

PREFACE.

It is especially appropriate that the nineteenth century, the history of which has been dominated by the spirit of nationalism, and which has witnessed the important federal unions of Switzerland, Canada and Germany, should also see its last days crowned by the unification of the segregated colonies of Australia into a strong federation under the flag of Great Britain. The federal state promises to be as distinctly the dominant type of modern governmental organization as the city state was of ancient Greece. For this reason alone, the Australian federation is especially worthy of study, as the latest product of the spirit of the age. Its history and its constitution are particularly valuable, as illustrative of the tendencies of the powerful social and economic forces of society, which enter so largely into the political life of the modern state. The Australian Commonwealth Act is not only the most finished product of federal constitution making, embodying the experience of all previous federations, so far as they were found applicable to Australian conditions, but it is as well, one of the most democratic instruments of government ever framed, expressive of the socialistic tendency of the rule of the working-man. The interest and significance of this event is intensified, if we judge of its importance, not by the impression it creates at the moment, but by the truer test of its potentiality in the political and juristic world, in presenting to the nations of the East and West a new factor in international politics, and in offering to statesmen and jurists an unique model of constitution making. He would indeed be a bold political prophet who would venture to set definite limits to the future greatness and influence of the new federation under the Southern Cross.

The history of the evolution of a nation is always a fascinating and instructive study, more especially so when the newborn state is possessed of almost unlimited resources, is inhabited by a race of high intellectual attainments and of liberal culture, and when its citizens, moreover, are among the keenest students of political and of sociological problems. Australia, by reason of her situation, of her history, and of her homogeneous population is an exceptionally favorable field