

REPORT No 2 - 31st December 1862

from Consul James Graham, Italian Consulate in Melbourne

James Graham (1818-1898), described by Governor LaTrobe as 'strong in talent, industrious and honest', was born in Ireland and educated in Scotland. After arriving in Sydney in 1839, he overlanded three months later to Melbourne where he became a successful businessman and merchant. Throughout his life he held directorships, appointments and interests in shipping, railways, banking, insurance, wool and commodities trading and landed properties. He was also a founding member of the Melbourne Club where a portrait still hangs.

In 1859 James Graham was appointed on an honorary basis Consul of the Kingdom of Sardinia in Melbourne by the then Minister of Foreign Affairs, Count Camillo Benso di Cavour. Melbourne was a Consular Delegation of the Italian Consulate in Sydney which was opened in 1855. A few months before the proclamation of the Kingdom of Italy in March 1861, Melbourne was elevated to the position of an independent Consulate, with jurisdiction over South Australia and Tasmania. Among his duties, Consul Graham was to compile six-monthly reports on the economy, internal affairs and population of the Colony of Victoria. Other duties included the keeping of records on Italian subjects residing and arriving in the Colony, transmission of death certificates and assisting with enquiries as to the whereabouts of Italian subjects in the Colony. Consul Graham was replaced in 1864 by Consul Biagi, who was the first Italian diplomat to be posted to Melbourne.

PREPATORY [sic] REMARKS

In preparing the periodical Reports from this Consulate, it will be my study to furnish a consecutive statistical account of the Populations, Imports, Exports, Revenue [etc.] of this Colony, together with any other remarks on its progress, production, and resources, as I may think may prove of interest to the people of Italy.

POPULATION

1. Since the date of my last Report, a period of six months, the population of Victoria, judging by the arrivals, and departures by sea, has decreased by an excess of the latter, over the former, of 2121, - the arrivals by sea having been 17,498, and the departures, 19,614. This is solely to be attributed to the great attractions of

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Melbourne Victoria,
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Preparatory Remarks

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the Gold Fields, in the neighbouring Colony of New Zealand, but as these Gold Fields are essentially summer ones, the winter of New Zealand being in general so very severe as to render it impossible for Miners to follow their avocations, in the greater part of the Country, where the Gold has been discovered, we may reasonably look, very shortly, for the return to our genial climate, of the larger proportion of those who have left these shores only for a time. There is no doubt whatever, that the Gold Fields of New Zealand are remunerative, and I trust also may prove sufficiently attractive to draw to its shores a large population from the older countries of the world, for the great want of all these Colonies is population, and if New Zealand is only successful in bringing people out, all its neighbours, in course of time, will participate in the benefit and especially this Colony of Victoria, which must always be a place of great attraction from its great mineral wealth, and unbounded natural resources.

I regret much, from the Registrar Generals' Statistical Report of the Births and Deaths of the Colony during the year 1862, not being yet published, that I cannot give these returns in this Report, but I feel confident that when they are published, they will show a large increase in the population, during the last six months.

IMPORTS & EXPORTS

2. The Imports of the Colony, from the 1st July to this date, amount in value to the sum of £6,613,047, and the Exports, for the same period, to £6,247,120, of which from the 3rd July to the 26th of December, there has been actually shipped of Gold, from Victoria, 1,027,116 ounces, of the value say £4,108,464.

GOLD PRODUCTION

The total shipment of Gold from Victoria, during 1862 was 2,019,839 ounces, of the value of £8,079,356 and during the previous year (1861) the total shipment was 2,072,359 ounces, so notwithstanding the great exodus from this Country to the newer Gold Fields of New Zealand, our export of the precious metal has not fallen off much - indeed, I believe, instead of a falling off, it would have shown an increase, had it not been for the fact, that during the latter part of this year, and particularly this month, there has been very little Gold shipped, in consequence of its having been kept back, for the month of January, on the first day of which the export duty on gold, is to be reduced from two shillings (2/-) to one shilling and sixpence (1/6^d)

per ounce. The month of January will therefore show very large shipments.

WOOL

The export of wool, to this date, amounts to 45,797 bales, of the declared value of £710,413, but as the wool shipping season continues up to the end of March, and very often later, it will not be in my power to give the production of wool, for 1862, until my next Report. The same remark will also apply to the export of tallow, hides, etc.

REVENUE

3. For the year 1862, the Revenue of the colony amounted to £3,131,420..7..4 against £2,886,091..13..10 for 1861 showing an increase of £245,328..13..6 in favor of this year.

VINTAGE

From all the wine producing Districts, the accounts of the Grape crop are most favorable. Thus far, we have had a fine warm summer, not too hot, so that everything, as yet, has been in favor of the prospect of a large production of Wine this year. One Grower, I hear, hopes to make on his farm alone 250 pipes, another 150, and so on. These quantities may appear small on the old wine producing countries of Europe, but in the new Country, still quite in its infancy, such results must be considered satisfactory. All Growers agree in the expectation, that the Victorian Wines of 1863, will rank very high in the estimation of good Judges.

AGRICULTURE

The weather, that has been hitherto so favorable to the Grape, has not been so equally so for Grain crops - being too dry consequently, they will be light this year, on the whole - a great increase of land however has been brought under cultivation, and when the Statistical Reports for the year are published, they will doubtless show a great increase in the production throughout the Colony. The Returns also of the Tobacco Crop will show a large tract of land, on the whole, under cultivation. The great extension of the use of steam and other improved machinery has been of vast benefit to the Farmers in the one item alone of saving in the cost of labour.

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Line of Railway, from Sandhurst, the present Terminus, to Echuca, which, when completed, will be the means of connecting the River Murray, with the sea coast, and will doubtless bring the greater part of the produce and traffic to Melbourne, not only from the interior of our own Colony, but also from the neighbouring ones of New South Wales, and South Australia. The cost of forming these Railways has been hitherto very heavy, but the works are of a most substantial and permanent character, and they have already proved of vast benefit to the Colony, in opening up the Country. The total cost of the Colony of the main lines, when completed, is estimated at £8,368,000 for about 260 Miles. This of course includes Rolling Stock and every expense. The Returns, for the portions completed, show that 47½ per cent of the earnings of the lines, will cover all making expenses. The passenger fares are threepence three farthings, (3 3/4^d) per Mile, 1st Class, and Twopence three farthings (2 3/4^d) 2nd class. Already many branch lines from the Main Trunk one, are contemplated by private enterprise, which will afford work for years to our Railway Laborers, and, at the same time, benefit the whole Colony in a great degree.

MORE FREQUENT POSTAL COMMUNICATION WITH EUROPE

Another great benefit in prospect for the Colony is the expectation of steam postal communication, twice a Month, with Europe, instead of once a Month, as at present. Already has the Peninsular and Oriental Company offered to carry the Mail twice a Month, for an annual subsidy of £60,000, in addition to their present contract, an offer, which, I have no doubt will be accepted when England, and the several Colonies, can agree, as to the amounts each should contribute to make up this sum. The advantages of bringing these colonies into more frequent communication with the Mother Country, and Europe generally, need scarcely to

be discussed, as they must be apparent to everyone.

FOREIGN SHIPS VISITING MELBOURNE

During the past year many foreign ships have visited this port, including Dutch, Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, French, American, and among others the Russian Corvette, "Bogatyr", carrying the Flag of Rear Admiral Topoff, but I regret not being able to announce the arrival of any vessel, in these waters, bearing the flag, of the country, I have the honour to represent.

J W Graham
Consul

This Report is from the Collection of Italian Diplomatic Archives 1855-1940, which the Society holds on microfilm.