

THE CRUISER *KREISER* IN AUSTRALIA



The cruiser *Kreiser* (shown in the photograph above), like the cruiser *Razboinik*, visited Australia while en route to the Russian Far East, where she was to join the Pacific Squadron. The vessel was commanded by Captain 2nd Rank Nikolai Ivanovich Nebogatov, who later became a rear admiral during the Russo-Japanese War and commanded the Russian naval detachment that attempted to pass through the Tsushima Strait following the squadron of Admiral Zinovy Rozhdestvensky. Nebogatov eventually surrendered his ships to the Japanese fleet.

Report of the Commander of the 2nd Rank Cruiser *Kreiser* on Her Visit to Melbourne — 8 April 1894

Melbourne is entirely a European city, with magnificent multi-storey buildings, excellent steam and horse-drawn tramways, and streets illuminated by electricity and gas. In a word, it is a city superior to the capitals of many smaller European states.

Its houses, markets, lighting systems, and tramways have all been created through the speculative enthusiasm of English and American investors operating according to joint-stock principles. Construction companies, electric lighting enterprises, tramway systems, and harbour facilities were all established on this basis. All these undertakings, however, were developed on an extraordinarily large scale, far exceeding the actual needs of the population. Melbourne, for example, was effectively built for a population of at least one and a half million inhabitants, whereas at present it contains fewer than half a million. The consequences of this disproportion became apparent five or six years ago. A large number of houses remain empty; markets and shops stand unoccupied; steam tramways run nearly empty cars every quarter of an hour; and even the horse-drawn tramways fail

to generate profit. The value of shares in these enterprises has collapsed to almost nothing. For example, shares in a horse-tramway company with a nominal value of nine pounds now sell for only fourteen shillings. Naturally, the founders of these ventures made fortunes and departed for United Kingdom, while the ruined shareholders remained behind. This situation has been further aggravated by the discovery of new goldfields on the western coast of Australia, rumoured to be richer than those of Victoria. Every steamer departing Melbourne carries people eager to seek their fortunes on the new diggings. Thus, the already limited population of Melbourne continues to decline. Bankruptcies among even the best and previously prosperous local enterprises occur constantly because labour and capital alike are flowing westward. At present, Melbourne is experiencing both a financial and an immigration crisis from which it is unlikely to recover quickly.

From the book "Rossiiskie moryaki i puteshestvenniki v Avstralii" (The Russian seamen and travelers in Australia (compiled by A.Ya. Massov and E.V. Govor), Moscow, 1993