

THE AWFUL AUSTRALIAN

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The Awful Australian by Valerie Desmond

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VALERIE DESMOND

**THE AWFUL
AUSTRALIAN**

THE
AWFUL AUSTRALIAN

BY
VALERIE DESMOND

F. Nicolis
Melbourne, 15.10.1913

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FOREWORD.

There has been so much adulation lately of Australia, Australian institutions, and the Australian people by writers with axes to grind and English politicians with party ends to serve that the people of the Commonwealth have come to believe that they are the salt of the earth, and that their country is the earth. Personally, I am impatient of such credulity, and I think it is time somebody called upon the self-satisfied Australians to show cause why a little more humility and a little less arrogance were not more seemly. With a view to restoring an apparently lost sense of proportion to the press and public of the country, I have written the following pages. If in telling the truth I shame the Australian this book will achieve its object. Should a howl of indignation be provoked, then will the condition of affairs be proved worse than my pen has power to depict, and nothing will be left but to declare Australia past redemption. This is the case for the prosecution.

VALERIE DESMOND.

Sydney, July 15, 1911.

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CHAPTER I.

AUSTRALIAN POLITICS.

This strange, topsy-turvey country, not content with having fruit with stones on the outside, has made the unique experiment of handing over its government to its peasantry! Other lands have at times fallen under the sway of the hoi-polloi, but this has always been temporary, and the result of some hysterical upheaval. But in Australia this has not been the case. The electors calmly and deliberately voted the Labour Party into power in April, 1910, and, since then, two of the six ridiculous States that this country of four and a-half millions has divided itself into have also calmly and deliberately decided, by majorities, to entrust their national guidance to butchers and bakers and candlestick-makers.

That any body of people should do this—even in a country where every man and woman, irrespective of education, wealth, or social position has a vote—seems unintelligible to the English visitor. It certainly was unintelligible to me at first. It grew more of a mystery when I saw and heard several of the Labour leaders. Then I saw and heard the Liberal leaders, and I no longer wondered.