

by Captain Sterling,<sup>1</sup> under the regulations of the Colonial Office, in the western half of the continent. As the settlers were few in number, the machinery of government was very simple, the Governor and an Executive Council sufficing to satisfy the political needs of the community. The constitutional history of the colony during the next half century was uneventful<sup>1</sup> and practically distinct from that of the Eastern group.

The colony of South Australia, like the ill-starred venture on the Indian seas, was the product of the new born interest of the English government and people in the subject of colonization. After the disastrous results of the American war, a deep depression, almost amounting to a re-action, set in against colonial enterprises and territorial expansion and even against the colonies themselves,<sup>2</sup> which were sometimes regarded as a source of embarrassment and expenditure, and at best but as a suitable dumping ground for convicts and other undesirables. As the inevitable law of colonial development, would it was believed, result in their separation as soon as they acquired sufficient strength and population to assert their independence, there was but little incentive to the fostering of over sea dominions.<sup>3</sup> But the commercial and political advantages of colonial possessions at last became evident; it was seen that they might become a source of strength to the motherland, by relieving the congestion of population through emigration, and that these new dependencies would in time furnish excellent markets for the expanding manufacturies of Great Britain. From a subject of careless neglect, the colonies now found themselves the centre of a philanthropic interest, and of social and economic speculation, almost as dangerous in character as the former indifference. In short, economic philanthropic political and commercial considerations combined to force the colonies into an unwonted prominence. This unnatural condition of theoretic interest produced its coterie of abstract political scientists. The immense unappropriated areas of Australia offered an ideal field in which to make experiments in colonization.

Foremost among these speculators was Mr. E. G. Wakefield,<sup>4</sup> whose name has since become identified with the scheme of assisted immigration by means of the land revenue fund to

<sup>1</sup>Quick and Garran, *Annot. Const. of Aust.*, p. 67.

<sup>2</sup>Woodward, *The Expansion of the British Empire*, p. 261. Egerton, *British Colonial Policy*, p. 256-8. <sup>3</sup>Egerton, *Ibid.*, p. 258.

<sup>4</sup>Egerton, *British Colonial Policy*, p. 282.