

# WITHIN THE COMMONWEALTH

## From the Colonial Office.

**S**IR CHARLES LUCAS has come and seen, but not conquered, says the Melbourne "Punch." The Colonial Office has not properly interpreted the overseas demand for more sympathy and knowledge in the Dominions department. Sir Charles is a very distinguished English Civil servant—a stamp never seen in Australia, and the kind of man who finds it hard to understand the free and easy style of our people and institutions. He is a scholar rather than a clerk; a literary man rather than an administrative officer. The two members of the delegation are veterans. Mr. Pearson has already been placed on the shelf. Sir Charles Lucas will shortly follow. Instead of sending out young men who will have to work the suggested new Dominions Department, the Colonial Office has commissioned two gentlemanly greyhairs to study conditions repugnant to their whole life's work. Sir Charles Lucas is a Balliol scholar, and an author of solid worth. His "History of the Canadian War of 1812" is a text-book, and his "Historical Geography of the British Colonies" is easily the best of its kind. In London, in official circles, he is regarded as a most effective speaker, with a broad vein of humour. Here in Melbourne one meets a tall, spare elderly man, with iron-grey hair, of distinguished mien and polished manners. When seen in close proximity to our heads of departments, he looks like Charles Surface hobnobbing with the unnamed waiter in "The Girl Behind the Counter." The Australian interviewer has taken away his breath. With carefully-studied stateliness Sir Charles dictates a few high-sounding but pointless sentences, as if he were taking the whole world into his innermost confidence, shakes his head solemnly when asked pertinent questions, and then solemnly and courteously bows himself away. The truth is the delegation belong, so far as Australia is concerned, to a bygone generation. They will have a pleasant six months' tour, see life through the eyes of Government House, never get close enough to the people to interpret their wishes, return to London and write scholarly reports which may prove interesting essays, but are hardly likely to create a Dominions Department in close touch with the overseas possessions.

## Swagman's Sheeking Fate.

An unknown swagman, apparently about 70 years of age, was accidentally killed in a tragic manner at Winton, Victoria. He had been begging for food about the township one day, and in the evening he started a fire at the foot of a dry tree, and lay down to sleep. During the night the tree burnt through and fell on the unfortunate man's head, crushing it badly. His body was also burnt in places. The district coroner has given an order for burial.

## Missioners.

There is a whole army of women interested heart and soul in the work which these imported American missioners are doing in Melbourne, remark a writer in "Punch." One of these girls, who regards me as a frightful heathen because I do not go twice to church every Sunday, obtained a ticket for me to the Town Hall, to hear Dr. Chapman and his coadjutors. Oh! it was a dreary business. Dr. Chapman is a sort of modern Jeremiah crying about "Sin" and the need for revivals. It is easy to understand that Dr. Chapman, who is a revivalist, thinks there is a need for revivals, just as the dress-maker believes there is a need for new fashions. I got dreadfully tired of hearing Dr. Chapman talk. He is a good story teller, though, and as he told three or four stories in the course of his sermon, the monotony was somewhat relieved. He almost whispered at times, and never speaks in a loud, commanding voice. You can imagine the result when anybody who wants to be heard whippers in the Town Hall. I was near the front, but as far as the people at the back were concerned, Dr. Chapman might as well have been in New York for

all they heard. Have you ever done a perish on a far-off seat while somebody wagged his lips on the platform, and you heard nothing? Mr. Alexander is another story. He is in appearance the image of a well-known official in the External Affairs Department—no, not Mr. Athel Hunt. That official is anything but religiously inclined, and it seems incredible to look at Mr. Alexander, who is his double. Talking religion and singing religion all the time. To me, Mr. Alexander is on that account alone the supreme joke of the mission. No, not the supreme joke. There is a better one, and it is Dr. Chapman himself. He is the facsimile in appearance of Mr. Harry Rickards. The resemblance is strikingly funny. Just imagine Mr. Harry Rickards in glasses and solemnity, preaching Evangelism. I nearly died when Dr. Chapman appeared. I said to my little girl conductress, "Who is that?" She said, in an awe-struck whisper, "Dr. Chapman." Just then he stood up and said something about the service. He looked more like the coster comedian than ever, and I collapsed behind my handkerchief.

## Unkind.

People are now complaining of the manner in which women wear their hair in the stalls of the theatres. After long agitation, man has succeeded in depriving the stall-going woman of her hat, and now, with the miserable selfishness that characterises most of his conduct, he seeks to deprive her of her hair. He is a bald person himself, as a rule, and like the fox who lost its tail, he would gladly see the woman as bald as himself. Letters are now appearing in the Press directed against the ladies' hair, and in the theatre itself one hears constant complaints from miserable men. The other night at the Princess a lady in the stalls was requested to remove her hat. She complied quite graciously. A few minutes later the man behind was complaining of her hair. The lady bore it for some time, and then turned and said: "I have taken off my hat for you. I regret that I cannot take off my hair." And the sullen wretch behind replied: "I don't expect that, but I think that when you're going to the theatre you ought to have more consideration than to put it on."

## A Music Hall Farewell.

I am very loth to confess it, but I am inclined to think there is more money in

Sydney than in Melbourne just now (says a Melbourne writer). I suppose it is the big prices received for the last wool clip that accounts for the extra cash in the Harbour City, but whatever the reason, it is there all right. I slipped away to Sydney for a couple of days, and went to the Budley's race ball. It was a superb function, and gorgeously brilliant. I would have been content to take the jewellery worn and have retired for life on the money I could have raised on it. Sydney, too, is ahead of us in another thing—the departure of the deep-sea liners. There is nothing more drab and dreary than our dirty Port Melbourne pier. When crowded with people its dingy griminess is only made more dingy and grimy. Sydney's piers are not much better, but her citizens have hit upon a charming way to convert the humdrum waterside into a carnival picture. Ribbons of different coloured papers are thrown by the friends ashore to the voyagers aboard. When some hundreds are stretched between ship and shore they look like a gigantic maypole dance. And as the stately liner sheers off slowly, they gradually draw taut, and with the final strain snap dramatically, and flutter down into the water with a pleasantly pathetic sense of the ties sundered by the sea. Why can't our travellers import a little romance into their departures?



GOOSE KILLS GOOSE.

(The Unionists are now preparing for a campaign to secure a six-hours day.)  
LIBERAL PARTY—My friend, do not forget: it is my goose that laid the golden eggs. As a layer your new bird may be a dismal failure.