

RAILWAYS.

AS an indication of progressive wealth, as well as a means for its greater production, the history of railway construction in these Colonies is highly instructive. The earliest railways were begun almost at the same time in New South Wales and Victoria. The works were, indeed, actually first commenced in New South Wales, but the first railway line opened for traffic was the Melbourne and Hobson's Bay line in 1854. It was originally intended in both Colonies that the lines should be constructed by private enterprise ; but as soon as the vast utility of the system became evident it was also apparent that only the Government could hope to keep pace with the needs of the country in this direction. The private works already begun in New South Wales were, therefore, bought up by the Government in 1854, and all private lines fell into Government hands in Victoria one year later, except the Hobson's Bay railway, which has since been purchased.

Hobson's Bay
Railway

From 1855 the Governments of the two Colonies undertook and carried on the work of railway extension. At first progress was slow, partly owing to the small population, and partly to the fear that the income would not justify the expense of widely-extended lines. The first Government railway-works were undertaken in South Australia in 1857 ; they were begun in New Zealand in 1863 ; in Queensland in 1864 ; in Tasmania in 1868 ; and in Western Australia in 1874.

History of
Railway
construction.

In 1873 the progress made showed a total extent of railroads in working order in the whole of Australasia amounting to 1,465 miles. The chief of these were Victoria with 458 miles, and New South Wales with 397 miles open for traffic. Of the other Colonies, Queensland had 218 miles ; South Australia, 202 miles ; New Zealand, 145 ; and Tasmania, only 45.

Extent of rail-
ways in 1873.

Progress of
railway con-
struction.

Since 1873 the progress of railway construction has been extraordinarily rapid in most of the Colonies. By the year 1881 the total mileage of railways had increased to 5,543, of which New Zealand represented 1,333 miles; Victoria, 1,247; New South Wales, 1,041; South Australia, 832; Queensland, 800; Tasmania, 168; and Western Australia, 122 miles. A further period of seven years brought up the total length of lines open for traffic to 10,137 miles.

The following table shows the progress of railway construction from 1861 to 1888 in each of the Colonies of the Australasian group, divided as nearly as possible into periods of ten years:—

Miles of Railway open for Traffic.

	1861.	1871.	1881.	1888.
New South Wales.....	73	358	1,041	2,206
Victoria	214	329	1,247	2,018
Queensland.....		218	800	1,931
South Australia.....	56	134	832	1,518
Western Australia.....			122	272
Tasmania		45	168	327
New Zealand		145	1,333	1,865
Totals	343	1,229	5,543	10,137

Expenditure on
railways.

The table next given shows that the Colonies of Australasia have already expended much greater sums in the construction of railways, in proportion to their population, than any other country in the world, with the single exception of Canada. The receipts so far have been less satisfactory than in older countries, a result which is clearly traceable to the comparative smallness of our population, and its exceedingly scattered character. Victoria, which is the most densely peopled of the Colonies of Australasia, shows the best result, and New South Wales the next best, while Western Australia shows an actual loss on working expenses. This is the more remarkable in view of the fact that the railroads of Victoria and New South Wales have cost nearly twice as much per mile as those of the other colonies, and three times as much as those of Western Australia.

Balance-sheet of Railways—1888.

Name of Colony.	Length of lines open.*	Gauge.	Government lines open for traffic.				
			Total cost of construction.	Average cost per mile.	Receipts during 1888.	Working expenses, 1888.	Net earnings, 1888.
	Miles.	ft. in.	£	£	£	£	£
New South Wales.....	2,206	4 8½	26,630,664	12,532	2,509,527	1,578,590	930,937
Victoria	2,018	5 3	27,468,258	13,612	2,756,049	1,753,019	1,003,030
Queensland.....	1,931	3 6	13,064,598	6,766	776,794	507,961	268,833
South Australia.....	1,518	{ 5 3 } { 3 6 }	9,666,223	6,444	948,382	453,385	494,997
Western Australia	272	3 6	892,243	4,374	38,371	44,080	5,709
Tasmania	327	3 6	2,353,585	8,436	135,984	129,265	6,719
New Zealand.....	1,865	3 6	13,472,837	7,582	997,615	647,045	350,570
Total	10,137	93,548,408	9,513	8,162,722	5,113,345	3,049,377

* Private lines are included in this column. The following are the lengths in the different Colonies:—New South Wales, 81 miles; South Australia, 18; Western Australia, 68; Tasmania, 48; and New Zealand, 88. The length of Government lines therefore amounted to 9,834 miles—the total to which the financial figures refer.