

Mr. David Murray

IN each Australian Colony there are great commercial houses which are intimately associated with its prosperity. Such houses carry on a wholesale trade, and they have business connection in nearly every town and township in the Colony. They are, indeed, immense depôts whence the country parts receive their supplies, their customers

being the storekeepers throughout the land. Of such institutions in South Australia, that of D. & W. Murray, Limited, is one of the chief. Since 1853 this house has been in existence, and during the intervening period it has been gradually extending its spheres of operations from north to south, and east to west, and even into the adjacent colonies. The biographies of great captains of commerce in the colonies, therefore, have an especial interest, inasmuch as the men themselves largely contribute in enterprise, wealth, and political sagacity, to the growth of the country. They have grown up, so to speak, with the country, as well in wealth as in importance.



Hammer & Co., Photo

David Murray was born at Anstruther, Fifeshire, Scotland, in December, 1829, and came with his brother William to South Australia in 1853. Almost immediately after their arrival, the

Murrays opened a small drapery business in King William Street, Adelaide. At that time the population of South Australia was exceedingly small, for the Province had not recovered from the phenomenal exodus to the Victorian goldfields. Business was depressed, though there was a goodly amount of money in circulation, due to the South Australian gold-diggers forwarding their winnings to their families, or returning to purchase property and to enjoy a holiday in their own Province. The business of D. & W. Murray obtained popularity, and it soon became necessary for them to remove to larger premises. They chose a site at the corner of Grenfell Street. From thenceforth, as years went by, and the Province increased in population and wealth, the business of the firm expanded

to very large dimensions, and improvements and enlargements were constantly made necessary. Settlement was being extended over wide areas, and great buildings were being erected in Adelaide, and in the townships. The members of the house of D. & W. Murray were large participants in the general expansion, and, confining themselves to the wholesale trade, rose to importance with the growth of the community. In succession, they had to obtain larger and yet larger premises, going from Grenfell Street to buildings in King William Street, whence they again removed to still larger buildings in the same thoroughfare. Eventually, in 1886, when the Province had attained a position of high importance, they moved into premises specially built for them in Gawler Place, where their headquarters still are. As has been already stated, the firm has flourishing branches throughout South Australia, and in other colonies, and its travellers visit almost every township of any size in South Australia. It imports from the world's markets, and distributes broadcast. The annual turnover is consequently immense.

When the material conditions of the Province became more stable, and the early struggles of the house were at an end, Mr. David Murray began to devote attention to public matters. The country needed men of superior intelligence and some experience to help it through the troubles of adolescence, and Mr. Murray's shrewdness and mental readiness of grasp proved of considerable value in the political arena. In 1870 he was elected to the House of Assembly for East Adelaide; but after two years' service, he retired into private life for five years. In 1877 he was chosen representative for East Torrens. With Mr. W. Gilbert, he was returned for Yatala in 1881, defeating Mr. Cavenagh, who, however, successfully petitioned against his opponent's return, and Mr. Murray was unseated. At the new election which followed in July Mr. Murray again defeated Mr. Cavenagh, but he held the seat for only a few weeks, when he resigned. In 1882 he again decided, on earnest persuasion, to enter Parliament, and on this occasion he was elected a member of the Legislative Council. Nine years later he retired finally from public life.

From the success which Mr. Murray attained in his business, it may be well conceived that he was a useful, practical legislator. The high intelligence, carefulness, discrimination, and foresight applied to his private affairs, proved also of service when devoted to affairs of State. Mr. Murray was, however, not disposed to indiscriminate speech-making, and he was none the less respected on that account. His speeches were composed of sound commonsense and rational representation, and out of his experience he was able to tender useful advice. He was thus able to largely influence legislation, especially on all commercial and financial matters. On July 9, 1886, upon the retirement of the Hon. J. B. Spence, Chief Secretary in the Downer Administration, he was offered the portfolio, which he accepted. For the 12 months that this Government remained in office, he performed the duties of the position with credit.

In his private capacity, Mr. Murray has proved a staunch friend of South Australia. He is a very prominent man in the Presbyterian Church, and, in connection with that communion—as well as in other ways—he has conferred benefits on his fellows. In character he is unostentatious; but his bright eyes and intelligent countenance bespeak a man of quick and governing intellect. He is indeed a captain in South Australian industry.