

A NEW NATION.

"A nation is the unity of a people."—Coleridge.

The Australian "Commonwealth" Compared with the Dominion.

By an overwhelming majority the six Colonies of Australia have just decided to enter into Federal unity, as the Provinces of Canada did in 1867. Although, in a general sense, the Constitution adopted by those six Colonies is like that embodied in the British North America Act, there are differences the working out of which will be watched with great interest in Canada, and, if found beneficial, will probably affect our own affairs. The federation is to be entitled The Commonwealth of Australia. There are to be two Houses, the Senate and House of Representatives. Each Colony or State will have the same number of members, viz., 6 for each State, making 36 senators for all Australia. This will give one senator for each 103,000 of population, the proportion in Canada being one to each 64,000 people. These legislators are not to be appointed by the Crown, which practically means the Ministry in power, as in Canada, but are to be elected by the people for a six years' term. Power is given to increase the number of senators. The House of Representatives is to have double the number of members of the Senate. The principle of representation by population to be observed, the unit to be 50,000, and no State is to have less than 5 members of the Lower House, which will number 76 representatives. In Canada the unit is about 23,000. The two Houses, in numbers and in proportion to population, will stand as follows:—

STATE	Population.	Number of Rep's	Pop'n. to each member.	Pop'n. to each Senator.
New South Wales.....	1,346,240	26	51,770	224,000
Victoria.....	1,175,490	23	51,110	136,000
Queensland.....	498,333	10	49,833	83,000
South Australia.....	367,934	7	52,700	61,320
West ".....	168,150	5	33,630	28,020
Tasmania.....	177,341	5	35,460	29,560
TOTALS....	4,733,688	76	av. 49,128	av. 103,700

The discrepancy between the number of inhabitants represented by the several Senators, one set of them each representing 224,000 persons and another set each representing 28,020 persons, is, in our judgment, a defect which will give rise to dissatisfaction. Occasion may arise when the six Senators of Tasmania, or West Australia, with each a constituency under 30,000 will outvote the six Senators of New South Wales, who each will represent 224,000 persons, or seven times over the number of the smaller States. Under such conditions friction is certain to arise that may disturb the new Commonwealth seriously. It is arranged that, if the Senate is enlarged, so must be the House of Representatives by their existing proportions, that is two to one. So that, at the least number by which the Senate can be increased is six, that is, one for each State, so the least number by

which the House of Representatives can be increased is 12, that is, double the increase made in the Senate. How to apportion 12 new members so as to give each State its due proportion will be a puzzle indeed, as, if one each is given to the three smallest, there will be 9 to be divided between three other States, whose exact proportions would be a tenth part, a twenty-third part and a 26th part of nine. To divide up members of Parliament equitably in such proportions would require anatomical operations. As, however, such re-adjustments will inevitably be required ere long in the Australian Commonwealth, there is every certainty of its passing through a very critical trial. A departure is to be made in Australia from the Canadian pattern in regard to the respective sphere of the Federal Parliaments and those of the several States. In Canada the Federal Parliament is the depository of all national rights, while the Provincial Assemblies have only jurisdiction over such as are specifically allotted to them.

In Australia the State Assemblies will reserve all rights except those which are specifically allotted to the Federal Parliament. The experiment of making a national Parliament subordinate to provincial ones is a constitutional curiosity, the result of which will be awaited with much interest. The Federal House will have the right to regulate trade with foreign countries as well as between State and State. It will also have exclusive powers over Customs and Excise after a certain period has elapsed, and have also the entire control of taxation. In view of the situation in Canada, it is interesting to note how Australia proposes to act when the Upper and Lower House come to a deadlock. The two Houses are to hold a joint sitting, and the final decision is to be by an absolute majority of this combined assembly. This is exactly what Mr. Laurier proposed for Canada. But when a real deadlock occurs which obstructs legislation, urged by the Government, then both Houses are to be dissolved, and an election held for both the Senate and House of Representatives. This is a very novel feature, extremely democratic, and full of hazard to the smooth working of the Constitution. A Senate elected at the same time by the same voters as a Lower House, the issue being as to which House will control the other in regard to a certain line of action, is certain to become a mere side show, an annex, a subordinate department practically of the House of Representatives. Such a Senate will have no independence, nor any reason for its existence. The probability is that Australia will eventually drop its Senate as an excrescence, as, under the arrangements just adopted, the government of the day, when in control of the Lower House, will be able to override the Senate at a joint meeting of the two Houses, and can at any time force a dissolution of that body. We look for lively times in the new Commonwealth over the friction between the two Houses. The expenses of the Federal system are estimated to be very materially below those of the present Colonies. The