

for political experiments, and fortunately her leaders have not been afraid to endeavor to solve some of the complex questions of modern social relations, which have daunted the statesmen of the old world. The record of the early stages of the federal movement, when a few chosen spirits were vainly groping after some scheme of intercolonial co-operation and unity, is equally valuable if not so interesting as the history of its consummation, in revealing to us the source of the spirit of Australian nationalism, which has made federation both possible and actual. It is only in the light of this early struggle which brought out all the forces and issues of nationalism and provincialism, that we can properly interpret the events of the last few years.

In seeking to present an outline of the federal movement during the first twenty years of its history, almost exclusive attention has been given to the political or parliamentary aspect of the subject. No attempt has been made to trace out the popular history of the movement as it expressed itself in the social life of the people. This mode of treatment is the more justifiable as, during this early period, the question of federation presented a distinctly political character, as exemplified in the policy of an English Secretary of State, and the activities of a few leading members of the Australian legislatures. An Australian social consciousness had scarcely begun to emerge; it was a modern development of the movement, a product of the spirit of native-born nationalism. The federal history of the colonies can be traced through three distinct stages of development. It was first an official, then a political, and finally a social question. The movement originated in executive statecraft, was fostered by parliamentary discussion, and was brought to fruition by a triumphant social democracy. During the earlier stages of its evolution, with which alone we are concerned, we can keep close to the heart of the movement only by carefully following the proceedings of parliaments, and the intimately related political events out of doors, from which the life and inspiration of the federal cause was derived.

Closely associated with the action of the legislatures was the discussion of the press, which played a part in the movement scarcely second in its influence to the efforts of the federal leaders in the local parliaments. Through its earnest advocacy the question was rescued from neglect, and endowed with an importance and a utility which it did not hold in the public