

suddenly and to such depths could colonial governments be plunged by the loss of their credit.

Nor is it necessary to examine this minor crisis in statistical detail. It will suffice that the course of events followed strictly the path of most Australian crises before or since. Swollen imports, consisting for the most part of railway iron, rolling-stock, and iron piping, came into the colony; and, since the greater part of the loans went as wages in constructional work, a false prosperity was induced which, considering the circumstances of the infant colony, degenerated into public and private extravagance of the most unwise kind. The sudden drying of the stream of credit proved how unproductive for immediate purposes was the use to which much of the borrowed capital had been put by the government of the day.

The second incident to which attention was drawn at the beginning of this chapter happened in the next decade. In spite of the decline in the total yield from gold-mining this phase might almost be called the mineral period. In Queensland, however, the gold yield increased from half a million in 1872 to 2½ millions in 1888, as a result of the developments at Mount Morgan, Gympie, and Rockhampton. Tasmania, after the discoveries at Beaconsfield, Lefroy, and Mathinna during the same period, produced gold to the value of over two millions; while Western Australia by 1880 was yielding an annual value of nearly half a million, to be increased very rapidly a few years later by the discoveries at Kalgoorlie and Coolgardie.

It was to the discovery and development of mineral deposits other than gold that the period owed its progress. Mining for tin and copper became of great importance in New South Wales, and after 1885 silver came into great prominence, a mineral that by 1890 was yielding a return of about £3,000,000 a year. The copper mines of South Australia were of increasing importance to that state, while both tin and copper meant much to Queensland's prosperity. The discovery of the famous Mount Bischoff tin deposits,¹ coming at a time of industrial stagnation, helped Tasmania in a like manner; and this was merely the prelude to

¹ This was the massive deposit which James Smith stumbled upon in 1871, and in the early years it yielded almost fabulous returns of tin. In 1885 alone over 4,000 tons of the metal were obtained.