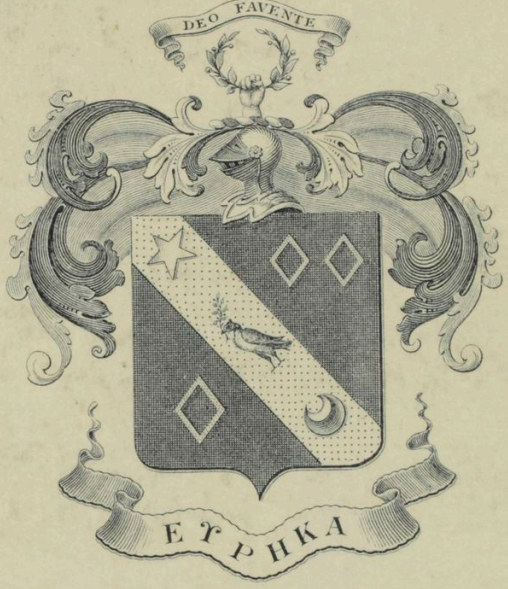

David Scott Mitchell.

D. J. Mitchell.

RICHMOND RIVER DISTRICT OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

NEW ITALY:

A BRIEF SKETCH OF A NEW AND THRIVING COLONY

FOUNDED AND ESTABLISHED BY THE

Italian Immigrants who were sufferers by the Marquis De Ray's New Ireland Colonization Scheme;

BY

FRED. CHUDLEIGH CLIFFORD.

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PREFACE.

My object in writing this brief account of a new and almost unknown colony is a threefold one.

In the first place, I am desirous of showing what can be done by pluck and perseverance with some of the so-called waste lands of New South Wales.

Secondly: I am anxious to relate what the founders and builders of the little colony of New Italy have done, notwithstanding they were comparatively penniless, had few friends, were in a strange land, and could barely speak or understand the English language.

Thirdly: I am of opinion that the example shown by these Italians might be profitably followed by others of their countrymen, and by a large number of the present unemployed, by obtaining from the Government such practical assistance as may be deemed advisable for the introduction of new industries and the successful development of others already in operation.

It is not within the scope of this sketch to demonstrate how this aid should be given. I merely direct public attention to the solid facts of what has been done, under a combination of the most adverse circumstances, on a portion of the so-called waste lands of this Colony.

I take this opportunity of tendering my thanks to Dr. Marano, Consular Agent for Italy at Sydney; Mr. A. Mackay, Instructor in Agriculture; Mr. P. De Mestre, Land Agent at Lismore; and M. Le Cheminant, Public School Teacher, New Italy, for the valuable assistance rendered to me during the compilation of this sketch.

F. C. C.

Richmond River,
July, 1888.

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BRIEF SKETCH OF NEW ITALY.

INTRODUCTORY.

It will be remembered by most that, about eight years ago, a certain Marquis de Ray formed a scheme for the colonization of a portion of New Ireland, an island containing over a million acres, and situated about 350 miles north-easterly from the coast of New Guinea, and which scheme resulted in a miserable failure, owing to the lax administration of affairs in connection therewith.

Nevertheless, it is owing to the failure of this scheme that New South Wales has within her borders the thriving little colony herein described; and, although there was the cost of providing necessaries for these destitute victims of De Ray's misplaced confidence, either in his own colonization powers or in the administrative abilities of his subordinates, on their arrival in Sydney, the example they have shown of indomitable pluck, industry, and perseverance, in successfully building up a flourishing colony under adverse circumstances, and on land long ago rejected by the average settler, has compensated a thousandfold whatever charity New South Wales then bestowed.

For the proper understanding of the early circumstances of these colonists, it will be as well to give a brief *resumé* of the De Ray scheme for the colonization of "New France, the free Colony of Port Breton, in Oceania."

In January, 1879, Charles du Breil, Marquis de Ray, then Consul for Bolivia, at Marseilles, issued a prospectus, wherein, after describing in glowing terms the fertility and absence from disease of the proposed colony, with a climate "equal to that of the south of France," and "continually cooled down by the breezes of the great Pacific Ocean"; the land intersected by "constant streams of fresh water"; of "easy cultivation, and possessing a really prodigious fertility, lending itself to all the products of both zones": he, "in order to give to that country a greater agricultural and commercial development," offers to assign a property of 20 hectares of land, with a house with four rooms, well built of wood, stone, or bricks, to every family of agriculturalists who wish to establish themselves in that colony, for the price of 1,800 francs in gold, the price to include the transport of the family to the colony, with rations equal to those of the sailors, and provisions for six months after arrival. This was the bait to catch the small capitalists.

For those who had not "money in their purse" equal to condition No. 1, the following inducements for colonizing "New France" were held out: "Everyone willing to give his services as agricultural labourer for the duration of five years will be put into possession of a house with four rooms, with 20 hectares of land, with payment of 250 francs for single men and women, of 125 francs for children, and of 1,000 francs for families consisting of not less than five persons," the Administration providing for passage and provisions and lodging during the five years.

Married women, and children under twelve years of age, were exempt from the obligation of labour; "good conduct and morality" were promised the reward of "greater pecuniary remuneration"; and the document winds up by stating, "the dominating religion is the Catholic one; however, there is plenty of freedom of conscience."

The prospectus is dated Marseilles, 1st January, 1879, and signed by Ch. du Breil, Marquis de Ray, Consul for Bolivia, and "the director and founder of the free Colony of Port Breton, in Oceania."

As might be expected, such an attractive prospect was only too welcome to the impoverished vignerons and labourers of Northern Italy, and intending colonists to the number of nearly 300 left their household gods and their beloved Italia for the Paradise promised them three or four degrees north of the Equator, in the steamer "India," which started from Barcelona on the 9th July, 1880.

The love of country, however, was all-powerful as against the colonization scheme, as far as those of moderate means were concerned, for I find that, out of the whole batch of embryo colonists, only one, Antonio Nardi, was a full-paying member of the expedition, the remainder being sent out under the five-years' contract.

On the voyage from Barcelona the immigrants do not appear to have suffered any hardships, other than those incidental to such voyages; but, after their arrival in New Ireland, in October, 1880, partly owing to the severity of the climate, but more especially to the wretchedly bad condition of the provisions shipped, many deaths occurred—in all, a total of forty-eight. After they had stayed four months at Port Breton, and a large quantity of the provisions had been thrown away as unfit for consumption, it was found that the supply of food was very deficient, the heat excessive, no preparations had been made in the shape of dwellings, and altogether the most utter maladministration of the affairs of the little colony seems to have existed, so much so, that the immigrants appealed to the "humanity" of the captain of the "India"—which was still used as a boarding-house—to land them at some port in New South Wales, but specifying Sydney, as being the residence of the Chief of the Colony of Port Breton, M. Prevost.

The "India," with the immigrants on board, left Port Breton on the 20th February, 1881, but, through stress of weather, want of provisions, and other causes, was obliged to put in at Noumea, New Caledonia, where the ship was condemned by the Harbour Board as unseaworthy, and ordered to be sold.

The immigrants refusing to stay in New Caledonia for the reason that, as Girolamo Tonie puts it, "There were only criminals in New Caledonia, and no land to cultivate," they were provided by the French Government with passages to Sydney in the steamer "James Paterson," at a cost of £3 per adult, that Government, however, taking a bill of sale over the condemned vessel and her cargo as security for the outlay.

The "James Paterson," with nearly 200 Italian immigrants on board, arrived at Sydney on the 7th April, 1881, when a Board of Inquiry, consisting of Mr. J. M. Marsh, Water Police Magistrate, and Mr. G. F. Wise, Agent for Immigration, assisted by Dr. Marano, Consular Agent for Italy at Sydney, was at once appointed to inquire into the circumstances and future plans of the Italian immigrants.

Before proceeding to relate the further circumstances which led to the foundation and building up of the Colony of New Italy, it is only just to state that, neither during the inquiry instituted by the New South Wales Government, nor the personal individual inquiries made by myself on the ground, not a word of complaint has been uttered against the originator of this magnificent but wretchedly carried-out scheme of colonization, the Marquis de Ray.

His motives appear to have been of a most praiseworthy and honorable character, and thoroughly understood as such by intending colonists, even now; but as much certainly cannot be said of those to whom the administration of the New Ireland colonization affairs had been entrusted, and of whom the Italians speak in bitter terms—only this, that, unwillingly, they have been the means of affording a practical lesson of settlement on the waste lands of the Colony, and one which it is to be desired those in authority and others interested will take care to profit by.

Of one thing we may be certain, these immigrants are in several ways a benefit, and if they experimentally prove what may be done with lands classed as waste, their settlement amongst us will be of much advantage to the country.

Of course, in sunny New South Wales, where pity for unmerited affliction lies very near the surface of our natures, and prompt aid speeds to the rescue of the suffering, sympathy for these destitute strangers was widespread, and offers of practical aid both numerous and diverse, and it is somewhat singular that two writers in the *Sydney Morning Herald* of 11th April, 1881, suggest that the Government or the public should do just what the Italians themselves accomplished a year or so afterwards, "To establish these people on the land by Government, or if that were not practicable, then by private subscription."

One, "Capricornicus," seems to have instinctively grasped the proper idea, and suggested the dedication of a few square miles of what was considered useless country, and a year's rations, implements, &c., and he winds up by saying, "Of course this suggestion of mine is too Quixotic and Utopian to be considered for a moment by any practical man."

Our Italian colonists, however, have, unaided, proved that the suggestion was not, as "Capricornicus" sarcastically puts it, either Quixotic or Utopian, but a good, common-sense, practical one, which would have borne fruit much earlier—though perhaps not on as hardy stock—than the unaided founding and building of the present New Italy.

The *Sydney Morning Herald*, as well as the Italians themselves, and others, was opposed to the dispersion theory which was then being advocated, and, in its issue of the 22nd April, 1881, suggests that "it is worth considering whether the case of these Italians might not form an exception to the sound policy of dispersion. Unlike the English, Irish, and Scotch, they do not speak our language."

And later on suggests that, as in the United States, there would be intermarriages and intercommunications of all kinds with the rest of the community, and after using the strength of their union for the establishment of those industries to which they had been trained, the Colony would see them gradually, instead of suddenly, absorbed in the general population.

Notwithstanding all that could be said or done, their dispersion was finally decided upon, although considerable contributions were coming in from

public meetings and other sources, and in some cases offers to engage the immigrants on large estates, *in globo*, and before the last day of April engagements had been entered into for them in all parts of the Colony.

The behaviour of the immigrants during their residence in the Agricultural Hall, in the Domain, is reported as "exceedingly satisfactory," and they were generally described as "industrious, economical, and accustomed to very careful cultivation of the soil."

Sufficient has, I think, been said to explain the source from whence the founders of the Colony of New Italy sprang, and, having cleared the ground so far—as they did—we will now—like them—proceed on our journey to New Italy, only by shorter strides, and, let us hope, less labour than did the sufferers from the De Ray colonization scheme.

SITUATION, FOUNDATION, &c.

New Italy is situated in the parishes of Donaldson, Bungawalbyn, and Evans, in the county of Richmond, at the junction of a road from Swan Bay, a small township on the Richmond River, with the mail-coach road from Woodburn, on the Richmond River, to Harwood, on the Clarence River (the route by which the bi-weekly Sydney mail is operated), and is about 6 miles from Swan Bay, 8 from Woodburn, and 16 from the Clarence River.

Where, eight years ago, giant timber trees and their executioners were the sole occupants of the soil, a flourishing colony now stands; and in place of the reckless denudation of valuable forest timber, the more nationally productive industries of horticulture and agriculture are in a healthy state of primitive vigour.

Ever since the settlement of the Clarence and Richmond districts, the land hereabouts, and in fact for the whole twenty-odd miles between these two rivers, had been looked upon as too poor and useless for other than lumbering purposes for supplying local needs and the larger markets of Victoria and New Zealand, and it was not until after the dispersion of the Italian immigrants by the "James Paterson," in April, 1881, which had the effect of sending one Rocca Comminitti to the Richmond district, and who, in April, 1882, just twelve months after the dispersion, selected 40 acres of land in the parish of Donaldson, was any attempt made to set aside the damnatory verdict.

Comminitti was speedily followed by numbers of his compatriots, and on the strength of what they had saved out of their earnings of the previous year, they resolutely set to work, and, by utilizing the whole strength of each family and obtaining occasional work from other sources, were soon able to say they really had formed out of very unpromising-looking materials a new Italy of their own, and one that was certainly better than the equatorial New France they had originally committed themselves to assist in building up.

One source of income, and which served a dual purpose to these indefatigable settlers, was procuring hardwood railway-sleepers for the Melbourne Harbour Trust; and as a good deal of the timber growing on the comparatively barren ridges they had selected was suitable for this purpose, they not only made money by their contracts for sleepers, but managed, in many

cases, to get a considerable quantity of fencing stuff out of the balance of the trees felled for contract purposes. As their contracts proceeded, so did their fences and necessary buildings; and when the male portion of the community were occupied in bursting up the most tenacious timber with as much energy and purpose as they formerly did a rotten dynasty, the female portion were fully occupied in digging, trenching, and planting, with a result something wonderful when compared with the feeble and spasmodic efforts of too many of our settlers, who are "settlers" only in a sense usually understood as the reverse of complimentary.

As time rolled on, a barren forest gave way to a comfortable-looking settlement, with clean and tidy dwellings, good and substantial fences and out-buildings, some of them of an especially good and durable character, while splendidly-tilled and cared-for gardens, orchards, and vineyards met the eye on every side. A little more than three years from the first 40-acre selection being made, a substantial school-house was erected, a priest paid periodical visits to his flock, and although, being a little off the mail-road, seldom visited by strangers, and almost unknown to the outer world, the little settlement has gradually grown and flourished, until the Colony of New Italy has become an accomplished fact, worthy of the emulation of many of those who are now only drones in the great hive of human progress, and the consideration of those who honor themselves by devoting their time and talents to the proper government of their country.

And when we calmly consider that only seven years ago these people were absolutely destitute, homeless, and aliens in a foreign land, and that unaided they have made a thriving colony in a locality long ago rejected by British settlers, one cannot help acknowledging that they stand pre-eminent as useful colonists, and are deserving, not only of commendation, but some substantial practical acknowledgment at the hands of the country of their adoption.

For some years, being off the main line of traffic, the progress made by these hardworking people was almost unknown, even to the residents of the district, who certainly knew there was a settlement of Italians somewhere, but of any further knowledge people generally were destitute; but, when loads of grapes and healthy-looking succulent vegetables began to appear in the larger townships and settlements, local interest in the little colony was awakened, and visitors thereto astonished at the amount of sterling work these people had so quietly and unostentatiously done. Information at the settlement was very difficult to be procured during the first two or three years of its growth, and it was not until a school was established in 1885 that very little more than signs and tokens greeted the interrogatory traveller.

My first experience with these settlers was about three years ago, when, as I was riding through the settlement on a hot and dusty day, I espied a vineyard in full bearing, and the luxurious grapes in purple clusters hanging made me athirst, but on asking the woman in charge to allow me to purchase some, I received nothing but dumb signs and a few words that, owing to my linguistic ignorance, I did not understand.

However, we came to terms afterwards by my pointing to the grapes and exhibiting a coin—a kind of language more universally understood than the Aryan, and one that had a magical effect on the hitherto puzzled face of the signora I was addressing. The fact that we could at length understand one another in a mutually satisfactory manner quite transformed the homely and somewhat withered face, and I was treated to as many "nods and wreathed smiles" as lightened my journey all the way to the Clarence.

At the period of their earliest settlement times must have gone very hardly with them, and their work have been somewhat of the heaviest, as the brush forest partially clothing these ridges was of a very dense nature, entailing hard and persistent labour before an acre of land could be brought into a fit state to be cultivated, and many a moonlight night has the sound of the axe of the Italian woodman rung throughout the settlement to the milder accompaniment of the women and children severing the smaller branches of the prostrate trees and stacking them in readiness for the future burning off. And in scarcely an instance is to be seen the usual temporary "cockatoo" or "dog-leg" fence constructed to do duty until that more convenient season, which too often never comes, shall arrive; but all the improvements went on gradually and were erected substantially, and the whole of what they have done, to the considerate eye, spells in very large letters all across the settlement: We came to stay.

Taking their improvements throughout, they are of a superior kind to those usually constructed by new settlers, while their method of tillage is of a much higher class, and, as a consequence, the yield is larger and of a better quality, the quality of the land being taken into consideration. In no case does there seem to be any scamping of the work, and whatever the people may be intellectually, the young fry, who can now understand English, seem shrewd enough and especially well-mannered. There can be no doubt that they are the very people the Colony requires to make some of our present idle and non-productive wildernesses to "blossom like the rose," and also yield their fair share of revenue to the State. The introduction of a few hundreds more at New Italy or elsewhere might be marked by a beneficial effect as represented by an increased revenue and the introduction and establishment of new industries.

As instancing one industry which requires additional fostering, and for which these Italians are exceedingly well adapted, that of wine-making is referred to by the London Correspondent of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, a few months ago. He says:—A well-known Victorian vigneron, Mr. Hubert de Castella, has lately been putting the Colonial Institute to some useful service. He read a paper on the 12th of June last on Colonial viticulture, drawing (as was natural) his most telling facts and figures from his own long Victorian experience. During the last few years certain brands of Australian wine have figured in the price lists of the best London wine merchants, but the extent to which Australia, and New South Wales in particular, could be relied on, were sufficient encouragement offered, to supply the enormous demands of wine-drinking Europe, must have come to Mr. de Castella's audience as a real surprise. Of course the terrible ravages of phylloxera in the French vineyards have for some time past compelled France to turn everywhere for the material for her most popular wines—Spain, Portugal, Italy, the Mediterranean, have been laid under contribution. We ourselves have exported many thousand gallons of red wine, to come back to us after scientific treatment in the Bordeaux and other districts as genuine Margaux, Médoc, Chambertin, and other similarly well-known French *crus*. Why we are unable to make as much of our wines as they make of them in France is of course a mystery—the mystery of wine chemistry, and perhaps "manipulation" has a little to do with it. But there is a magnificent opening in France for our crude wines, provided they be sound, and of that opening we ought to take instant advantage. Mr. de Castella gives good reasons for putting down the net profit of vine-growing at about £20 per acre, supposing only 2s. per gallon to be obtained by the grower. But our people are proverbially slow to take hints, and a very small

proportion have any practical knowledge of the vine. What we seem to need just now is a moderate immigration of substantial Continental vignerons, not Mr. Ritchie's local Government paupers. On the foot-hills of our coast ranges we have many hundreds of thousands of acres not rich enough for maize or cereals, and not suitable for orchard or sugar cane, but admirably suited for the choicest and most delicate vines. Is it not about time that we devoted some attention to the capabilities of our coast districts, and particularly at the present moment?

We can't subsist for ever on larrikins and expansive clauses, whatever our politicians tell us. Let us therefore make a compact with the reverend and irreverend local option prohibitionists, and increase our acreage of vineyards and our product of good wine—of course only for exportation and foreign consumption.

But the subject of viticulture will be more fully dealt with in its proper place further on.

AREA AND POPULATION.

The extent of area which comprises the Colony of New Italy is about 3 miles square, and consists of fifty-three selections, ranging from 40 to 120 acres, occupied by about thirty families. As will be understood, the holdings are mainly small ones, and although all are securely fenced, the land is not all utilized for tillage, attention being principally devoted to the thorough cultivation of small areas for horticulture and wine-growing, the Italian colonists evidently believing in the superior tillage of small areas as against the indifferent cultivation of larger ones, and inspection of their labour, their trees and crops, proves very conclusively that the policy is a sound and payable one.

The adjoining land, extending for miles towards the Clarence River, being viewed contemptuously both by the squatter and the average selector, offers unusual advantages for the breeding of horses and cattle, of which animals the colonists possess considerable numbers, and which are not unimportant factors in aiding them to make comfortable additions to their mode of living and their annual income.

The bump for the acquisition of land is probably not so largely developed in any nationality as in the British, and certainly the Italians do not possess an equal propensity for acquiring large areas, but appear to be content with a much more limited area and superior tillage, hence the smallness of the area of New Italy as compared with the population and the extent of unoccupied land surrounding them, equal in its apparent worthlessness to that selected.

The colonization of this apparently barren locality is an interesting experiment in any case, for it may be assumed that these foreigners, from a previous experience in their own country, recognized certain properties in the soil that had totally escaped the notice of others, and the horticultural and viticultural success which has attended their labours, even in so short a period, is ample evidence that they knew perfectly well what they were about, and that such land, of which there are millions of acres lying idle, can be profitably cultivated, having the proper knowledge.

As showing the rapid growth of the settlement, the following account, compiled from the records of the Lands Office, Lismore, will be useful.

The following areas were selected :—

	acres.
In 1882 :—	
Rocca Comminitti	40
Pietro Mazzer	45
Antonio Melare	40
Guiseppe Martinuzzi	50
Antonio Nardi	40
Giovanni Rusolen	80
Antonio Pezzuti	40
Phillippe Palis	80
Angelo Rodero	90
Dominico Spinaze	40
	545
In 1883 :—	
Liugi Antonelli	120
,, ,,	75
Maria Batistuzzi	40
Giovanni Batistuzzi	40
,, ,,	84
Antonio Bazza	60
Natali Fava	45
Maria Gava	50
Angelo Nardi	40
Natali Fava	45
Agostin Pelizier	60
Antonio Piccoli	40
Giacomo Piccoli	40
Nicholas Pezzutti	40
Francesa Rodero	100
Giovanni Rodero	40
Lorenzo Spinaze	41¼
Michel Scavrabellotto	40
	1,000¾

	acres.
In 1884 :—	
Giovanni Bertoli	40
Aadrian Palis	41¼
Lorenzo Roder	60
Giovanni Spinaze	63¾
Guiseppe Tedesco	80
	284½
In 1885 :—	
Giovani Batistuzzi	55
In 1886 :—	
Giovanni Bertoli	40
Giovanni Roder	40
Lorenzo Roder	60
Candido Roder	40
	180
In 1887 :—	
Cathernia Comminitti	44½
Dominico Merandini	100
Antonio Melaro	80
	224½
In 1888 [to July] :—	
Antonio Resolen	67
Giacomo Martinuzzi	50
Guiseppe Martinuzzi	50
Dominico Roder	100
,, ,, (C.L.)	100
Peter Resolen	170
Antonio Morandi	44½
Pietro Sanot	160
	741½

Total area, 3,030¾ acres.

From this list it will be seen that the main settlement, in 1882 and 1883, took place at the earliest practicable time after dispersion in Sydney; and, if anything were needed to show the advisability of aiding such settlements instead of attempting to absorb such immigrants compulsorily into an alien population, it is to be found in the fact of so many families hoarding up—as they must have done—every available shilling of their earnings, so that they might form one community as speedily as possible.

This gregarious instinct must have been a dominating one and ever present with them, as may easily be gathered from a perusal of the memorandum of agreements made by and for these Italian immigrants and the wages they were earning, as shown on page 18, Report of the Board of Inquiry.

There have been occasional additions to the population of New Italy from other sources than that of the De Ray immigrants,—countrymen from Newcastle and other places, but more than twenty of the families who arrived in the "James Paterson" are now located there, and are multiplying and replenishing the earth in a manner highly creditable to them as colonists, and that should be a source of peculiar gratification to a patriotic statistician.

The population of New Italy, as taken by me at the latter end of 1887, with the kind assistance of M. A. Le Cheminant, the school-teacher there, numbered 202, and were made up of the following classes:—

Adult population—Married: males, 34; females, 35. Single: males, 22; females. 8.

Children under 16 years—Boys, 50; girls, 53.

Total—Adults, 99; under 16, 103. Grand total, 202.

As the mortality for the past year was nil and the births 20, it may now be fairly assumed that the population numbers nearly 250.*

So healthy is the climate of New Italy, and so frugal and abstemious are the people, that a doctor would starve there; and, at present, of stores there are none, the people obtaining their supplies from the neighbouring towns of Coraki, Swan Bay, and Woodburn.

Yet there is abundance of evidence adducible to warrant the prediction that with a little aid in the matter of olive, chestnut, and vine-growing, coupled with a system of forest conservation on the lines of that now being so successfully prosecuted in South Australia, the population would, in a short time, become more than quadrupled, and the nucleus of a future large and wealthy settlement, where high-class horticulture, viticulture, sericulture, and arboriculture could be successfully and profitably carried on under the supervision of the State.

The haulage to deep water at Swan Bay is about 6 miles, and to Bungawalbyn Creek about 3 miles. The climate and soil have been proved excellent for the purpose, and the results of the labours of these Italians prove them to be thoroughly industrious, economical, and well versed in the careful cultivation of the soil and the growth of tropical and semi-tropical products.

If any further evidence were needed of their value as colonists, a reference to the Report of the Board of Inquiry shows us that they had, with two or three exceptions, all been brought up as agricultural labourers and vine-growers, and had a thorough knowledge of the cultivation of the vine and the making of wine; that the men were skilful in the felling of trees; that all (including young lads and young girls) were able to milk; that they had all been vaccinated; that they appeared to be a moral and sober people; and that they have been industrious and thrifty, their labours at New Italy amply testify.

With respect to the area, it will be noticed by reference to the tables herewith that the increase during the first six months of 1888 promises a much larger area of selections for that year than any previous one, and this is strong presumptive evidence of the success of these colonists, especially as we find that of the selectors in 1888 seven of the eight names are those of selectors in previous years, the balance being one who would appear to have joined the community during that period. And, if we take the twenty children born in 1887 as a fair basis as to the annual increase of a population of over thirty families, throw in those ranging from 16 years of age, as in course of time and nature bringing their tally into the general stock, and making a fair allowance for the natural gregariousness of the Italians, and the influx of others of that nationality into the settlement from outside sources, it may be fairly enough predicted that another decade will bring the sum total of the population of New Italy up to nearly a thousand souls.

At present these people have no strictly political significance; not one being on the electoral roll for that district, although established there six years, and being just a sufficient number to secure a narrow electoral majority. Curious but true.

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*It does. Sept., 1888.—F.C.C.

TIMBER, SOIL, &c.

UNTIL Rocca Comminitti appeared upon the scene in April, 1882, the locality now known as New Italy was comparatively a howling wilderness, sacred to the timber-getter and the dingo, and the land thereabouts generally described as being "not fit to keep a bandicoot."

Nevertheless it grew magnificent timber, and thousands upon thousands of the tall and stately giants of the forest, reduced to the severely practical form of hardwood piles and railway-sleepers, have found their way from the forest to the river, and thence to Victoria, New Zealand, and other foreign ports.

The apparently barren and undulating ridges on which New Italy is located, and which extend for many miles in the direction of the Clarence River, are thickly timbered with ironbark, mahogany, spotted gum, and a species of oak, while in the flats at the foot of the adjacent range, where the richer soil has been washed down, are large quantities of grey and black ironbark, box, orange gum, grey gum, tallow-wood, pine, beech, teak, and stringy-bark. The trees are tall, straight, and stately, some of them growing a clean bole 100 feet high without a limb, and, as showing their values as timber, it may be mentioned that Mr. Thompson, a timber-getter living under the shadow of some of these mighty trees at a place christened by him "Ferndale," but known to the aborigines as "Garagoola," showed me the remains of an ironbark tree from which two "stringers," for girders, each 86 feet long, 18 inches in width, and 6 inches thick, had been obtained. The butt of the tree, at the severance from the trunk, was only 2 feet 6 inches in diameter, and at 96 feet measured 19 inches.

When it is understood that the belt of timber in which these trees were growing is 2 miles in width, and extends nearly to the north arm of the Clarence River, some idea may be formed of the former forest wealth of this part of the country, and which has in a great measure been allowed to go to enrich other colonies for the bare price of a timber license, and without any attempt being made to replace it.

This tract of timber runs fairly alongside the western boundary of New Italy, and lies at the foot of the eastern slope of the Moonumbar division of the Richmond range, which range divides the waterfall of the Richmond from that of the Clarence; and all the circumstances being taken into consideration, presents a most favourable locality for a reserve for forest conservation.

There is a settlement there; the residents are experienced in husbandry, horticulture, and arboriculture, and nature has pointed out in an unmistakable manner its suitability for the growth of marketable timber. The enormous quantity of timber which almost daily leaves the Richmond and Clarence for foreign ports naturally gives rise to some uneasiness as to our future supply. The work of denudation goes on rapidly, and no effort worth mentioning has yet been made to replace the forest-trees that are so swiftly going to build up the commercial prosperity of other colonies; yet there can be no doubt that, notwithstanding our natural wealth of timber, speedy and vigorous efforts should be made to replace the stately and valuable forests we are constantly destroying and sending away. It is, however, both agreeable and suggestive to note what splendid efforts in this direction have been and are being made in that steady-going colony of South Australia, which, taking *festina lente* as its motto, manages in the long run to take the lead of all our colonies in matters of public benefit and internal economy.

In the matter of forest conservation, she has run clean away from them; and that it is a profitable industry is shown by the fact that during the eleven years forest conservation has been instituted by that Government it shows a clear profit of £10,000, besides 8,000,000 trees, representing a further very valuable asset, to say nothing of the sanitary effects of tree-planting in treeless and arid wastes and in fever-stricken, low-lying lands. What can be done in South Australia can most certainly be done in New South Wales. At present the woodman, instead of sparing the tree, is, in a legalized manner, robbing the people of one of their richest heritages; and it is not too much to predict that, in another half-century, curses both loud and deep will be hurled at the unconscious heads of a bygone generation for its reckless negligence in the matter of the conservation of the forest wealth of the Colony. As an instance of what is being done, even on a small scale, I was informed at the time of my last visit to New Italy that not less than from 1,100 to 1,200 piles were then awaiting shipment at Swan Bay and Bungawalbyn Creek, and thousands of railway-sleepers, and that very large numbers of others had just been shipped for the Melbourne Harbour Trust. This is, of course, on one side, undoubted testimony as to the forest wealth of this locality; but, on the other hand, it is irrefutable evidence of our negligence as a people in not providing for the future wants of the Colony in the matter of forest conservation.

Enough, however, has been said to show that there is abundance of useful timber at New Italy for the needs of a much larger population than it can at present boast.

The following is a list of the principal timber-trees growing at New Italy, and extending almost to the Clarence:—

Spotted gum	Eucalyptus maculata.
Grey gum	Eucalyptus saligna.
Orange gum	Eucalyptus.
Grey ironbark	Eucalyptus paniculata.
Black ironbark	Eucalyptus leucoxylon.
Blackbutt	Eucalyptus pilularis.
Tallow-wood	Eucalyptus microcorys.
Stringybark	Eucalyptus amygdalina.
Mahogany	Eucalyptus resinifera.
Peppermint	Eucalyptus piperita.
Beech	Gmelina Leichhartdii.
Teak	Endiandra pubens.
Pine	Frenela robusta, v. microcarpa.
Oaks	Casuarina suberosa aud torulosa.

The soil of the gently undulating ridges on which New Italy is situated is apparently of a cold and barren nature, more especially as viewed from the road from Swan Bay to the Woodburn-Harwood mail-coach road, and which just about traverses the centre of the Italian settlement.

And it is probably for the dual reason that the land hereabouts was very seldom seen except from this point of view, and that those who did see it had not the experience necessary to know what the soil was suitable for, that it remained untouched so many years, and was left for an alien to introduce settlement there at last. From this road the soil which supports the stately timber-trees that grow thickly over its surface seems to be a stiffish clay, inclined to be gravelly where exposed in the ruts and water-courses, and occasionally somewhat sandy. After heavy rain the gravelly tendency is most marked, the clay and sand having become washed from the minute nodules of ironstone which lie scattered over the depressions on the bare surface, like quantities of shot.

But on the slopes of the ridges and the intervening oak flats the soil is richer; the flats being mainly reserved for grazing purposes, and evidently not commending themselves to the Italians as such profitable ground for tillage as the slopes of the ridges, which run uniformly north and south, and thus give eastern and western aspects for the various descriptions of horticultural products. Nor that there is a difference in the soil on the slopes, the difference being that on the eastern slopes fruit ripens earlier than on the western.

The appearance of the soil when turned up and trenched—as all the cultivated land is—is not at all attractive to the eye of the amateur horticulturist, having more the appearance of a dirtyish-yellow clay and loam interspersed with stones, ranging from the size of sparrow shot to that of a tennis-ball, and lacking altogether that rich warmth of colour and mellow appearance usually associated with the soil used for such cultivation; but perhaps if others dug as deeply as do the Italians, considerable deposits of clay might be brought to light minus the stones, the presence of which latter ingredient usually means an open soil and almost perfect drainage, two conditions absolutely necessary for successful fruit-growing.

In connection with the subject of the soil, it would be interesting to learn how Rocca Comminitti and Antonio Pezzutti detected the suitability of this land for vine-growing, &c., and the only hypothesis we can arrive at, lacking the personal explanation which I was unable to obtain, is, that it must have been by a mental comparison of this land with similar soil in Northern Italy, the scene of their former experiences in husbandry.

Whatever it may have been we can certainly congratulate them, and ourselves as a colony, on the agreeable fact that they did promote settlement there, and that from the yield of an apparently ungenerous soil, and by the practice of industry, frugality, and perseverance, they are daily becoming a stronger and wealthier people, adding materially to the prosperity of the Colony by showing how such so-called waste lands may be profitably utilized.

Having intimated to Mr. Angus Mackay, Instructor in Agriculture, my intention of compiling a brief history of this interesting settlement, he kindly offered to analyse a portion of the soil so as to make the sketch more complete.

Therefore, on the occasion of my next visit to New Italy, I obtained from the eastern slope of Philippe Palis' selection, being about the centre of the settlement, and on a line with his vineyard, a cube of soil about 6 inches in diameter, extending from and including the natural grass surface, to a depth of about 18 inches, which was forwarded to Sydney to Mr. Mackay, and the analysis of which is here appended.

Soil from Italia, per Mr. Clifford, Coraki.

Appearance.—Looks a kindly, loamy soil; colour, brownish. Washing shows iron-stone per oxide. Sifting gave 78 per cent. of fine earth.

Analysis.—Vegetable matter, fair percentage, 7·25.

Iron.—Heavy, but mostly in a form indicative of a naturally open soil.

Lime.—Fair for fruit-growing, but (say) a ton of quicklime per acre would improve the soil for field crops, and would be an advantage in any case.

Alkalies and Phosphates.—Sufficient to show that the soil would grow good nourishing grass, but manure is necessary for either corn, sugar-cane, or cultivated grasses.

As a whole, is indicative of a very fair, healthy, fruit or grass soil.

ANGUS MACKAY,
Instructor in Agriculture.

Technical College, Sydney, 14th October, 1887.

In addition to that on the oak-flats, good, wholesome, nourishing grasses grow on the slopes of the ridges, and in some places special clearings have been made for grazing and dairying purposes.

On some of the selections, even without manure, very good maize has been grown, and the suitability of the soil for tubers, as exhibited in the yield of sweet potatoes, is remarkable; so much so that some of the Italians, who do not, as a rule, lean much towards porciculture, were obliged, in self-defence, to introduce a few pigs to assist in consuming the mighty tubers. Sweet potatoes at New Italy appear to grow as spontaneously as the almost ineradicable *opuntia vulgaris*, or prickly-pear, does on almost every vacant spot of uncultivated land on the Clarence and elsewhere.

The question of water supply is one that must sooner or later engage the attention of these settlers; for, although good water is procurable in any direction by sinking to a depth of from 8 to 12 feet, there are no creeks except what are little more than insignificant water-courses, and it naturally follows that some system of water conservation will have to be adopted as the settlement and its necessities increase.

This is a matter that could easily be effected by damming one of the adjacent blind creeks or gullies running from the Moonumbar division of the Richmond Range, and which, at a comparatively small cost, could be made to conserve a fairly large body of water.

There are two small creeks running through Mr. Thompson's selection at Ferndale—about a mile from New Italy—but both are unnamed, and contain little water, excepting just after heavy rains.

At present there is plenty of water for stock in the adjacent swamps and blind gullies, unless in very dry seasons; but with the coeval growth of population and stock, some provision will require to be made for a more abundant supply of water than at present exists; and this should, perhaps, all things considered, be done at the cost of the Colony.

The question of how it should be done is, however, outside the scope of this sketch; yet the fact remains that for this community of nearly 300 souls nothing has yet been done beyond the erection of a wooden building for a school-house.

The appearance of the country at and about New Italy may be generally described as bush forest; and as giving some idea of the density of the timber growing thereon, I may mention that Mr. Angus Mackay, Instructor in Agriculture, who spent a brief interval there *en route* from the Richmond to Sydney, estimates that the labour of clearing such land, so as to bring it into garden condition, is worth £12 per acre; so that these settlers must have had the real grit in them to sit down and conquer such country, under the poorest of circumstances, and on what one would think was a very problematical speculation.

Coal exists in the neighbourhood, and the local tests that have been applied by blacksmiths and others have given very favourable results, but the lack of local capital has hitherto prevented any practical work being carried out. The seam crops out of the side of the Moonumbar Range, and has a westerly dip into the mountain and towards Bungawalbyn Creek, which runs at the foot of the range on the other side, and which is there navigable for small vessels, and is the medium by which the vast quantities of sleepers, piles, &c., are conveyed to the Richmond River, 7 miles away.

There is little, if any, doubt that from the dip of the coal seam a bore sunk on the western side of the range near the creek would demonstrate the practicability or otherwise of this large seam being worked, and would at the same time decide the existence or otherwise of better seams of coal at a greater depth.

The working and development of a coal seam is, of course, out of the power of men who, however willing and industrious, find that their utmost present endeavours are needed to subdue and cultivate the land they have selected and made their homes, and who have no idle time for speculative enterprise. Two miles further west, on another spur of the same range, coal seams of considerable extent have been opened to view, and left for want of means to prosecute their profitable working; and it is an open question whether it would not be politic for the Government of the Colony to elucidate the fact of the practicability of working these seams, and their probable profitable development hereafter, by sending a boring apparatus to the spot to test the matter.

Failing this, it would be an act of wisdom on the part of the Colonial Sugar Refining Company—holding vast properties in these districts, and consuming large quantities of coal—or some other company or syndicate to test the seams which undoubtedly exist at Moonum, within a reasonable distance of navigable water. The benefit to the districts and the Colony generally, if good payable coal were found, is scarcely to be conceived, and the known large mineral resources of the northern portion of the Colony, added to a payable coal-field, would render it the richest and most interesting division of New South Wales.

Gold is said to have been found in one of the creeks running through Mr. Thompson's selection, but he, wisely enough, confines his attention to the nuggets dimly visible in the holes of 5-feet through beech and teak trees, and sinks no farther than a convenient distance down the trunk to use the axe.

It is possible there may be small patches of alluvial at the foot of the spurs of the range, but as to whether it is even "tucker" country is open to very grave doubt.

As for the Italians, their minds appear to run more on railway-sleepers, monster tubers, and massive bunches of luscious grapes, than on that most costly of all our industries, the digging in the earth for gold.

PRODUCTS, &c.

The products of New Italy, small though the settlement is, must be described as "various"; the principal, however, being, at present, railway-sleepers, piles, fruit, vegetables, and babies—the latter item, a most important one in the social economy of the settlement, for the Italian girls make very handy, pleasant-looking, cleanly, domestic servants and nurse-girls, whilst the boys are early taught how to become expert gardeners and husbandmen.

As was natural, the first effort at cultivation, in every instance, was with what their life-long associations and recollections had endeared them to and made them most familiar with, the vine; and their knowledge of the soil suitable for its cultivation, coupled with their high class of tillage, has resulted in such success as is leading them to increase their vine areas as rapidly as possible.

The grapes grown at New Italy are of a peculiarly rich and aromatic flavour, the latter quality being quite a distinctive one, and calculated to obtain a splendid character as a wine if the aroma can be preserved.

The peculiar aroma is probably due to some ingredients in the soil specially beneficial to the perfecting of the grape, for there was nothing peculiar about the vines except that they were very clean and the ground thoroughly trenched.

In the wine I tasted at Phillipe Palis', who manufactured 60 gallons from less than half an acre, the first year of bearing, the aromatic flavour was distinctly perceptible, although the wine was then new and crude, but giving promise of being later on a very marketable light dinner claret.

On this selection of 80 acres there are 60 acres of land equally as suitable for vine-growing as that on which these grapes were grown, and which is being gradually brought under cultivation for such purpose. All the cultivated land is trenched at least 18 inches deep, and the same rule applies throughout the settlement.

The soil of New Italy possesses a wonderful appetite for manure, and everything available from "buffalo chips" to dead leaves and wood ashes, of which there are abundance, is carefully utilized in the cultivation throughout the settlement, except in the case of the sweet potato, which seems to thrive amazingly and upon the slightest provocation, and which forms a very valuable addition to the dietary scale of both bipeds and quadrupeds, as well as a source of income by sale to the inhabitants of the surrounding townships.

Some two years ago a large number of bags of sweet potatoes were forwarded to the Sydney market, but through some mismanagement or misunderstanding the returns therefor were nil. This may, however, be remedied in the future, for sweet potatoes and grapes grow with wonderful prolificness at New Italy, and with a minimum of danger from disease and cost in cultivation. As a matter of fact, the dreaded vine diseases, oidium and phylloxera vastatrix, have not made an appearance in the vineyards of this settlement during the three years they have been under cultivation, and the owners seem to have no fear of any such visitation, for what reason is best known to themselves.

The fact, *per se*, is a cheery one, and worth carefully noting, for where the soil has been proved to be specially adapted for viticulture, and an absence from disease seems assured, while abundance of such land is lying idle awaiting subjection to profitable cultivation, the conditions would appear to exist which would warrant the settlement of other colonies of vignerons on various portions of our lands, now classed as waste and totally unremunerative.

In some vineyards the cochineal insect did appear, but in very small numbers, and they were easily destroyed.

The principal products of New Italy, which are more definitely dealt with hereunder, are as follows:—Railway-sleepers, piles, grapes, lemons, citrons, apples, peaches, loquats, mulberries, figs, bananas, sweet potatoes, maize, oats, barley, lucerne, sugar-cane, onions, cabbage, lettuce, peas, tobacco, &c.

Railway Sleepers and Piles.—Like other things, vineyards take time to arrive at a profitable maturity, and these being placed in a fair way of progression, the attention of the adult male members of the colony is bestowed mainly upon the best means of making a sufficient income from other sources generally, by getting railway sleepers and piles, which are

produced in great numbers, and shipped to Melbourne and New Zealand. In isolated cases, as many as seventy sleepers have been obtained from one tree; and only a few days ago, when riding by the loading depôt on Bungawalbyn Creek, I saw a stock of sleepers 8 or 9 feet in height and fully 100 yards long awaiting shipment, and drays were still drawing thereto, whilst piles, uncountable under the circumstances, strewed the sides of the road and the slopes of the spurs of the adjacent ridges for a considerable distance.

Beautiful sticks they were too, as straight as a gun-barrel, and some of them 90 feet in length.

For the sleepers a sum of 1s. 6d., at the stump, is paid, and the cost of haulage to water is, under 4 miles, 6d. each; beyond that distance, 7d. The haulage, however, affects the sleeper-getter only inasmuch as he is charged the additional penny if his trees are outside the 4-mile limit.

The Italians, therefore, who utilize their spare time from the cultivation of their vineyards and gardens—which are carefully tended by the female and younger members of the community—can earn as much as £2 to £2 10s. per week at this industry alone; but they have to work very hard; they are naturally industrious, and they do it. I was informed during my last visit that one of the sleeper-getters (not an Italian) had a contract for a sum of over £1,000 for supplying sleepers at a convenient place for shipment, and the trade appears to be an immense one.

Grapes.—The area of grapes under cultivation is from half an acre to 2½ acres to nearly every homestead, the black Hambro being principally grown, the Reisling, and probably some others, finding a place also in some of the vineyards, which are everywhere marvels of cleanliness and attention, and in every instance is the area being gradually increased at such a ratio as the circumstances of the owners will permit. Up to the present time the matured vine areas are limited to (say) half an acre each, and from which area last season one Vincenzo Nardi realized a sufficient crop to enable him to sell 1,000 pounds of grapes at 6d. per pound, in addition to making over 60 gallons of wine for home consumption. Next year he will have double that quantity of matured vines, and the following year, all being well, upwards of 2 acres of productive vines, representing over £100 in cash, and more than 240 gallons of wine, which, at 5s. a gallon, means £60, as well as citrons, lemons, sweet potatoes, mulberries, apples, peaches, cabbage, lettuce, peas, oats, and barley. And Nardi's is not an isolated case by any means. Some others have larger areas and greater variety of fruits, vegetables, and cereals growing. On the other hand, some have only made a commencement, but taken altogether, Nardi's yield may be taken as a fair sample of what this waste, hitherto condemned land, is capable of producing with ordinary care and attention, assisted by some practical experience.

Two kinds of pruning are in vogue; in some cases the dwarf system obtains, but in the majority of cases the usual 4-foot stakes are used, and the vines allowed to grow to that height.

What the relative difference was as affecting the yield I was unable to ascertain, but the dwarf system seemed to be the best for a hot climate.

Lemons and Citrons.—These grow very luxuriantly; some of the trees of only a very moderate size were loaded with fruit of good form and size, but, singular to say, the propagation of the orange-tree does not seem to have engaged the attention of the Italians to any extent as compared with other fruits, nor do they appear to understand much about it.

Orange cultivation is not carried on in Northern Italy, and in the course of the inquiry held in Sydney in 1881 it was elicited from one of the immigrants that "they did not understand the cultivation of the orange." This accounts for the scarcity of orange-trees to a certain extent, but of the other members of the citrus family, the citron (*citrus cedra*) and the lemon (*citrus limonium*) will grow as luxuriantly as they have been shown to do; the sweet orange (*citrus dulcis*) and the mandarine (*citrus nobilis*) might probably be induced to do so too.

Apples.—Of these several varities are growing, and from appearances are doing well; they are, however, yet too young to say what the yield of fruit will be or its quality. The trees look fresh, healthy, and vigorous, and will probably in another year or two give a satisfactory account of themselves.

Peaches.—Grow very luxuriantly, and are to be found on every selection, but the immaturity of the trees prevents a proper account of their fecundity being given. What peaches there were last season were of a capital flavour, though small, but manure and attention will remedy the latter defect, while time will increase the size of the trees and their yield.

Loquats grow freely, and had commenced to fruit last year; the trees give promise of good growth and yields of fruit later on.

Mulberries will be a large crop in course of time; the trees, small though they be at present, were bowed down with fruit in September last, and looking remarkably vigorous and fresh.

There can be little doubt that, in course of time, the white mulberry-tree (*Morus alba*) will be largely cultivated in this settlement for the sustenance of the Chinese silk insect (*Bombyx Mori*), as it is of extremely easy growth from cuttings as well as from seeds, and as 1 lb. of silk may be obtained (as far as the Bombyx is concerned) from 30 lb. of mulberry leaves, or from a single tree, and which pound of silk is worth its weight in silver, and is sufficient to manufacture 16 yards of Gros de Naples, there exist strong incentives for the Italians to initiate this branch of industry there, and others equally strong for the Government of New South Wales to aid in establishing such a profitable industry as that of silk-growing.

Baron von Mueller, in his "Select Extra-Tropical Plants," says:—"The planting of mulberry-trees has recently assumed enormous dimensions in California, where, in 1870, between 700 and 800 trees were planted. The cocoons, after they have been properly steamed, dried, and pressed, readily find purchasers in Europe, the price ranging from 3s. to 6s. per lb.

"The eggs of the silk moth sell at a price ranging from 16s. to £2 per ounce.

"Instances have been recorded in California where 8 tons of leaves were gathered in the first year from the mulberry-trees of 1 acre, and 30 tons in the next year. As an example of the profit thus to be realized, a Californian fact may be cited, according to which £700 were the clear gain from 3½ acres, the working expenses being £93.

"The Commissioner of Agriculture of the United States has estimated that under ordinary circumstances an acre should support from 700 to 1,000 mulberry-trees, producing 5,000 lb. of leaves fit for food when four years old. On this quantity of leaves can be reared 140,000 worms, from which ova, at a net profit ranging from £80 to £240 per acre, will be obtained by the work of one person.

"Mr. C. Brady, of Sydney, thinks the likely proceeds of silk culture to be from £60 to £150 for the acre. The discrepancies in calculation of this kind are explained by differences in clime, soil, attention, and treatment.

"Mr. Brady, as well as Mr. Martelli, recommends very particularly the variety passing under the name of *Morus multicaulis* for the worms in their earliest stages. The former recommends the Cape variety also. The *multicaulis*, however, comes several weeks earlier into bearing than most other sorts, and should therefore be at hand for early-hatched worms."

This appears to be an employment specially adapted to the families settled at New Italy, and others of their countrymen, as the silk industry has been established and flourishing in Italy for over 600 years; and, in addition to its nature being familiar to them, it opens up a large field of usefulness for the absorption of odd hours both with young and old during its inception and earlier stages.

It may also be noted that in the district of Rajshahye (British India) a quarter of a million of people derive their support from the trade and other branches of the silk industries, the yield of raw silk alone amounting to £400,000 a few years ago.

Figs grow very well, but I had no opportunity of testing what the fruit was like, the trees being as yet too immature.

Bananas do not appear to be a success, although in some cases bunches containing as many fruit as would count up to sixty have been grown. The frost of last winter has given them a severe temporary check, but amid the withered and scorched-looking leaves and stems of last season I could detect vigorous emerald shoots, giving promise of luxuriance as the earth and air became warmer and more genial. But it is doubtful whether bananas can be profitably grown on such soil.

Sweet Potatoes, as I have before remarked, grow most luxuriantly, some of the tubers weighing as much as 8 lb., and yielding in some cases 20 tons to the acre. The commercial economy of New Italy is at present at too low an ebb for the growers to get much more benefit out of this tuber than applies to home consumption and small local sales, but when they become better acquainted with the usages of markets, and the "peculiar" ways of agents, this vegetable will be a considerable assistance to them in leaving a respectable credit balance in their ledgers each year. The fact of the settlement being almost unknown has been a considerable drawback to these people, and many instances might be quoted wherein the supply has been very much larger than the demand, but which supplies, had their existence been generally known, would certainly not have been allowed to go to waste.

Maize is grown in small quantities, but not successfully, nor in sufficient area for other than home consumption, 2 acres being the largest and only field I saw growing. It does grow, however, and thereby is saved a certain outlay for feed purposes. But, as Mr. Mackay points out in his analysis, considerable manure would be required for either maize or sugar-cane.

Oats grow strong and well, and to a good height, with fairly full heads, but the absence of some necessary constituent of the soil has given to the crop a silvery colour, which, however pretty to look at, does not seem very satisfactory as far as the fodder value of the cereal is concerned.

The pale-green silvery sheen of the gently-waving stalks and nodding heads is somewhat ghostly to look at, although the tint is a beautiful one, and con-

trasted with the rich dark-green foliage of the neighbouring citron and lemon-trees, the paled-green patch looks weird and uncanny, and involuntarily reminded one of the shimmering garb of Undine.

Barley grows fairly, but suffers from a lack of the same "something" which blanches the adjoining oat crop.

Sugar-cane grows well, but is not cultivated to any extent for obvious reasons. It is scarcely to be imagined from the analysis of the soil that it could be grown here successfully, and if it could the distance from water carriage to the crushing mills would be an insuperable obstacle to its payable cultivation. What is grown is in small patches for cattle fodder, and for that purpose grows well and easily. The descriptions I saw growing there were Grey Fijian and Lilian green, the stalks being about 7 feet high, and of a fair average girth.

Onions, Cabbage, Lettuce, and *Peas* are grown at almost all the homesteads, and successfully so far. It is not to be supposed that members of the brassica family would grow to any enormous dimensions in such soil, yet very fair cabbages may be seen growing, but not to the same extent or degree of perfection as the sweet potato.

Tobacco.—A few plants of *Nicotiana tabacum* are grown almost everywhere in the settlement, but mainly, I fancy, for the delectation of the elder members of the community, some of whom are inveterate snuffers, and who manufacture their own "lundy foot" or "Scotch mixture." The plant appears to thrive well, and "as it delights in rich forest soil, particularly where limestone prevails, on account of the potassium compounds which abound in soils of woodlands, and also because in the clearing of forests greater atmospheric humidity prevails, needful for the best development of the finest kinds of tobacco".—[Von Mueller]—I see no reason why the New Italians in their woodland settlement should not grow as much tobacco as they require, and of a satisfactory quality.

I had a somewhat curious ocular demonstration of their mode of growing it. Riding through the farm and vineyard of Giovanni Batistuzzi, along a well-formed road leading from his house to the boundary fence, I was astonished at the display and peculiarity of the blossoms of a row of trees on my left, which, on inspection, proved to be peach-trees and tobacco-plants, planted alternately. They were both in blossom, and the tobacco-plants were nearly as high as the peach-trees, and remarkably lusty-looking. The effect was good and novel, but I could not help thinking that the peaches *in posse* would be apt to have a "sneezy" flavour, and that the snuff might perhaps not be improved by a possibly peachy pungency.

There can be no doubt that in the north-eastern portions of the Colony of New South Wales, especially in the Big Scrub and on the Brunswick and Tweed Rivers, tobacco might be grown advantageously.

Flowers.—In the matter of flowers the *utile* is evidently more considered than the *dulce* by the Italians; still at every homestead there are flowers growing, and they generally form appropriate borders for the beautifully-kept vine-plots.

Roses appeared to grow here much more vigorously and were more healthy looking than I remember to have seen elsewhere; but as none were in blossom on the occasion of my visits, I am unable to say how they behave themselves in the matter of flowering. I never saw any rose-bushes appear so utterly free from blight or weakness; they were models of verdant strength, and it would be highly interesting to know how they do blossom.

Wine.—This is made only in small quantities and for family use at present; but the irresistible evidence of the suitability of the soil for viticultural purposes, coupled with the fact that very large areas of similar land is looked upon with contempt, and absolutely yields no revenue to the State; also, that these compulsory immigrants to Australia have proved their ability to subdue and cultivate such land, and that their and their countrymen's long experience as vignerons and wine-makers would be calculated, if judiciously assisted, to successfully establish such an industry in a portion of the Colony having no recognized qualitative value, should prompt the Government to foster such an establishment by judicious immigration and technical assistance, or by liberal land grants to private speculators or public companies.

And as Australian wine has now the distinct stamp of royalty's approbation and patronage, and that prizes have been offered for the best wines of a light claret type, grown and made in the Australian Colonies, it appears to be clearly the duty of the State to foster viticulture in New South Wales in a heartier manner than has hitherto been the case. And, as bearing pertinently on this subject, I quote from the Report on Colonial Viticulture by the Executive Secretary of the Bordeaux International Exhibition of Wines, written in compliance with the instructions of the New South Wales Committee, and published in the General Report of that Exhibition in 1884, as follows:—

"Viticulture is considered in Europe almost as a regular science, the secrets of which it is not given to everyone to penetrate, to learn, and to teach to others, without a regular course of previous and persevering studies, remarks, observations, and practice extending over a very long time."

At the present moment the viticulture of the Colony is hardly better off than in 1816, when Messrs. Busby and Macarthur introduced their first wines at Camden; there is, perhaps, not the same complete ignorance or inexperience, but there is certainly the same uncertainty, owing to a want of records having been kept of previous experience so far.

Nearly all our wine-growers have started without any previous knowledge, and some are yet to be found who actually plant, train, prune, and grow any species of vine in any ground and in any way; they make their wines very primitively, and think of nothing else than to get their money back again as soon as possible, even at the cost of the reputation of the Colonial vineyards as a whole; they trust to the people of the Colony not knowing better, owing to inferior importations, so as to pass off inferior wines, forgetting that if any sample is sent abroad it may be enough to injure for a long time, and very effectively, the good name which some growers have already acquired, or are on their way to secure, for Australian wines.

It may be admitted that the present torpid state of the wine industry here is due to the want of special knowledge and to the limited means of the greatest number of those colonists engaged in wine-growing; that industry then, for the sake of the Colony, should be taken in hands at once by patriotic colonists of wealth, and it would thus soon prove the best means of settling agricultural people on this privileged land; but some lasting impulse must first come, as everywhere else, from the Colonial Government taking a special interest in it, and endeavouring to obtain and spread the necessary special knowledge.

It is certainly a pity to have recourse to the Government for so many things, and especially for an agricultural industry so promising and so unlimited as is wine-growing in New South Wales, especially when com-

pared with the same in France; but what else is to be done, if capitalists will not embark in industries which do not promise quick, great, and labourless income?

It should not be forgotten that agriculture should, more than anything else, be the mainstay of the Colony, the only one likely to keep people settled on the land, and the principal one to bring immigrants of the right sort; therefore Government aid, patronage, and supervision are not unjustified, and it has been well understood so in Europe and in the United States, where Financial Credit Institutions have been especially created, and Bureaux of Agriculture are to be found almost everywhere; for without information to be depended upon as coming from the State, or without a certain credit granted on acceptable terms, how can any immigrant, small farmer or wine-grower, however skilled in his speciality, carry on his first investment, more especially when the land of the Settled Districts costs a long price, has to be improved and tilled, implements are to be purchased and buildings put up, and yet the first income is not to be expected for four or five years?

The number of people engaged in wine-growing in New South Wales, as per Census of 1881, is 256 persons, representing an increase of 64·86 per cent. upon the previous Census of 1871; according to the most recent Statistical Register, at the time of the Bordeaux Exhibition, the total number of acres planted in vines and their production have been as follows:—In 1876, when the most important vintage in the Colony was made, 4,458 acres produced 831,749 gallons, and in 1881–82, if the Statistical Register is correct, there were only 4,027 acres of vines in the Colony, producing 513,688 gallons,—a production inferior by 55,000 gallons to that of 1874. Also, further, the number of wine-presses in 1874 was 367, and in 1882 is reduced to 281. The conclusion to be arrived at seems to be, that Colonial viticulture in New South Wales is fast decreasing, and must soon disappear if it is left to itself, as at present; on the other hand, progress should be much more felt if Colonial people without previous training in Europe had some encouragement to go into it, and somewhere to look to within the Colony for information and such help and assistance as they may occasionally require.

In France, Italy, Austria, Hungary, for instance, the respective Governments have appointed from time to time Boards and Commissions, and asked reports from world-known savants upon the cultivation of the vine-tree; they have, besides, permanent branches of their public service in constant charge of this important branch of agriculture, and a numerous staff is dispersed over their territories to inspect and to examine vineyards; to provide reports upon their yearly conditions; to watch constantly the diseases and insects which threaten the very existence of the plant; to organise syndicates of wine-growers and wine manufacturers; to afford to everyone applying for same such information or other assistance within their means, so as to develop and preserve from all dangers so important a source of revenue, so great an element of trade, prosperity, and health to their countries, and which would prove here a great factor in the bringing of agricultural immigrants.

In a young country like this, much more so than in any part of old Europe, a special School of Agriculture in general, therefore, including viticulture, with a model farm and vineyard attached, is of much absolute necessity, if not more than a school of law or medicine, and as useful as a school of mines or a technological college, for the development of Colonial agriculture. The time cannot be very far when that necessity shall impose

itself in an unmistakable way. It will certainly prove one of the most creditable and serviceable creations of which any Colonial statesman, or any successful colonist with a generous mind, might well feel very particularly proud. As to the budget of the institution, I believe it would be found in a couple of years to be fully self-supporting. Some reformatory institution for boys could be well made use of for the starting of such an agricultural farm or model vineyard.

With regard to the yield of vines in this Colony, Mr. Bonnard says:—

"It may be reckoned that a well-trained vine would easily in the Colony produce over 500 gallons of wine per acre every year, but the present average, 300 gallons per acre, selling the same at the low price of 2s. when new, would bring a sum of £30 per acre, from which a sum of £10, at the highest, must be deducted for cost of production, leaving a balance of £20 per acre.

"As to the soil, it may be asserted that the vines will grow very well in almost every one; the lighter and poorer is the better, and whenever possible, stony, pebbly, clayish, or mixed with decomposite granite, or volcanic subsoil.

"An information of special use in this Colony is, that wherever ferns are very luxuriant, and wherever the maritime pines will successfully thrive, there the vine will also most particularly succeed in their vicinity.

"As a rule, a sandy, siliceous soil will give light bright wine.

"A calcareous soil will give a very alcoholic wine.

"An argillaceous soil will produce sweetness, and also give much earthiness.

"Rich alluvial soil must be expected to produce a wine somewhat deep in colour, but rather rough to the taste.

"A small proportion of iron in the geological formation of the soil will also secure good deep colour for red wines, and further contribute to provide them with lasting qualities.

"The soils of the most famous vineyards are those containing oxide of iron, a small proportion of lime, and conveniently drained, yet remaining slightly wet. Finally, it should be suited to the grapes planted in it. Thus the species which are successful in the Médoc, or St. Emilion districts, are not in any way adapted to surrounding parts of the south of France, less again to the north.

"Situated as has just been described, the vine will give most satisfactory results in good seasons from the fourth year of its plantation, for an average period of twenty-five to thirty years or longer, if the soil is rich enough by itself, or properly and regularly manured; but when in manured soils, or in too rich a soil, the grapes, if more numerous or weighty, must not be expected to be of as good a quality as if the vine is simply living by the means of nature alone, or rather of a careful cultivation in accordance with the known requirements of nature.

"When speaking of the soil most favourable to vineyards, a special mention should be made here that in case of an attack of the dreaded *Phylloxera*, those vineyards are almost sure to escape destruction which are planted in grounds containing a percentage of 60 per cent. at least of sand or siliceous matter."

IMMIGRATION OF EUROPEAN VINE-DRESSERS.

In accordance with the wishes of the New South Wales Government, and of the Wine Committee, I have on every opportunity, and in every possible way, invited the attention of skilled capitalists and wine-growers to the boundless fields open in this Colony to their operations, and to the great advantages which it offers to them for the transferring of their enterprise to New South Wales.

I feel confident that I have succeeded in provoking much interest towards this country, and its adaptability to the production of good wines. I have received and interviewed many gentlemen of means and special knowledge with respect to viticulture, and I have also corresponded with many others at a distance, and numbers of these have taken into serious consideration whether they should not at a near future time elect to emigrate to Australia with the young members of their families and their capital, to endeavour regaining at the antipodes, in their own special industry, that which has been taken from them in Europe by the invasion of the *Phylloxera vastatrix*.

I have also been in contact and in communication with large numbers of wine-growers, vine-dressers, and coopers, and strongly endeavoured to induce them to come over to Australia, and I found many quite willing to come out; but in both classes of people, there is an energetic objection on the part of certain portions of the families to their leaving the country for a land little better than unknown, and so far distant from Europe. There is also a lingering hope that the *Phylloxera* may yet disappear, and that French vineyards will be restored to their old value, or so reconstituted as to make up for it.

Yet, if any Colonial growers had authorized me to secure for them whilst I was in Europe the services of competent and useful vine-dressers or wine-coopers, I believe I could have done so on very easy terms, for many men would be glad to come at once, if, on reaching this country, they could depend with certainty upon obtaining employment; this I could not give them, without in some way compromising the Colonial Government, of which I was the agent, so that I limited myself to recommend to those men to come here on their own hook, and to go in for wine-growing on their own account. I shall not be surprised to see numbers of them coming here by degrees; but I must say that so long as many will get 1 or 2 tons of wine from their land, and sell it as they do now, at the same figure almost as they did obtain for ten times the same quantity a few years ago, these are not likely to leave France or any other European country.

In my report in connection with the Amsterdam Exhibition, I have pointed out many reasons why the Australian Colonies do not secure a larger number of European immigrants from the old continent. These same reasons might be summarised here, as follows:—1. Great distance from Europe, as compared with America. 2. Absolute want of information, unless through London and in foreign language. 3. Difficulty of obtaining immigrants passage, unless from England.

I cannot, therefore, give much hope to see large numbers of vine-dressers or others emigrating at their own cost to this Colony until the Colonial Government adopts some means of permanent official representation on the Continent, and makes arrangements for granting immigrants passages from Antwerp, Havre, Bordeaux, Marseilles, and Naples.

But I fully expect to see a few wine-growers with capital arriving in New South Wales before very long to plant vineyards, and grow wine on a large scale. Indeed, it is even as likely that spirited English capitalists of London will soon devote their attention to this subject. A company has already been formed for the introduction of Australian wine into England, and for its production in Australia, but with too limited a capital, however, to do much in that last line at the present moment; so much more so that the price of agricultural land in the settled coast districts of the Colony, the very best to be chosen for wine-growing purposes, is so high as to be prohibitive, or prevent small capitalists ever going into agricultural pursuits on their own account with any fair chances of success in a reasonable time.

As a last word on this subject, I beg to say that it may lead the Colony to severe disappointment within a number of years, possibly much limited, to depend any longer almost solely upon its mineral and pastoral industries. The sooner some other colonizing, populating, and productive industries are added to the very few now in favour amongst the people, the better for the Colony, more especially if preference is given to Viticulture, intended by nature as a special gift, and if it is supported by large land-owning syndicates, and some honest institution of credit, formed for the exclusive purpose of helping agricultural settlements and pursuits in this bright and fertile Colony of New South Wales.

This is rather a wide digression, but the subject is worthy of it, and most pertinent to the sketch of this settlement of Italian vignerons, who are just the class of colonists referred to by the Executive Secretary of the Bordeaux International Wine Exhibition; and it is no less evident that a very large proportion of our coast lands, now looked upon as barren and useless, may be made profitable and able to support a large and useful population.

EDUCATIONAL.

The education of these Italians may be said to have been in abeyance from the time of their first settling on the land in 1882, until 1885, except such as was necessarily picked up by the members of the Colony who were at service, and by them communicated to the others, but assuredly their principal education was that of labour and their school-mistress, Dame Nature, until a wooden building was erected in 1885, and duly opened in September of that year.

As soon as the school was declared open, and a teacher installed, pupils began to roll in rapidly, some of them being big, robust boys and girls, of 14 years of age and upwards, who were, although not devoid of education, wholly ignorant of the English tongue, but exceedingly anxious to learn, for, not until they had been taught to speak the language of those with whom they would have to associate could they go out to service, and by their labour add something to the family stock of wealth as well as experience.

And certainly their education in this respect has been most commendable; in every case that has come under my knowledge during the past three years, have very nearly the whole of the wages earned by girls and boys, and young women and young men, been carefully added to the common family stock, and for the general family good. The difficulties that their elders must have experienced during their first year's travail in a foreign land must have been immense, but their natural quickness and perseverance

pulled them through, and what little knowledge they gathered was, of course, also put into the general stock, whereby the young folk naturally gleaned a slight substratum of the language and customs of the country, and which must have been of material help to them when the opportunity for learning under a regular system of education and a thoroughly qualified teacher presented itself. All those of 14 years and upwards who attended school in 1885 have now been temporarily absorbed into the general population outside the settlement, in different kinds of service, and their general character and efficiency in their several spheres of labour is spoken of most favourably.

That their anxiety to learn was not a spasmodic effort is evidenced by the fact of the attendance being pretty equal all through the two years the school has been established, the roll in September, 1887, numbering 44, and the average attendance for the year being 31·5. M. Le Cheminant, the school-teacher at New Italy, speaks in high terms of the aptitude of his scholars for mastering the rudiments of English education, and between himself and his pupils the best of good feeling appears to exist.

It was to this gentleman's kindness I was indebted for the opportunity of obtaining a correct census of the population, and when I say that the whole of it had to be obtained from a room full of partially "broken in" Italian scholars, who could not possibly grasp the scope of the inquiry, some idea may be formed of the difficulty of procuring information under such circumstances; but patience and perseverance, added to the teacher's knowledge of the Italian language, and the idiosyncrasies of his pupils, won a complete victory at last, and we had our number to a soul, much to the relief of the little dark-eyed, olive-skinned sons and daughters of that land of flower and song—Italia.

At the time of my visit the school was badly supplied with educational apparatus, and no accommodation exists for the teacher other than a small dormitory attached to the school; he obtaining his meals at the residence of a selector more than a mile away.

This arrangement is objectionable for a variety of reasons, primary amongst which are, the time occupied in traversing this distance, and the strong incentive to starvation in wet and boisterous weather. The addition of a room with a fire-place for cooking purposes would not be a great expense, and it certainly seems to be the duty of the Department of Public Instruction to provide suitable accommodation in such places.

As showing to some extent the geographical and other knowledge of Australia possessed by some of these immigrants on their arrival, it may be instanced that it was reported to the Board of Inquiry, in Sydney, that one man would not leave the Agricultural Hall for a long time, although a good offer was made for him and his family to enter into service at Fairfield. When pressed for reasons, he confessed that for his little ones' sakes he was frightened to encounter the wild beasts at Fairfield!

Their agricultural education, presumably, began at the time they were first able to observe and comprehend, and has gone on ever since by large or small instalments, as the exigencies of their position allowed, or their circumstances demanded, and therefore it may be considered that they are, in this direction, as well educated as their ages and opportunities have admitted; and it is perhaps in this direction that larger means should be provided by the State to foster such settlement, and as the following remarks appear to me to be *apropos* to this part of my sketch, I have given them a place therein.

In the report of the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into technical education in England, the following is written under the heading of "Technical Instruction in Agriculture" :—

"The recommendations made by Mr. Jenkins (late Secretary to the Royal Agricultural Society of England) for the improvement of technical instruction in agriculture may be summarized under the heads of primary, intermediate, and advanced instruction.

"Primary instruction in agriculture is for the farm labourer, farm bailiff, or small farmer. To some extent this instruction could be given in the public elementary schools of country parishes. Agriculture should be made one of the compulsory subjects in rural schools. Each school should be provided with a garden proportioned to the number of scholars, and in this garden they should be employed for a certain time every day. Together with this practice, they would have a series of elementary lessons on the principles of agriculture.

"Children in the first three standards would have lessons on the common objects of rural life, the familiar animals and plants of the country.

"They would also study the construction of farm implements and simple agricultural machinery, and of simple mechanical and physical apparatus, such as the lever, pulley, wheel, axle, spirit level, barometer, and thermometer. This obligatory course would take the place of the optional course in the principles of agriculture, which is now comprised under the title of elementary science. On the above scheme every child going to a country school would obtain some insight into the principles of agriculture, and the common labourer would cease to be merely a living tool."

Further on the report says :—

"No scheme of technical instruction in agriculture would be complete unless it made provision for teaching forestry. Our older Colonies already feel the bad effects of the reckless destruction of forests. Every enlightened country on the Continent has one or more schools of forestry."

If New South Wales be considered not sufficiently advanced for the establishment of such institutions on an extensive scale, a modified form of agricultural instruction could be established on the basis of this system with much advantage to the rising generation of tillers of the soil, vignerons, wine and olive-oil manufacturers, and the Colony at large. Soon or late the Government will be forced to establish and inspect some system of technical schools of agriculture such as are here briefly alluded to, co-ordinately with the system of national education at present in vogue. As Mr. Montague says in the report previously referred to, "technical training merely directs into the channels of the various industries that activity of intellect which is called forth by a good general training in literature, science, or art. The first step, therefore, in establishing a complete system of technical education is to supply, as far as possible, all deficiencies in our system of general education, and more especially to perfect our elementary and intermediate schools."

And, regarding the establishment of such schools being the means of directing a flow of private liberality into a well-defined and useful channel, the same writer says :—"The experience of other countries and of our own, the public spirit shown by rich men in France and Germany, the magnificent gifts made to such institutions as the Museum at South Kensington or the National Gallery, show that private munificence can be led to flow copiously in the channels provided by public authority. It is natural that this should be so. The desire of connecting their names with great and durable institutions, of the assurance that their gifts will be best employed, encourage men

to acts of liberality which they would not perform for a merely transient object, or under any depressing uncertainty as to whether they could effect any good at all."

With regard to the religious education of these Italians, the dominating religion, as Charles du Breil, Marquis de Ray, puts it in his tropically verbial prospectus, "Is the Catholic one, and there is plenty of freedom of conscience."

Being strictly a Roman Catholic community, the attendance of any clergyman other than the regular visiting priest is unknown and unsought for, the religious ministrations being held in private houses at somewhat irregular intervals until last year.

In 1887, however, Antonio Nardi donated a portion of land in a central position for a church site, and sufficient funds were soon collected to erect a substantial wooden building for holding religious services in, and which functions are now regularly administered by Father Schürr, a kindly, unassuming, and most intelligent old gentleman, and one who has found his way deep down into the hearts of his little flock at New Italy, as he has done where his other ministrations call him on the Clarence and Richmond Rivers.

The political education of these settlers must, perforce, be represented as nil; and it seems somewhat strange that this snug little pocket borough should have been so carelessly overlooked by men ambitious of Parliamentary honors. Certain it is, however, that these 200 and odd souls have lived their lives and gone on in the even tenor of their way without as much as being incited to qualify themselves for voters, and it is probable that a wager may safely be laid that they do not appear on the census papers of the Colony at all; for, at the time the last census was taken, these people were being "dispersed" by absorption into the general population of the Colony, and it is not too much to say that there are very grave doubts whether the cutest of census collectors would be able to successfully "collect" the particulars of scores of families who were known to nobody but themselves, and who could not speak a word of English. How it is that the political regeneration of these people should have been allowed to remain in abeyance would be puzzling were it not that it is from the same cause, probably, which has prompted the writer to collect such materials as he could for this sketch, with a view to its publication, and directing public attention to the existence of these people and the capital work they have accomplished. It is to be hoped, however, that the Members representing the important electorate in which the Colony of New Italy is situated will take the matter up now that it has been made public, and give these sound colonists a voice in the election of the law-makers of the Colony, and at the same time initiate them in the rudiments of their political education.

Of their social education I can say but little. My experience, however, and that of others with whom I have come in contact, goes to show that not only is their general character excellent, but that they are kind and hospitable to strangers, and with a great warmth of attachment to one another, as members of the same community.

There is not a public-house within 7 miles of New Italy, and the names of these settlers do not appear in the records of the Police Courts adjacent, neither has their morality ever been called into question.

The Department of Public Instruction, which, of course, is at the mercy of local inspectors, deals rather inconsistently with some of these outside schools. It is true a wooden building was erected at New Italy, but any

attempt at clearing a space for a play-ground about this densely-timbered spot was patriotically left to the Gladstonian efforts of a not too muscular teacher, who, however, has managed to clear about 2 acres, with a view to getting fresh air and at the same time affording a place of recreation for his scholars.

And the neglect shown herein is the more apparent, inasmuch as at Swan Bay, 6 miles away, there is a substantial brick school-house with weather sheds and enclosed play-ground, and a brick residence for the teacher, and where the average weekly attendance is officially recorded as being only 27·6.

GENERAL REMARKS.

During the agitation anent the unemployed in Sydney, some time ago, I heard a gentleman of large and practical experience of the world, and keen intelligence, remark that "if a man in this Colony wanted to make a living no combination of adverse circumstances ought to prevent him from so doing," and gave as an instance this settlement of the Italians at New Italy, about whom I have been writing. For myself, I can scarcely conceive that it is possible to place any number of people in more unfavourable circumstances than these people were; and that, unaided, they have made their mark upon the history of the Colony the facts stated in this unmistakably point out.

And it is through the most diligent perseverance and economy that they have so succeeded. The early conditions of this very young and unique Colony were those of hard work and self-denial, not on the part of one or two only but of whole families. By working part of the week or month to obtain means to procure the necessaries of life, and the balance of the time on their selections, or, in some cases, by sending the stronger members to earn money and leaving the older and weaker to do what work they could, these people have arrived at their present thriving condition.

In March, 1881, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* correspondent at Noumea, writing of these unfortunate Italians, who were waiting there for transmission to Sydney, says: "Several offers to engage some of these people have been made, but they decline, being bent on going to Australia. They seem anxious to prove that they are good agriculturists, but, moneyless and bowed down by suffering and disappointment, their position seems more than pitiable," and concludes with the pathetic interrogation "What will be the finale?" The finale, it is pleasant to say, has commenced to be written in this brief sketch of these brave people and their flourishing settlement of New Italy. One can scarcely wonder at the *Herald's* correspondent's interrogation, for who could have imagined that foreigners landed in Sydney absolutely destitute could in such a short space of time, and under such circumstances as attended their dispersion, have achieved so much. All honor to them for so doing.

Two grave questions of political economy which these Italians in their endeavours to make homes for themselves have unwittingly answered are, that relating to providing occupation for the unemployed, instead of keeping them as State pensioners engaged on comparatively unproductive works; and the profitable utilization of some of the large areas of land at present classed as "waste," and from which no returns are received. Two important questions indeed. There are millions of acres of land throughout the

Colony similar to that at New Italy; and when chance or some other cause has led to individual isolated settlement, some agricultural and horticultural results have been shown quite as remarkable as these at that settlement—only on a smaller scale.

For instance: The maize grown at Camira Station, about midway between the Clarence and Richmond, was awarded first prize at the Clarence Pastoral and Agricultural Society's show, held at Grafton last year; and oats of good payable quality, and orange-trees bearing 600 dozens to the tree, have been and are being grown a few miles further on.

Thousands of persons must have ridden or driven over, and written and spoken about, the land now smiling in an apparent wilderness of aught but sylvan beauty at New Italy, until these unfortunate Italians pitched their tents there, literally, but which was then passed by as worthless, just as now large areas of similar and better land are carelessly passed by, and written and spoken about as useless for either pastoral or agricultural purposes. And it is not too much to say that dozens of such settlements might be dotted over the apparently barren lands of these northern districts and other parts of the Colony if some inducement were held out in the shape of a practical assistance to give the people a start, and the construction of roads giving access to markets.

The cognate question of forest conservation is one that must, sooner or later, be forced upon the attention of the Government; the sooner the better. The rapid rate of denudation of our forests now taking place without any equivalent replacement means ultimate bankruptcy as regards our marketable timbers; but with such a system of forest conservancy as is practised in South Australia we need not be driven to import the bulk of our timber, and a handsome profit could be realized from the produce of the State reserves.

The South Australian Department of Forest Conservancy has a comfortable credit of balance of £16,000, besides about nine millions of growing trees, and a very large and valuable plant.

As a position for one reserve or State nursery, I know of none offering greater advantages than the locality herein described as New Italy. A settlement has been formed there; the class of labour required is close at hand, and nature has spoken in unmistakable terms as to the timber-producing capabilities of the soil.

Even in Victoria there appears to be a fuller recognition of the value of forest trees than with us, and great zeal and intelligence have been shown in procuring timber-trees from all parts of the world. Thousands of plants of British and American oak, ash, and sycamore trees have been there planted out, and there are thousands of Californian pines which have grown fully 25 feet in nine years; and there is no reason that, in addition to the hundreds of thousands of native and other timber trees growing on the scores of State reserves that should dot the surface of New South Wales, the whole of that rugged and useless stretch of sandstone country known as the Blue Mountains may yet be covered with pine forests, and so become of immense value to the future industries and prosperity of the Colony. And then, in addition to admiring the natural picturesqueness of these rugged hills, could we not exclaim with Ruskin: "Behold how fair, how far prolonged in arch and aisle, the avenues of the valleys, the fringes of the hills—so stately, so eternal, the glory of the earth."

One excellent feature in connection with the State nurseries of Victoria is that which relates to the employment of neglected boys—street arabs.

Several of these are employed at these nurseries, where they are not only kept from the unhealthy taint of bad companionship, and brought up in a wholesome atmosphere, but they learn the business of gardening and arboriculture, and as soon as they are old enough to leave, their labour and skill are eagerly sought after by private employers.

The humanizing influence of rural pursuits, and their value in the formation of character during the most impressionable period of life, might be availed of to a large extent if New South Wales possessed a score or two of State nurseries, and a few model farms—such as those doing such splendid work in Great Britain—to serve as training-grounds for this class of boys, and at the same time be a partial means of providing profitable occupation for the unemployed.

Were forest conservancy the main topic of this sketch, many instances could be adduced of the total annihilation of our cedar and other timber forests, and many others where the haulage to navigable water has during the past few years gradually extended itself from a dozen to 60 and 70 miles, and in some cases even more.

This means a gradually increasing scarcity of timber, additional cost of obtaining it, and a considerably higher price to the consumer, or the introduction of foreign timber; whereas, under a properly-supervised system of forest conservancy, a fair price could be maintained equably throughout, and the revenue of the Colony considerably increased.

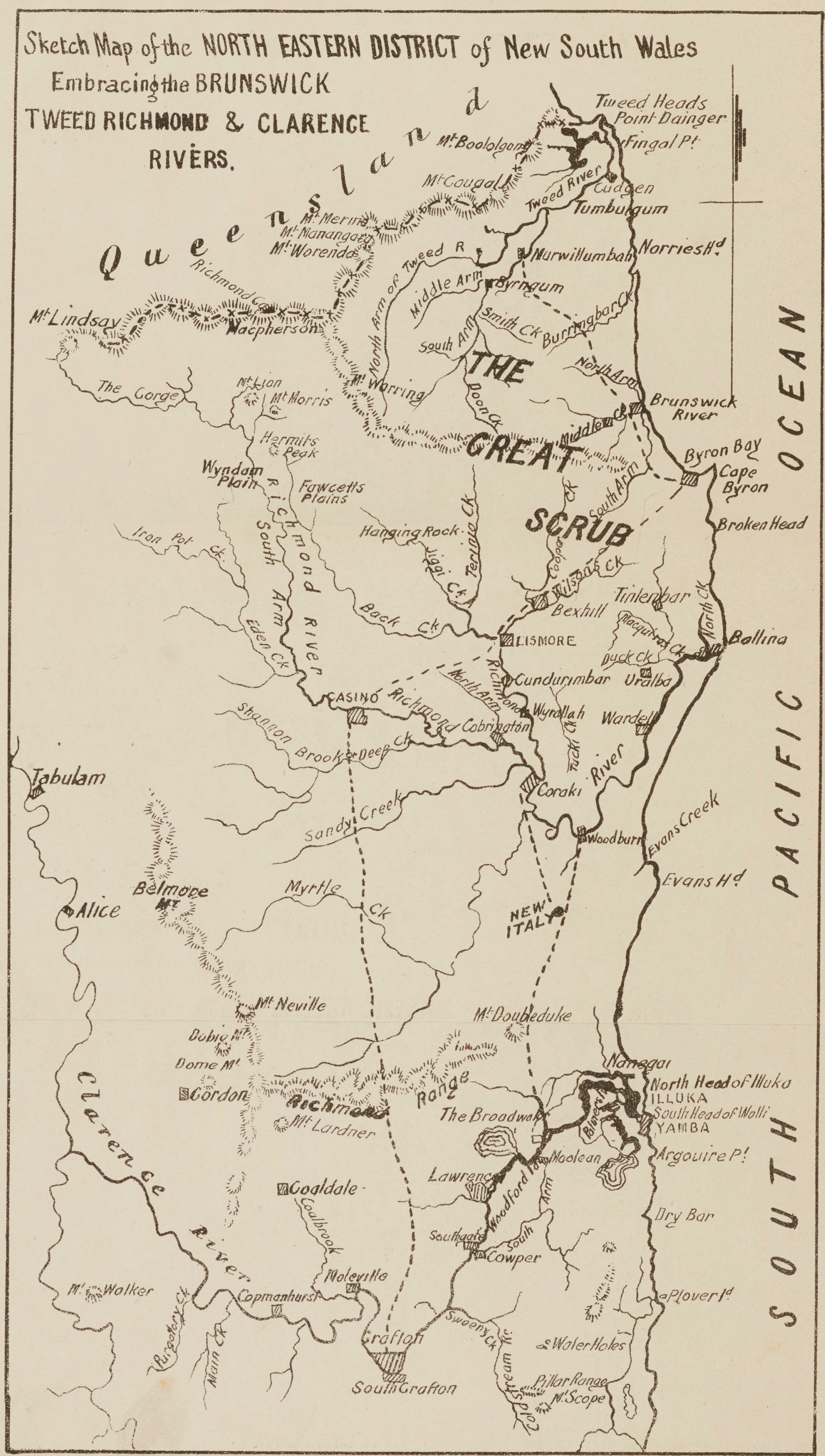
The South Australian Department of Forest Conservancy, in addition to supplying trees gratis to corporate bodies and farmers, supplies the Public Works Department of that Colony with its railway-sleepers and hardwoods, and thereby retains within the Colony the circulation of some tens of thousands of pounds annually. The additional value such State reserves would give to adjoining lands in any district goes without saying, and when another decade has passed, and another sketch of New Italy is written, that the profitable establishment of State nurseries there and elsewhere may be chronicled as "a consummation devoutly to be wished."

The importation of foreign timber, from 1875 to 1884, amounted to £2,464,840; yet instead of importing timber in any shape, New South Wales should be one main source of supply to all parts of Australasia and Europe. Her millions of acres of untenanted lands, classed as waste and utterly unremunerative, could under proper supervision be made to yield a handsome revenue, and the population induced to settle thereby, and the additional value accruing to the adjacent land would prove to be no mean factors in her future prosperity.

And if the public, and those in whose hands the solemn charge of the future welfare of this Colony has been placed, learn somewhat from the unaided efforts of the little Colony of New Italy, and the vast possibilities which might be evolved therefrom, and from the establishment of other similar colonies, the principal aim of the writer of this sketch will have been achieved.

[One map.]

Sydney: Charles Potter, Government Printer.—1889.



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