeed in carrying our point, it will be because we shall not deserve success. It all rests with ourselves. We feel assured that this is the last



time the cry of "Independence" will be heard. When the railway is open to Echuca, when small steamers are puffing away among all the nooks of our rivers, and getting all our exports for the depôt at Echuca, it will be too late to talk of the Riverine Colony, the districts will be overrun with Victorian merchants, Victorian storekeepers, Victorian innkeepers, and men of all callings—not excepting free selectors. The voices of our settlers will then be swamped, and the latter will rue the day when they declined to take advantage of their position. With nations, with colonies, with communities, as with the individual, the tide of fortune is the same; and woe is theirs who fail to take advantage of it when it runs in their favour.

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#### FREE SELECTION ON THE MURRAY FRONTAGE.

[PASTORAL TIMES, FEBRUARY 28.]

The raid made by Mr. DUFFY and his democratic friends in Victoria upon the squatters of that colony is fast being extended across the Murray into New South Wales. Our police report of proceedings at Moama, as contained in a recent issue, chronicled the doings of one of those fortunate men denominated "free selectors." It is questionable whether a much better name might not be found for gentry of this class, if Mr. MAIN, who has camped on Parracoota station—near to Moama, is to be taken as a type. This person very coolly crosses the Murray in front of his household goods, quietly seeks out an opportunity of sitting down on a spot where he can do the most mischief and havoc upon the property of a squatter—selects one of the choicest spots on the Murray side, surrounding an old crossing-place, where once was a ferry, the "free selector" or "free-booter," for that is the more appropriate designation, then throws out his chain, and complacently measures off for himself forty acres, hies off to the duly-appointed public officer at Moama, and having paid his 25 per cent. purchase money, or, in other words, £10, for his forty acres, immediately proceeds to work the "oracle." Some of the cattle and horses owned by the lessees of the station graze, or are alleged to have grazed, over their wonted pastures, and they encroach upon the new and unenclosed domain of Mr. MAIN. Off they are driven to the nearest pound, and damages to the extent of £38 19s. 6d. claimed—just £1 0s. 6d. less than the new landlord of forty acres is to pay for the fee-simple of the land to the State at the end of four years! Messrs. ROW and KIRK, the lessees of the run, appeal against the monstrous proceedings, and the Police magistrate of Deniliquin, who presides at the hearing in Moama, decides against the free selector—the poundkeeper returns the impounding charges, paid



under protest, as being excessive, the free selector tells the magistrate that he intends to apply to the Supreme Court for a prohibition, and then the first act of the drama ends.

As to the merits of that part of the question relating to the excessive impounding charges, no one will dispute the Magistrate's decision—the charge was an outrage upon every honest principle. Of the second element—as to the impounding law being opposed to the proceedings of the free selector, and thus making the act illegal, we are not so certain. That the action taken by this man, that he sat down here with the view of “trapping,” there can be no doubt; but that the law enabled him to do so appears debateable. Treating of the general question, however, the frontage to the Murray was proclaimed as a reserve years ago, for sale and occupation. The Supreme Court at Sydney recently declared, in the case of the Moira appeal, that the squatter had his grazing right over all the frontage for two miles distance from the river (the extent of the reserve) against all parties, unless they had purchased the freehold, and resided on it. Thus it follows that the whole of the Murray frontage for two miles from its banks, is open for free selection from its rise in the mountains to the boundary line between New South Wales and South Australia, excepting one mile in every four (recently recalled by an Order in Council), set apart, we presume, to enable the flocks and herds of the lessees of the adjacent runs to have access to water. We are not aware whether the same privileges extend to the Edward and the Murrumbidgee, but as the same cause may be said to operate in the case of these rivers—their being proved navigable, doubtless reserves are, or will soon be, proclaimed on these, as in the case of the Murray. Thus practically any part of the frontages of the principal rivers of the district of the Murrumbidgee will be at the mercy of any loafer with £10 in his pocket, who may choose to settle down and impound the cattle off the run. The settlers whose runs are thus situated may be able “dimly,” to see their future prospects; we say, “dimly,” because no man thus placed can tell on what day his run may be pounced upon and its frontage taken up. Half-a-dozen free selectors, with £10 each, can thus positively reduce the value of any settler's run residing on the Murray, in four and twenty hours by at least 25 per cent.

This is a pretty state of things, and yet who can blame the *bonâ fide* free selector for exercising that freedom which the law has given him? We do not include in that category Mr. MAIN; the law, impolitic as it is, never contemplated such proceedings as he adopted. And it may be, that Government will see the necessity of passing some enactment compelling those who go about in the free and easy character of selectors to fence in their ground before they use the Impounding Act for grossly dis-



honest purposes. Surely it was never intended that "occupation" meant sitting down upon a Crown tenant's run at a moment's notice, in a forty-shilling tent, and then the free selector have the power of impounding the stock from off the unenclosed ground. Heartless as was the conduct of the majority of the Assembly in Sydney when they passed the unjust land law, surely the tyrannical power thus given, and the extortion attendant on its being called into action, was never contemplated. The effects of such legislation are, however, already made manifest to us. We are not of those who preach the doctrine of meeting evil half-way; perhaps those who are more immediately interested in the matter see the evils that threaten them, and consider that in silence is their greatest safety. The disastrous effects of democratic legislation are, however, upon us, and *we* cannot be silent. We cannot shut our eyes to the impending evil. The settlers have done so too long. Even now we hear of a few selfish settlers, residing on the back country, crying out against the movement for independence. Would they do so if their runs were bounded by either of the rivers named? After having destroyed the frontages, the next sacrifice to the Sydney mob and its legislature will, of course, be the back country. Having tasted of the sweets of free selection, king Demos will not be satisfied until the country is over-run. It is only a question of time. One hundred free selectors, properly organised, with an aggregate capital of £1000, or £10 each, could over-run the whole of the Murray frontages, and thus depreciate in value a million's worth of station property. All that the State would get by the raid in four years would be £4000, while the step would involve a number of settlers in positive ruin. O! Mr. GIDEON LANG, what a mistake you and your friends made two years ago, when you postponed the subject of independence.

We were of the first to give this question practical aid; we stuck to it until every squatter had deserted it, and we warned those interested that they were losing the golden opportunity. Politically inactive as they always have been—not deficient in intelligence, moral worth, or pecuniary means—with the best of causes for which to contend—possessing all the elements of good colonists—the acknowledged pioneers of this continent—they allow themselves to become the prey of political adventurers—perchance the greatest knave of his class who may bid the highest for popularity, power and place. Organisation would have saved them, but this they never could accomplish; they never seem to have studied the household fable of the bundle of sticks; thus it is that, as a party, they have been cut off in detail, and have fallen victims to their political inertia by which numbers of their class have become helplessly involved in ruin.



## THE RIGHT TO ALTER BOUNDARIES.

[PASTORAL TIMES, MARCH 14.]

Now that Separation is resolving itself into the question of Annexation or Independence, and is thus fairly before the public, imaginary obstacles are sure to spring up. This has invariably been the fate of all important movements of a political character. The public mind having to undergo a revolution, it cannot be expected that we in these districts, who have thought so little on politics, should, in one moment, be exempt from a certain amount of doubt and fear. Some may indulge in the pleasing pastime of making "mountains of mole-hills." There are minds given to these phantasies, but when convinced of their error, generally make the *amende* by pursuing the object sought in a sober practical manner. We have, in our recent issues, disposed of two stumbling-blocks to the progress of Separation, viz., the want of means to maintain a government, and the want of a port—each objection on being put through a mild test is found to contain nothing that a rational effort on our part could not dispose of. In the movement for Separation we cannot expect to advance without much opposition; some of it may prove more formidable to our progress than the most far-seeing of us anticipate. We shall come in contact with great interests, and we may therefore naturally expect considerable obstacles to be raised if we touch them. We are certain to rouse passions of every kind; from these, in all probability, will spring a battle most obstinate in its character, and which shall have to be contested inch by inch. We shall not have to "fight for it," although one of the members in the Sydney Legislature declared we should, when Separation was talked of two years ago. We may, however, rest assured that the struggle will be by no means divested of obstinacy; nevertheless, amongst the arguments against the success there will be found many that are not worthy of very serious notice.

We are now met by the assertion that the Queen has no power to interfere with the existing boundary of New South Wales; we admit at once that her Majesty has not that power. A moment's reflection must show that the Queen can only possess the power when given to her by the Imperial Parliament. The subject has been mystified by the constant reference to her Majesty: "We shall petition the Queen for Separation" is the cry of those who have not given the matter much consideration. Like true Englishmen, they believe that in her Majesty is concentrated all the power, wisdom, and glory of our nation; and it is no slight homage to the chief ruler of our nation that here—at the antipodes—the majority of us have still that fervent attachment for the head of the State. Doubtless, in the expression, "Petition the Queen," those who give utterance to it



believe that, as a last resource, when all other channels through which we may seek justice fail us, that then we should "Petition the Queen" as the fountain-head of all justice. The Duke of Newcastle tells us that "her Majesty has no power,"—in the despatch of September 20th,—therefore it is that we seek to give her power by an Imperial Act. After this shall we be wrong in asking her to exercise it? We now give the clause in the New South Wales Constitution Act, defining the boundaries of the colony.

"For the purpose of this Act the boundaries of the colony of New South Wales shall, except as hereinafter named, comprise all that portion of her Majesty's territory of Australia or New Holland, lying between the one hundred and twenty-ninth and one hundred and fifty-fourth degrees of east longitude, reckoning from the meridian of Greenwich, and northward by the fortieth degree of south latitude, including all the islands adjacent in the Pacific Ocean within the latitude aforesaid; and also including Lord Howe Island, being in or about the latitude of thirty-one degrees thirty minutes south and one hundred and fifty-ninth degree east longitude, reckoning from the said meridian of Greenwich, save and except the territories comprised within the boundaries of the province of South Australia and the colony of Victoria as at present established, provided always that nothing herein contained shall be deemed to prevent her Majesty from altering the boundary of New South Wales on the north in such manner as to her Majesty may seem fit, nor from detaching from the said colony that portion of the same which lies between the western boundary of South Australia and the twenty-ninth degree of east longitude, reckoning from the said meridian of Greenwich."

It will thus be seen that the Queen reserved to herself the power of separating the Moreton Bay district, and a piece of territory known as "No Man's Land," situated on the western boundary of South Australia, and between that colony and Western Australia. This territory belonged to New South Wales nominally, but was geographically allied to South Australia, and has since been given by the Home Government to the latter colony. Moreton Bay separation was virtually accomplished before the Australian Act was passed, and it was evident that "No Man's Land" would be ceded to South Australia; so her Majesty reserved the power to alter the boundaries, without consulting the Imperial or any other Parliament. This is what the DUKE OF NEWCASTLE means in his despatch in reply to Sir HENRY BARKLY, as to the requisition for separation forwarded by the petitioners from the western part of Victoria. The QUEEN was asked instead of the Imperial Parliament. The result might have been the same had the petition been sent to the House of Commons. In order, however, to put the matter



beyond a doubt as to whether any insuperable barrier exists in reference to separating our districts from New South Wales, the Hon. JAMES MARTIN, Q.C., perhaps the most eminent constitutional lawyer in Australia, has been consulted. The case was put to him on Friday last, as to whether the QUEEN in Council had the power to grant us separation. The following is his reply by telegram :—

“ March 7, 1863.

“ The Imperial Parliament can. The QUEEN in Council cannot. The Imperial Parliament is the only authority by which any part of New South Wales can be formed into a separate colony. The New South Wales Legislature has no control over the matter, but I believe the DUKE OF NEWCASTLE has intimated in a despatch that he would not be a party to any separation without the consent of the local Legislature.”

Thus, one by one, all the obstacles raised against us vanish, as we were satisfied they would. We have little to do with the Sydney Assembly; although much depends on that body as to whether we secure Independence or Annexation, much more depends upon ourselves. If we are true to the cause of Independence the result cannot be doubtful. This is the position that we have all along maintained. We have the means, and again we ask—have we the men? There are many things to be done ere the battle is half won. The Sydney Legislature hold our country in trust for national purposes; if to create an Australian empire now in embryo it is found necessary to separate extensive districts for a time, until the day shall come for a great confederacy of all the colonies, and all the Australias become one, it is difficult to discover any insurmountable barrier in the way of Annexation or Independence.

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### SEPARATION AS IT AFFECTS THE LABOURING POPULATION.

[PASTORAL TIMES, MARCH 21.]

It must not be forgotten that there are other parties interested in the Separation question than the settlers. An attempt is being made in some quarters to make the agitation purely a squatting movement; but to encourage that would be, to say the least, a great mistake. Some of the squatting class are said to be desirous of obtaining a monopoly of the public lands of these districts for a series of years in addition to their existing tenure; and as a consequence of this the old cry is being revived, in a modified form, as to the grasping propensities of the monopolising squatter. This cry has been very success-



ful in Victoria, where there is an abundance of prime agricultural land, where "Down with the squatter!" has been so destructive of the pastoral interests; and where, in fact, numbers are suffering from the disturbed and uncertain condition of the Crown pastoral tenants. The demand for agricultural land in the sister colony was magnified a few months since to such an extent by noisy partisans as to compel the Government to take steps to throw open ten million acres of the best land in the colony for free selection. The Government, however, subsequently recalled six millions from the large area named. When all the splendid land was offered to those whom it was pretended were seeking to buy it, the Government found that the land was not required—that there were ten times as much land in the market as would, in all probability, be bought for many years. As the rights of the squatters, whose runs have been thus invaded, have not been recognised, the consequences are seen in the utter prostration of the whole of squatting interests. The faith of the Crown lessees in the Government has been so much shaken, that years of conservative reaction are not likely to re-establish matters as they were once—between the settlers and any government who may be in power. The democratic organs acknowledge that the cry for agricultural land was monstrously exaggerated,—that they were deceived, and the leaders of the same class, in the Assembly, if they had the same honesty of purpose as the journalists, would also make the same honest confession. Borne up by their brazen impudence, they stand on the political pillory, martyrs to their own ignorance, and defy their enemies with a zeal worthy of a better cause. The derangement and partial destruction of a great and permanent interest like that which has taken so many years of toil and capital to build up, among a population numbering now only a few hundred thousands, must be productive of great evils in a monetary point of view; nor can the social part of the subject be lost sight of; once let the capitalists lose confidence in the stability of a country's laws, then will they take themselves off to other lands, and seek safety for their capital in a new country. The fruits of this destructive legislation are clearly felt in Victoria. The evils afflict all classes—bankers, merchants, professional men, tradesmen, mechanics, and all the labouring classes. The latter feel it most heavily; their labour, which is their capital, is not sought as it was once; and if engaged, the remuneration for it is generally very much below the standard which we would like to see, or which the labourer himself can well be content with. The working people of Victoria have experienced, we fear, only a very small proportion of the mischief which their *quasi* friends in the Assembly have brought upon a country, perhaps the richest in



the world. It is its vast wealth from natural causes, its gold and other minerals, its splendid pastoral and agricultural soil, its fine climate, in fact its unlimited resources, which have saved it from the extreme affliction of bad legislation.

In the country which we seek to separate from New South Wales, the salt-bush country, we can have at present but one great interest. We have no millions of acres of fine agricultural lands to tempt either the cupidity of needy agitators or draw the attention of many farmers. Our lands are pre-eminently pastoral. We do not say that other interests may not ultimately spring up, requiring both recognition and support; but in all probability, judging from the present characteristics of both soil and climate, generations must pass before other modes of industry can become of great moment here, or exercise much influence on the laws to be made for the government of the territory. Nevertheless, wherever lands fitted for agricultural settlement, or capable of being easily made so, exist, such areas must be placed in such a position that settlement may be encouraged. There can be no doubt about the recognition, in the widest possible sense, of this principle, as being both just and necessary. There can be no excuse in our indulging in any speculations as to the good effects of throwing open the country to other occupants than those who shall try to develop its legitimate resources. It is a country where above all others there are fields for the capitalist. In the gold-fields there are natural grades for the occupation of capital. There is the alluvial soil for the poor man, who has nothing but *thew and sinew* to support him. There is the moderately-deep sinking for the man with small means. There is the deep sinking for the man with more means; and then we have the quartz-reef for large capitalists or for a body of small capitalists who have a little money to invest. Here, in this pastoral country, considerable capital is required for the smallest station. The sum wanted for the most petty station must be reckoned by the thousand. The great bulk of the country has yet to be reclaimed; wells, dams, reservoirs, have to be constructed, canals to be made, and considerable rivers have to be turned and locked; and then there is the stock required for this country, the chief of which is now a wilderness. If we reckoned up all these, the capital required would come to millions; and what employment this will give to tens of thousands of the labouring population! The demand for labour must increase as the capitalist reclaims the country. Here those who have been unfortunate on the various gold-fields might seek employment; for all the purposes of well-sinking and dam-making—all the skilful applications in vogue for pastoral improvement—the foiled labourer of the gold-fields is found to be unsurpassed. If, then, we could establish a pastoral colony



that would give to capitalists a reasonable guarantee that their investments and labours would not be disturbed by every shifting wind in the political horizon, we think that the labourer, the artisan, the storekeeper, and the merchant would profit by the change as much as the capitalist, and permanently more so. In our midst would be our Legislature, and the great bulk of the settlers would reside on their stations, improving the public property and fulfilling in all respects the duties of colonists. They would naturally become attached to the country, and it would follow that they would take an interest in the social advancement of those in their employ. The bond of union would, as in other countries where stability and order reign, be stronger between the employer and employed than it is at present. We regard the prospect of the settler being stationed amongst us, taking an interest in our charitable and benevolent institutions, our schools, and our churches, as the strongest argument in favour of independence. And this is our chief reason for preferring Independence to Annexation. It is undoubtedly better to govern ourselves at home than to be legislated for at a distance. We have been long enough treated as a rich milch cow, Sydney and Melbourne dividing the produce between them. There is nothing unreasonable in our desiring at last to keep the cream at home, leaving our surplus to find its way to the proper market, neither is it difficult to conclude that our labouring population and those dependent upon them would thus receive their fair share of the united industry. If we thought for a moment that independence would curtail the privileges of those who are otherwise engaged than in squatting, we should print our protest against it in our largest type; in preferring self-government to being a distant dependency of Victoria, we keep the interests of all in view. We are not the special organ of any class in these districts. Difficulties stand in the way of our seeking annexation as well as independence; the same amount of energy necessary to conquer the one may perhaps enable us to effect the other. Which ever is preferred by the public in general here will be accepted by us as preferable to the existing state of our political position. It is our duty to tell our readers which way we lean; if, however, it should be finally determined to accept annexation to Victoria, we shall do our best to attain it, and we sincerely hope that all in these districts will work with unanimity and concord.