

THE CALL OF THE SOUTHERN CROSS

*being
Impressions of a Tour
in
Australia and New Zealand*

BY

A. S. WADIA, M.A.

*Sometime Professor of English and History, Elphinstone College,
Bombay; Dakshina Fellow in Natural Science*

"One feels indeed that this is no ordinary book of travel, but a very intimate, inclusive and natural account of personal experiences impersonally described by one possessed of the highest gifts of literary excellence and vision combined with a rare poetry of feeling and a sincere love of truth."—*Mazdaznan*.

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of a Four Months' Tour
in Australia and New Zealand

BY
ARDASER SORABJEE N. WADIA, M.A.

*Sometime Professor of English and History, Elphinstone
College, Bombay; Dakshina Fellow in Natural Science.*

*"The Southern Cross sent word across the Seas that said:
'The House is finished and the doors are wide,
Come, follow in my Wake, and enter in.
A stately House it is, with tables spread,
Where men in liberty and love abide
With souls afire and hearts akin.'"*

After Roderic Quinn.

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“For them a Continent undreamed of, peerless—
A Realm for happier sons of theirs to be,
One spot preserved, unspotted, bloodless, tearless,
Beyond the Rim of an Enchanted Sea
Lay folded in the soft compelling langour
Of warm South Airs, as an Awaiting Bride,
While strife and hate, and culminating anger
Raged through the far-off nations battle-dyed.”

John Farrell.



“Remote compatriots, wheresoe’er ye dwell,
By your prompt voices ringing clear and true
I know that with you all is not quite well;
Young as you are, your world-task just begun!
All of the Empire know, as I know by you
Our Veins are Million but our Heart is One.”

After J. G. Findlay.

EPISTLE DEDICATORY
TO
MY FRIENDS
IN
AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

**“In Each Other’s faces,
Looked We like the Pioneers;
Drank the Wine of Courage,
And parted like Friends of Years.”**

After Jessie Mackay.

EPISTLE DEDICATORY

DEAR FRIENDS,

It was that intrepid and rather erratic French explorer, Louis de Rougemont, who first kindled my interest in Australia. I remember as a boy buying the very first issue of the *Wide World Magazine* in which commenced the Adventures of de Rougemont. So thrilled was I by the story of his daring and exciting exploits in the Wilds of Australia that each month I waited impatiently for the next issue: and I still remember that it was with a heavy heart I put down the number in which they came to an end. Though most of his Adventures time has well-nigh wiped out of my mind, and de Rougemont himself is little more than a memory to me now, I can yet recall to mind two things of which he spoke. Of his great devotion and love for his Black companion, Yamba, and of his riding the sea astride the back of a giant tortoise. Rougemont, however, had merely excited my curiosity about Australia. It was Disraeli,

that one great statesman of creative imagination and Imperial vision England produced in the Nineteenth Century, who made Australia a matter of more than curious interest to me. "Think Imperially," said Disraeli in a moment of rare prescience fifty years ago, and that Imperial slogan has ever since so impressed itself upon my mind and coloured my thought and political outlook that I could not and can never even to this day think of my own country, India, except in terms of the Empire. But, thinking imperially and merely enthusing about the Empire did not for long satisfy me. A larger desire took possession of my soul of "Seeing the Empire" and of knowing my Imperial fellow-citizens in their own countries and among their own home surroundings. To carry out that desire of mine, I started with "the brightest Jewel in the Imperial Diadem," and saw my own country from north to south, and from east to west. Then, after a time, I went to the heart and centre of the Empire and lived in England and moved among the English people and, as the roving fancy led me, travelled through the rest of the British Isles. On my next visit to England I crossed over to Canada and saw it from end to end, that is, from Montreal in

Quebec to Victoria in British Columbia. In further fulfilment of that same desire three years ago I sailed down South to your fine countries, covered vast tracts of the two Dominions by car, rail, and aeroplane, and brought back with me a rich store of valuable experience and the priceless memory of a few dear human souls, of all of which I speak in the following pages. Not having kept a diary of the facts and incidents narrated in this volume, I have had to rely solely upon my memory in describing them. If, in spite of my endeavours to be scrupulously fair and accurate in my descriptions and narration of events, you, my dear friends, detect certain misstatements of facts, you will, I am sure, attribute them to those inevitable and insuperable human limitations of which we all feel conscious at times, and pass on.

Aseveryours,

A. S. W.

MACDALA HOUSE, POONA,
Empire Day, 1932.

SOUTHWARD.

“What opiate sealed thine eyes, O South, till others
Grew tired and faint in East and West and North?
Why didst thou dream until thy joyful brothers
Found where thou wert, and led thee smiling forth?
Why didst thou mask the radiant smile thou wearest?
Why wert thou veiled from all the eager eyes?
Why left so long, O first of lands and fairest,
Beneath thy tent of un conjectured skies?”

John Farrell.

APPENDIX A

I extract the following from *The Free Press Journal* of April 26, 1932:

ASSAULT ON FALLEN VOLUNTEERS

No Protest Meetings Allowed
No Enquiry Conducted

By

PETER FREEMAN

*(Formerly Member of Parliament for Brecon
and Radnor)*

I WAS going along Mount Road (the main street of Madras) about four o'clock in the afternoon, when I saw on the other side of the road about a dozen Indians, walking quietly along, one of their number carrying a flag. On enquiry I was informed that they were members of the Congress. Such action is illegal in India to-day. A policeman whom they passed on their route snatched the flag out of the hands of the man carrying it and

without further ado the police officer started hitting him repeatedly with a heavy lathi as hard as he could hit, on every part of his body, including many blows on his head. The man was knocked down, and became unconscious after a short time, but the rain of blows continued, even while he was lying maimed and helpless on the ground. By this time, a car-load of about twenty additional police had arrived, all armed with heavy lathis. Other members of the little group were then attacked and beaten mercilessly. There was no retaliation of any kind from the Congressmen. In one case the man's nerve failed him, and he attempted to run away, but he was chased by four or five of the police officers and hit ruthlessly on every part of the body, including the head. How he was able to stand the heavy blows without losing consciousness I do not know, though he attempted to ward off the blows with his bare arms, but with little effect. Eventually he was able to escape and made his way amongst the crowd.

No aggressive attitude had been shown by any of the members of the little procession, and no kind of counter-attack was made. No crowd had collected. No enquiry was

made and no attempt to arrest these men was made at the time, though other members of the group were subsequently arrested. No threats were made to the police, and there was no danger of any kind of attack, as every member of the group was unarmed and walked quietly and peacefully along until stopped.

To their shame, four English sergeants were present and encouraged this deliberate and brutal treatment of untried, harmless citizens.

If they had committed an illegal act, they could have been arrested, tried, and, if guilty, whatever punishment was necessary could have been administered by the proper authority. But for the police to take the law into their own hands and use such cruel and brutal methods, is a denial of every sense of justice and fair play which is the backbone of English traditions and humanity. Posterity will class such brutalities as worse than the Black Hole of Calcutta, or the burning of Joan of Arc.

Even in warfare, no one would attack an unarmed, defenceless man in cold blood, and beat him on the ground while in a state of unconsciousness, as I saw done by the police on this occasion. Even the most abject

criminal can claim protection by the police force until the law inflicts its punishment. What justification is there, then, for the brutal attacks on our fellow-citizens?

Ordinances and regulations prevent fair report of such cases in any newspaper. No chance of a just trial is possible. No permission is granted to hold protest meetings. No public enquiry is allowed to be conducted. Such suppression of a nation has alienated British feeling entirely throughout India. Let Great Britain cease brutality and open up negotiations for a mutual and amicable settlement of India's just claims with those who can speak in the name of India before it is much too late and India follows America and claims her complete independence and severs her connection with the British Empire.

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