

Observations of a British Migrant Voyaging to Australia

TSS Largs Bay

Australian Commonwealth Line



Courtesy of the Queensland Maritime Museum

C'WLEA... LARGES BAY. 80

ON GOING "OUT THERE".

FREE PASSAGE POST M&K
MILITARY MERIT

60
It is now the fashion in England, with many of us, to regard "Aussie" as the promised land; it is also quite evidently the mode, from such Australian papers as I have seen, to execrate "Billy Hughes" and all his works.

Nevertheless, at least one British ex-Service man (finding himself finally approved for a free passage to Australia) elected to go by one of "Billy Hughes' boats", namely the T.S.S. "Larges Bay" of the Commonwealth Government Line.

This was done, in the first instance, out of compliment to his adopted country; but at the same time, the fact that this line advertises "unsurpassed third class accommodation" was by no means a negligible factor in making the choice.

Nothing has transpired since I have been on board, to make me regret my decision, and the fact is not lost upon me that many of my fellow passengers who have travelled by other lines are now congratulating themselves.

The accommodation has justified my expectations, everything is clean and well-ordered, there is a liberal table, and prompt service, four meals per day being provided on what is practically a "one-class liner".

In fact, many passengers are affluent Australians, well able to pay first-class fare, but prefer to "travel third" for the greater sociability afforded thereby. In this connection it was a pleasure to find that no distinction invidious or otherwise, is made between fare-paying passengers and their fellow passengers going to Australia under the auspices of the British Government's Free ex-Service and Assisted Passage Schemes.

This is not an "emigrant" ship in the discredited sense that the word "emigrant" was formerly used in stunt journalism, the class of people now travelling on her being in no way comparable with the polyglot, fugitive, verminous pauperdom from Central Europe and elsewhere, who flocked across the Atlantic to U.S.A., before the war.

The writer, being a mere Englishman, felt somewhat reassured as to what prospects Australia offers, when he observed such a large percentage of Scotsmen on board.

All the decencies, proprieties and amenities of life are observed. This is effected without any irritating officiousness by those who have these sometimes delicate duties to perform in supervising the ship.

The voyage has been anything but dull, thanks being due to an energetic entertainment committee, there has always been something doing. Whilst entertainments are all very well in their way, many of us have been especially grateful to those Australians who have been kind enough to give lectures on the various kinds of farming and conditions of agricultural life in the Commonwealth.

These lectures have been delightfully informal affairs, of an informing nature, much useful knowledge has been acquired at first hand, and in a more readily available way than by scanning attractively "written-up" pamphlets.

Some of us may have felt the need of a gymnasium on board, but even if one were provided, it would require a person of very unusual Spartan-like qualities, to slog away at "Physical jerks" in the tropics. Perhaps there is nothing so conducive to downright, unashamed laziness as a deck chair on a voyage of this kind.

I have never received anything but civility from any member of the ship's personnel, and this has not been civility of a servile kind.

After the religious service one Sunday morning, I was informed that no clergyman of the Established Church was on board; nevertheless, the Non-Conformist Ministers had modelled the service on "Church of England" lines in order to make Anglicans feel more at home. One preacher referred to "we Australians, who have been visiting England, that country which we call home". No one, seeking a home overseas could hear such words unmoved.

Indeed, I have been assured by Australians, that they think much more of us, than we do of them. They have been surprised to find how little of Australia is known in England; in fact they sometimes think that it might be on another planet for all that the English "man in the street" knows about their country, and the heritage that it is to the Motherland.

In some ways the Australian character widely diverges from the English character, but in more than one respect it closely approximates. They are much less inclined to stand on ceremony than the English are, but they have all the traditional John Bull bluntness of speech. They constitute a very high-spirited nation, with a pronounced insularity of outlook.

Perhaps it would be well for intending settlers from England

to forget that our dictionaries harbour such a word as "Colonial" for it is not exactly a felicitous word to use in this great self-governing continent.

In more than anything else does the Australian rival the Englishman by possessing an uncompromising insular patriotism of his own.

CYRIL LEWIS.