

POLITICAL DIVISIONS.

THE Australasian Colonies are comprised in the five divisions of the continent of Australia, the adjacent island of Tasmania and the islands of New Zealand. The total area is, approximately, 3,076,763 square miles, the continent of Australia alone covering an extent of about 2,946,153 square miles. The areas of the respective Colonies are :—

	Square Miles.
New South Wales	310,700
Victoria.....	87,884
Queensland	668,224
South Australia	903,425
Western Australia	975,920
Tasmania	26,375
New Zealand	104,235

Each Colony possesses a distinct constitution, and, with the exception of Western Australia, enjoys the privilege of responsible government.

New South Wales is the oldest Colony of the group, the first settlement on its shores having been effected by an expedition under the command of Captain Arthur Phillip, who landed at Botany Bay on 19th January, 1788, and formally took possession of the whole continent. Botany Bay being found unsuitable for a settlement, the fleet was brought round to Port Jackson, and the city of Sydney founded on the 26th January of the same year. Though the Colony was originally a penal settlement, free immigration existed from the first, and, after the abolition of transportation in 1840, all traces of the penal element were rapidly lost. The Constitution of New South Wales was proclaimed on the 24th November, 1855.

Tasmania, formerly known as Van Diemen's Land, was colonized from New South Wales, having been intended to serve the purpose of a subsidiary penal settlement. Lieutenant Bowen, in

charge of an expedition despatched from Sydney, took possession of the island on the 10th August, 1803, and formed a settlement on the east bank of the Derwent River, at Risdon. The government was administered from Sydney until the year 1825, when, in the month of December, Van Diemen's Land was duly constituted an independent province. The present Constitution of the Colony was framed in 1855, and proclaimed in the following year, the Act (18 Vic. No. 17) created a "Legislative Council and House of Assembly constituting the Parliament of Van Diemen's Land." The name of the Colony was formally changed to Tasmania on the 1st January, 1856.

VICTORIA.

The first attempt to settle Victoria was made in 1803. On the 10th October of that year Lieut.-Colonel Collins arrived from England with the intention of founding at Port Phillip a convict settlement similar to that which had been established at Sydney. The expedition landed on the shores of Port Phillip, near Sorrento, and several explorations of the country were made, but in the course of a few months the attempt at colonization was abandoned, as the place was believed to be unsuitable for a settlement. For twenty years the District of Port Phillip, as it was called, continued to be neglected. In 1824 Hume and Hovell undertook an exploration of the territory, and in 1826 another expedition, under Captain Wright, was sent from Sydney to form a settlement, but returned by order of Governor Darling, after one year's trial, although the reports of Hume and Hovell, and the officers of the military, were favourable to its prospects. In 1835 Batman, with a party from Hobart, and J. P. Fawkner, at the head of another party from Van Diemen's Land, obtained from the Aborigines extensive tracts of land on the shores of Port Phillip and the banks of the Yarra. In 1836, Sir Richard Bourke, then Governor of New South Wales, despatched Mr. Stewart from Sydney, with the title of "Superintendent of the District of Port Phillip," to establish a regular Government, and Captain Lonsdale arrived soon

afterwards with a party of soldiers and prisoners, as well as the necessary civil officials. The district was then formally placed under British rule. Victoria was separated from the mother colony on the 1st July, 1851, and its present constitution came into force on the 23rd November, 1855.

Western Australia was the fourth Colony established in Australia. The first settlement took place in 1826, when Major Lockyer landed at Albany in charge of an expedition from Sydney, consisting of a detachment of the 39th Regiment, and a number of prisoners. In 1829 Captain Freemantle landed near the mouth of the Swan River, and in the same year the town of Perth was founded. The territory was made a separate Colony on the 1st June, 1829, and Captain Stirling was appointed the first Governor. Western Australia still remains a Crown Colony under the direct control of the British Government.

South Australia was colonised in the year 1836, by immigrants sent from England, under the auspices of the South Australian Colonisation Company. Until a site for the capital was chosen the immigrants were landed at Kangaroo Island. Colonel Light, who was sent out to select the site for the settlement, arrived in August, 1836, and, after examining Nepean Bay, Port Lincoln, and Encounter Bay, decided upon establishing the capital where Adelaide now stands. Captain Hindmarsh, the first Governor, arrived at the close of the same year, and proclaimed the Colony on the 30th December. The new constitution of South Australia came into force on the 24th October, 1856.

New Zealand became a British Colony in 1840, but a company organized in England, styled the "New Zealand Land Company," had, during the previous year, despatched a preliminary expedition for the purpose of treating with the natives for the purchase of land. Five immigrant ships arrived in 1840, and settlements were made at Wellington and Auckland. By the treaty of Waitangi, which was signed on February 5, 1840, the native chiefs ceded the sovereignty of the islands to the British Crown.

Disturbances, however, soon occurred between the Maoris and the white settlers, and for about a quarter of a century matters were in a more or less unsettled state. The chief events may be thus summarized:—The Waira massacres occurred in June, 1843; insurrection headed by Honi Heki in July, 1844; rebellion of Wiremu Kingi in March, 1860; general war with the Maoris commenced in 1863; serious British reverses, including the Gate Pah disaster, in 1864; outbreak of the Hau-hau heresy in March, 1865; death of the chief William Thompson, which practically closed the war, in 1867; rebellion under Te Kooti in November, 1868, which was not finally quelled until July, 1870; submission of the Maori king to the British Government in February, 1875. Constitutional government was conferred on New Zealand in 1853, and a system by which the local governing power was vested in Provincial Councils, presided over by superintendents, continued till 1875, when it was abolished by an Act of the General Assembly.

QUEENSLAND.

Queensland, like Victoria, is an offshoot of New South Wales. In 1825 the first convict establishment was formed at Eagle Farm, in the Moreton Bay district. The penal settlement came to an end in the year 1842, and the district was proclaimed open to free settlement. Its separation from New South Wales took place in 1859, and the present constitution came into force on the 10th December of that year.

Thus, with one exception, all the Australasian Colonies have, for periods of from thirty to thirty-six years, enjoyed the privilege of framing their own laws. The people of Western Australia are now agitating for constitutional government, but the difficult subject of the control of the waste lands has hitherto stood in the way of a settlement of the question. However, the time cannot be distant when the demands of the West Australian people, backed up as they are by the voice of the rest of Australia, will be conceded. Recent events in the Imperial Parliament indicate a speedy solution of the difficulty.