

The Federal Story

The Inner History of the Federal Cause 1880-1900

Deakin, Alfred (1856-1919)

Edited by J. A. La Nauze

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The Federal Story

The Inner History of the Federal Cause 1880-1900

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1963 (1944)

Introduction

J. A. La Nauze

Alfred Deakin died in 1919. His 'Inner History of the Federal Cause' was first published in 1944 by Messrs Robertson and Mullens of Melbourne, in an edition edited by his son-in-law, Herbert Brookes, who gave it the title of **The Federal Story**. The present edition, published with the permission of Mr and Mrs Brookes, has been newly collated with the manuscript, passages omitted from the 1944 edition have been restored, and new material has been added. These matters are more fully explained in the Note on the Text which follows this Introduction.

The narrative was begun in March 1898 in the closing days of the Federal Convention. Most of the portraits and judgments of the Australian participants in the federal movement were set down during the next few months. The account of the conclusion of the movement and its final stages in London was added in 1900, before the inauguration of the Commonwealth. Thus Deakin's assessment of motives and conduct was contemporary, and unaffected by the charity, the disillusionment or the mere information which the years might bring. That is why it is so vivid and so valuable. For this is not simply the work of a highly skilled journalist, though Deakin was that among other things; it is the work of a man who was from first to last at the centre of the events he describes, and whose place as one of the three or four founders of the Commonwealth of Australia is beyond dispute. If he saw the federal movement and those engaged in it in a certain way, that is itself a fact relevant in historical explanations. His narrative is thus a document for the student. For the general reader it remains, and is likely to remain, the most exciting and readable book on its subject.

It must be remembered what that subject was: not a general, nor even a political history, but an 'inner history of the movement and private aspects of those concerned in it'. Deakin left it to 'the student of the future' to write a full, scholarly and critical examination of the federal movement in Australia. A careful reading of his first and last pages will show that he was aware of the importance in it of economic and other factors which in recent years historians have begun to explore; but his purpose was to set down personal impressions and interpretations which otherwise no historian could recover. It is a pity that others who played leading roles in the events did not do so. Bernhard Wise's **Making of the Australian Commonwealth** (1913) comes nearest to being in the same sense a 'document' as well as a narrative, but it is coloured not only by the inevitable contemporary bias which Deakin warned his own readers to allow for, but by the intervening personal frustrations of its author's life after 1900.

No full and formal history of the federation movement has yet appeared. Some of the ways in which, drawing partly on recent work, such a history would need to supplement or correct Deakin's narrative are not difficult to indicate. His viewpoint, for example, was essentially Victorian. He did not fully appreciate the complexity of the federal issue in the senior colony, New South Wales. He knew

well enough that there 'again and again it was made the sport of Ministries and Parliaments and local agitations'; but he did not allow sufficiently for the real weight of the objections to the Constitution as it was framed by the Convention. Again, taking the narrative on its own terms as mainly a retrospect of men and motives, some corrections should probably be made in its estimates. He was for many years deeply engaged, actively and emotionally, in 'the federal cause'. His account of it, in contrast to the autobiographical chapters about his early years in politics,* is not primarily concerned with his own role, but it does reflect his own anxieties and emotions to a greater degree than an unwary reader might suspect. A decade later he recalled that he had 'once thought our Federation a distinct illustration of a real and great victory won against hopeless conditions'. His judgments of men were made before he even knew that it was a victory.

The elaborate portraits of Sir Henry Parkes and Sir George Reid, for example, have given joy to readers for years, but they are not equally detached. The treatment of Parkes is the more penetrating because here Deakin was not only an acute, but, as it were, a clinical observer. Parkes was dead, and had played no part in the second phase of the federal movement, not yet concluded, but as Deakin saw it, brought to a halt which might mean failure largely by the actions of Reid. Deakin believed what he had said at the Adelaide session of the Convention: 'Should we fail in our task, it is . . . easily possible that decades may pass before another such opportunity as this can present itself.' His verdict on Reid is affected by this belief. It is not therefore necessarily unjust, but there is a case against it to be considered. Again it is obvious that the comments on men, manners and politics in England, though vivid and entertaining, are necessarily more superficial than those based on more than a decade's experience in the federal movement in Australia. Deakin was, however, extraordinarily sensitive to impressions, and skilful in communicating them; and the views he expressed in 1900 about the governing classes in England help to explain the way in which, as Prime Minister of the Commonwealth, he approached the question of imperial relations during the next decade.

These and other comments on the narrative which treat it as if it claimed to be that history which, so far, 'the student of the future' has not provided, are in danger of forgetting that its author described it as a 'sketch, undertaken while the last series of events are fresh in recollection and almost all the actors in all stages still upon the scene'. It was not his fault that the other principal actors were too uninterested, or unskilled or lazy to set down their interpretations of these events. In style and significance, his remains the most valuable memoir yet written by an Australian politician; and he needed no assistance to write it. Certainly the role of economic interests and organizations, the designs and activities of pressure-groups, the personal exigencies of political leaders in their local politics, need further exploration. But it is unlikely that historians will be able to brush aside the question implicit in Deakin's conclusion, or to dismiss as irrelevant to explanation the feelings to which only at the end he gave expression: 'To say it was fated to be is to say nothing to the purpose: any one of a thousand minor incidents might have deferred it for years or generations. To those who watched its inner workings,

followed its fortunes as if their own, and lived the life of devotion to it day by day, its actual accomplishment must always appear to have been secured by a series of miracles.’

J. A. LA NAUZE

University of Melbourne

* **The Crisis in Victorian Politics, 1879–1881** (Melbourne University Press, 1957).

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Note on The Text

J. A. La Nauze

The present narrative was written in two stages. After beginning it just before the close of the Convention in March 1898 Deakin continued writing for the next few months until he reached the end of chapter XIV which he dated '30.7.98'. When he returned from England in July 1900 he set to work to record the successful conclusion of the federal movement, and wrote his last words on 14 September. His original title, chosen when the outcome was yet unknown, was 'Personal Recollections of Three Conventions', i.e. the Melbourne Conference of 1890, and the Federal Conventions of 1891 and 1897–8. This was altered later to 'The Inner History of the Federal Cause, 1880–1900', which was used as the subtitle by Mr Brookes when he published the narrative as **The Federal Story**. The present edition retains a title which has become familiar.

The manuscript was never revised by Deakin. There is indeed no indication in any of his later writings that he ever looked at it again. In 1923 Walter Murdoch, who had access to the manuscripts in the care of Deakin's eldest daughter Ivy and her husband Herbert Brookes, quoted some of the pen-portraits, and used the narrative in other ways in his **Alfred Deakin—A Sketch**. Edited by Mr Brookes, Deakin's work was published by Messrs Robertson and Mullens of Melbourne in 1944. His edition omitted many words, phrases and sentences, and several lengthy passages, and in places substituted words or phrases for those in the original. There were also cases of incorrect transcription, explained by Deakin's sometimes difficult handwriting. In this edition the text has been restored in full. The lengthier additions occur in chapters X and XVII, but the reader who compares the two texts will notice small changes, some important, on almost every page. Students of Australian history, however, owe a debt of gratitude to Mr Brookes for publishing the narrative in the first place.

Some editorial rules have had to be adopted in the reproduction of an unrevised manuscript written fluently and at high speed. Punctuation of Deakin's often lengthy sentences has mostly to be supplied; in his published writing he punctuated rather elaborately, in his manuscripts hardly at all. Abbreviations, including those for Christian names, have been spelt out. The division and numbering of the chapters are Deakin's, but titles have been supplied. Some of the longer passages have been cut up into paragraphs. Deakin's varying capitalization for the same word has been made uniform (for example, he rings all possible changes in this respect on a word like 'anti-Federal'). In a few cases tenses that have gone astray have been corrected. Otherwise, the text is reproduced as it stands in the manuscript, at the risk of some pain to the editorial staff of the Melbourne University Press who have a proper regard for 'house rules'. My thanks are due to Miss M. Donald and Miss G. Williams for their help in its preparation.

J. A. L.

Author's Note

The Inner History of the Federal Cause 1880–1900

These articles though unrevised ought to be worth £250 after my death to either **Age** or **Argus**. Though strictly truthful and fair so far as I can make them they are very personal and unflinching in their candour—A reader must allow for the inevitable bias of any actor in such events—Those who desire to know the part the writer himself played in the public debates or campaigns must turn to the Reports published officially or by the press—I have written these articles to provide one of the few legacies I can leave my wife and children.

ALFRED DEAKIN*

[1900]

* The **Age** and the **Argus** were the leading newspapers in Victoria. It must not be assumed that Deakin originally began the narrative in 1898 with the intention of publishing it as a series of articles. By the time this covering note was written, however, it was certain that the Commonwealth would come into being. It was his intention to enter federal politics and he knew that this would mean abandoning the practice of law. He had made a reasonable income at the Bar, but though his habits were prudent and economical he had various commitments which had prevented his making any substantial savings.

The Federal Story

I Victorian Federalists

TODAY, SATURDAY MARCH 12TH 1898, after an all-night's sitting and under conditions of great nervous exhaustion and irritability we have practically completed the draft Bill for the Constitution of the Australian Commonwealth. Whether it remains like its predecessor a mere draft marking only another stage in the development of the Federal principle, or whether it prove the bond of union between the separate colonies and the creation of a national Australian Parliament and Government, some notes on the circumstances attending its evolution and final adoption may possibly prove interesting if not valuable hereafter. The outer history and official records of debates and documents of the present Convention cover more than 5,000 pages of print, without reckoning the associated development of the Federal Council or related debates in that Council and upon these Conventions in the several Parliaments, which occupy 5,000 pages more. Ample material lies open to the student of the future to comprehend and criticise their work and it asks but patience, together with some acquaintance with the political methods and social and material conditions of the period to enable him to digest and comprehend its significance and the circumstances of its adoption. But here as elsewhere the inner history of the movement and private aspects of those concerned in it will always be much less easy to restore or interpret. Yet much of the Constitution and more of its fortunes have been determined by the individual idiosyncrasies, attractions and repulsions of those workmen who had a hand in building it. In addition to the obvious influences of the times, there has been a great deal due to causes of which press and public alike have remained in ignorance. In some instances grave misapprehensions have obtained currency as to the parentage of particular proposals. Memory affords a less and less trustworthy witness as the years roll on, and hence this sketch, undertaken while the last series of events are fresh in recollection and almost all the actors in all the stages still upon the scene, may suffice to supplement and to some degree to interpret the outer shape of the Constitution about to be offered to the Australian people. A rude outline of the course of public events must be given as preliminary and as framework to the reminiscences.

The Federal Union of Australia, projected even in the days of Wentworth, was discussed in Victoria at an early period. The Chairman of the Royal Commission which even in the fifties considered and recommended a united government was Mr, afterwards Sir Charles Gavan Duffy. His colonial career though brilliant in parts was on the whole

unsatisfactory, largely owing to British prejudice against an avowed 'Irish rebel' and partly owing to unattractive characteristics of temperament. My acquaintance with him was slight and short. He was Speaker of the Legislative Assembly when I entered it for a day in 1879 but not when I returned in 1880. His intellectual forehead, dignified demeanour and carefully polished utterances well fitted him for the post, though his voice at once weak and harsh, thin and squeaky, and his cold calculating eyes indicated the physical and emotional defects which helped to cripple his efforts and to defeat his soaring ambition. The literary graces and practised craftsmanship manifest in all his writings indicate the natural bent of his abilities and enable him to present in his autobiography a flattering full-length portrait of himself as he believed himself or desired others to believe him to be. He was statesman enough to foresee the future of the Federal movement and politician enough to endeavour to employ this and other issues discernible outside the beaten track of politics to improve his status. During his Premiership, by sheer force of ability he aroused a loyalty among his supporters and a hatred among his antagonists which made its brief existence as marked as it was diversified. His speeches as head of the Government were distinctly superior in power, breadth and finish to those with which the electors were familiar. He fell because of the weakness of his colleagues, the composite character of his following and the personal rancour provoked by his antecedents and his disposition. His own picture of himself discovers a patriot as forgiving as he was unselfish, but the tradition of his opponents emphasises qualities of an exactly opposite nature.

An illustration of his temper is supplied by his treatment of Mr Gillies, with whom he had been politically acquainted for some years and always on friendly terms though they were in no sense intimate outside of Parliament. Even at an early period Duffy aspired to the Chair which he afterwards filled most creditably, and his aim being discovered, was made the subject of a cartoon in **Punch** in which Sir Charles McMahon was represented regarding himself in a mirror as he donned the Speaker's robes, while Duffy in the dress of an Irish peasant, shillalah in hand, crawled from under a table with the exclamation 'Drop that, ye spalpeen.' During the illness of the Editor of **Punch** some year or eighteen months previously, Gillies, who was a friend of his, had conducted the paper gratuitously though most successfully for some time, but upon his friend's recovery had ceased to have any voice or interest in it. Duffy at this time spent his Sundays at Sorrento where, on seeing the cartoon prematurely disclosing his plans, he was seized with a frenzy of rage and in spite of the assurances of his friend O'Grady who was his guest, persisted in attributing it to

Gillies. When therefore on his return to town he met Gillies, who had not even seen the cartoon at the time and greeted him as usual, he fixed upon him an angry glare and strode by without the slightest sign of recognition. They remained absolute strangers except when obliged to address each other in the House until on the formation of his Ministry, Duffy sent first O'Grady and then McLellan and others as emissaries to induce Gillies to join his Cabinet, only to be met with a prompt refusal and the assurance that until the amplest apology was made by him, Gillies would neither join him nor, except so far as questions of policy were concerned, give him any personal support whatever. [Even] if Duffy apologised Gillies would not agree to join him, and as he maintained an absolute silence, they never spoke again. To request the alliance of a man to whom he would not extend the ordinary civilities of political and private life, and to cherish an animosity for years, which he must have had a least a strong suspicion and probably had a conviction had been based upon a foolish blunder of his own, indicates the co-existence of passions which must necessarily hamstring the influence of any leader. It was certainly some such defects that occasioned his failure to hold positions for which he possessed many manifest qualifications. But for them he might as Premier have laid an earlier foundation for Australian Union and have ruled the destinies of Victoria for years.

In 1871 a handful of young men, of whom Mr J. L. Purves was the most able and conspicuous, met together to establish an Association which should be at once a benefit society and a National political organisation. At the time of its foundation and indeed for years afterwards so far as it attained to notoriety at all it was chiefly to be ridiculed because membership was limited to those born in Australia, though generally [it was] ignored. It grew quietly and unobtrusively for about ten years when a few young men of marked enthusiasm and ability attained to its control. In the hands of a very Sir Galahad, Thomas J. Hart, a deeper and truer note was struck which even after his lingering and untimely death inspired a number of sincere disciples. In 1880 a resolution in favour of Federation was tabled in the Legislative Assembly by Mr James Munro, a politician who before the fighting days of 1876–80 had forged to the front, and during them, though largely absorbed in making his fortune, had frequently endeavoured to create an independent party. He was supported by Dr Quick and discouraged by the then Premier Mr Graham Berry, to both of whom we must return at a later period. The debate never reached a division and so far as I remember aroused little interest. The Australian Natives' Association from time to time stirred the languid pulse of public interest and it was about this time that it began to emerge upon the stage of public

affairs. Its centre at this time was in Ballarat and district, where Mr T. J. Hart of Stawell breathed into it a higher sentiment of duty and power than had up till then inspired its members. Of a sensitive and delicate organisation, a religious habit, and singularly pure and noble character, he impressed himself powerfully upon his association and would have taken a high position as the leader of the Association had not his untimely death cut short a life of remarkable promise. He was well read, thoughtful, and an excellent speaker, all but winning the seat for Stawell against a very popular representative. His work lived after him, and as he had foreseen and provided the Association as a national patriotic force came to the front with a rush in 1883. Hart's mantle soon after fell upon another Australian of splendid promise, a young Bendigo lawyer, Mr T. Jefferson Connelly, afterwards Councillor and Mayor of that City, who brought to bear upon its counsels uncommon mental capacity, great force of character and an intellectual energy which enabled it to retain and improve the position thus gained in public regard. He too unhappily and prematurely was taken from us. Still it may fairly be said that from 1883 onwards the growing influence of this Association was never absent from the consideration of Federal issues and that the steady work done in its branches contributed in a large degree to render the movement actual and persistent.

Its influence was consolidated under the judicious direction of Mr G. H. Wise of Sale and Mr Peacock (afterwards Chief Secretary), but it was largely due to the return to active service of one of its founders, Mr J. L. Purves, a Q.C. and one of the leaders of the Bar, that its prestige was enlarged and public attention attracted to its proceedings. The son of one of the early Victorian squatters, Mr Purves was educated partly in Germany and partly in England where he was admitted as a barrister. A typical Australian in his devotion to sport in all its branches, an exceptionally good shot and endowed with a powerful physique hardened by outdoor exercise, he flung himself into all the pleasures of his time and surroundings, including some continental gambling escapades in which he lost his own money, then that of his friend, then that which he borrowed to enable them to return to England, and only avoided having to beg their way home by a lucky accident. Poverty drove him to the press, at first in London where he earned a precarious livelihood on a now forgotten comic paper, and afterwards in Melbourne, where for a time he contributed to the **Age**. His first years of attempted practice at his profession proved as unprofitable as usual. The money he received from his family was spent as soon as received, if not all anticipated and pledged in advance. It was under these circumstances that he received a brief to appear in a remote country town for which he left with his usual heedlessness at the last moment, to find

that there was no coach from the terminus to the town in which the court was to open next morning. The landlord was aware of his emergency, and demanded an extortionate sum for the hire of the only available buggy and pair, whereupon the wrathful young advocate with characteristic heat described him in terms which rendered further negotiation impossible, and set out to walk the 40 miles which separated him from his destination. His boots were new, purchased no doubt none too soon and in honour of his windfall, and after a few miles' tramping his feet were so tortured that he had to halt at a wayside public house. Here he was appealed to by a couple of laborers who had just finished digging a tank for a neighbouring farmer at a price per yard and who found themselves utterly unable to calculate the sum they were justified in charging for the excavation made. Purves, though never a careful or accurate calculator, boldly attacked the problem with results in the way of charges which filled his employers with wonder and delight. Next morning he was up at daylight to make another start, but his feet proving too tender for him to proceed, he was reduced to turn in to the first house he came to, where a scene of some excitement was proceeding between three men on the front verandah. His arrival was hailed as most opportune by all of them, for they included his two clients for whom he had undertaken the marvellous calculation of quantities, and an infuriated farmer whose opinion of their honesty and greed was being expressed in the most unqualified manner. Nothing daunted he faced the situation, corrected the account and harmonised the contending parties, after which he succeeded in borrowing a mare big with foal, upon whose back he completed his journey in time to hold his brief and gain his case. Never a studious man, though well read in the lighter literature of France and England and in the biography of adventurous men, he remained as little of a case lawyer as was possible and indeed as little of a lawyer of any kind as was compatible with the large practice which accrued when his great powers of cross-examination, his worldly wisdom, and remarkable gifts as an advocate carried him to the top of his profession. In spite of faults of temper which limited the numbers of his friends and multiplied inordinately those of his enemies, his attractiveness and force as a public speaker, added to the weight of his position combined to render his Presidency of the Australian Natives' Association for two years a memorable period of its history. In his political life he had been a fierce opponent of Sir Charles [Gavan] Duffy, but as head of the Association he did much to advertise and popularise the cause of which the brilliant Irishman had been one of the first prophets in Australia. The alliance of opposing local politicians in the National cause was evidence even then of the breadth and height of Federal feeling in Victoria.

The fact that Purves did not achieve anything more for Federation at any time than his powerful platform addresses was due to more serious faults than those of temper. His negligence in correspondence with constituents and the irregularity of his attendance at the House helped to drive and keep him out of Parliament which he had merely made a theatre for the display of his oratory or the gratification of his humour. But it was his want of application and of a sound foundation for his views which proved permanently fatal to his ambition. He had little taste for study, less perseverance, and least of all concentration. He was by inclination and habit a sportsman on land and water, happiest with gun and line in hand and attached to his profession only for its excitements and emoluments. His politics were those of his class, picked up at hazard and modified by judgment or necessity. Except upon larger patriotic issues he was always upon the unpopular side and never sufficiently qualified or sufficiently in earnest to conduct a consistent campaign. When the tide set towards what was called Nationalism in New South Wales he was prepared to regard the ultimate independence of the colonies as assured but at a later date went even more strongly in the direction of loyalty [to the Empire]. This instability was fatal to his chances of success in politics and limited those won at the Bar to his triumphs of cross-examination and his consummate art in handling juries. The part he played in the Federal movement was that of the stirring and effective speaker whose appeals to the emotions of his hearers were repaid with tumultuous applause. The strength of his constitution and frequency of physical exercise enabled him to lead in town for some [time] a life as fast as that of a roystering squire and man-about-town. He had no lack of adherents and followers in this as in his other essays. As a business manager he was a mere figure-head but as a centre of public interest and inspiration he far surpassed all the Presidents of the Australian Natives' Association who either preceded or succeeded him. His arrogance, uncertainty of mood, and unevenness of style were compensated for, if not concealed, by his generosity, placability, flashes of judgment and prevailing good fellowship. His enthusiasm for the cause was sincere and the courage with which he faced prosperity, adversity and all the chances of fortune was that of a man. The Australian Natives' Association played a great part from first to last in pushing on the time-servers among the politicians and in securing popular approval to the Bill when it was framed. Its leaders were young men of varied ability and information, most of them well trained in debate and all deeply in earnest in the National cause. They merited great praise for all that they accomplished, but Purves was the only one of their chiefs whose personality stood out when in office and out of office as a powerful Federal champion. The association was powerful only

in Victoria.

One man who left the deepest impress upon the public life and parliamentary traditions of Victoria was equally potent in his influence upon its patriotism. The greatest of Australian orators and of Australian Liberals, the noblest nature and the most refined, George Higinbotham was at the same time the most ardent of Imperialists in policy and more than any other man or group of men stamped that sentiment upon his associates in the House and his followers throughout the country. None of the other colonies exhibited just the same firm alliance between radicalism and loyalty to the mother country because no other colony had a Higinbotham. His practical career whether at the Bar, in the Assembly or on the Bench was never an unqualified success in the ordinary acceptance of that term. His standards were too high, his temper too unbending, his scrupulousness too indiscriminating to render him a colleague whom it was easy to cooperate with or to understand. Just to a hair's-breadth and generous to a fault, he was yet tyrannical as duty itself and uncompromising as chastity in little as well [as] great affairs. But if he was too great for the great positions he filled, he was filled with a holiness of purpose that in many a crisis crowned as with an aureole his singularly beautiful head and face, and thrilled through his rich harmonious voice. His manner in its simple dignified courtesy surpassed that of any man in Victoria or Great Britain no matter how high his station or important his office. As a speaker he was at once cultured, simple and effective, passionate and yet self-restrained. His influence was more magnetic, his thoughts—political, religious and social—more radical, and his will more dominating than Morris'[s] Memoir describes. Such a man, rare in the world, seemed rarer still in Australia where his inflexible purity of life and aim, his irresistible charm and grace, and his transcendent power of convincing and being convinced, left an indelible impression upon so many minds and characters, that, Federalist heart and soul, though his position [as Chief Justice] sealed his lips upon the question, it was he who imparted to [the Federal Cause] in Victoria a special note of undeviating loyalty to the Empire.

2 Convention in Sydney, 1883

THE FEDERAL IMPULSE OF 1880 was in the first place a reaction from the ultra-Protectionist policy of 1878–9, some of whose imposts, and the Stock Tax in particular, being directly aimed at intercolonial imports, naturally provoked great bitterness of feeling upon the border. The completion of the connection between the New South Wales line to Albury and the Victorian line to Wodonga in 1883 afforded an occasion for an outburst of sentiment in favour of union, though the way had been prepared for this and the chief stimulus given by the threatening aspect of affairs in the Pacific in the immediate neighbourhood of Australia. The actual impulse came at a little later date from Queensland where Sir Thomas McIlwraith's action in hoisting the British flag in New Guinea having been disavowed by Lord Derby on behalf of the Imperial Government, received the support of the other Australian Premiers in his protest against the supine pusillanimity of the Colonial Office. The first expression of the growing idea had come from Victoria and from the same colony came the heartiest endorsement of the bold act of Queensland. An intimation that any resolutions arrived at by the Australian Governments collectively would receive consideration led to the Intercolonial Convention of 1883. Dread of German aggression in New Guinea and of a French annexation of the New Hebrides coupled with the alarm occasioned by the arrival of escaped criminals from the penal settlement in New Caledonia were the chief operating causes of this gathering. It met in Sydney where the interest in these dangers was least and the New South Wales representatives faithfully reflected the indifference of their colony. The defeat of Sir Thomas McIlwraith at a general election immediately preceding had deprived the meeting of its natural leader, and though afterwards a member of the Convention of 1891, his dominating personality, force of character and warmth of temperament were never really exercised upon the Federal field. He was a man of action, capable and resolute and though a good debater upon practical issues was somewhat out of place in the work of shaping a Constitution. His successor, Mr Griffith [afterwards Sir Samuel], offered the strongest contrast possible to his defeated rival and except that both were fair, presented a marked antithesis.

Sir Thomas [was] a man of business, stout, florid, choleric, curt and Cromwellian. Griffith, the leading barrister of his colony, lean, ascetic, cold, clear, collected and acidulated had not at this time developed or at all events exhibited the force and depth of his Federal aspirations. The leadership in consequence fell to Mr James Service, Premier of Victoria, a

circumstance which by no means commended the matter to New South Wales or its representatives owing to the jealousy existing between the colonies. Mr Service was a curious combination of Mcllwraith and Griffith, a shrewd and successful Scotch merchant of Imperialistic tendencies and daring disposition. Like the first, his early training as a schoolmaster gave him a preciseness approaching to that of a lawyer's, while his general demeanour covered his strong enthusiasms under a coolness, cautiousness and slyness akin to [the] sceptical and almost cynical manner of Griffith, to whom in slightness of build and lack of robust physique he closely approached. Less masterful than the first and less analytical than the second, he was in his prime a better debater and platform speaker than either and indeed under the circumstances of the situation, was undoubtedly the most powerful influence in the Convention. He had some ambition to fill the Chair but discarded it willingly upon learning that the Premier of New South Wales also coveted the post and was only likely to fall into line under some such temptation. His colleagues merely acted as his advisers.

Berry, whose capacity and experience would have entitled him to a place as prominent as that of his chief, was generously anxious not to rival him and was for the matter of that not an ardent Federalist at this period. He would have been more active if he had not regarded the very limited measure of union proposed as inadequate, but at the same time as a Radical he was out of sympathy with most of those present and still more suspicious as a Protectionist of possible advances to Free Trade. With less education, less coolness and a less logical mind than Service, he had more force, fire, resource and daring. Both were seen at their best in debate, when Service's coldly ironical and stinging tongue was devoted to destructive criticism, while Berry carried away his audience and even conquered votes in the House by the irresistible magic of appeals, cogent, apt and ingenious, and what was more, vibrating with electric sympathy. He was a less efficient, a less economical, a less methodical, and less consistent administrator, but for all that possessed a store of energy and breadth of view which enabled him, with his extraordinary oratorical gifts, to defend himself against assaults. As a statesman and party leader he was more inspiring than his rival, never losing touch with the sentiments and opinions of the masses on whom he exercised an immense influence. He was a genuine and greatly gifted tribune of the people, much nearer to them and more of them in his weaknesses, and in his strength more reckless, improvident and buoyant than Service. After his great victory in 1877 he was the most powerful chieftain of Democracy since Higinbotham and possessed for a time practically despotic authority 'On the one

condition', as he shrewdly said, 'that I did not exercise it.' He was a warm friend and liable to be too liberal to protégés in his appointments and promotions, but never a bitter enemy. He loved his ease and dignity. His vanity has led him to make indiscreet speeches without premeditation or care of consequences, but he was so superior to his colleagues and to all his later rivals except Service, that such slips may well be forgiven him in view of his dauntless and memorable Victorian career.

Mr Alexander Stuart, [N.S.W.], was like Service a Scotch merchant, canny, honourable, a hard worker and careful administrator without the fire or exceptional ability of his distinguished fellow countryman. He was even then breaking down under his unsparing devotion to business and politics, though a man of sturdy frame. He enjoyed the reputation of being the plainest-visaged man in politics or, as some said, out of it. He acted in the Convention and afterwards, mainly as a brake upon Service's enthusiasm. His chief colleague, Dalley, then Attorney-General, applied no spur to his chief. His great oratorical gifts, his general disposition and the spirit afterwards displayed by him in offering the Soudan contingent for service [in] Egypt two years later, were not manifested at this meeting, though in all probability its discussions contributed by enlarging his outlook to prepare him for the bold stroke which was to win him fame a little later. Stuart's other colleague Mr George Dibbs was also little in evidence at this period. A splendidly built man of towering height but never unwieldy, with a high forehead, keen eyes glittering through his spectacles, strongly marked features, and manly address, his many charms of character and some powers of mind were ill conjoined. He was not only prejudiced even among the New South Welshmen of his day, but obstinate, eccentric and changeable. Converted from an ardent Free Trader into a strong Protectionist almost without an interval long enough to permit of baptism, he compared it, himself, to the miraculous conversion of St Paul. By turns he was radical and conservative on particular questions with apparently no sufficient motive for change, so that it will be hard for the historian to do justice to his many amiable qualities and his statesmanlike action at one juncture. For the greater part of his later career he was overshadowed by the superior dignity, authority and eloquence of Sir Henry Parkes, who was accustomed to define him as 'a man of a weedy nature and a sprawling mind'; yet it was the same Dibbs who at the time of the financial crash of 1893 when a feeble Victorian Ministry rather increased a panic which they interfered to avert, saved New South Wales the extremity of disaster by his courageous action. Bank after bank was closing and the Directors of the Bank of New South Wales were trembling and about to close their doors when, entering their Board room, he dashed his umbrella upon the table as

he told them that the Bank must not close; that it should not close, and that he was prepared to employ all the resources of the Government to support it. This deed and the acts he passed, though both of them involving a tremendous responsibility to the State and a possibility of disastrous failure, saved Sydney from much of the suffering into which Melbourne was plunged and gave the former city its first decided advantage over its rival in the race for commercial supremacy. This was just the result which Sir George Dibbs, as he had then become, would have preferred almost to any other. The New South Wales Ministers cared nothing for Federation. Dalley at the outset sought to have the Convention termed only a Conference and Dibbs threw cold water upon the vigorous proposals of Victoria and Queensland; but both were subordinate to their chief, Mr Stuart, and loyal to him as Chairman, as certainly Dibbs would not have been if any other Premier had held that office. As soon as the Convention was over they relapsed into their pre-existing hostility to the whole movement. Next to the Scotch element in the Convention in prominence came the Australian represented by Dibbs, Bray and Downer. Mr Bray was one of the men who by reason of being general favourites are able to reach to positions which they are able enough to retain. In local politics he was considered a trimmer and in the shock of the Conventions his kindly courtesy and tact contributed always to compromise. His colleague, afterwards Sir John Downer, was made of sterner stuff and took a far more important part than his chief both in 1883 and 1891. Australian as he was, appearance and character alike were thoroughly and typically English. Bull-headed, and rather thick-necked, clean shaven as a priest, and with the dogged set of the mouth of a prize fighter, of medium height and strongly built, his smallish eyes lit up with animation or twinkling with humour only partly disclosed his combination of resolution with kindness. As a speaker he was always suave, clear, courteous and effective whenever he took pains to prepare. He was Conservative to the core though not reactionary and only prevented by reserve and indolence from playing a far greater part than he did both in South Australian and Federal politics. As it was, his influence increased from 1883 to 1891 and from 1891 to 1897–8. His attitude was always independent. Sir Henry Atkinson, Premier of New Zealand, was a man of kindred temper but much more enquiring and possessed by a desire to keep abreast of the march of the times. A most upright, candid, modest, sincere and gentle disposition disguised the firmness of will and tenacity of purpose which distinguished him throughout his career. He was a warm supporter of the Imperial policy urged by Mr Service. In 1891 his health was so undermined and the interest of his colony so remote, that he took little part in the proceedings.

Mr Nicholas Brown, then Minister of Lands for Tasmania, was also a member of the Conventions of 1891 and 1897–8 and in both, though with some timidity, displayed a truly Federal spirit. His Premier, Mr Giblin, a remarkably impressive man too big for his colony, died before the next Convention and though Sir Graham Berry sat in that of 1897–8 he was so enfeebled by age that he took little part in its deliberations. The astute Attorney-General for Victoria, afterwards Mr Justice Kerferd, Mr Garrick of Queensland and Mr Whitaker of New Zealand passed out of the movement at this stage though the last was an active participator in the work which was done in 1883. It was Mr Service's Convention, in fact as well as in name, for he supplied it with all its motive power and material. Having neutralised the antagonism of New South Wales by placing Stuart in the Chair, he was fortunate enough to be able after a long private interview to induce Griffith to support his programme. When unfolded it won the approbation of Giblin, Atkinson and Downer, though to meet the views of New South Wales the scope of the Union was so restricted as to render its creation at all a doubtful gain. Even then the draft Federal Council Bill proved unacceptable to the Sydney representatives and came so near shipwreck during the sitting that Berry left the Convention in despair. When he returned from his walk, he found that by diplomacy the rocks had been avoided and that those assembled had agreed to pass something more than declaratory resolutions. Griffith had been anxious to prove to his colony that he was no less eager than Mr McIlwraith to protect its interests in the Pacific and no less capable of playing his part with the other Premiers. Beginning from this narrow standpoint he steadily broadened into an absolute Federalist. South Australia was affected through her Northern Territory, while New Zealand in consequence of her position necessarily developed a Pacific policy. No one at that date thought it possible for the colonies to unite upon any matters of domestic politics. The Conservatives present were in a large majority and like Service approved of a cautious step by step advance; consequently resolutions and Bill alike were aimed chiefly and almost solely at the protection of Australian interests in the surrounding seas.

Up to this point all had gone well and promised better. After the Convention, Service committed his one irreparable blunder in connection with the Federal cause. A grand dinner of welcome to the South Australian, Tasmanian and Western Australian representatives, who returned to Melbourne with him, was given in the new Queen's Hall of Parliament House at which, exulting in his success, he spoke as he might have been pardoned for speaking in Cabinet but as no politician could be excused for speaking in public. Forgetting that he had to deal with the most susceptible

city in the colony of this group, most sensitive to criticism and with the keenest rivalry for Victoria in general and its capital in particular, he told his astonished audience how, in going to the Convention, he had found Sydney asleep and how with the help of his friends who rallied around him he had awakened the slumberers and led them to do their Federal duty. The statements were perfectly [true] but so mal à propos and indiscreet that even his Victorians looked at each other in surprise and Mr Downer did not fail to bluntly repudiate any rally around any person. The response from Sydney, when the report of his remarks reached them, was naturally severe and all the more severe because the facts were just as he had declared. One indignant parliamentary orator declared amid the cheers of the Assembly that New South Wales was as far above Victoria as Heaven was above the earth. Sir John Robertson politely referred to Victoria as a mere cabbage garden and a considerable quantity of bitterness was thereafter infused into the always jealous relations of the two colonies. Worst of all, it was made perfectly plain that the Convention held in Sydney had really been Victorian and thus the Federal Council became branded as a Victorian invention. As such it became a point of patriotism with many New South Welshmen to belittle and oppose it. During the passage of the Bill through the Imperial Parliament the endeavour of the New South Wales Cabinet was to weaken, and of Victoria to strengthen the new legislature and in the final result New South Wales and South Australia both remained out of the tentative Union on the ground of its insufficiency. Enfeebled by their abstinences added to the very limited scope of its authority, the Council struggled on till 1889 when for a single session South Australia was also represented and it was resolved as a preliminary to an expansion of its powers that the number of representatives from each colony should be increased from two to five. They would still continue to be nominees of the Government or Parliament of the day, but it was intended that they should include members of the Opposition as well as of the Ministry. Even this change did not secure the continuance of South Australia in the Council* . It remained little more than a debating society, though very useful as a milestone and meeting place for the representatives of the four colonies included. But above all it was a constant menace to the anti-Federalists of the mother colony. The one great service it can fairly claim is that it alarmed them with a possible loss of the pre-eminence they so coveted. It was after its expansion in 1889 and when it appeared likely to commence a career in which all the colonies except New South Wales would be united, that Sir Henry Parkes discovered the necessity for taking the immediate action which led to the Melbourne Convention of 1890. It was in 1895 while the Council was determined to use the legislative powers it

possessed, which it had hitherto refrained from exercising out of consideration for New South Wales and South Australia, that the Conference of Premiers decided on the summoning of an elective Convention to draft a Federal Constitution. Its purpose to act was once more a spur to New South Wales so that, weak as has been its policy, the Council can fairly claim to have twice forced the hand of New South Wales.

Other causes of a personal kind contributed to the same results, but for all that the pride of New South Wales was perpetually pricked at beholding an assemblage which the adherence of South Australia and any sudden opportunity might render the most important Australian factor. To be excluded from such a body or to be compelled to crave admission to it after having vainly endeavoured to destroy it by neglect was a prospect so humiliating that, in order to avoid it, men of all parties in Sydney were from time to time stimulated to make some effort to displace or replace it, so as to shift the centre of interest to their own city and restore the hegemony of New South Wales. The local feeling coupled with an enjoyment of a sense of superiority in Sydney was always a much more potent influence than in any other State capital. It proved throughout the whole history of the movement one of its most serious obstacles and most important factors. The Federal Council became influential by the excitement it occasioned around Port Jackson.

* There follows a deleted sentence: 'and therefore unless the present movement fail and New South Wales and South Australia return to it as a pis aller the prospects of this Federal organism appear no more promising.'

3 Imperial Conference, 1887

THE ASPECT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS continuing threatening and it being apparent that the Federal Council could neither speak nor act on behalf of an united Australia, it became necessary to adopt some other means of dealing with the pressing issue of naval defence. The ill-fated Admiral Tryon, a man of large mind, large frame and admirable tact, had already discussed with the colonies severally the terms upon which a special squadron of the Imperial fleet might be provided for the Southern Seas, but beyond the formulation of the proposal, nothing had been done and little could be expected while there were seven distinct governments not too certain of their tenure of office, whom it was desired to induce to accept the same terms. Canada was interested in a proposed trans-Pacific Cable and there was as usual a difficult situation in South Africa, so that a proposition for a Conference between representatives of the Imperial Government and of her self-governing dependencies was submitted by a circular from Mr Stanhope, Secretary for the Colonies in the newly formed anti-Home Rule Conservative Ministry, which with the aid of the Unionist Liberals had just been returned with a large majority. The gathering of 1887 differed from the Jubilee Conference of 1897 because deliberation was the first consideration and actual legislation resulted, while in the later meeting, though all the Premiers were present, their attendance at the celebration was the chief motive. Only a general discussion of trade relations was attempted and this was not attended by any result. The proposal for a Conference in 1887 was novel, was welcomed in every colony and sent a thrill of patriotic anticipation through the whole Empire. As India was not represented and as the representatives of Crown Colonies played but formal parts at the meeting, its official title was the 'Colonial Conference', though even omitting the great tropical possessions of the Crown it was in spirit and in fact an 'Imperial Conference' and was generally so designated.

The Australian representatives were unequal in numbers and in weight. Sir Samuel Griffith as Premier of Queensland and President of the Federal Council expected to have taken and might have occupied the post of leader, but his absence of enthusiasm in regard to the questions under consideration and the somewhat marked deference he displayed towards the Colonial Office caused him to exercise far less influence than his ability and knowledge would have justified if they had been boldly exercised. His cynical attitude at the outset placed him out of touch with his colleagues and at no time afterwards did he recover the lead. Sir John

Downer as Premier of South Australia was far warmer and more active in private, but in public his sense of responsibility was so keen that he too, though cordially co-operating with his associates, took no specially prominent part. New South Wales was represented, owing to political necessities, by two members of a recently displaced Government and an Agent-General of long experience and great sagacity, none of whom felt sufficiently assured of support from Sir Henry Parkes and his Government to venture upon any initiative. The representation of Tasmania and New Zealand was equally official. Western Australia was still a crown Colony, so that Sir John Forrest, then Commissioner of Crown Lands, had little scope for the exercise of his energies. Victoria sent four representatives, one more than New South Wales and the Cape of Good Hope, which were each content with three. Sir Graham Berry and Mr Service, members of the recent Ministry, certainly compared favourably in capacity and experience with any of those present, while Sir James Lorimer, a leading Melbourne merchant, had mastered the details of the defence questions, which were the most important matters to be discussed, more thoroughly than any one in the Conference. [Mr Deakin was the other member.] The Victorians were all keenly alive to the importance of the issues at stake, especially in regard to the Pacific, and though there was no leader of the Conference or of any section of it they certainly, perhaps because of their superior number, took the most prominent part in the proceedings. Officials of the Colonial Office confessed at the close that they had at first looked forward to the action of the Victorians with most apprehension but that they had discovered in them a better knowledge of the situation and a better disposition to meet it by united action than in the others upon whom they had expected to be obliged to rely.

The debates and proceedings of the Conference are printed, with the exceptions of the confidential discussions which took place on a few occasions with closed doors. One of these attended by the Premier, the Marquis of Salisbury himself, in which the future disposal of the New Hebrides was under discussion, was marked by great excitement. The information regarding it which found its way into the English and colonial press at the time was vague and inaccurate. The motive for secrecy having long since passed away, there need be no scruples now in making it public, except those which inevitably embarrass a writer when compelled to speak of himself.

The sitting was presided over as usual by Lord Knutsford, then Sir Henry Holland, a highly cultivated, suave, tactful and able English gentleman, a Liberal-Conservative Barrister who had passed through the Colonial Office. By the unaffected sweetness of his demeanour he won the hearts of

all the representatives, while the readiness and acuteness of his mind and the breadth of his views commanded respect from the best lawyers in the Assembly, men who like Sir Samuel Griffith, Sir Thomas Upington, Sir John Downer and Sir Robert Wisdom were well qualified to test the training of an English expert.

The Marquis of Salisbury, then at the zenith of his powers, was a tall, broad-shouldered, bulky man with large round head somewhat bowed upon his breast, a calm clear eye and an expression of serene self-command which enhanced the grave dignity of his manner and style of speech. At the opening session he had addressed the Conference in carefully weighed and stately sentences, wise, though in the nature of generalities, and displaying abundant caution in his attitude towards any possible form of Imperial Federation or Customs Union between the mother country and its dependencies. In the privacy of the Conference on the other hand, he adopted a different tone, speaking eloquently but carelessly and even cynically until he satisfied all who heard him that his reputation for 'blazing indiscretions' was thoroughly well deserved. His tone breathed the aristocratic condescension of a Minister addressing a deputation of visitors from the antipodes whom it became his duty to instruct in current foreign politics for their own sakes. His speech was in all probability unstudied, for though well phrased and diplomatically balanced and blasé, with long experience carefully distilled, it was somewhat inconsecutive and inconsistent. His theme was the comparative worthlessness of the islands; the impatience of the French and the unwisdom of declining their offer to stop the sending of criminals if the group were ceded. When he finished, a representative of New South Wales spoke first in reply with bated breath and whispering humbleness, apologising for the strong feeling which had been expressed in the colonies and assuring the noble Lord that when their peoples heard the excellent reasons which he had offered for the surrender of English claims in the New Hebrides to France in exchange for an assurance from the Republic that the deportation of recidivists to New Caledonia would be discontinued, they would willingly concur in his proposal. Griffith followed with a cool and dignified analysis of the case and an implied acceptance of the situation.* Service and Berry both spoke with warmth restating the colonial case, reurging it, and expressing deep regret at the position in which we found ourselves. They appealed for a more sympathetic reply but received no promise. Another representative from Tasmania adopted the same dolorous tone but with less decision.

Deakin followed almost last, because, though official head of the Victorian representatives, he wished to pay all deference to his late Chiefs who preceded him at his request. He broke quite new ground not only with

unrestrained vigour and enthusiasm on the general question as his colleagues had before him, but because he did so in a more spirited manner, challenging Lord Salisbury's arguments one by one and mercilessly analysing the inconsistencies of his speech. They were asked to surrender the New Hebrides as of little commercial value and in the next breath were told that the French set the greatest store by them for commercial development. For us to attempt to negotiate a great power like France out of its place in the joint protectorate was presumption and yet a greater power, the British Empire, was asked to consent to be negotiated out of her place without even protest. Their interests in Australasia were spoken of as large, while ours which were really incomparably larger were brushed aside as of no account. All that was offered us in exchange for our sacrifice of an existing treaty was another treaty just as likely to be discounted in the future. We were assured that our alarms as to French intentions was groundless but we should never forget that it was while relying on a similar assurance from the Colonial Office, our trust had been betrayed by a surrender of part of New Guinea to Germany. Australian ideas of British Ministers were now derived from their bitter experience of Lord Derby and such a proposal as this would only confirm them in their impression that Tory and Liberal Ministries alike were prepared to sacrifice their dearest interests without consideration or striking a single blow. It was admitted now that the Republic had not kept faith with us, but urged that their chaotic political condition explained the lapse. Had they been brought to London to be taught the disadvantages they suffered from owing to the stability of British Governments? Was this the justification for always conceding and condoning broken agreements? Were we asked to regret the absence of political chaos in the mother country and to pay for that elsewhere? We were reminded that the French were a proud, high-spirited and powerful nation, perfectly prepared to defend their rights by war if necessary. Had then the colonists come thousands of miles to learn that Great Britain was no longer proud nor high-spirited and was not prepared to defend the rights of her people or to resist unjust demands? If so, it was a most unfortunate but very impressive manner of teaching the lesson. Deakin went on to declare in an impassioned manner that the people of Victoria would never consent to any cession of the islands on any terms and that the Australian-born who had made this question their own would forever resent the humiliation of a surrender which would immensely weaken their confidence in an Empire to which hitherto they had been proud to belong.

The effect of such a bold protest was electrical. Lord Salisbury several times stared at the speaker, as well he might, in considerable amazement at

his plain speaking and in some discomfort at the stern debating retorts to his inharmonious contentions; but he appeared rather pleased than otherwise at the strong condemnation of Lord Derby's surrender of New Guinea and was evidently superior to all personal irritation against the speaker. One or two others supported the line of resistance then taken, though it afterwards transpired that overtures had already been actually made in tentative form to the French Ministry on the advice, it was said, of the British Ambassador, Lord Lyons, for the withdrawal of British claims to the islands in return for the cessation of deportations. A few nights afterwards Lord Salisbury forced his way through a packed throng in Lord Knutsford's drawing room to whisper to Mr Deakin that instructions had been despatched to Lord Lyons, the British Ambassador at Paris, not to yield on any terms any of the British interest in the group, and afterwards went out of his way to speak of him privately and publicly in the warmest way as belonging to a type of men to whom the destinies of Australia might safely be entrusted.

This after all was but a negative success. The positive work of the Conference was the settlement of the conditions upon which a special squadron of the British [Navy] should be created in Australasian waters. Here again Victoria found herself in the minority who held out for better terms than those which the majority accepted. New South Wales followed Sir Samuel Griffith as did Tasmania, so that Victoria and South Australia, as the question was one of money and not of principle, were obliged to agree. The Naval Defence Bills were passed in all the colonies, though in Queensland only after considerable delay and in the teeth of strong opposition. This was conducted for party ends and would probably not have been affected if better terms had been secured. The importance of the agreement thus arrived at by a Federal Conference at which the Imperial Government was represented can scarcely be over-estimated. It furnished a final reply to those who were clamouring for a step towards separation, and endorsed as it was throughout the whole continent, was a distinct declaration which might almost have been styled unanimous in favour of union. Had the Federal Council embraced all the colonies, it would have been the body to which must have been delegated the task performed in this instance by members and nominees of the several ministries of the day. The difficulty and delay in Queensland was another illustration of the manner in which any one member of the group could thwart or defeat concerted action. Still the Conference not only fulfilled the end for which it had been summoned but taught all present the risks of trusting to such occasional gatherings the great and growing interests of great and growing colonies. The divisions in their almost chance constituents not only led to

our paying more than was necessary for our Naval defence but went very near to costing us our interest in the New Hebrides as well. This would have meant a blow to patriotic sentiment and to some extent to the Federal spirit which at that date was still inspired chiefly by the necessities for union in foreign affairs.

It was in 1888 or 1889 that the inner Cabinet of the Victorian Government, consisting of the Premier, the Chief Secretary and the Minister of Defence, prepared a stroke on the lines of the New Guinea annexation attempted by Sir Thomas McIlwraith. There were once more rumours of French preparations for the seizure of the New Hebrides which on enquiry seemed to be well founded. It was therefore decided to forestall them by despatching a detachment of the Victorian permanent military forces in a swift steamer with orders to hoist the British flag and keep it flying. The boat was to be chartered privately and the men taken off when supposed to be away at Westernport in practice. This time it was not intended to allow the flag to be hauled down except upon express instructions from the Home Government. With the assistance of the other colonies who were to some extent sounded as to their feelings, but none of whom were acquainted with the project, it was believed that these instructions might be prevented and that the islands in which it was proposed at once to undertake settlement and investment would not again be allowed to pass from under British control. On the eve of the execution of this enterprise it became clear that the French cherished no intentions of taking action and consequently the plot was at first postponed and then abandoned. Taking into account the electrical conditions which then obtained, this decisive action might have had the gravest consequences. It must at least have forced the hands of the British Government to some extent, if indeed it did not provoke a final settlement of the vexed question. At this time Australians had grown tired of appealing and protesting and were determined to act for themselves on behalf of the Empire should the necessity arise. Fortunately perhaps it did not then arise and the project then on foot remained not only unexecuted but even unsuspected till this day.

* This sentence originally began with the deleted phrase: 'To the best of my recollection . . .', which may be significant in the interpretation of this episode.

4 Parkes in Melbourne, 1890

AUSTRALASIAN NAVAL DEFENCE having been provided for, the Imperial Government despatched Major General Edwards to inspect and report upon the military organization of the colonies. His paper indicated with clearness the dangers inseparable from divided forces. The Federal Council was proposing to enlarge its representation, and strengthened by the accession of South Australia was evidently preparing for a further extension of its powers. Under these circumstances Sir Henry Parkes thought it advisable to make his entry upon the Federal stage. This he accomplished in characteristic fashion without the foreknowledge of a single member of his Cabinet, in a public speech at Tenterfield. Once having launched his proposal for a complete Union he sought the summoning of a Convention of the colonies for the purpose of drafting a Federal Constitution forthwith. As the other Premiers regarded his sudden emergence with some suspicion, it was decided to hold a preliminary Conference to which each Government should send two representatives. It met in Melbourne and continued from February 6th to February 14th, 1890. Its business was formal and was discharged in a formal way. Though it was spiced with some personal antagonism there was no real debate. The speeches were a series of essays in which those interested may note the vagueness of conception that then enshrouded the movement. This was due to some extent because of a politic disinclination of the speakers to commit themselves in advance but it was also due to the fluctuating ideals which then obtained. Perhaps the chief importance of the Conference lay in its educational influence upon the public and its greater interest in the men whom it then introduced into the Federal ranks.

First and foremost of course in every eye was the commanding figure of Sir Henry Parkes, than whom no actor ever more carefully posed for effect. His huge figure, slow step, deliberate glance and carefully brushed-out aureole of white hair combined to present the spectator with a picturesque whole which was not detracted from on closer acquaintance. His voice, without being musical and in spite of a slight woolliness of tone and rather affected depth, was pleasant and capable of reaching and controlling a large audience. His studied attitudes expressed either distinguished humility or imperious command. His manner was invariably dignified, his speech slow, and his pronunciation precise, offending only by the occasional omission or misplacing of aspirates. He was fluent but not voluble, his pauses skilfully varied, and in times of excitement he employed a whole gamut of tones ranging from a shrill falsetto to deep

resounding chest notes. He had always in his mind's eye his own portrait as that of a great man, and constantly adjusted himself to it. A far-away expression of the eyes, intended to convey his remoteness from the earthly sphere, and often associated with melancholy treble cadences of voice in which he implied a vast and inexpressible weariness, constituted his favourite and at last his almost invariable exterior. Movements, gestures, inflexions, attitudes harmonised, not simply because they were intentionally adopted but because there was in him the substance of the man he dressed himself to appear. The real strength and depth of his capacity were such that it was always a problem with Parkes as with Disraeli where the actor posture-maker and would-be sphinx ended or where the actual man underneath began. He had both by nature and by art the manner of a sage and a statesman.

His abilities were solid though general, as [were] his reading and his knowledge. Fond of books, a steady reader and a constant writer, his education had been gained in the world and among men. A careful student of all with whom he came in contact, he was amiable, persuasive and friendly by disposition. A life of struggle had found him self-reliant and left him hardened into resolute masterfulness. Apart from his exterior, he was a born leader of men, dwelling by preference of natural choice upon the larger and bolder aspects of things. He had therefore the aptitude of statecraft of a high order, adding to it the tastes of the man of letters, the lover of poetry and the arts, of rare editions and bric-à-brac, of autographs and memorials of the past. His nature, forged on the anvil of necessity, was egotistic though not stern and his career was that of the aspirant who looks to ends and is not too punctilious as to means. He was jealous of equals, bitter with rivals and remorseless with enemies—vain beyond all measure, without strong attachment to colleagues and with strong animal passions *—weak in discussion of detail, unfitted for the minor tasks of administration, apt to be stilted in set speeches and involved in debate, he yet was well qualified for the Premiership by great and genuine oratorical ability. A doughty parliamentary warrior neither giving nor asking quarter, he struck straight home at his adversaries with trenchant power. He was a careful framer of phrases and of insulting epithets which he sought to elaborate so that they would stick and sting. He confessed that he passed many of the weary hours in which he sat unmoved upon the front bench of the Assembly in mentally summing up his associates and opponents, fitting to each some appropriate descriptive epigram which he treasured in his memory for timely use. One lean long swarthy and hungry-looking enemy he stigmatised as a ‘withered tarantula’. An academic radical from Victoria,* possessed by what he regarded as impractical enthusiasms, was

more mildly entitled 'professor of Democracy'. Dibbs consisted of 'a weedy nature and a sprawling mind'. He had a copious flood of sometimes coarse vituperation which he was prepared to pour upon any who crossed his path at critical times, and lighter touches of genuine and happy humour emitted under pleasanter circumstances. At times his irony was of the grimmest and most merciless. Very many admired and not a few weaker men loved him; he brooked no rivals near his throne but all found his personality attractive and submitted more or less to his domination. It was not a rich nor a versatile personality, but it was massive, durable and imposing, resting upon elementary qualities of human nature elevated by a strong mind. He was cast in the mould of a great man and though he suffered from numerous pettinesses, spites, and failings he was in himself a full-blooded, large-brained, self-educated Titan whose natural field was found in Parliament and whose resources of character and intellect enabled him in his later years to overshadow all his contemporaries, to exercise an immense influence in his own colony and achieve a great reputation outside it.

It was necessary to see Parkes in his own home, on the platform and in Parliament to appreciate his versatility. In the first he was a literary connoisseur, dilettante and author, retired from a world in which [he] held the foremost place at will; on the platform he was the candidate whose transparent candour could not conceal his great services but whose humility was ceremonial until he was roused to passion, when he became a turbulent tribune of the Democracy. His sly humour marvellously helped him in encounters with the mob-wits of his meetings. When challenged at Manly by an elector who professed the utmost faith in his sincerity, but none the less marvelled that he had not during all his three years in office as Premier since he last addressed them fulfilled his express promise to have the Quarantine removed, he replied in his low soft squeaky tones that he had no recollection of having ever made any such promise, but if he had, his heckler should be the happiest man in the room since, having announced entire confidence in his good faith, he must feel himself just three years nearer its fulfilment. He could play the fox on occasion to perfection and at other times a loftier role which gratified his sense of superiority as well as his humour. One of the most characteristic incidents related of him occurred when, without his knowledge, the son of an old friend of his who belonged to a Staffordshire regiment was selected for a military vacancy in the colony by the Agent-General in London. Sir Henry, known or believed to be in debt to all his acquaintances, was at once assailed by his opponents with torrents of abuse for what was termed a corrupt exercise of Crown patronage. The sums he owed the father were

named and it was protested about the House that he had obtained a complete quittance as consideration for his dishonourable act. To this storm Sir Henry turned a deaf ear and a head unbent, scorning all reply or rather reserving it until it could be made most effectively. The tumult raged among the lesser men but he gave no sign of being even aware of it. The young officer arrived and in full uniform accompanied his General for the purpose of being introduced to the generous Premier who had suffered so much on his account. What he may have proposed to say by way of sympathy with the calumniated statesman will never be known. When ushered in and duly announced, Sir Henry with weary accent and eyes that told of abstracted thought, after a pause expressed his pleasure at meeting him and apparently regarding him as an English visitor, added 'And pray how long do you propose staying in Sydney, Captain—?' The young man sat paralysed, his gratitude and sympathy frozen on his lips, while the General hurriedly explained once more that the officer had accepted a commission for seven years in the New South Wales forces and desired to thank Sir Henry for his appointment immediately on reporting himself for duty. Sir Henry again appeared absent-minded, for he requested that his caller's name should be repeated; then after another painful pause with a slight gleam of interest continued: 'May I enquire if you [are] any relation to my old friend Frederick—?' naming the father of his supposed protégé with whom the corrupt bargain was said to have been made. The bewildered and stammering Captain admitted his paternity whereupon with stately courtesy Sir Henry welcomed him to the colony and permitted the perplexed son to withdraw to meditate upon so extraordinary an interview. The story leaked out as no doubt was expected and long formed matter for jest among those familiar with the parties.

When he arrived in Melbourne a private interview was held at the Victorian Premier's Office between Sir Henry Parkes, Mr McMillan his colleague, Mr Gillies and Mr Deakin. At this time what was termed a National Party was still active in Queensland where it opposed the Naval Defence Bill and had an influential organ in the Sydney **Daily Telegraph**, the mouthpiece of two of the ablest and most spirited pressmen of the Continent, Mr Ward, afterwards Editor of the Brisbane **Courier**, and Mr Gullett, afterwards Assistant Editor of the **Sydney Morning Herald**. By some very strong utterances in connection with a Chinese Exclusion Bill. Sir Henry had secured the enthusiastic support of this party whose aims were an ultimate separation of Australia from Great Britain. His sudden adherence to the Federal cause which he had never opposed but which he had allowed to slumber for some ten years, was suspected of being fostered by the so-called Nationalists as a necessary means to their end and

consequently the motive which actuated the Victorians was to discover his attitude in this connection and to take care that any resolution which he, as the Convener of the Conference might intend to move, should not be ambiguous in any of its expressions as to Australian attachment to the Empire. Deakin retained the original resolution drafted by Sir Henry at his hotel and submitted by him to the Victorians. It reads as follows: 'That while recognising the services of the authors of the Federal Council in 1883, this Conference declares its opinion that the seven years which have since elapsed have developed the national life of the Australasian colonies, in population, in wealth, in the discovery of resources, and in self-governing capacity, to an extent which justifies the higher act, at all times contemplated, of the union of these colonies under one legislative and Executive Government.' Mr Gillies had prepared four resolutions, only the third of which, borrowed from the Canadian Conference, was discussed that morning. It ran thus: 'The best interests and present and future prospects of Australasia will be promoted by a Federal Union under the Crown of Great Britain, provided such Union can be effected on principles just to the several colonies.' It was soon agreed to combine these two and Deakin at once wrote out a rough draft which Sir Henry corrected as follows: 'In the opinion of this Conference the best interests and the present and future prosperity of Australasia will be promoted by an early Union under the Crown and while fully recognising the valuable services of the members of the Convention of 1883 in founding the Federal Council, declares its opinion that the seven years which have since elapsed have developed the national life of the Australasian colonies, in population, in wealth and in the discovery of resources and in self-governing capacity to an extent which justifies the higher act, at all times contemplated, of the union of these colonies under one legislative and executive government on principles just to the several colonies.' With the alteration of 'Australasia' where it first occurs to 'the Australasian colonies' and of 'the Australasian colonies' lower down to 'Australasia' the resolution was proposed and passed in this form. But even then the suspicion of Sir Henry Parkes's loyalty broke out in the speech of Mr Playford, the leader of the Opposition in South Australia and one of its representatives at the Conference.

Mr Gillies, President of the Conference and Premier of Victoria, afforded an excellent physical contrast to Sir Henry Parkes, being short, stout, sturdy, florid, with clean-shaven face and close thin hair; an excellent constitutional authority and man of ripe experience in parliamentary affairs, a master both of the motives and dialect characteristic of the Victorian Chamber, clear-headed, and cold in temperament, he was without even a tinge of the poetry which occasionally infused its glow into

Parkes's orations as when at the banquet in honour of the opening of the Conference he referred to 'the crimson thread of kinship' uniting the colonies to the mother country. Not that in debate Gillies lacked force and fire or any quality of the successful party combatant, for, though with a tendency to Fabian tactics in action [and] to fall to common-places and repetitions in speech, he was a good general either in victory or defeat, without intimate friends but loyal to his associates and enjoying the confidence even of his opponents in his judgment and fairness. At the opposite pole to him in every respect was Dr Cockburn, the young Premier of South Australia, oppressed by the sense of his responsibilities and the presence as his colleague of the late Premier and his present rival Mr Playford. An extremely handsome man with regular features, dark hair and complexion and a well-proportioned figure, his enthusiasm glowed in his eye and overflowed in his fluent but not easy speech. A visionary by nature and a dreamer by habits, a professional man of miscellaneous reading and limited experience, full of recent heterodox ideas in politics, religion and medicine, weak in will and unstable in opinion, he was condemned to be cautious and to strive to appear practical under considerable disadvantages. A most charming companion and man of unblemished personal character, he was faced by a huge giant, an ex-market gardener known as 'honest Tom Playford' whose force of character and general disposition had pushed him to the front where, owing to the temporary disability of his bosom friend Kingston, he became Premier. Carefully equipped by Kingston with the necessary information as to constitution-making his own strong good sense and rugged grasp of affairs enabled him to acquit himself with credit, though his want of tact brought him at once into collision with the never too tolerant Sir Henry Parkes. He was quick-witted enough to seize the first occasion of speaking even without some of his notes in order to forestall Cockburn and put him in a secondary position. In this he succeeded to some extent though it soon became plain that neither of them was specially anxious to see the accomplishment of Sir Henry Parkes's ideal.

Mr Inglis Clark, Attorney-General of Tasmania, was also the son of his own works though in his case he had won a high standing in his profession by sheer talent and industry. Small, spare, nervous, active, jealous and suspicious in disposition, and somewhat awkward in manner and ungraceful in speech, he was nevertheless a sound lawyer, keen, logical and acute. A persevering student, his sympathies were republican, centering upon Algernon Sydney among Englishmen, upon Mazzini in Italy and especially upon the United States, a country to which in spirit he belonged, whose Constitution he revered and whose great men he

idolised. He brought in consequence a highly trained mind and a large fund of legal and constitutional knowledge to the work of this and the succeeding Convention. His colleague, Mr Stafford Bird had been a dissenting minister before he became a politician and was as sound and sober in thought as he was solemnly impressive in appearance and manner. New Zealand sent two cultured and wealthy gentlemen, Captain Russell and Sir John Hall, whose courtesy if it did not conceal at all events sweetened their unruffled good sense and friendly criticism as of onlookers rather than actual participants or even prospective partners.

* 'passions' replaces 'physique'.

* Deleted: 'of some education'. This was presumably Deakin.

5 Men of 1891

IF THE CONFERENCE served merely as an introduction to the consideration of Federal issues, the Convention of 1891 marked a serious attempt to solve them under the sanction of seven Parliaments. It was in numbers, in quality and in task, by far the most important representative gathering which had ever met in Australia.

It was presided over by the veteran Sir Henry Parkes who placed himself under great restraint and indeed spoke but seldom in the Assembly which he had been the means of summoning, and except upon one or two important points exercised little influence beyond that attaching to an ordinary member. The Vice-President, who by being afterwards chosen Chairman of the Committee on Constitutional Powers and Functions became practically the leader of the Convention, Sir Samuel Griffith, was seen at his best when in charge of the Bill of which he was the dominating and responsible draftsman. The delight in difficulties and indifferent determination between them which rendered his opening speech on the resolutions the starting point for all the controversies of the debate, but in other respects an unsatisfactory because chilly and negative contribution, disappeared so soon as he had a definite measure to defend. His patience, lucidity and thorough grasp of the subject made him a model leader among men who needed no quickening enthusiasm and would have brooked no assumption of Ministerial supremacy. Mr Clark of Tasmania was Chairman of the Judiciary Committee which did its work well, the right of appeal to the Privy Council which it proposed to abolish being the only subject of any feeling. The Finance Committee brought forward proposals which were subjected to severe condemnation almost on all hands but whose main principles, more carefully elaborated, were afterwards adopted in 1898. Its Chairman was the Hon. James Munro, Premier of Victoria, a fiery Scot, a speculative plunger, at that time thought to be a sound financier, a practised political chief, cunning, untrustworthy and unscrupulous, and an effective but sometimes injudicious debater. Sir Joseph Abbott as Chairman of Committees discharged the duties of that position without difficulty.

The most prominent member of the New South Wales delegation besides Parkes, Dibbs and McMillan was the Hon. Edmund Barton, Q.C., M.L.C., who distinguished himself by his first speech and afterwards assisted in drafting the Bill, but who did not take in this Convention anything approaching the commanding position which he obtained in 1897–8. This was largely due to the indolence which had contributed greatly during his

political career to keep him out of the leadership of a party. The face in this respect was a true index to the man, the forehead fine, not remarkable in itself but surmounting an intellectual, well-balanced head crested with iron-grey hair, well-shaped features indicative of refinement and eyes of remarkable beauty and expression, glowing like jewels in the ardour of his inspiration. But the lower part of the face fell below this high standard; the mouth was fish-like though its pout often had a pretty effect, the jowl was large, pointing not only to strength of will but love of ease and indulgence. In later years his fine figure became too corpulent to be graceful so that his Apollo-like brow and brilliant capacities were to some extent chained to earth by his lazy love of good living. At no time and in no sense intemperate, his genial, affectionate nature made him so companionable that he spent many hours in his club chair which could have been more profitably spent in his chambers or in his study. A sound lawyer with a judicial dignity of speech, a fine public spirit and high sense of personal honour, he was it might be said too superior to his surroundings to be able to achieve success. Still his manifest powers had won high recognition; he had been Speaker of the New South Wales Assembly while younger than most of those over whom he presided, and had achieved a large practice at the Bar which would have been larger had he only attended to it. His temperament was Conservative yet sanguine, his intellect liberal and enriched by generous instincts, his temper, though even, somewhat too readily disturbed. In debate he was always cogent and impressive but involved in style and sometimes in arrangement, owing to want of preparation. He had comparatively little of the sympathy which keeps a speaker in touch with his audience. A good classic, with an original vocabulary, a noble delivery and an advocate's eye for an opponent's weak points, he was at times an excellent debater and capable of set speeches of a high order of merit. But he could not be relied upon to rise regularly to his best level. Of all this in 1891 only the outline was to be seen.

In addition to Sir Harry Atkinson the dauntless warrior and high-minded statesman who, though a Liberal, had been driven into the opposite camp in which his colleague Captain Russell naturally found a place, New Zealand sent one of the most romantic personages in Australian history, the veteran Sir George Grey, military man, explorer, Governor, politician, Premier and friend of native races. A small stooping venerable figure with a silver head, high in forehead, long in nose and chin, softened by age to a quiet dignity of expression. A silvery voice, a cultured English accent, a style clear, concise, persuasive and eloquent which sheathed even bitterness and innuendo in polished grace; he seemed at his best a younger brother of Higinbotham. His foes painted him in the heyday of his power,

strong, inexorable, obstinate, tyrannical and vindictive, but upon the platform he was always deferential and in debate courteousness itself. His was the Gladstonian experience of a continuously liberalising growth, until in his age he had become so charmed with the visions of current radicalism that he had ceased to speak the language of the Assembly, or at all events employed it very frequently to dwell upon the vague and emotional aspects of public questions rather than upon those which might be argumentatively presented. When in happy humour, a not very frequent condition at this time, he resembled Lord Granville, though the latter was reckoned by many one of the most winning debaters in the Lords and the best after-dinner speaker in England. With the eye of a statesman Sir George Grey fastened at once upon the question most likely to live and also to confer a reputation upon its advocate, that of 'one man one vote' or, as with scholarly punctiliousness and a touch of aristocratic fastidiousness, he invariably denominated it 'the Single vote'. But his aim was not merely to make the masses the arbiters of political contests. He wished to make them absolute masters of the daily working of the political machine and to reduce the importance of those who became their constitutional representatives. The single vote was to be employed to elect the Government, and to operate by means of the referendum and probably the initiative upon all questions of the day. One was inclined to suspect that these views were pressed further by Sir George because he evidently felt from the first that they would be repugnant to the majority of his colleagues and especially to Sir Henry Parkes, to whom in strength of will and force of egotism he was no whit inferior. Had fortune placed them in the same political sphere theirs would indeed have been a battle of the giants and though the same wilfulness and incapacity to keep a party or Ministry together would have hamstrung Sir George Grey, he would have proved an adversary superior in craft and in power of thrust to any of those with whom Parkes had been confronted. Better disguised in Sir George Grey, vanity and love of applause were no less potent with him than with the President of the Convention, obviously uneasy from the the first at contact with a man as venerable as himself, with a richer and more varied history, better social standing and more illustrious friends and correspondents. Each had been so long the 'grand old man' of his own colony, that it was almost with a feeling on each side of affront at an attempted usurpation by an interloper that they met and from the first moment plainly bristling with hostility to each other.

One of Sir Henry Parkes's besetting foibles was a love of associating himself with the notables of the day, of whom he devoutly preserved all mementoes, of whom he frequently spoke and with whom he corresponded

whenever possible. At the Conference of 1890 he managed to introduce with comments a letter from Lecky and to mention by the way that he had been introduced to him by Lord Tennyson. When Sir George first rose Sir Henry watched him from under his lids with great interest and followed every word with the closest attention, though this must have proved a very painful experience. If Sir George Grey had set himself but the one purpose of inflicting the utmost exacerbation upon all the tenderest vanities of his great rival, he could not have better constructed that elaborate address in which he contrived to delicately remind his hearers of his own chief achievements and of some of his distinguished friendships commencing with the Marquis of Salisbury and another unnamed peer, and leading up to Her Majesty and the Prince Consort who personally explained to him their entire sympathy with him at the time when, as he boasted, 'I was arranging for the federation of all South Africa—triumphantly arranging it' and he was dismissed from his offices of Governor and High Commissioner of the Cape. What Sir Henry's feelings were could only be guessed, for he by no means wore his heart upon his sleeve, but even he could not refrain from whispering to me, 'Don't you think this speech is rather too much about Sir George Grey and his illustrious friends?' No doubt it was, but it was also the height of irony that it should be Sir Henry Parkes who should complain of it.

The Queensland representatives who were new to the movement call for no special remark. Sir Thomas McIlwraith, second in the Ministry to his old antagonist, Sir Samuel Griffith, suffering from indifferent health and falling financial fortunes, the final crash of which came in 1897, played but a small part in the Convention. The gallant fiery Macrossan died in its early days speaking twice only, both times with practical effect and in his second speech laying stress upon the influence of party government overlooked or under-estimated by all who had preceded him.

The South Australians included among their new men Mr Kingston, then Attorney-General and afterwards Premier of the colony and President of the Convention of 1898, a man of great physical size and strength, of fine features and large head with rather small eyes and compressed lips. His hesitating pauses in speech came between bursts of rapid dogmatic and pugnacious utterance. Strong passions had crippled his self-development and political career but his great ability, indomitable will, and fearless courage steadily surmounted all these barriers. He was at this time the soul of the Ministry but had not yet attained to the Federal spirit which afterwards dominated his views and like the majority of his colleagues took but a limited part in the debates as the movement was then in advance of their ambition.

Kingston's courage verged upon unscrupulousness and his abuse was always vituperative. When in opposition to Cockburn during the short Premiership of the latter, both wooed with persistence the favour of the Liberal paper of Adelaide, the **Advertiser**. Cockburn was constant in his attendance by day and Kingston by night. On one occasion when a crisis was threatened they chased each other in and out of the office in search [of] the proprietor and editor until the small hours of the morning. Though there was nothing to distinguish them on this score, Kingston boldly attacked his rival on this very score in Parliament, declaring that the stairs of the **Advertiser** office were being worn out by Cockburn's constant pilgrimages. He knew that Cockburn knew of his own visits but he also knew his man. Cockburn made no reply and returned no retort to his partner in guilt, if guilt it was to be considered. This little incident stamps the men and indicates why some years after, Cockburn became a recruit and followed Kingston as a colleague for many years.

Sir Richard Baker was at this time in advance of all his colleagues in federal knowledge and in the federal spirit. A prosperous lawyer, afterwards President of the Legislative Council and one of the leaders of the Conservative party, he had published a handbook for the benefit of his fellow representatives in which the features of the various Federal Constitutions of the world were briefly outlined. A study of these enabled him to perceive the strength which the British Executive placed in the hands of the people and determined him more and more in the conviction that either the United States or Swiss Executive was much more likely to be able to resist reforms such [as] Australian radicals desired. Mr Hackett of Western Australia was the first to grasp this truth in its full force and to state with epigrammatic brevity that either responsible government must kill Federation or Federation would kill responsible government, meaning by responsible government the British form and by Federation the doctrine that the States were to enjoy in the Senate coequal power with the House of Representatives. Sir Richard Baker was his first convert and afterwards the persistent advocate of this view, though his ardour in the national cause enabled him to endure defeat in this regard without prejudice to his efforts in its behalf. Mr Gordon, a graceful speaker with a musical voice, allied to Mr Cockburn in his dread of centralization and in his desire to limit the power of the Federal Government and maintain the sovereignty of the States, won recognition by the spirit of his reply to some unjustifiable sneers from Sir Henry Parkes.

The most picturesque figure and perhaps the most typical representative of Tasmania was the Hon. Adye Douglas, a short, well-built, active white-haired, firm-featured veteran upwards of seventy years of age, who had

supported Lord Palmerston in his later elections, had been as Agent-General of Tasmania one of the representatives at the Imperial Conference in 1887, and who retained the boyish courage and energy of a lad whose favourite diversion at school had been the practice of fisticuffs with his fellows. By far the ablest and most influential of his fellows was Mr A. Inglis Clark, whose part in the debates was not great, but who was of much assistance to Sir Samuel Griffith in the drafting.

Among the Victorians Sir Henry Wrixon attracted most attention by his thoughtful and scholarly exposition of constitutional principles. The son of a judge and himself a barrister who had ceased practice when he had no longer any need of earning his bread, he was a well-read and well-educated man and had been in the early years of his politics still more developed by being the disciple and colleague of George Higinbotham, the man who then and long afterwards possessed the most commanding and fruitful influence of any public man in Victoria. Without any of the iron resolution of his chief which was sometimes indistinguishable from obstinacy, and with as little of his fine-drawn distinctions, often far more legally logical than practical, Wrixon possessed in a large measure his candour, sincerity, courtesy and integrity. The splendid enthusiasm of Higinbotham, elevating him above his contemporaries and making him the master of the masses, was rarely reflected in Wrixon whose intellectual convictions and warmth of sympathy could not be said to radiate from him as they did from his illustrious leader. The tendency to over-refinement of views and what men termed Quixotism in action was common to both, though Wrixon's easier and less assertive nature made him a much less impracticable colleague and a no less loyal friend.

Sir John Forrest, now Premier of the newly constituted Parliament of Western Australia, was under the influence of his responsibility steadily growing in political knowledge and power though still without that confidence in himself, born of experience, which was very manifest in 1897. His guide, philosopher and friend, the part proprietor and editor of the chief paper of the colony, Mr J. Winthrop Hackett, was an Anglo-Irishman of good family, college-trained at home and with some experience as a University lecturer and as a barrister in Melbourne. Here he had stood for the Assembly in the radical interest and had nearly gained a very difficult seat by his zeal and the ability with which he fought. A man of refined tastes and manners and a thoughtful student, his practical business training made him also an excellent judge of men. His speeches were more on the English model than those of any of his fellows, admirable both in diction and delivery and in finish of style. Though rarely on his feet he was certainly one of the most well-informed, critical and

capable members in the Convention. Sir James Lee Steere, who represented Western Australia, was a man of similar type and standing with the slowness of the Englishman uniting a very practical sense of all the issues involved and a kindliness of disposition which made him a general favourite.

Mr McMillan, Treasurer for New South Wales, belonged to another class, that of the thoughtful, educated business men, narrow and cold after the manner of the Manchester school of which Cobden was the type and ideal. Prudent but not wanting in courage, independent though deferential to his exacting and sometimes inconsiderate chief, patient, painstaking, business-like in manner and incisive in debate; he supplied many of the elements missing in his illustrious leader without undue demonstration. Griffith we have previously seen. His colleague and formerly bitter antagonist, Macrossan, was a small rather shrivelled Irishman with a large forehead and a twinkling eye. A self-educated digger who injured his sight poring over his beloved volumes by the camp fire and a clear but staccato speaker evidently in feeble health, in poor circumstances and without anything of distinction in his appearance or style of address, his was one of the clearest and strongest heads in the Conference, one of the most ardent and far-seeing of Federalists whose speech, packed with matter for thought though one of the last delivered, stood out in most respects above them all, its closing words being delivered with a sincerity of passion that conquered his hearers as it evidently conquered him. His untimely death during the sittings of the Convention of 1891 was a great loss not only to his colony but to the Australian cause.

6 More Men Of 1891

DECOROUS AS WERE THE PROCEEDINGS of the 1891 Convention as a whole, there was by no means perfect harmony within its several delegations. There was in the first place an open antagonism between Parkes and Dibbs which gave smouldering evidences of activity even in the public debates. While ostentatiously admitting the President's right to the Chair, Dibbs could not throw off his familiar role of leader of the Opposition sufficiently to allow him to regard the propositions submitted by his rival dispassionately. They emanated from Parkes and as such it was his duty to defeat or at least to mutilate them as much as possible. As Sir Henry evidently leant to the liberal view of the right of the popular Chamber to superior power, he became an ardent advocate of a strong Senate; as Sir Henry was a professed Free Trader he declared Protection a condition precedent to all union, 'the bedrock of the whole structure'. At the Conference of 1883 he as a Free Trader had introduced the fiscal question in order to defeat the federal aims of Protectionist Victoria, but having failed to secure support to a motion in the New South Wales Assembly declaring that the Parkes Government had not made its policy sufficiently in favour of free exchange, he had after a very brief delay announced his own conversion to Protection and produced another motion condemning them for their Free Trade platform. He now re-introduced the fiscal question on the inter-colonial stage once more, this time as a Protectionist in order to defeat the federalising tendencies of the Premier of New South Wales. Finally after much boasting of a private 'bombshell' of his own which he proposed to 'let off' at a later period, he made his final effort to sow dissension in his own colony and its Parliament by the announcement that he intended to propose Sydney as the capital of the future Federation. From this time forward Dibbs remained absolutely hostile to the rest of the Convention and to every other delegate of his own colony. He was in fact an opponent of Federation and recognised as such, so that he was driven for solace to seek the society of such members of his own party in the local Parliament as chanced to attend the Convention. Though rarely alluded to by his associates, he was regarded on every hand as the Ishmaelite of the Convention.

Sir Henry Parkes had to some extent brought this upon his own head by his endeavour to exclude Dibbs, though leader of the Opposition, from the New South Wales delegation—an unworthy attempt on his part, prompted by the personal vindictiveness which he occasionally displayed, which met with well-deserved failure. When the retaliation came, his curses upon the

‘traitor’ as he termed him were not loud but deep and continuous in private. He referred publicly to his propositions and plots as swept away by himself as he would ‘a cobweb or any other offensive substance that obscured the light’ and for the rest contented himself with a mixture of the leonine indifference and contempt to which his appearance and posings admirably lent themselves. His pachydermatous power of resistance to attack was one of his capacities utilised especially when in office as he utilised every capacity unless carried away by spleen or temper. This he too frequently permitted himself, when in irresponsible opposition or when he deemed his foe weak enough to be crushed. But his invulnerability was greatly helped by the sense of humour that redeemed so many of his defects and enriched his abilities.*

Dibbs was isolated not only in the Convention but among his New South Wales colleagues, even his old Cabinet associates Jennings and Barton condemning his tactics and supporting Parkes. Among the Victorians for purely local and personal reasons Munro was equally solitary. Colonel Smith, his ostensible ally, remained aloof because aggrieved at his exclusion from the Victorian Cabinet. Munro's attempt to covertly introduce his Attorney-General into the Convention cost him the confidence of all the rest of the delegates. Chosen while the previous government was in office, the Premier Mr Gillies, the Attorney-General Sir Henry Wrixon and the Chief Secretary, Mr Deakin, had been selected to represent the Ministerial side of the Assembly. A Caucus of the Opposition had chosen Mr Munro, its leader, and Colonel Smith, while the Council selected Mr Cuthbert, then Minister of Justice and Mr Fitzgerald who had more sympathy with the late than the present government. At Mr Munro's suggestion it was agreed that all the Victorian delegates should meet each morning at his hotel so as to exchange opinions before commencing the work of the day. Accordingly on the first morning all assembled except Sir Henry Wrixon, then returning from England and due to arrive in a few days. There had been a rumour that an authority which Mr Munro had obtained from the Victorian Parliament, authorising the Governor-in-Council to fill any vacancy or provide for any absence in the representation of the colony, was to be used to introduce the new Attorney-General as a member until Sir Henry Wrixon's arrival and probably retain him afterwards. He was not present at the gathering and the subject was not alluded to by Mr Munro, though immediately upon the assembling of the Convention he read the Commission and the Attorney-General entering took his place. Such an incident occurring at the very outset terminated once and for all the relations between Mr Munro and his colleagues. There were no meetings held from that time forward and no consultations even in

the Chamber. He sat alone and acted alone. Though friendly, all the Victorians thereafter acted independently.

The South Australian delegation alone was divided into two parties; the Ministerial headed by Playford and sympathised with by Bray was confused to some extent because the Attorney-General, Kingston, was largely influenced by Cockburn and Gordon who regarded the whole movement as premature, and considered that the looser the type of Union adopted the better. They openly expressed their preference for a Confederacy as distinguished from a Federal Government and desired to see the new central authority as far as possible dependent upon the States. When the struggle between the partisans of the House of Representatives seeking the rule of the majority, and the upholders of the Senate demanding the predominance of the States and the Senate or States Chamber came to a division, there were only Playford, Kingston and Bray found upon the side of the popular Chamber, although in local politics Cockburn and Gordon were reckoned even more radical and democratic. The more Conservative but more Federal South Australians, Sir John Downer and Sir Richard Baker, while warm defenders of Senatorial supremacy, were staunch Federalists and without sympathy with the Confederate ideal. On the critical issue as to the two Houses, Downer carried three colleagues with him to Playford's two. The Queensland delegation as a whole worked well together and though divided on this main issue preserved a general unity. The Western Australians usually voted solidly and with the exception of Mr Hackett followed Forrest and Sir James Lee Steere almost unquestioningly.

It was in Tasmania that the greatest rent came, for though local political differences existed they were slight as compared to the broad division created by the contest of the Convention between the advocates of popular and of Senate rule. Adye Douglas was the champion of the 'stalwarts', not so much because he was irreconcilable as to the principles at stake, but because he was by disposition and training essentially a fighting man. With him every question was a party question and most of them personal questions. He did not argue upon any of the constitutional, abstract or logical aspects of the issues. He was concrete, local and personal throughout. Each colony was an entity in his eyes and as a Tasmanian he waged war in an explosive subterranean way on behalf of his colony against all comers. It was to the interest of Tasmania that the Senate should be strong, and consequently those of her representatives who voted for the compromise which was eventually carried, were renegades, perverts, recusants and traitors. His very vehemence choked his public utterances and it was only in conversation that he was enabled to free his mind in

regard to them. Yet in the very height of his passion and tempest of his wrath, the twinkle returned to his eyes at any touch of humour, showing the man himself underneath the advocate, undisturbed by the hurricane of his own denunciations.

Very different was the demeanour of [Sir George Grey] the 'old man eloquent' from New Zealand to whom the Federal theatre was welcome as the last stage upon which he was likely to make a figure. To the principles of Federalism he too paid scanty regard. The leadership of the Convention was not for him, neither in the Chair nor the practical task of drafting the Constitution. It was as the Champion of the single vote that he found his means of distinction and he appeared to view every proposition solely from that standpoint. When however he gave his vote at the test division against the House of Representatives and in favour of the Senate, it is to be feared that he was actuated by personal antipathy to Parkes as much as by any other motive. As New Zealand was only represented by courtesy, the proper course was for her delegates to have refrained from taking part in a division which might have wrecked the whole project and dissolved the Convention without any result. Sir Henry Atkinson, high-minded, scrupulous and unimpassioned, alone followed this course. Captain Russell, the coming leader of the Conservative party in New Zealand, voted as such beside Sir George Grey, the discarded leader of the Liberal party. But even this temporary union was fortuitous; though only three persons represented their colony they were as far apart in character and career as men well could be. Sir Henry Atkinson, a radical by birth and a socialist in ideal, had become leader of the Conservatives of New Zealand and of the moderate Liberals who recoiled from the combination of Caesarism and radicalism in the unpractical policy of Sir George Grey. Sir George, an aristocrat by training and a radical by revolt against his class, as well as from general humanitarian sympathy, had keenly felt his failure as a parliamentary chief and was prepared to give scant shrift to the institutions he had failed to control. Captain Russell on the other hand belonged to the numerous class of the well-to-do who, beginning on the narrow basis of class prejudices, are broadened in their views partly by experience but most by the necessity of making concessions, which are given grudgingly and as ineffectively as possible, in order to gain seats or maintain their party.* There was no sort of unity therefore between these three and they acted with perfect independence of each other throughout. Sir Henry's failing strength and disinclination as an outsider to interfere with continental developments rendered him almost a silent member, yet his love of work and knowledge of detail led him to follow the debates with the closest attention. He opened his lips only some half-dozen times

and on each occasion only to utter a few terse sentences. His leading interests were the social legislation of the future, the Imperial destiny of Great Britain and the honest and economical administration of local affairs. Captain Russell on the other hand dealt in a dilettante way only with a few of the largest issues involved, while Sir George Grey watched eagerly for every opportunity of expressing the vague enthusiasms and violent antagonisms which composed his political creed.

The one occasion on which the composure of the Convention became somewhat ruffled in public debate was when Sir Henry Parkes, with an arrogance of manner which added weight to his words, stigmatised the views of Cockburn and Gordon as 'monstrous'. The spirited reply made by Gordon, brief and polite but apt and courageous, was not only his best contribution to the debates but probably the best retort of the Convention and was admirably delivered. After this Sir Henry treated him as was his custom partly from policy and partly from appreciation, with careful courtesy. Sir George Grey seized the occasion to make a telling rejoinder to Sir Henry's depreciation of Congress because of the Sumner incident by a reminder as to the recent Bradlaugh tussle in Palace Yard. He spoiled his point however by wandering off into reflections upon Australian goodness and greatness and incidental references to himself as a 'man who really loved his fellow-men—who for years had been a companion with them in their difficulties of every possible kind' and who had mourned over the gallant explorers and their lack of reward or recognition. Neither to this nor any other of his criticisms did Sir Henry deign any direct reply. As his manner was, he bided his time and when an opportunity presented itself in which he believed it was possible to prevent Sir George Grey from obtaining a vote upon his proposal for the introduction of a clause making all State constitutions alterable by a vote of their electors, 'with the utmost respect to the distinguished gentleman' he submitted that it was out of order. Sir George Grey replied with considerable acerbity and much repetition in his usual inflated style, that 'this attempt to stop a consideration of the kind is one that will strike with astonishment every part of the civilised world which is regarding what is being done by this Convention. I feel sure that one common wonder will seize the minds of all men.' But if Sir George Grey was not appreciated even after such an appeal, there was no inclination to submit to the despotism of the Premier of New South Wales. After discussion he ungracefully withdrew his objection with the remark that it was unjust to him 'for even Sir George Grey to venture to say' that he desired to stop discussion. Sir George Grey, anxious to make it clear that he owed him no thanks and gave him none, retorted that his critic had withdrawn simply because he could not sustain

his position. He was manifestly exultant though undemonstrative and Sir Henry sulky though equally impassive outwardly after this amiable interchange of courteous jealousies.

* Deakin here originally repeated, with slight variations, the story of the young Captain already related on p. 29.

* The order of words in this sentence has been slightly re-arranged.

7 The Bill Of 1891

THE HANSARD OF THE CONVENTION sufficiently relates its proceedings from its opening to the appointment of its Committees, which did their work in private and whose records have until now remained unpublished. The resolutions submitted by Sir Henry Parkes were considered and somewhat amended at a meeting of Premiers. It was understood that Sir Samuel Griffith had a considerable share of responsibility for their form and expression and that for him they would have consisted of little more than a declaratory paragraph setting out the advantages of Union for purposes of defence and intercolonial trade. The speech in which they were introduced by Sir Henry threw no new light upon them and it was the address which followed from Sir Samuel that brought the delegates at once face to face with the issues by which they were to be divided. The requirement that all laws should require the assent of a majority of the States [in] addition to a majority of the people was assumed by him and accepted by the Convention as fundamental. So overwhelming was the United States precedent in this regard, that when he proceeded to urge as a corollary that the Senate should exercise co-ordinate powers even as regards money bills and to indicate the probability that the British system under which Ministers are responsible chiefly, if not solely, to the elective branch of the legislature would probably be greatly modified by the co-existence of two Chambers possessing equal authority in every respect, he fairly raised the issue which at once served the Convention into two camps and thus provided the party distinction without which practical political argument seems impossible. The spectacle of a Government, whose members might not sit in either House of the Legislature and whose tenure of the office might be independent, instinctively repelled the radicals though they very dimly realised the value to the democracy of the Executives to which they had always been accustomed and roused the distrust also of the old Parliamentarians, whose experience of the actual work of carrying on government had taught them the leverage which the association of a Cabinet with the popular House endowed with special financial powers had always given them. What they knew of the United States did not encourage any of them to any sanguine forecast of how such a government would work. Sir Samuel Griffith had a philosophic confidence that in the end the future Unionists would work out their own Salvation, but this characteristic confidence was not shared by others to whom his temperament of intellectual detachment and unemotional speculation was as foreign as his views. Mr Munro and Mr Playford, two

practical-minded Premiers, united in the emphatic declaration that they were not prepared to abrogate responsible government as the colonies knew it for any Executive chosen on the American or Swiss methods, or to allow any second Chamber, not even a Federal Senate, to exercise equal powers over such a Ministry or over its financial policy. Sir Thomas McIlwraith reiterated his chief's contention that the Senate must have equal powers and all the colonies equal representation in it in order to preserve their individuality. The battle was fairly open and the centre of conflict plainly revealed before the second day's debate was over.

More than half the 'Hansard' of the Convention is occupied by the general discussion of the Parkes Resolutions which were finally referred to committees upon: 1. Constitutional Functions; 2. Finance and Trade; 3. A Federal Judiciary; the last two reporting their results to the first, upon which was cast the responsibility of embodying them in a Bill. This main Committee consisted of Sir Henry Parkes and Mr Barton for New South Wales; Mr Gillies and Mr Deakin for Victoria; Sir Samuel Griffith and Mr Thynne for Queensland; Mr Playford and Sir John Downer for South Australia; Mr Clark and Mr Adye Douglas for Tasmania; Sir George Grey and Captain Russell for New Zealand; Mr John Forrest and Sir James Lee Steere for Western Australia. Sir Samuel Griffith was elected Chairman and the Committee at once proceeded to work under his direction. Sir Henry Parkes remained throughout almost a silent member, taking no interest in points of detail and only striking in when the important principle of the relative powers of the two Houses was involved. To this restraint of his there was one notable exception. His literary tastes and habits led him to take a deep interest in the title of the new Union. He had been accustomed to lecture upon the heroes of the great political convulsion which culminated in the Great Civil War and it was but natural therefore that the name 'Commonwealth' should occur to him. It was received however with scanty favour by the Committee because of the flavour of Republicanism and the suggestion of Separation that it was considered to convey. After a very brief discussion it was rejected and the choice appeared to be between the Federation or the Federal States of Australasia. Sir Henry Parkes's seconder, Mr Deakin, after a night's reflection became enamoured of the name proposed and next day reopened the contest in its favour and attack[ed] the rival epithets as barbarous, clumsy and uneuphonious. This attempt too would have failed but for an energetic personal canvass which he took on its behalf. Adye Douglas had for all his conservatism a streak of republicanism in his politics and had once made a speech in which he declared independence to be the inevitable destiny of Australia. An appeal to this sentiment secured his support. Inglis Clark's

tendencies ran somewhat in the same direction so that from the first he was favourable. Griffith and Barton accepted it out of friendship for Parkes and Sir George Grey as the more radical title of those submitted. It was finally carried by one vote, after a heated discussion destined to be renewed in the Convention and in several of the local Parliaments. Gradually however opposition died away and by 1898 the title had become finally established.

The Committee debates were harmonious throughout and the chief provisions of the Bill were endorsed by substantial majorities. The acceptance of the South Australian system of permitting the Senate to make suggestions instead of amendments in money bills solved the chief difficulty, while Sir Samuel Griffith's doubts as to the future of responsible government were satisfied by the absence of any provision requiring members of the Executive to hold seats in Parliament. Sir George Grey's proposal to limit all electors to a single vote and Mr Deakin's propositions for the direct election of members of the Senate and the introduction of the Referendum in the event of deadlocks were dismissed with little delay. Ultimately the details were decided and then Sir Samuel Griffith withdrew to the steam yacht owned by the Queensland Government, which was then lying in Sydney Harbour, with a chosen company including Mr Barton and Mr Clark, who had submitted a draft Bill prior to the meeting of the Convention and both of whom had some hand in the drafting, though even Clark's share was small. Mr Kingston and Mr B. R. Wise, a brilliant young barrister then out of politics, had some small share in the criticism but as [a] whole and in every clause the measure bore the stamp of Sir Samuel Griffith's patient and untiring handiwork, his terse, clear style and force of expression. The Bill as a whole speaks for itself. There are few even in the mother country or the United States who could have accomplished such a piece of draftsmanship with the same finish in the same time. While not altogether free from the sensitiveness of authorship, especially in points upon which he felt his clauses to be vulnerable, his demeanour when in charge of the Bill in Committee before the whole Convention was almost unimpeachable in temper, courtesy and considerateness. Sir Henry Parkes was the convener and presiding chief of the Convention, but the Bill which represented its labours and remained as its memorial, was in style and spirit far more the creation of Sir Samuel Griffith and far more nearly expressed his own ideal than that of Parkes or any other member. Its substance would have remained much the same in almost any event but not only was the form it assumed his, but by his insight in the first instance and his lucidity afterwards, he saved his fellow-members much time, much confusion and much fruitless discussion.

When once the question of the money powers of the two Chambers were

defined and the South Australian practice accepted, the fighting energies of the Convention diminished and the proceedings came to an uneventful close. The financial provisions were felt to be unsatisfactory but it was even then realised that any settlement in this direction must be in some degree experimental and its difficulties solved by a cutting of the Gordian knot rather than its untying. The Bill as drafted was at once a testimony to the ability and shrewdness of its framers and also to the immaturity of their views. The bold outline of the form of government then adopted was reproduced in 1897-8, the only important changes being the substitution of an elective Senate for a body chosen by the State Parliaments and the revival of the right to appeal to the Privy Council. But the simple and sometimes stately general language of Sir Samuel Griffith's Bill was replaced by more elaborate and technical phraseology in order to render the intention more precise, while by the introduction of the single vote and a means of terminating deadlocks which induced a dissolution of the Senate, the whole measure was given a more decidedly democratic development. Yet the later Convention raised and magnified many more obstacles than it surmounted and in some instances, as with regard to the control of rivers and attempted control of Federal expenditure, introduced new dangers, thus justifying the wisdom and restraint of the men who in 1891 drew with a bold hand the shape and features of a Constitution so far as it has ever as yet proved possible to determine them.

The feeling of responsibility was somewhat less keen in 1891, as those present were after all but Parliamentary nominees. There was the inevitable delay at the opening and scurry at the close which seem inseparable from all legislative bodies. The hospitalities of Sydney were as usual lavish but badly managed, the endeavour being made to accommodate too many local guests as well as the visitors. There were no caucuses or even private gatherings, no parties and few personal animosities engendered. The probability that those present were engaged in drafting a Constitution for a great country led to a certain amount of posing for photographers and in 'Hansard'. Indeed the success of the undertaking was generally assumed on all hands and especially during the heat of their labours the members, becoming enamoured of their handiwork, were evidently unable to stand off and regard it with the dispassionate eye of outside criticism. Any antagonism that was manifested was from sources [with] which it was evident that local political feeling had much to do, and consequently at the close of its labours the Convention seemed to be launching its bark upon a halcyon sea.

Within itself the Convention exhibited little change. Sir Henry Parkes proved a dignified President and by no means inclined to unduly interfere

in debate or exercise authority in the Chair. Age was visibly telling upon him but it was also evident that in Committee he felt to some extent out of his element. He lacked a vigorous opposition to fire his blood, and a party from whom he could receive hearty support in the hour of danger when exerting himself to appeal to them. These conditions did not exist. He was deeply concerned to see the meeting crowned with success. It was the last and greatest ambition of his life to be father, and if possible first Premier, of an United Australia. With this end in view he bore a good deal and would have endured much more than it was necessary for him to do. Besides, he was always very sensible of certain public proprieties and desirous of acting the part of President with becoming deportment. The immense importance which he attached to such consideration was made manifest one day at luncheon when, contrary to his general practice, he took his meal in the general dining hall and was chatting with Mr Deakin whom after a reflective pause he asked what element most conduced to success in public life and on receiving some indifferent reply, said thoughtfully but very impressively, as if to prove his own thesis—‘Manner—Manner—Manner’—a modern version of the Demosthenic ‘Delivery, Delivery, Delivery’ as the first quality of the orator. Up to this dictum he most steadily and persistently lived and certainly his great height, leonine head and commanding gestures, if natural, were always employed by him with consummate art so as to render his words trebly impressive in any assembly and effective even in the rough-and-tumble diversions of an election meeting. In the Convention his contributions were limited to consideration of a few first principles such as many there might have uttered and were certainly surpassed by several of the best speeches. But in Manner he remained from first to last the Chief and leader of the whole Convention.

At its close Griffith's influence had become supreme, for his moderate attitude conciliated the members from the less populous colonies, while his abilities and zeal for Union won the respect of the whole body. His manner gave no assurance except of self-confident calm and well-informed capacity to deal with the problems submitted in an impartial manner, but his work was eloquent more than supplying any want of charm. No other representative rivalled him. Barton was somewhat indolent and retiring though obviously one of the weightiest debaters; Kingston was nervous and ineffective in spite of his power; Clark nervous and ungainly in style, though full of matter. Munro and Playford as practical working Premiers were watchful and urgent throughout, and Sir Henry Wrixon made friends by the courtesy and lucidity of his few addresses. Generally speaking therefore, [the Convention] closed without displaying any great disparities

between the colonies or the individuals who represented them. The official heads of the Conventions were also its actual leaders and on the whole local jealousies were kept well in hand. Auguring from such omens, the members not unnaturally separated full of hope and confidence in the early establishment of an Australian Union.

8 Stagnation and Revival

THE CONVENTION having been parliamentary in its origin required to submit its work to its parents. In a short time its fate became manifest. New Zealand at once made it plain that no such Union would be acceptable, since she looked forward to an independent policy and separate individuality in the southern seas. From this time she disappeared altogether from the Federal stage. Western Australia indicated the role she intended to follow as one of dependence upon her elders. When they had agreed to terms of partnership she would be prepared to come in, but until then remained quiescent. South Australia and Tasmania commenced to consider the measure but [on] realisation of the fact that they too could accomplish nothing of themselves, hung back waiting for a lead. Queensland though ready for action allowed herself to be paralysed by the uncertain attitude of New South Wales. Victoria alone and as usual fulfilled her obligations. The Bill was debated and amended by both Chambers of the Legislature and though their views were not brought into harmony, a compromise could have been agreed upon if the situation had encouraged them to complete their work. Political quiet within the colony certainly assisted her when, as in every instance from 1883 to 1898, she proved her loyalty to Union. But as in 1883 so in 1891 the movement was frustrated in New South Wales. Her geographical position enabled her to isolate Queensland again as in the Federal Council. Wealth and population rendered her better able to stand alone than any of her southern sisters. Her backwardness in development encouraged the anticipation that postponement would increase her relative importance. Sydney jealousy of rivalry looked forward to a time when pride of place would be accorded them and enable them to claim the title of capital of the confederation. Moreover it had been the lot of New South Wales at each crisis to be under the domination of peculiar personalities.

Sir Henry Parkes, zealous as he was for federation, was still somewhat divided in his ambitions, regarding the Premiership of his colony as a prize not to be lightly parted [with] even if in order to retain it he put the national cause in peril. Whether he would have succeeded if he had at once introduced the Bill, whether his tactics were not the best even in its interest or not, the fact remained that he postponed it for his social legislation with the result that he was ejected from office. After delaying until he received a pledge that the Bill would be taken up and pressed forward, Mr Barton joined the new Premier and its chief enemy Sir George Dibbs as his Attorney-General. The stress of the financial crisis leading up to the failure

of the Banks overshadowed every other issue. When Sir Henry found himself approaching the end of his career, his anxiety to crown his labours by the accomplishment of the Union deepened and strengthened. His efforts were in vain. On his occasional visits to Melbourne he painted with lurid colours and with fiery scorn the portraits of the men who stood between him and his goal, devoted himself to literature and more than once announced his final retirement from the scene. The least temptation however always sufficed to bring him to the front again. His alliance was sought by the little band of academic federalists who acknowledged Mr Barton as their chief, and with whom when out of office he still in a languid way endeavoured to keep the patriotism of Union alive. On one occasion he even attended one of their meetings held in a room which also served to contain the samples of a dealer in tinned provisions. A very short discussion convinced the practical old politician that nothing was to [be] gained from such a gathering and accordingly with characteristically insolent humour, he seized and opened a pot of jam. 'Do you know this brand?' he enquired of his astonished hosts, all of them men of exemplary politeness and most of university education. They did not. He tasted it and pronounced it good, sent out for bread and closed the conference with a meal of crust and jam. With such allies any effective campaign was impossible but he never failed to watch for a turn in the tide of popular favour and it was only when utterly defeated at the polls, penniless, almost friendless and dying, that he relinquished the struggle. Had he served the Federal cause with the same ardour in his earlier career in all probability it would have been successful but he postponed it too long to his party and personal ends, until it grew beyond his grasp, affording him merely the last satisfaction of being one of its martyrs. With him passed from the scene the most powerful, the most picturesque and the most picaresque of Australia's Federal fathers.

Sir Henry Parkes's place in New South Wales and soon in Australian politics was taken by Mr G. H. Reid who soon discovered as conspicuous and as curious if not as complex a personality. A clear-headed young civil servant who won a Cobden Club prize for an essay on Free Trade, a fluent and assiduous member of a Debating Club which included Barton, Went, O'Connor and many other young aspirants, his earlier years were characterised chiefly by indolence and geniality. In his prolonged bachelorhood he became most distinguished as a squire of dames. His first appearance in politics was beside, and partially in opposition to, Sir Henry Parkes when he stood as a candidate for one of the four seats of East Sydney. In those days the formal proposal of candidates took place on the hustings where they first addressed the electors. Sir Henry, as senior sitting

member and Premier, opened in one of his favourite poses as the old well-tired and well-known veteran and with a covert sneer at the unknown young man who ventured to seek election with him. Listening attentively until he had concluded, Reid took a Hansom and driving to the Park hard by thought out his reply and how he should weave it into the speech already prepared. He returned in time to speak in his turn, as he was last on the list, and at once gave the crowd and Sir Henry a taste of his quality. 'It was true that he was unknown and must remain so unless they were willing to accord him the opportunity of showing what was in him, and it was also true that his rivals and especially the Premier were all well known. But that was not altogether to their advantage. They were well known, too well known, known as men who had won office and held it, won K.C.M.G.'s decorations and enjoyed them. They were well known for what they had done for themselves but he doubted if they were equally famous for what they had done for the electors. It was his ambition if he ever should achieve a reputation to be known for the services he had rendered and not for the prizes he had appropriated.' Parkes looked and listened with consuming wrath but with thorough appreciation as the novice at one stroke won the rapturous applause of his hearers, probably foreseeing the result of the voting when the unknown man was returned at the head and he was relegated to a subordinate position in the poll. Reid's parliamentary career begun thus brilliantly was followed not long after by his accession to office as Minister of Education, where gradually his incorrigible idleness and indifference in administration and in the House earned him the reputation of a mere speech-maker. He lost his seat at an election and his office at the same time. He had already lost his little practice at the Bar and was promptly informed by the wealthy parent of the young lady to whom he was engaged that under the circumstances their betrothal must be considered to be terminated. In middle life he was obliged to begin again to earn his living at the Bar, to painfully watch for little briefs and with difficulty kept his head above water. His laziness prevented him from becoming learned in the law and the same reputation diminished the number of his jury cases. He never made much headway in his profession and when he returned to politics it was as a mere junior in his profession, with what appeared to be the ineffaceable stamp upon him of the politician of whom much has been expected, who has been tested and has absolutely failed.

The hard discipline of these years turning the young into the middle-aged man had apparently left little trace upon him when he renewed his parliamentary career, though really he was now prepared to endure any toil and pay any price to gratify his ambition and thought he saw a great

opportunity at hand. Parkes, who never allowed personal animosities to stand in the way of his designs and was capable of admitting his bitterest assailants into his Cabinet, would have willingly included Reid in one or more of his later Ministries. But partly from a belief that Parkes's power was waning and association with him dangerous, and partly from antipathy, Reid declined the overtures. He had some years to wait which he spent in somewhat spasmodically but consistently angling for a popularity that very slowly came. As a member of the Free Trade party he owed a nominal allegiance to Parkes whom he pertinaciously harassed for his failures to carry out the entire party programme. One of his first bids for a hostile leadership was made when the Convention of 1891 concluded its labours. Mr Reid was then the first to take the platform in avowed and uncompromising hostility to the measure, associating himself for the purpose with the Labour party in particular and rallying support from all possible sources first against Sir Henry Parkes and then against Mr Barton. With the assistance of Mr Want, the leading advocate in criminal and shipping cases, a brother bachelor and master of violent invective, he contributed largely to the defeat of the Bill in New South Wales. During one of Parkes's temporary retirements he was chosen leader of the Free Trade party by a narrow majority, and from that moment clung to the position with tenacity and fought for it with energy against the Protectionists in front and the irrepressible Sir Henry on his flank. By consummating an alliance with the Labour party and dauntlessly staking his fortunes upon a thorough policy of Free Trade and land taxation, he carried the country twice, defeated Sir Henry himself in the King division of Sydney and established himself as undisputed master of the political life of New South Wales. Unsuspected resources of determination, subtlety, humour and audacity developed rapidly under pressure of circumstances until he reduced his colleagues, none of them considerable before, to utter insignificance and overshadowed the whole of his following. The utter weakness and incompetence of Mr Lyne, the Opposition Leader, of course contributed greatly to this result, but the main cause undoubtedly was the platform and parliamentary ability of the new Premier. His foresight warned him that the one danger in his path would arise from the federal situation, and accordingly he sought to further isolate and undermine Parkes by assuming the leadership of the unionists in New South Wales. In spite of the agonised protests of the dying chief he accomplished his purpose and for the first time appeared upon the intercolonial field as Federal leader of the first colony of Australia.

The reception which the Bill of the 1891 Convention had received was sufficient warning that no merely parliamentary authority would be held

sufficient to prepare a Federal Constitution. The two principal objections of the radical critics of the Bill were that the Convention had not been chosen by the people and the Constitution when drafted should be submitted to the electors for its adoption or rejection and naturally it was sought to remove these stumbling blocks from the pathway of the democracy. Some residents of Corowa (a small New South Wales township opposite Echuca*), where the constant irritation caused by the Border duties kept the federal feeling always sensitive, boldly resolved to hold an open Conference to consider the best means of union. A number of politicians and others interested in the question both from New South Wales and Victoria accordingly assembled there. The initiative was taken by Dr John Quick of Bendigo, who had supported the motion in favour of federation moved in the Victorian Parliament in 1880. Though not actually born on Victorian soil he had no recollection of any other country. As a lad his lot was hard and he was obliged to earn his living on a mine before he was in his teens. Dark, handsome, sturdy and intelligent, the lad possessed a dauntless determination and trustworthiness which enabled him to educate himself so as to qualify for a reporter on a Bendigo paper. From thence he passed to the Melbourne **Age** rising at last to the position of Chief of the Staff and writing an occasional leading article. At the same time he pursued his University course, being one of the first to win the LL.D. degree at the Melbourne University. He commenced practice in what he considered his native city and soon won his way into Parliament where his diligence, information and power of speech soon gained him a prominent place. He was offered a seat in the Gillies-Deakin Cabinet of 1886 but declined it, and not applying himself to the care of his constituency as he might, was unexpectedly unseated. From that time forward he devoted himself to his practice and gradually to the Federal question of which he became one of the Victorian leaders. Mr D'Esterre Taylor, Secretary of the Imperial Federation League and an active member of the Australian Natives' Association suggested, in the course of conversation with Dr Quick on the way to Echuca, that in his opinion the next step would be for the colonies to elect representatives to a Convention as provided in the United States Constitution who should draft a measure to be submitted to a popular referendum. Dr Quick, to whom the same idea had probably occurred independently, acquiesced and moved a resolution to that effect which was carried. He followed this up by preparing and circulating a draft Bill which was widely discussed and generally approved. He visited Sydney where the Federal League accepted it as did the Melbourne League and had an interview with Mr Reid in which the latter expressed himself well pleased with the proposal. Indeed it was an opportune proposal at an opportune

time since it enabled him to take up Sir Henry Parkes's work on a more democratic principle, and to take it out of his hands at a time when local reactions were rendering it possible for him to reappear as a popular leader. The Federal Council was once more beginning to lift its head, as the adhesion of South Australia was once more proposed, and it became necessary for him to provide against the complete isolation of New South Wales. To prevent this he invited his fellow-Premiers to a Conference arranging that it should be held in Hobart during the sessions of the Federal Council which was at once overshadowed by a gathering which included New South Wales and South Australia, while a representative of New Zealand was present in the person of Mr Ward, then Treasurer of the Seddon administration. The Premiers of New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia supported Dr Quick's proposed method of reviving the Federal issue and with little difficulty carried the Tasmanian Premier with them. Sir Hugh Nelson for Queensland and Sir John Forrest for Western Australia did not hesitate to express their distrust of the method of popular election and dislike of the Referendum, but indicated that their colonies would probably accept the scheme with such variations as they thought necessary. An angry debate in the Federal Council, in which the representatives of Queensland and Western Australia openly expressed their jealousy of the Conference and their antagonism to its proposals, produced no effect. Mr Byrnes, then Attorney-General, was the ablest adversary of the new development. Largely by his influence the Queensland Government remained uncertain and finally when every other colony adopted a Bill upon these lines, except that Western Australia retained the method of electing its representatives by its Parliament, Queensland, which when Sir Samuel Griffith (now Chief Justice) was Premier had led the movement, dropped hopelessly to the rear.

* Deakin's geography is here somewhat astray.

9 Men of 1897

THE FEDERAL CONVENTION ELECTION resulted in the return of a number of those who had previously been associated with the movement. In South Australia this was especially the case, for Bray having died and Playford being in England, the remaining five delegates to the 1891 Convention were all approved by the electors. Their relative positions had altered. Kingston especially had grown in self-confidence and power of influence and speech. His successful Premiership added to his prestige as it rendered him the mouthpiece of the majority. Sir John Downer, though less changed, had mellowed and matured so that in spite of his occasional relapses into silence and aloofness, he was a more prominent figure than heretofore. Cockburn but little less impracticable and Gordon decidedly more federal remained as before but Sir Richard Baker, now President of the Council, defended his old views with more resolution and more personal emphasis.

Tasmania was faithful to four of her former representatives, Fysh, Brown, Douglas and Moore. Except that Douglas with increasing age showed signs of increasing impatience, they were little altered. Western Australia also retained four: Forrest, with vastly more self-confidence, self-importance and experience, had become a leading figure. Lee Steere and Loton continued almost silent members while Hackett, now ranking among the most influential men of his colony and well able to take part in the discussions, was suppressed owing to his sense of the little likelihood there was that his colony could as yet enter into any union. In New South Wales three of the men of 1891 were retained, but they were the only candidates, for Parkes, Jennings and Suttor had died and Dibbs as a Civil Servant was no longer eligible. Barton, who headed the poll, had developed physically and mentally. Still handsome though extremely stout, his fine presence had gained by the fire and zeal with which he had devoted himself to the national cause. McMillan broadened by experience of public life had gained in freedom of style and pleasantness of manner. Abbott enjoyed the added dignity of many years' experience in the Speaker's Chair. From Victoria, Deakin was the only delegate connecting the two Conventions, though three of his old associates had been fellow-candidates.

Measured by all-round ability the South Australian delegation was undoubtedly the strongest. Howe and Solomon who constituted its tail were men of business training and shrewdness who were capable of taking part in debate. The former, tall, heavy and somewhat lumbering, began life as a policeman. The latter was a dark, well-whiskered, portly Jew

speculator who had undertaken a variety of enterprises in Northern and Western Australia as well as in South Australia. Mr Glynn, a little Irish barrister, large-nosed and florid, with a brogue as broad as he was long and the figure of a jockey and the reputation of a hard and reckless rider, if not the best-read man of the Convention, certainly carried more English prose and poetry in his memory than any three or four of his associates. Theoretical, thoughtful, and pedantic in style and delivery, his high character and elaborate but sincere courtesy rendered him a favourite out of the Convention rather than in it, where owing to a somewhat stilted manner and air as of one repeating a lesson he failed of his due effect. For all that, he was one of the most painstaking and devoted of all the throng. J. H. Symon, Q.C., the leader of the Bar of South Australia, above the medium height, blonde, well-poised and so nearly absolutely bald that what little hair he had was invisible, had passed through but a short parliamentary experience and still retained more of the traditions of the court than of the legislature. He had however taken an active part in public affairs as an antagonist of the radical party and most particularly and personally of Kingston, with whom he had recently engaged in a public correspondence the most violent in vituperation that the colony had ever witnessed. Thoroughly well-informed, above the middle height, endowed with a rich and powerful voice, an impressive manner and a great command of language, he was if not the best, decidedly one of the best of the set speakers in the Convention. An expert lawyer and practised advocate, he had every trick of the practised pleader at his fingers' ends and employed them without stint where necessary. But decidedly the strongest addition to this team was Mr Holder, former Premier and now Treasurer of the colony. A Wesleyan local preacher and country newspaper editor as thin as a paling, dark, swarthy, narrow-faced and narrow-shouldered, like Mr Symon he had one eye useless and a chest which seemed destined for consumption; a powerful voice, clear if rather monotonous and preachy utterance, curt sentences and great facility of speech. But all these were united with a singularly lucid mind and faculty for logical exposition, great mastery of detail and cautious judgment which influenced his hearers more and more as they came to realise his thoroughness and fairness in debate. The varied quality of the South Australian team and distinctive abilities of its members rendered them when united the most powerful phalanx debate.

The most conspicuous figure of the Convention, its official author and in matters of moment its leader, was the Premier of New South Wales [G. H. Reid], physically as remarkable as his predecessor Parkes, but without his dignity, and even more formidable in discussion because less self-respecting. Even caricature has been unable to travesty his extraordinary

appearance, his immense, unwieldy, jelly-like stomach, always threatening to break his waistband, his little legs apparently bowed under its weight to the verge of their endurance, his thick neck rising behind his ears rounding to his many-folded chin. His protuberant blue eyes were expressionless until roused or half hidden in cunning, [and] a blond complexion and infantile breadth of baldness gave him an air of insolent juvenility. He walked with a staggering roll like that of a sailor, helping himself as he went by resting on the backs of chairs as if he were reminiscent of some far-off arboreal ancestor. To a superficial eye his obesity was either repellant or else amusing. A heavy German moustache concealed a mouth of considerable size from which there emanated a high, reedy voice rising to a shriek or sinking to a fawning, purring, persuasive orotund with a nasal tinge. To a more careful inspection he disclosed a splendid dome-like head, high and broad and indicative of intellectual power, a gleaming eye which betokened a natural gift of humour and an alertness that not even his habit of dropping asleep at all times and places in the most ungraceful attitudes and in the most impolite manner could defeat. He never slept in a public gathering more than a moment or two, being quickly awakened by his own snore. He would sleep during the dealing of cards for a game of whist and during the play too if there was any pause, but he never forgot the state of the game or made a revoke. In the Assembly or in a train he indulged with the same facility both of sleeping and waking if necessary with an appropriate retort upon his tongue. His extreme fatness appeared to induce this state and for that his self-indulgence was chiefly responsible since he denied himself nothing that he fancied, sucking ice or sweetmeats between meals and then eating and drinking according to his fancy. In some respects he was the antithesis of Parkes, who used to quote scornfully a confession of Reid's that he never read a book unless it were a sensation novel. Apparently nothing else could keep him awake. He had no taste for literature, for art, for bric-à-brac, or the study of the past. Newspapers satisfied his tastes; he was fond of society and social amusements, but even at the theatre his preferences were those of the crowd. In other respects he resembled Parkes for he was inordinately vain and resolutely selfish, a consummate tactician even more cunning, if anything excelling him in variety and violence of vituperation. He was almost as impecunious but contrived to keep out of debt, whereas Parkes said of himself and another member that they were alike in that they consistently lived above their means. He was as much an admirer of the fair sex, so that when once on a specially dashing woman appearing in the Gallery of the New South Wales Assembly, and Parkes being asked who she was, replied in sardonic style: 'Well I don't know myself. I've asked George Reid and Wise and they

don't know, from which I conclude that she must be a woman of good reputation.' The Chief difference between them was that while Parkes was a Liberal of the old school, making concessions to the Labour and Radical party only so soon and so far as he was compelled, and seeking in the main to develop a policy of his own, Reid won their cordial sympathy by making their aims his own and having no other policy than that which would assure him his majority. He appeared to be sincere in his allegiance to Free Trade until his Budget of 1898, but certainly pinned himself to no other principle, suiting himself to his surroundings with more coolness and less friction than his great predecessor. As a platform orator he was unsurpassed. His voice could reach a great crowd and his deliberate drawl enabled the densest among them to follow him. At his best his arguments were well shaped and perspicuously expressed with admirable directness and in the plainest words, often in slang, but always so as to be understood. He once remarked to a Victorian whom he closely watched during the Convention, that his manner of addressing that body was as if he were merely 'thinking aloud'. 'You don't make platform speeches that way do you?' said he, 'or you cannot reach the people if you do.' He made his one long appeal to their sympathy and sensibility and, provided he got it, cared nothing for his own consistency or dignity or their comments upon his obvious trickiness and insincerity so long as his cleverness captured their support. He did capture it whenever he desired. Yet Renan, that master of the pure eloquence of limpid prose, in his address to the French Academy on the reception of Lesseps, incidentally said: 'To speak well is to think aloud. Success oratorical or literary has never but one cause, absolute sincerity.' Either he meant permanent success or he thought only of cultured audiences. [Reid] was not merely a humourist but a great actor assisting his low comedy parts with irresistible gesture and expression. He cared nothing for the heights of outlook or depths of insight, discarding all decorum of deliverance, finish of style or grace of expression, aiming always at the level of the man of the street and reaching it by jest, logic, appeal, rant or ruthless abuse as appeared most effective. He always was effective for he possessed a really marvellous political instinct, a readiness and adaptability, a quickness of repartee and a rolling surge of ad captandum arguments which were simply irresistible. He knew the average man better than he knew himself for he was the average man in every respect except in his amazing platform powers, political astuteness and the intensity of his determination to carve out and keep the first place for himself in New South Wales and in Australia if possible—but in New South Wales at all events until sure of the other by any means and at any cost.

The best contrast, physical and intellectual, to Reid was presented by his fellow-Free Trader and land taxer, Mr Bernhard Wise, a young Australian educated at Oxford who had become more English in manner than most of the sons of that famous University where he was known as a man of brilliant promise. Indeed no sooner did he go to the Sydney Bar than he was chosen for Parliament and no sooner was he in the House than he became Attorney-General in the Parkes Ministry. He had written a few striking articles for the English magazines and a text-book adverse to Protection, hailed with enthusiasm by the Cobden Club. A man of letters himself, all his tastes were literary. His love and knowledge of art made him [an] active Trustee of the Sydney National Gallery. Handsome as the hero of the female novel, a moustached but beardless Cupid with a rich soft voice and a perfect enunciation, his speeches followed the best English models and were replete with well-turned and telling phrases. A man of culture and of aristocratic tendencies, he was a democrat by conviction, shrinking from no radical proposal except those that seemed to impair parliamentary development. He made some brilliant successes at the Bar but neither there nor in any other sphere fulfilled the promise of début, or the potencies of his mind. Parkes tersely likened him to one of those round-bottomed bottles that cannot stand still, and hit upon the chief secret of his failures. He could not consent to move in familiar or commonplace views but leant always to the new, the startling and unexpected and consequently when once he resigned office to return to the Bar and yet afterwards left the Bar to return to the Assembly, he became summed up by the mass of the very ordinary but business-like politicians as an impracticable and impossible man, and his doom as a leader was sealed. He was too independent in mind and haughty in manner to be a favourite with his fellow-members and too self-respecting to stoop to a crowd when he believed them to be in the wrong. Then again he was sincerely attached to Parkes and loyally staked his fortunes upon those of the grand old man when they were hopeless and declining. If he could have realised this it would probably not have altered his attitude, but as a fact his political judgment was not good. He was by no means an average man and was a bad judge of the actions or impressions of the masses to whom he appealed, while he was feared and dreaded by those of his own class. Having proposed Reid as leader of the Free Trade party, affection for Parkes and dislike of his rival drove him slowly but steadily into extreme and finally bitter opposition to a man whom he envied a little and despised much. Even in the Convention his erratic genius scarcely achieved its due and made far less mark than that of his quieter and more sober colleague, R. E. O'Connor, Q.C., besides Glynn the only Roman Catholic in the

Convention, though unlike him, of Australian birth and training. He was one of the type of the Spanish Irish, dark of complexion, regular of feature, the head somewhat small for the upright, well-set, deep-chested, vigorous frame, rather above the middle height and carefully maintained in health by self-control and regular exercise, typical of the prudent, practical nature of the man. Not swift but solid, not widely read like Wise but well-read, with a strong sense of personal dignity, much reserve and yet a straightforward frankness and absolute sincerity of disposition which gradually made him one of the most popular delegates in all the Convention. Liberal Conservative in politics, his steady application and sound sense had won him a high position as a barrister. Without the arts and graces of Wise or the tricks and humour of Reid, he carried more conviction than either by the plain logic, well-linked reasonableness and mature reflection of his remarks. His style was conversational, not oratorical or ornamental as Wise's, nor declamatory or playful like Reid's but argumentative and essentially fair-minded, always on the point and to the purpose. No better illustration of the sure weight of real merit of a practical character in any public assembly could be found than the way in which he won upon the Convention from the very first.

Carruthers, Minister of Lands in the Reid Cabinet, a little man with a great voice, was overshadowed by his chief with whom he was not always in harmony and who did not hesitate to publicly put him back in his place on occasion. He had Reid's faults of platform utterance, a good deal of power and sincere Federal enthusiasm; but without Reid's prestige or redeeming humour he made but little figure in the debates. Lyne, leader of the Opposition to Reid, a crude, sleek, suspicious, blundering, short-sighted, backblocks politician to whom Reid owed many of his greatest successes, was still less notable. Brunner and Walker were practically ciphers and Abbott obviously out of element in most of the debates. Imposing as were Barton, Reid, O'Connor, Wise and McMillan, the remaining half of their delegation was so inferior that it reduced them as a whole below the more even quality of the South Australians.

10 More Men of 1897

THE PARTY VOTE given by the Protestants of New South Wales in order to defeat Cardinal Moran was probably responsible for the return of Brunker, a fine figure-head with mutton-chop whiskers; Abbott, whom we have seen; Walker, a mere commercial man, and Wise, of whom only the last won a place [sic] upon the Convention. The party vote in Victoria given to the Liberals as against the Conservatives or the **Age** [as] against the **Argus**, was responsible for the return of Berry, Fraser, Zeal and Higgins of whom curiously enough, as in the case of New South Wales, only the last and lowest upon the poll justified his selection. Of course Sir Graham Berry's return was a proper recognition of past services and abilities but his physical feebleness owing to advanced years rendered him unable to take any active part in the proceedings. He spoke admirably once or twice, but the rest was silence. Fraser as Grand Master of the Orangemen and Zeal as President of the Council received considerable Conservative support, but it was the personal friendship of the proprietor of the **Age** which led him to include them in the paper's list of the Liberal Ten. By their choice he gratified his personal preference and at the same time excluded Wrixon, Sargood and Murray Smith, the far abler members of the Conservative party. Higgins, though he made a thorough tour of the colony, would not have been selected but for the **Age** nomination. Of the remaining six Victorians Mr Peacock, the Chief Secretary, though taking an active interest in all the proceedings, spoke but two or three times, and even Dr Quick, than whom there was no member who had better mastered the subject or more closely followed the work of the Convention, partly from nervousness and partly from defects of manner, spoke rarely and without marked effect, although with great warmth, transparent sincerity and vigour of conviction. With four silent members, the Victorian team was too heavily handicapped to bear comparison with its rivals even if its remaining members had been stronger than they were.

The Premier [Turner] and Attorney-General [Isaacs] assisted in a practical way by the Chief Secretary, worked together and bore the chief burden between them. In some respects they were alike for both were self-made men, untiring workers, ambitious for themselves and for their colony but in appearance, tastes and powers a complete contrast. Turner, who as a young man was but a law clerk and who married on 25s. a week, was fortunate in finding a partner who assisted him at every step and constantly pushed him forward. He obtained his articles, qualified himself as a solicitor, became a partner in a profitable but by no means high-class

practice and when by dint of economy and industry they had acquired a small competence, became a municipal councillor, mayor and finally member for St Kilda. He was far more than even Reid the average man, for while Reid wore an eyeglass, entered society and lived as a member of a learned profession, Turner was the ideal bourgeois who married early and who was in dress, manner and habits exactly on the same level as the shopkeepers and prosperous artisans who were his ratepayers and constituents. He was also bourgeois in his uprightness, straightforwardness, domestic happiness and regularity of habits, in none of which respects was there any likeness between himself and his fellow-Premier though he never read a book and had received his education in every-day life and in the practice of his profession. Reid had risen by his powers of speech, Turner by his trustworthiness and business capacity. As a speaker he was as plain, commonplace, and even slangy as Reid, but had none of the rich humour or oratorical flights or passages of polished rhetoric which formed the armoury of his rival. His merits were an obvious earnestness and a lucidity which made the most complex propositions plain. His faculty of work was enormous, his love of detail great and his whole life devoted to work either in his business or politics. He had no hobbies, no amusements and no diversions. He ate, slept and worked—worked at whatever he had to do with a tenacity and clearheadedness that made him in time a good lawyer, a good financier, a good administrator, a good speaker and a good leader of the House. He had no enthusiasms and no vices—his only emotions were indignation at scamped work or extravagance, except the inevitable sensitiveness as to maintaining his position which at times discovered itself in his demeanour. Ambitious, secretive and impressionable, he was timid and inclined to be envious. He had to find his principles as he went for there was no theoretic basis for them in the background. He arrived at them through expediency and they never became with him condensed into a creed or digested into a dogma. He was Australian by birth but British to the backbone in the practical good sense, dislike of doctrine, dread of emotion and determination to compromise his way out of all difficulties. As each question rose before him he grappled with it as if it were a new brief, sent for friends and subordinates and sucked their brains assiduously, looked up a few authorities, or more often had them prepared for him, considered it as a man of affairs must and then came down to the House well crammed but also well capable of assimilating what he had acquired only when he needed it. Consequently there was no horizon in his mind, no perspective in his policy, no broad surface of principle upon which he rested except such as was naturally supplied by so sober and solid a mind out of its past experiences. Turner was of the English type, fat, solid, thick-

necked and with a large even head. Isaacs his colleague was a short, spare, dark-skinned Jew with a thin neck, protruding lips, large nostrils and a high, narrow retreating forehead. His figure was loose and ill-made but it was his hands and head that were most remarkable. The hands were so heavily jointed and knuckled that they were almost deformed, the fingers flat-topped and the whole bony. The head was extremely long from the eyebrows which projected like a penthouse over the eyes to the point of the back brain which was equally prominent behind. From each of these extreme points the head sloped rapidly to a narrow ridge almost with an apex but not high above the ear though fairly broad at the base of the brain. Looked at from the front or back it was roughly triangular receding to the crown. What redeemed a face which was certainly plain and a figure that was ungainly, was the fire in the eye and the energy in the motion by which the whole was rendered tense, taut and agile. His smile was bright, light and winning in its regard either to his family, his intimates or the stranger he was welcoming, but the nostril quivered and the brows lowered readily upon provocation which he was not slow to take, though often slow to express. The son of a struggling tailor in an up-country town, he had as unpromising an outlook as could well be imagined for such a career as his proved. First a State School teacher and then a clerk in the Crown Law Office, he was everywhere saving to penuriousness, strenuous in self-education, resolute to succeed. He practised his French accent by following an itinerant Gallic knifegrinder from street to street, book in hand and engaging him in conversation. German he readily conquered and the classics offered no obstacle. Called to the Bar, he was eager for work, and willing to seek it, unwearying in preparation and dauntless in Court where his acuteness and thoroughness soon helped him to the front. But he did not relax his efforts and soon was in receipt of a large income out of which he generously provided for his parents, his brothers and finally his wife and children. There his unselfishness and generosity stopped short. Intellectual to the finger-tips and gifted with a marvellous memory, he was always acquiring knowledge, reading widely in all fields and it is said commencing the violin when approaching his fortieth year. He entered politics like Turner as a Liberal with Conservative leanings and was a member for a time of a Conservative Ministry, but under the stress of antagonism to his old colleagues and his sense of the requirements of the political situation, soon laid all his Conservatism aside and began to qualify for the future Radical leadership. While Turner's opinions were derived from actual political work, Isaacs' were carefully read up and elaborated from such authorities as he could consult, with whom he soon made himself thoroughly familiar. A clear, cogent, forcible and fiery

speaker, he set himself at once to work to conquer the methods of platform and parliamentary debate and in both succeeded. He was not trusted or liked in the House. His will was indomitable, his courage inexhaustible and his ambition immeasurable. But his egotism was too marked and his ambition too ruthless to render him popular. Dogmatic by disposition, full of legal subtlety and the precise literalness and littleness of the rabbinical mind, he was at the same time kept well abreast by his reading of modern developments and modern ideas. He supplied the basis of literature and theory that Turner lacked, while from Turner he began to learn the arts of managing men and conducting business in the practical municipal way. Together they were strong and with Mr Peacock's knack of keeping himself in touch with men and things around them the two former were enabled to make a much better figure with [the] Convention than they would have done alone.

Higgins owed part of his prominence to the fact that he was soon at odds with his fellow-Victorians and with almost the whole Convention, but most of it to his dogged courage and power of intellect. A large-headed, rudely-featured youth who had conquered a tendency to chest weakness by means of the Australian climate, a rigid regimen and hard physical exercise, he was handicapped by what would have proved to many insurmountable obstacles to success as a speaker, an awkward manner, a nervous stammer and slowness of speech. But he was endowed with an iron will and a fine brain capable of prolonged effort and acting with the power and precision of a machine. By sheer hard work he won his way to the front at the Bar, into Parliament and into the Convention. Unlike Turner and Isaacs, he entered with fixed principles and well-thought-out ideals, having followed British politics with the keen interest of an ultra-Radical and a Home Ruler. An admirable dialectician, well versed in English literature of the best class, he was more versatile in interests than at first appeared. A keen observer of men and somewhat harsh judge of opponents, he prided himself upon a rigid rectitude of life and severe punctiliousness of demeanour which was due both to his self-respect and keen sense of humour, welded into one by a dominating egoism that ultimately overbore both. Under an inflexible exterior he was a man of strong passions, strong prejudices and towering ambition, capable of nourishing his designs undemonstratively and biding his time for long periods. He was drifting into opposition to the Turner Ministry because of their time-serving policy and soon adopted the same attitude in the Convention, doing them something less than justice and willing to join in defeating them as opportunity arose. It was his natural tendency as well as his tactics which led him to desire to outbid them as far as possible with the Radicals inside

and outside of the Chamber. Gradually he unmasked his aims, and in his resolute devotion to them as his own and to his own ambition, became less and less scrupulous in tactics as he politically developed.

Trenwith was yet another who had achieved success under the most unpropitious conditions, fighting an even harder fight than Turner, Isaacs or Higgins. A Tasmanian bootmaker who while yet a young man found himself illiterate, burdened with a wife and family and with his eyesight almost gone, he nevertheless maintained through a poverty that was almost abject the pursuit of knowledge. His powerful voice, powerful physique and powerful will enabled him to win at last a recognition among his fellows of his own craft and from this it was but a step to the public platform as a champion of his class. As such he had to encounter a storm of obloquy such as inevitably assails the pioneer and it was only after years of strife and more than one failure that he conquered a seat in Parliament. He was soon able to discover that the extravagant rhetoric and equally extravagant proposals of irresponsible men need expect no favour from Parliament, where indeed they could not even win attention. Master of a sledge-hammer style of oratory, very loud, very forcible and very logical, he softened away its excrescences of violence, watched and studied the temper of the House and gradually elbowed his way through its crowd of speakers into the front rank of its debaters. There were few adornments and few quotations in his speeches, the material for which he found largely in the addresses of those to whom he replied and for the rest drew out of his own recollection. If he had pursued his course of self-education as consistently in his later years as in his earlier, and if he had added a deeper knowledge of books to the knowledge of affairs which he acquired, he might have outshone all his associates, but as it was he became one of the best debaters in the Convention as in Parliament, won the same esteem for his ability and fairness and though he discharged his duties as to attendance with some laxity, exercised a considerable influence because he was not simply a brilliant delegate but distinctively the representative of the working classes—the only representative who had been elected and whom even his opponents were prepared to welcome as a partner—all except Adye Douglas, who glowered at him like a Highland seer and denounced his future as gloomily as the wizard did Lochiel's, with eyes burning from within an orbit of white hair and whisker and with uplifted and trembling finger and insisted upon regarding both Lyne and Trenwith, who were Tasmanian-born, as renegades to their native country. Of Deakin it is unnecessary to say anything except that on seeing the impression created by his fellow-Victorians he devoted himself from the first to the task of smoothing away resentments and overcoming difficulties, preferring to

support amendments rather than move them as so many coveted to do, and in every way subordinating his votes and speeches and silences as he believed would most contribute to the attainment of Union. Many others were actuated by precisely the same motives, but none followed it in precisely the same manner of self-suppression in public coupled with continuous activity in private among the members.

Tasmania contributed in the person of its Premier the most distinguished-looking delegate of the Convention, Sir Edward Braddon, brother of the lady novelist of the same name and himself author of a book of sporting adventure besides tales and sketches, all of them admirably and characteristically written. Almost as thin as Holder, slight, erect, stiff, with the walk of a horseman and the carriage of a soldier, he had the manner of a diplomat and the face of a mousquetaire. An iron-grey lock fell artistically forward upon his forehead, bright grey eyes gleamed from under rather bushy eyebrows, a straight nose leading to a heavy moustache and a Vandyke beard. If his locks had been longer his whole appearance would have admirably suited a Cavalier costume. Beside the massive Kingston, the podgy Reid, the bourgeois Turner and the bluff Henry-the-eighth appearance of Forrest, he looked like an attaché from Paris surrounded by the fat burghers of a Flanders city to whom he was conveying the King's commands. He was a most amiable cynic, an accomplished strategist and an expert administrator, who having done excellent service in India had settled in Tasmania to enjoy his pension and add to it if possible. Politics contributed nothing, for remarkable to relate, though Premier, he held no office and drew no salary. He was no speaker, jerky, nervous and without flow, but for all that had a certain warmth and clearness of expression which but for a helpless manner would have made him pleasant to hear. An admirable negotiator, a devoted whist player, an indefatigable sportsman and thorough man of the world, he introduced into the Convention an element of manners in which it was by no means affluent. Henry, a sound, sober man of business, and Lewis, a thoughtful and gentlemanly young lawyer were the most useful of his allies, though Dobson, another lawyer of an irrelevant mind, was at times their best and in parts almost their worst debater. The new men from Western Australia were mainly spectators and votes. Leake, leader [of] the local Opposition, had a dignified address, and James, a younger lawyer promise of both fire and sparkle. It was mainly left to the rather overbearing Premier and his University conscience Hackett to speak and think for the group. With Kingston in the Chair, Barton, Abbott, Reid and Lyne of New South Wales, with Brown of Tasmania on his right—Forrest and Briggs on his left, all of them men of about six feet or above fifteen stone in weight, the

Convention was physically massive. Douglas, Glynn, Carruthers, Zeal and Isaacs were its smallest members; Douglas its senior, James its junior and one of its best-looking men.

11 Antagonisms in Adelaide

THE CONVENTION WHICH ASSEMBLED in Adelaide on March 22nd 1897 at the outset possessed antagonisms within its several delegations which needed little encouragement to discover their malignancy. In New South Wales the three Ministers, Reid, Carruthers and Brunner cherished some resentment towards Barton, Lyne and O'Connor, the Protectionist leaders of the local Opposition. McMillan and Wise—Free Traders—the one a candid friend of the Ministry and the other as a friend of Parkes, hostile to Reid, leant rather to Barton and his friends. Abbott and Walker, though acknowledging no party ties, sympathised more with McMillan than with [the] Ministers. Reid could not forget that although Premier of New South Wales he held but the second place to Barton in the national poll, watching events with an evident determination to attain what he considered his due position in the Convention. In South Australia party lines were drawn with absolute distinctness—Kingston, Holder, Cockburn as Ministers and Gordon as their late colleague on the one side with Baker, Symon, Downer, Howe, Solomon and less aggressively Glynn on the other. Not only was political passion strong in all, but personal antipathies were violent. Kingston had once challenged Baker to a duel and had been arrested walking with a loaded revolver in his pocket at the part of a public street which he had named as place of meeting. After this Baker refused to meet or speak to him except officially and in public. Symon's correspondence with him, in France or the Western States, would have justified half a dozen duels. Downer detested him for private as well as party reasons, while Howe and Solomon were both more than partisan in their hostility. In Tasmania the sentiments were milder except in the language of Douglas. In Western Australia Leake made a few futile efforts to assert himself against Forrest and in Victoria Fraser and Zeal regarded with apprehension the too liberal action of their Premier, while for exactly opposite reasons Higgins censured them from the opposite point of view. But in these three colonies the members on the whole worked amicably and in all the five [colonies] party differences were at once sunk upon any provincial issue or upon any truly national question.

At the very outset there was an illustration of the rivalry of the colonies. Reid consented that the Convention should meet in Melbourne, which meant that Turner would be its President and Isaacs undertake the formal control of business. It was believed that Kingston had consented to this and appeared to have agreed not to object to Melbourne. But this did not

prevent him from making an underground treaty with Tasmania and Western Australia under which they consented to support the choice of Adelaide. When this little arrangement was unmasked, great was the wrath in the Turner Cabinet and indeed among the New South Wales representatives also. A stay in Melbourne was looked forward to with pleasurable anticipation but in Adelaide, the City of Churches, it was quite another matter. Remonstrance however was in vain and greatly grumbling, the Victorians and New South Welshmen took the road to the capital of South Australia. Here at once local intrigue of fiery hatred and vehemence was unmasked. Baker, Symon, Downer, Howe and Solomon were cut to the quick by the unexpected contingency of the election of Kingston to the Presidency of the great National gathering. They were prepared to support or if necessary to move the appointment of any rival to the throne and at once set themselves to work with zeal to defeat his nomination. Barton declined to contest the post and Reid appeared to have no ambition for it, but for all that New South Wales had its nominee ready and from what transpired it appeared that the reason for the abstention of Barton and Reid was not that they did not desire the honour, but that both were already pledged to their Speaker, Sir Joseph Abbott, for whom the whole of their delegation was privately but actively canvassing. The decision rested with the Victorians who held the balance of power and who, unanimously declaring for the observance of the precedents of all previous intercolonial conferences, rendered opposition hopeless. Kingston had secured the support of the Tasmanian and Western Australian Premiers when the place of meeting was fixed. The manner of selection was not the most flattering. A Caucus was held at which Turner proposed and Barton seconded Kingston, both of them simply quoting the previous practice as their justification. After an embarrassing silence as there was no other nomination he was declared elected and the meeting closed grimly. His nomination in the Convention was entrusted to Abbott who protested to the Caucus that he had not made any effort to win the coveted post and desired this opportunity of proving his concurrence and [it was] seconded with equal frigidity by Berry, while the silence and scowls of his local enemies proved how bitterly they detested his elevation.

The third intrigue which originated also among the South Australians only gradually manifested itself and, though it never reached the light, was at one time likely to be successful. Although all delegates owed their position to the electors and were named in their order at the poll, the Premiers who headed the vote in Victoria, South Australia and Western Australia were seniors on that account. In New South Wales and Tasmania they stood second. But it was their official rank and party leadership which

asserted itself in a variety [of ways]. The Convention was dependent upon them for information or the fulfilment of its orders in their respective domains and thus in a sense they constituted a Cabinet of which the members took care to keep in touch one with another. When it became clear that owing to the Premiers' approaching departure for the Jubilee celebrations in London, the proceedings of the Convention would require to be hurried to a close and it was assumed by them that in consequence the meeting must be adjourned, a count of heads was commenced to see if a proposal to sit on and finish the work in their absence would be acceptable. At first it met with almost universal approbation but as the ardent federalists came to perceive that they would probably alienate and certainly could not pledge the absent Premiers to take up a Bill so fashioned and press it forward, the design became repugnant to them and by their influence it was rejected. The last and most painful incident occurred in connection with the choice of a Drafting Committee out of the members of the Constitutional Committee, significant because it furnished a key to a good deal of the public debate in Adelaide. Before this however the decision of a Caucus of the whole, held on the first day of meeting, requires notice though necessarily its proceedings became known immediately after. The Convention consisted of two sections, those who had taken part in preparing the Bill of 1891 and those who now sat in a Convention for the first time. The latter were anxious that as far as possible the Bill of their predecessors should be ignored and that this Convention should now independently begin in the same manner by a series of resolutions upon which a new measure should be built. The members of the 1891 Convention for the most part desired to force an acknowledgment of the value of their work by making their Bill the preliminary draft of the new Constitution and thus publicly proving how few the amendments necessary to bring it up to date would be. They would have been defeated out of hand had not Reid and Braddon supported this procedure in the hope of thereby shortening the proceedings. At this stage it was evident that one or two major alterations of that Bill would have perfectly contented Reid and he pressed strongly that they should be made so that the Convention could finish and separate in a very few weeks. Barton, Downer and Deakin among the 1891 men strongly urged a fresh commencement with fresh resolutions, maintaining that either method would lead to the same result but that this manner of reaching it was much more in accordance with the independent elective character of this Convention and would more clearly prove its freedom from any obligation to accept any old clause except upon its merits. The contest was warm; Turner was doubtful; McMillan reluctantly yielded his judgment to that of the majority. Wise, Trenwith,

Symon, Isaacs and Quick among the new men stood out strongly for a brand new measure and finally carried the day by 19 votes to 14. Rumblings of discontent were afterwards heard in the Convention because of this decision but it was nevertheless adopted. Had the Western Australian delegation been present it would have been defeated both in Caucus and Convention for they were adherents of the 1891 [Bill] as well as anxious to shorten the proceedings as far as possible.

The Caucus heard a suggestion from Sir Philip Fysh that they should ask Mr Barton to act as leader of the Convention. At all events a few had been consulted as to this course and they approved. Mr Reid had not been consulted and did not approve. Turner proposed it in the Convention, Downer and Symon at once heartily endorsing; Reid then endorsed it as 'the generous suggestion of Sir George Turner that the whole load should be put upon the shoulders of Mr Barton', concluding with the remark that his being senior representative of the mother colony was 'of course an element in the matter' and that he possessed 'every other qualification' for it. Seeing that the selection was inevitable he accepted it with the best grace he could and as indeed he was bound to do on behalf of his colony. It was not that he desired the post for himself. He knew perfectly well that he had neither the constitutional knowledge, capacity as draftsman nor unwearied industry that were essentials in a leader. He would only have exposed his own weakness and have been at the mercy of better qualified critics. Even the legal knowledge he discovered during the debates was of the most elementary character and he was obviously timorous of framing amendments without advice, or when he did frame them himself, was compelled to submit to their alteration. The only man to whom he grudged the position he could not occupy himself, was the one man who had surpassed him at the poll. But during the Adelaide session he was upon his best behaviour and under severe self-restraint refrained from anything more than a brush with Barton and O'Connor. To the other delegates his attitude was one of studied politeness. His self-esteem was gratified by his being allotted the first place at all outside functions and by the ease with which he excelled all his rivals by his after-dinner speeches. With great art he assumed a central position on the Convention stage and was solaced by the attention he received on all hands. He played his part as the Free Trade bountiful Premier actuated by sincere Federal impulse to perfection. He boasted of the prosperity of his colony and was vaguely generous in his promises of the sacrifices he was prepared to make. Tasmania rejoicing in the open Sydney market, South Australia grateful for the trade to Broken Hill and Western Australia leaning rather to Barton but expressly limited in her acceptance of any Constitution to one that New South Wales would

approve, all followed in his train and hung upon his words. He was the author of the Convention, Premier of the greatest colony, the best platform speaker, rejoicing in platitudes of liberality and largeheartedness, revelling in quip and jest in private where he was always a jolly good fellow as well as in public and thus monarch of all he surveyed, inhaling perpetual incense of flattery and winding the majority around his finger as he pleased. Although he was neither President nor leader of the Convention in Adelaide, he was at once its master and its most popular member, admired and trusted by all the delegates except a few of his colleagues from New South Wales who even then admitted his ability and powers.

12 Rivalries in Adelaide

WITH REID MASTER OF THE CONVENTION at Adelaide, and Barton its leader loved by most and respected by all, with Wise and McMillan boldly championing the claims of the less populous colonies and with O'Connor's growing influence, the position of New South Wales was absolutely one of dominance and supremacy from first to last. The ability of the South Australian delegation was admitted but it was recognised that theirs was a poor colony seeking what it could gain, while New South Wales was the giver upon whom she depended. With Kingston in the Chair and Baker in the Chairmanship of Committees her representation fell into [the] hands of Holder, Cockburn and Gordon, whose leanings to the Confederate rather than to the Federal type of union put them out of sympathy with most of the delegates. Holder had not as yet found his feet and Downer was somewhat indolent, so that their undoubted strength was not put forth at this sitting. Far other was the position of Victoria, whose delegates found themselves an unpopular minority and almost in isolation from the first. Her markets were shut against all, instead of open like those of New South Wales. Her Protectionist policy angered the Free Traders and did not appeal to their fellow-Protectionists in other colonies. Her radicalism rendered her specially repugnant to all the Conservatives, while the hereditary rivalry of New South Wales deprived her of support when she was most entitled to expect it. She had little or nothing to yield to her neighbours and was regarded as committed to any scheme of union they might please to frame.

To these heavy handicaps were added many others of a personal nature. Her delegates were practically all new men to the remaining delegates and were known to have been returned upon a ticket. Unfortunately even the able among them had no gifts of humour, no social good fellowship, and no distinction enabling them to win friends or followers. Turner's good qualities as a working member did not at first appear and there was nothing in his manners or address to recommend him to the vigilant critics, who saw him not only overshadowed but consenting to be overshadowed everywhere by Reid, and without the presence of Kingston or the style of Braddon. He looked and spoke like a busy little shopkeeper and being pushed forward by unwise colleagues to seize the earliest occasion of speech, delivered an elaborate catalogue of radical proposals just as he would have read a list of goods and chattels at a Sale. He was hastily classed as a mere speaking-tube of a very commonplace character, and practically ignored. That he accepted this treatment with perfect

indifference was mistaken for another evidence of his inferiority, surprise being continually expressed that such a mediocrity could be Premier of Victoria. Isaacs was still more unfortunate in the impression he created, for though his acuteness and research soon won remark, his endeavour to command attention by force and his constant appeal to the general principles of democracy fell flat upon his hearers. As this became apparent, smarting under the injustice though resolutely repressing every sign of sensitiveness, he rather increased his first mistake of talking to his constituents by almost confining himself to such matters as would appeal to them. He thus drifted hopelessly out of touch with the Convention and [with] the Constitutional Committee where in a positive manner which seemed arrogant and with a warmth which appeared to be dictation, he laid down the law to his hearers so offensively that they retorted upon him bitterly and rose against him in revolt. Astonished at this unexpected development but not deterred, and too proud to seek sympathy from friend or foe, he took his way alone along a very unpleasant path. Neither he [n]or any of his colleagues took much part in the social festivities of the time and consequently became little better acquainted with their brother delegates when most of them had fallen into friendly groups. So far as Higgins took any action, it was in opposition to the rest of his colleagues and to the rest of the Convention so that he began to be reckoned a mere irreconcilable and the conjoint influence of Turner, Isaacs and Higgins gave the Victorian delegation an unfortunate reputation from which it never recovered during this session, and which was made notorious by a painful incident when the Constitutional Committee decided to remit its conclusions to a Drafting Committee to be put into the form of a Bill.

The Committee would necessarily consist of lawyers and necessarily Barton would be one. The number would be limited to three and the other two chosen from the neighbouring colonies. Kingston for South Australia and Isaacs for Victoria were obviously designated for the position, both by capacity and position and both became candidates. When Downer was nominated against Kingston it was regarded as a piece of party action which could not succeed. O'Connor was named also and his personal popularity sufficed to explain this. Lewis of Tasmania declined the contest and the Western Australians followed suit. The candidates therefore were Barton, Kingston, Isaacs, Downer and O'Connor, and they were balloted for accordingly. Sir Richard Baker again gratified his bitter enmity to Kingston by conducting a cabal against him while affecting to be concerned only in ousting Isaacs because of his aggressive conduct, and indeed one or two South Australians to support O'Connor. Some other Conservative members were induced to strike out Kingston in favour of

Downer and as a result Barton, Downer and O'Connor were returned giving two members to the always predominating New South Wales by the defeat of the Premier of South Australia and the Attorney-General of Victoria. Able as Downer and O'Connor undoubtedly were, they were no abler and less experienced than Kingston who was a born draftsman and Isaacs who was a most searching critic. Their defeat was occasioned purely by personal motives and from personal dislike and was brought about by a plot discreditable to all engaged in it. The unhappy incident had an injurious effect upon Isaacs, whose hostility to the Bill preceded its appearance and was but partially conquered by his splendid self-restraint and it was a direct insult to the President of the Convention who was shown what treatment would have been accorded him in his own election but for Victorian support. For this Victoria was now punished by exclusion from the Committee altogether, a result that would have been impossible to such a colony, unpopular as its policy was, had it not been for the marked unpopularity which its delegates had aroused. Barton himself, though not a party to the plot, was aware of it and rejoiced in its success, because being a man of strong friendships he found collaboration with the two men out of the whole Convention who were his most intimate friends extremely pleasant. But even in consenting to such personal feelings, though he did not like Kingston and cordially disliked Isaacs, he fell short of the obligations of his high and honourable position. It was by no act of his own but he could and ought to have forbidden it and would have furthered the fortunes of the Bill if he had sacrificed his affections upon its altar. Neither O'Connor nor Downer did more than concur as Barton did, but they too would have taken higher ground if they had resisted temptation. Isaacs' tendency to minute technical criticism was sharpened so as to bring him not infrequently into collision with the Committee when the measure came on for debate, and though this diminished with time it reappeared at the very close of the proceedings and threatened the adoption of the measure by his Ministry. The effect of the indignity to him was to still further alter the attitude of most of the Victorian delegates and to render them even more careful to subordinate themselves and their colony. Instead of moving amendments they induced others to undertake their carriage and in every way sought to mitigate the animus so evident against them by discreet self-suppression. No other delegation laboured under such a disability and though not entirely harmonious among themselves, and only holding third place in point of debating ability, they certainly exhibited more patience and diplomacy under fire than any of the others, and before the close of the session had sensibly improved their position. For one thing the sincerity of their Federalism was transparent and though this was mistakenly ascribed

to the necessities of their colony, it shone out amid the doubts and divergencies which gradually arose so as to win for them on this account the confidence of the whole of their colleagues. They might be radical but as it became clearer that unlike South Australia which had its eye upon the river waters and traffic of New South Wales and unlike New South Wales which desired a financial settlement to suit itself, though it must be disastrous to less prosperous colonies, the patient attitude of the Victorians was gradually brought into relief and their alliance sought by the contending parties. No one Victorian came conspicuously to the front above his fellows but the whole delegation by slow and steady stages under these favouring circumstances began to be conceded the authority which ought to have [been] theirs from the first. Not that this was recognised in South Australia where the newspapers, partly under influence of press representatives of Victorian Conservatism, and partly because they recognised in them the most determined antagonists to the Confederate principles, were consistently hostile. They too paid some court to the New South Wales delegates who held the same views as the Victorians but there was no sympathy whatever exhibited in any quarter for their nearest neighbours, so that summing up the situation as a whole, it may be said that except perhaps in the case of Tasmania whose delegation was divided on the test question of the amendment of money bills by the Senate, no colony as such exercised less influence or possessed so little favour, as Victoria. Even Western Australia, because its representatives voted as a man and its trade was very valuable to South Australia, was more courted and in a sense more influential.

It would be unjust to Mr Reid to say that he created the situation but he certainly appreciated and utilised it to the full. New South Wales shone like the sun in the heavens rejoicing in her strength and in the plaudits of all beholders, while Victoria if she appeared at all proved but a pale and changeful reflection of [her] glory. At a very early stage of the proceedings he executed his first volte-face and while at the outset the most eager supporter of a forward policy which should conclude the Convention's work so as to allow the Premiers to leave for England in good time, he no sooner realised that an adjournment was possible and that it would be to Sydney, than he commenced to dwell upon the necessity for the inclusion of Queensland and the unwisdom of any undue haste that might prevent her from coming in. Those colleagues of his who always contended that he had simply adopted the Federal movement to serve his own electoral ends were at once upon the alert, believing that they recognised the beginning of an attempt on his part to wreck the agitation. They were only reconciled to the adjournment when it became clearly inevitable. The inner side of the

Committees was afterwards so well indicated in public debates that it is unnecessary to deal with it here. Barton, with less coolness than Griffith who was occasionally splenetic when hard pressed, took as he did the real burden of the work but the debates on this occasion were longer, fiercer and more oratorical than in Sydney. We had a Bill before us instead of resolutions and it was criticised phrase by phrase. Kingston, though more active than Parkes had been, spoke rarely and briefly. Baker utilised all his opportunities, since as Chairman of Committees he must be silent in the Convention. Downer, Deakin and Quick were more active than in public. Reid and Turner occasionally attended, though mainly occupied on the Financial Committee where the whole scheme elaborated by Turner was upset by Reid, who rollicked in this privacy as a hippopotamus might if he had climbed into a ferry boat and was determined to upset it unless given his own way. He obtained it so completely and with such adroitness that Turner practically never recovered his self-confidence and realised his inferiority in sophistry and subtlety so keenly, that he could hardly ever be persuaded to meet him in any conference again and required much stimulus and assured support before he would consent to enter into any negotiation with him, so powerful was his personality and so supreme was he by the consent of all his fellows. The one other piece of private and effective work was accomplished on the trip to Broken Hill, where by the efforts of the Victorians, Zeal, Higgins and Deakin, a sufficient number of the Tasmanians were satisfied that they must be content to allow the Senate to make suggestions and not amendments in money Bills unless they wished to shipwreck the whole Bill. Barton, O'Connor and Wise had already strengthened their friends in this matter and by this last success the peril was just avoided and no more. Neither Mr Reid nor his Ministerial colleagues lifted a finger or took the slightest pains to assist the Bill in any particular by personal exertion during the very trying days and weary nights during which it was threatened by Conservative influences in South Australia.

13 Sydney and Melbourne, 1897–1898

WHEN WE REASSEMBLED in Sydney in September 1897 it was not only a change of scene and of climate but of the whole spirit, temper and attitude of the Convention. Much had happened in the interval—the detailed discussion of the draft Bill in the several Parliaments and in the press; the visit of the Premiers to the mother country where probably some influential persons intimated to the more conservative among them the wisdom of concessions to the popular Chamber, and finally the determination of some who had resisted concessions in South Australia on the ground that the time had not arrived for granting them, but who were now* willing to go even further than they had originally intended. The most influential of these was Mr Holder who, shaking off his former Confederate ideals, became a warm Federalist prepared to subordinate provincial jealousies to national liberalism. Mr James of Western Australia was a typical example of less prominent but equally decisive development. Undoubtedly the surroundings were not without their influence, of which indeed the more clear-sighted Conservatives like Downer publicly complained. The delegates from the less populous colonies were severed from their supporters and, sensible of the wealth, population and public feeling of a great metropolis, were visibly weakened in their antagonism. As a consequence, instead of the effort now being on the part of the Liberal element to arouse feeling in their favour, it required to be made by the Conservatives to rally their forces against the onward rush of amendments of a radical character.

But for the uncertain attitude of Reid, who had evidently not even then made up his mind as to what he ought to insist upon, even more would have been accomplished; but while abstaining from all canvassing or exercise of influence privately by which he might have smoothed the way, he alternately temporised and threatened in public, no one knowing how far he was in earnest or what his ultimate demands would be. The Bill was immensely liberalised, but largely owing to his wavering and bad generalship the work done was not as thorough as it might have been.

What transpired in Sydney is faithfully exhibited in the ‘Hansard’ report of the debates and demands no detail. The change in the relative importance of the delegations steadily continued. South Australia being now more decisively divided, Kingston, Holder and Glynn adopting the national Federal principle openly diminished the resistance offered by Gordon and Cockburn; it lost its momentum as a delegation though its members remained in the front rank of debate—Symon especially

improving his individual position by his fine oratory, though his concessions to liberal demands cost him the confidence of Forrest whose legal conscience keeper he had been in Adelaide, and helped in this way to hamstring the forces of Western Australia. The line of demarcation in the New South Wales group also began to declare itself with ominous distinctness, Barton, O'Connor, Wise, McMillan, Abbott and Walker clustering apart from the three Ministers. But it was Reid himself who inflicted the severest blows upon the delegation by his obvious want of grip of the situation and his bad temper. Though chief host of the visitors and chief representative of Sydney, he contrived to alienate all the respect and sense of obligation which were tendered him on these scores. Not only did he talk to the galleries but turned to them as if ignoring the convention altogether, delivering hustings speeches in which there were more coarsenesses and personalities than arguments. Cheap in style though effective, they were worse in manner than in matter. It may have been the solid, sober, studious demeanour of Barton, heart and soul devoted to his task, always at his post, and treated with the most marked respect and admiration by all his colleagues—so pre-eminently the chief and leader of this great intercolonial gathering that Sydney and New South Wales looking on could not fail to be impressed by it and to recognise that its Premier in the opinion of his peers was not even occupying a second or a third place—that stung him into his indiscretions. Or it may have been his own sense of impotence in constitutional constructiveness or criticism, the manner in which his legal readings or comments on principles were met and swept aside by the chiefs of the Convention—but whatever the cause in his own colony, his own capital and his own constituency he fell from his high estate and ceased to be either the most prominent person in the Convention or even in the New South Wales delegation. O'Connor had won the confidence and Wise the admiration of the delegates far more conspicuously. His party organ the **Daily Telegraph** did its best for him but the broad result which could not be concealed in the public sittings in Sydney was his failure.

The divisions of the South Australian and New South Wales delegations relatively enhanced the position of the Victorians who, even when Higgins supported by local radicals came forward more boldly with his proposals to substitute an unified democracy for a federal union in which the States should continue to be entities, remained as a whole in harmony upon most of the questions submitted. Further than this as Reid's brilliancy was obscured Turner's sterling qualities of fairness, thoroughness, sincerity and reliability shone by contrast, placing him in a far more dignified place. Isaacs too with magnificent self-restraint subordinated his sense of

personal injustice and won high appreciation by the keenness of his legal criticisms and the fullness of his general knowledge. The demeanour of the delegation as a whole was still subdued and patient, so that in this respect also flattering comparisons were drawn between their restraint and consideration when seen side by side with the domineering insolence of Reid. These favouring circumstances assisted to balance the superior abilities of the delegations of South Australia and New South Wales so as to place them in point of effectiveness upon about the same level. The Sydney press and the **Daily Telegraph** in particular were unfriendly to Victoria, as indeed was much of the public opinion of their city, but inside the Convention these outside voices had but small influence.

In Melbourne the Sydney experiences were repeated with very slight variation. The fierce contest between South Australia and New South Wales in regard to the rivers enabled Victoria's position to still more improve, though the agreement between her delegates was less complete. Despite occasional infirmities of temper and undue though natural impatience. Barton's authority steadily increased. The tactics of Reid which had become somewhat more systematically and consistently provincial, forced him into some difficulties from which he emerged as a New South Wales delegate instead of a leader of the Convention but these lapses were few and inconsiderable while the general standard of his conduct was high and worthy of his trust. O'Connor's reputation for judicial ability and solid workmanship grew increasingly as it deserved. Downer's native insouciance asserted itself when the work wearied him but he too advanced in favour with all, though not to the same degree as O'Connor. Holder by patient thoroughness had come to rank with Turner as the financial adviser by whom all were swayed. Kingston under severe provocation maintained at all times the dignity of the Presidency and his own prestige. Baker proved almost a perfect Chairman of Committees, his one weakness being a delicacy in keeping eminent transgressors against the standing orders in check. The chief and almost the sole offender was Reid who, having failed in all his attempts to induce the Victorians to wrestle with him upon their several rivalries, turned upon the South Australians, the Tasmanians and the Western Australians in turn with studied offensiveness and vulgar jibes until he who had entered the Convention at Adelaide its most popular, most influential, and most generous leader left it the most unpopular, least trusted and least respected of all its members. His career had gone full circle, in the old phrase, or rather more accurately a half-circle from the zenith to the nadir. Conscious of the fact though only half-conscious of the causes of his decline, he left it a thoroughly disappointed and still undecided man. He always boasted that he never made up his mind until an

emergency requiring action arose. True to his customary policy he had never made up his mind during the Convention as to what was the irreducible minimum of his demands and when he returned to Sydney it was to bury himself in a solitude where he could get in touch with those who could supply him with the decision he lacked. The **Daily Telegraph** had made and could unmake him and the paper declared against the Bill. Yet there was a large body of public opinion strongly in its favour and Barton with his laurels of leadership upon him was a possible Opposition Chief of a very different type from Lyne, who had already declared against the measure. It was simply from the incapacity to make up his mind, that is to determine which was the safer course for him to pursue, coupled with the ambition to take some step which would enable him to oust Barton and assume the leadership for himself, that naturally and indeed inevitably led up to his final adhesion to the famous 'Yes-No' policy which has become historical.

Whatever justification he might have claimed for his attitude, if it had been forced upon him under stress of a rivalry that had left him no alternative, was removed by a frank and explicit offer of loyal support for his leadership and full recognition of it at every stage made to him in Melbourne by Barton and O'Connor for themselves and for those like Wise and McMillan in their own colony, like Quick and Deakin in Victoria, like Kingston and Holder in South Australia, who put the cause of union above and beyond all party aims and who were bound by the undertaking then tendered. He declined the proffer upon the declared ground that too many of his party were opposed to the Bill as it stood, and announced his [in]tention of keeping his hands free; a clear intimation that he intended to be guided only by what he believed to be his own interest and not at all by any sympathy with the Federal cause. Immeasurably superior in ability to Lyne, his policy, though better disguised, was equally contemptible and he walked always with one eye upon the movements of his rival, determined at all hazards to avoid being supplanted by him in the Premiership. Lyne was according to his lights and tortuous disposition absolutely and honestly anti-Federal. Reid was neither federal nor anti-Federal but either at need and as far as possible both at once. It is difficult indeed to describe so extraordinary a man without appearing to caricature him. Yet it would seem as if many of his characteristics had attached to an illustrious predecessor for it could be said of him with absolute truth that 'In the foremost rank of orators a place must certainly be assigned to—(Reid). He was not at his best in the House (in the Convention). His coarseness, violence and cunning were seen to the worst advantage in what was (after all) an assemblage of gentlemen. His powers of ridicule, sarcasm and

invective, his dramatic and sensational predilections, required another scene for their effective display The raciest wit gave point to the most irrelevant personalities and cogency to the most illogical syllogisms; the most daring perversions of truth and justice were driven home by appeals to the emotions.’* Reid was a less fiery, a less lofty, a more colloquial, a more prosaic O’Connell but far more truly his son than anyone who has ever borne his name.

Symon scarcely maintained in Melbourne the oratorical primacy which he had approached in Sydney and was certainly surpassed by Wise in his elaborate attack upon the Referendum—perhaps the most exhaustive and ornate speech of the Convention. McMillan had been most in evidence in Adelaide. Carruthers was at odds with Reid who, knowing him to be in an embarrassing situation owing to local attacks, did not hesitate to publicly humiliate him. Gordon’s fight on behalf of the waters of the Murray tributaries, elaborate and ingenious, eloquent and powerful, was somewhat marred by its partisanship. Glynn, with greater assiduity of research, splendid and carefully polished diction and stiff delivery, never caught or kept the ear of an Assembly, like all popular bodies jealous and antagonistic to scholarship and style, unless forced upon them by more practical merits. Symon and he laboured alike under the lack of political experience and office responsibility. Cockburn fell back into the ruck from whence Henry of Tasmania emerged in financial issues. Douglas and Zeal, the two veterans, displayed the testiness of vigorous age and the force of character which had pushed them on. Sir John Forrest was to the fore as leader of the stalwart Conservatives in resisting with undaunted courage and inexhaustible persistency common-sense objections to every innovation. Braddon and himself resented with power and self-command the violences of Reid and proved themselves unsleeping watchdogs of the interests of their colonies. The Victorians on the whole gained ground up to the last. Turner became more trusted for his business qualities, Isaacs more appreciated for his unflagging energy, industry and acumen, and Trenwith for his bold, broad common sense and grip of essentials. Yet of all, Higgins by his independent isolation, his courage in fighting against desperate odds, his unflinching devotion to doctrinaire principles and his capacity for clear reasoning made up most leeway of all. It was solid intellectual power coupled with force of character that brought him to the front and kept him there. Quick, too earnest in his feeling and too sincere in his loyalty to do himself justice in debate watched over the Bill in its infancy as if it had been his own child. He too was respected and trusted by all. The fact that the Victorians were Federalists in heart brought them more abreast of their abler rivals, so that with the weight of their colony behind them they

finished about abreast of the abler delegations of their rivals. The Convention had lived long enough to become a Parliament and to manifest that distinctive faculty which enables representative assemblies to exactly gauge their members, of course only by the standards of its own needs and aims. Men can be too great to be so measured or too handicapped by circumstances, physical or social, to get placed in the rank of their attainments. Orators like Burke were above the House of Commons standard, philosophers like Mill, men of letters like Lytton, or Birrell. Statesmen can be too profound and too wise or far-seeing for their associates—Tennyson, Spencer, Martineau, T. H. Green, George Meredith would have been only brilliant failures in debate. The House would have had little or no use for them. But for its own special purposes and within its own sphere it is an infallible judge. At the close of the Convention, without assigning their precise individual order even in their colonies, it may be said that the first rank of men of influence at the final sitting when staying power had asserted itself consisted of Barton, O'Connor, Reid, Kingston, Holder, Turner, Isaacs and Forrest. Close behind them as a second rank came Braddon, Wise, Downer, Symon, Trenwith and Higgins.

* Deakin wrote 'not', but the next sentence indicates that Mr Brookes was correct in amending this to 'now'.

* [G. W. E. Russell], **Collections and Recollections** [London, 1898], p. 161 [Deakin's note].

14 The Age and the A.N.A., 1898

THE VICTORIAN SITUATION at the time of the final closing of the Convention was so remarkable that it merits some notice since, if studied from the public point of view, it may soon come to be inexplicable. The chief factor in the crisis was the **Age** whose proprietor and staff alike were roused to resentment by the defeat of the democratic proposals for the Referendum and were prepared to make these their justification for an attack upon the measure. One real source of their dread was the apprehension that the paper would lose in the Commonwealth the immense influence it possessed in Victoria and preferred to reign in the State rather than be but a powerful factor in the Commonwealth. The other source of apprehension lay in the probable change of the fiscal system likely to follow when the Federal Parliament framed its first tariff. The policy of Protection had been the cardinal doctrine of the paper for many years and it was inclined to refuse as inadequate any duties short of those then existing in Victoria, which were higher than any elsewhere in Australia. The Melbourne manufacturers however were willing to face some reduction in order to gain larger markets and without their encouragement the **Age** could scarcely begin a crusade. For the agricultural community however the larger markets had less attraction seeing that in meat, grain and timber they were certain to be affected by imports from neighbouring colonies, while their gains could only be in root crops and dairy produce. The stock breeders in particular felt that lower prices must rule when the border duties on cattle and sheep were withdrawn and they at once responded to the **Age** appeal. The difficulty with the paper was that the duties it desired to retain were impossible under Federation and though after consideration they were prepared to reject the whole scheme in the interest of the stock breeders and grain growers, they had so committed themselves to the cause of union that it was too late to turn back on grounds like these which must have been foreseen from the very first. The jealousy of New South Wales was an element which existed in the journal to a greater degree than outside and an endeavour was made to represent the settlement of the rivers, railways and finance questions as injurious to Victoria while unduly favourable to the Sydney side. This was more effective with the provincialists and consequently before the close of the Melbourne sessions, the **Age** had practically decided to defeat the Commonwealth Bill by whatever means presented themselves, under cover of a plea that if its acceptance were postponed it could be amended in the interests of New South Wales and Victoria as against the less populous colonies and of

Victoria as against New South Wales. The design was so improbable that it cannot have satisfied even those who framed it. The proposal that the Convention should frame a tariff for the Future Union was in the first place impracticable, owing to want of information upon which an Australian tariff could be based, again impracticable because of the months that must be consumed upon its details by men not elected with any authority to deal with such an intricate problem, and yet finally impossible because such a tariff as would be acceptable to both New South Wales and Victoria at the outset could not be contrived, and the proposal in every aspect then was aimed at Union altogether. The paper by degrees prepared itself, storing up causes of complaint and objection and accumulating demands which could not be conceded, magnifying every danger, minimising every advantage and representing the proceedings of the Convention and of even the Victorian representatives solely with a view to this end.

The Ministry depended for its existence upon the **Age** and betrayed no more reluctance in accepting its policy from the paper in this regard than it had done in all minor local affairs. The Cabinet did not doubt but that it was as all-powerful in this connection as in most others and offered no resistance when they were given the cue. This was amazing unless the characters of the two leading Ministers are remembered. Turner had no enthusiasms except for economy and to him the Commonwealth Bill appealed no more on the emotional side than a measure for municipal rating. He had taken it up because it was part of his business to do so. He relied for support upon the **Age** and upon the labour and radical wing in Parliament which was offended by the rejection of the Referendum. It would clearly be impossible for the Ministry to live if opposed both by the paper and this wing, so that without a pang and without a struggle he prepared himself to yield the Bill. He would have hesitated longer but for the influence of Isaacs, which ran decisively and strongly in the same direction. He was the Ministerial channel of communication with the **Age** so exclusively that even his colleagues in the Convention, Turner and Peacock, complained when in both articles and paragraphs the paper supported him as against them when they differed, as they did on several occasions. From the first, Isaacs had cast in his lot with the newspaper, had spared no pains to ingratiate himself with its proprietor and the staff and exercised no small influence in pressing the **Age** itself into antagonism to the Bill. He had not forgotten the manner in which he had been publicly and privately humiliated in Adelaide and could not overlook the fact that in all the sittings his amendments and criticisms were received with scant consideration, unless they commended themselves to the drafting Committee. He was a strong-willed as well as a self-willed man, who

under his exterior of calmness keenly felt these indignities, especially those to which he was subjected in Melbourne under the eyes of their parliamentary supporters and consequently, loyal as he was to his leader, did not shrink from using the paper against him as well as against his opponents in the Convention. They resented this deeply but could not cope with him in strategy. In the **Age** he stiffened the determination to attack the Bill, supplying their article writer and reporters with all the points that could be urged against it, while in the Cabinet he again employed all his arts of special pleading, threats and his untiring energy to carry his colleagues by the same road. Peacock, a Federalist before all else, resisted to the best of his power and for a time sustained the Premier, but at last when Turner declared definitely for the **Age** he too collapsed, and the whole team prepared for opposition except Peacock, who most reluctantly and with great regret still resisted the colleagues he was not prepared to leave. The closing days of the session therefore saw not only incomparably the most powerful paper in Victoria but also the Ministry and the three official delegates of the Convention together with Higgins and the labour and radical wing, definitely determined to defeat the Bill. Isaacs openly stated to Graham and other country members that they intended to declare against it and that it was thoroughly unacceptable to the colony. The outlook was serious and the conflict promised to be hard. Turner was in extremely bad health and about to submit to an operation. He was weaker than he otherwise might have been and Isaacs acting in his stead was continually closeted with the **Age** article writer in the Ministers' room during the last sittings of the Convention where they prepared together the explosion that was to follow the promulgation of the Bill. Reid's attitude was encouraging to all opponents of the measure and with both governments against the measure and both great papers (the **Daily Telegraph** in Sydney was for other reasons already even more openly hostile than the **Age**), it was clear that, doomed in these two colonies or indeed in either, the Bill was doomed altogether and any effort for Federation would require to be begun over again in some indefinite future.

Only those acquainted with Victorian politics from 1875 could realise the enormous influence exercised by the **Age** upon its 100,000 readers or at all events the great majority of them. **The Times** in its palmy days was not more omnipotent in London nor the **Tribune** of Horace Greeley in New York. Its opposition meant that it would be almost hopeless to attempt to obtain the necessary 50,000 votes. Then the Ministry had but lately been returned to Parliament with a majority of nearly forty in a House of ninety-five and was still in the full flush of its prosperity. With its official standing and its members as official opponents of the Bill, its chances of even

securing a majority of votes polled were small. But there are occasions in democratic Communities when all the powers that be are made to feel their subjection to the popular will, and this was one of them. The Government attitude was closely watched and clearly understood by a small group of six or eight young members of Parliament either belonging to the Australian Natives' Association or associated with it. Finding that Deakin and Quick at all events were prepared to champion the Bill at all hazards and against all adversaries, they met and agreed to united action. Their first step was to privately allow Peacock to understand that his opposition to the Bill meant a severance of all the ties which had untied him to them and to the Federal cause—a prospect from which he at once recoiled. They further conveyed to the cabinet through him, their resolution to make this a test question and if necessary to go into direct opposition to the Ministry in the Assembly upon it, making it the occasion of a final and irrevocable breach. Seeing that these young men included Mr Hume Cook, Mr Fink, Mr Kirton, Mr McCay, Dr Salmon, Mr Toutcher, Mr Watt and Mr Hamilton, who contained a large percentage of the ability and promise of the House, this intimation was serious for it was clear that their example would be followed by at least as many more Ministerial supporters and threaten at once the life of the Cabinet. Peacock at once declared his loyalty to be unimpaired and Turner relapsed into silence and meditation. The first blow had been struck. Isaacs alone declined to be intimidated and declared for the **Age** and its policy. Just then the time for the Annual Meeting of the Australian Natives' Association most opportunely arrived. It happened to be held in Bendigo and as most of the young members referred to belonged to its Board of Directors, a great effort was determined upon to capture this organization. Foreseeing the importance of this assembly, Isaacs and Higgins accepted invitations to be present. But the patriotic feeling was too strong. Toutcher, the President, who had been alarmed by Isaacs, might have hung back but in the hands of Cook, Kirton, Salmon and Watt neither he nor Peacock had any escape and they carried a recommendation from the Board in favour of the acceptance of the Bill. Deakin was sent for to the **Age** office before he left for Bendigo and subjected to an argument with the chief members of its editorial staff, who urged him to use his influence in moderating the anticipated action of the Natives' Conference in favour of the Bill. Its members however, who had been for years making this the one plank of their political platform, welcomed and unanimously approved the decision of the Directors. Still they almost trembled at their temerity and the Banquet the same night afforded Isaacs and Higgins an opportunity to plead for delay. It was in vain. Isaacs received an angrily hostile reception, mainly due to the manner in which he insisted upon

proceeding with his carefully prepared plea for hesitation and further consideration coupled with attacks upon the measure, even after he knew the Conference and those at the Dinner were against him. Higgins, though better received because franker and because less was expected from him than from Isaacs who was Australian-born, made little or no impression. Purves and Deakin made passionate appeals to them to seize the opportunity to leap to the front and make the measure theirs, and the gathering which contained sixty or seventy delegates from all parts of the colony, rapturously responded and pledged themselves to the task in a scene of the wildest enthusiasm. They spoke for the youth of the colony and appealed to its heart so that the Banquet created an immense sensation. The second blow was struck.

When the Convention held its final sitting a day or two after, the colony was ringing with the Bendigo declaration of war. Turner was ill and Isaacs, who faced the situation with the same defiant resolution, spoke in a more diplomatic manner though without retreating from his position. But meanwhile other influences had been brought to bear upon Trenwith, who had already decided to support the measure, to speak at once and he did so with effect. This evidence that the one labour representative was satisfied to take the Bill on the part of the working men of Victoria, coupled with the evidence that a band of young politicians were prepared to join hands with him and with the Australian Natives' Association went home to the hearts of the people everywhere. Trenwith's adherence was of the highest value as a reply to the **Age** declarations that the measure had been wholly shaped in a Conservative direction, and consequently on the very threshold of the contest, rendered this contention but partially tenable. The third blow was struck.

Without an instant's delay the Federal League and the Australian Natives' Association commenced to address meetings and prepare for a popular campaign. The Ministry hung back in silence. The **Age** suddenly wavered and, feeling the tide of public opinion running strongly against it, almost in spite of itself retracted some of its censures and while sneering at the patriotic enthusiasm of the young members of the Australian Natives' Association went so far as to admit that from a democratic point of view there was after all nothing to censure in the Bill. Its fault was that it was a bad bargain for Victoria and not just to vested interests. After this the paper relapsed into sulky silence, endeavoured to pose as impartial while finding all possible fault with the measure and at last gave a qualified dilatory and half-hearted declaration of acceptance of the Bill. The Ministry felt that the current was running from them, formally adopted the Bill and stepped among its warmest supporters and headed the battle on its behalf. A

determined struggle against it was undertaken by Higgins, whose temper at last got the better of his judgment under the strain and whom the prominence and popularity he acquired with the Labour party carried for a time off his feet, but whose wonderful courage, endurance, resource and force of will won him a high place as leader of a forlorn hope. Nothing succeeds like success. Men of all parties joined hands to support the cause of Union which in Victoria attained an overwhelming victory. It would be idle to attempt to conjecture what might have been, if the few ardent Federalists of the Convention had Wavered or if the handful of young members and the Australian Natives' Association had not intervened just when and where they did, courageously burning their boats behind them. On the other hand but for the dangers, the Bill if it had been accepted at all in Victoria would have been adopted with far less éclat, with far less patriotic feeling and with far less emphasis than was the case when it became clear that the labour of years was imperilled and, even at the eleventh hour, the National Cause in imminent danger of defeat. (30.7.98)

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* Deakin's date, in the MS.

15 Federation Approved, 1898–1899

WHEN THE COMMONWEALTH BILL was submitted to the electors in 1898 there followed platform campaigns which in New South Wales and Victoria in particular were the keenest ever witnessed. The latter colony was thoroughly well canvassed and owing to the energy of the Federal League embracing organizations of every political complexion and of the Australian Natives' Association whose members with hardly an exception became the active emissaries of union everywhere, a superb victory resulted. In New South Wales the Federal Party was to some extent paralysed by the attitude of Mr Reid and by the vivid provincialism of Sydney, inflamed almost to madness by the extraordinary efforts of the **Daily Telegraph** which shrank from no suggestion, insinuation or assertion that could stimulate the hate, fear, cupidity, jealousy, envy or animus of its readers. In spite of these odds the Federalists headed by Mr Barton, though poorer in funds and richer in scruples than their antagonists, maintained a most gallant and spirited conflict. Mr R. E. O'Connor, Mr Wise and Mr McMillan spent themselves heroically in the cause with the result that a majority was secured in the colony as a whole, though not in Sydney and not the [8]0,000 required for the acceptance of the measure. South Australia and Tasmania joined Victoria by large votes but the mother colony remaining aloof, the movement came practically to an end. The battle was lost. The work of the Convention seemed fruitless. An alliance between Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania was not of the question. The anti-Federalists everywhere rejoiced. Their victory seemed to them complete and final.

The Federalists of New South Wales however, under their trusted leaders, rallied immediately and resolved to continue the struggle. Time they felt was upon their side and what was more, with a general election close at hand, the fact that a majority at the poll had votes for union enabled them to take heart of grace. They closed their ranks, maintained their organizations and began at once to take ground in readiness for the coming dissolution. The man who had wrecked the cause was however no less alive to his perils than they were. He dared not allow them a monopoly of the Federal vote and accordingly declared for an amended Bill. So transparent was the trick that South Australia and Tasmania declined his invitation to a Conference of Premiers to consider the situation. He proposed that Queensland should be asked to attend though within the week its Premier, Mr Byrnes, had announced that the question of Union could afford to be discussed for some years before a definite decision need

be given upon it. The Victorian Government, acting with the advice of Mr Deakin, on the other hand thought it desirable to give him an opportunity of stating his case and undesirable to allow him to contend that it was because their design upon New South Wales had been defeated that chagrin prevented the other colonies from even listening to his proposals. Sir John Forrest also opposed the Conference because he too wished a definite decision postponed for some years. Mr Reid's position was then rendered more serious by the determination of the Opposition to sink the fiscal issue and appeal to the country as Federalists solely upon the Convention Bill. He began to prepare for another change of front. A caustic article from his antagonist, Wise, appeared in the **National Review** for July 1899 trenchantly painting his Federal career. At the outset in 1891 he had been an anti-Federalist in opposition to Sir Henry Parkes, and only when it became necessary to deprive him of the leadership did he himself espouse the cause, clutching at the Corowa proposal for a popularly elected Convention as the means. He employed this in a leisurely way so as to maintain his Ministerial position in New South Wales and as he became after Parkes's death the Federal leader of the leading colony, was ardent in his loyalty until first Mr Barton's position above him on the poll and in the Convention robbed his advocacy of all zest. The poor figure he made as a contributor to the framing of the Constitution assisted to alter his attitude. His visit to England at the Jubilee led him to regard the post of Agent-General as one to which he could retire with profit and pleasure when his Premiership seemed likely to draw to a close. He returned to Australia believing that the Convention would fail and at the Sydney and Melbourne Conventions did his best to ensure its failure. Afraid to altogether oppose the Bill when submitted to the electors, he wished it to be defeated and felt sure that it would be defeated without his taking an active part in its overthrow. As however popular enthusiasm grew and it became plain that Mr Barton, his one dreaded rival, Mr O'Connor, his ablest political opponent in the legislature, and Mr Wise, his pet personal antipathy, were likely to achieve a triumph in which he had no share, he threw off the mask, speaking more and more strongly against the Bill. That, in the teeth of the covert opposition and open dislike, a majority of the electors should support the Convention Bill came as a shock to his Ministry and to himself. With ignominious haste he once more tacked so as to sail with the wind and hence his declaration for the bill 'improved', upon which he faced the elections. He himself defeated Mr Barton who had chivalrously challenged him in his own constituency and Mr R. E. O'Connor was rejected owing to the Labour influence for the seat which he contested, but three of the Cabinet disappeared and his majority was seriously reduced.

He had already attacked Mr Barton personally more than once and soon after, with his colleagues at his heels, visited and canvassed against him for the seat which a friend had resigned in his favour, revealing by his bitterness and malice the meanness of the motives which had governed and continued to govern his Federal policy. When Barton was elected in spite of him, and chosen leader of the Opposition in spite of his endeavours to prevent it, he at once publicly bespoke his aid on behalf of the national cause—and received it.

Resolutions were proposed and carried in the New South Wales Parliament declaring for Union but requiring that the Bill should be amended in ten particulars of which five were material. The other colonies accepting this act as a pledge that New South Wales was prepared to join upon these terms, agreed to a Conference of Premiers in Melbourne for their consideration. The Victorian Convention delegates met in advance at the request of the Premier to advise him as to his attitude. It was unanimously agreed that the proposals to liberalise the Bill should be supported and even Higgins consented to the view that it would be useless to attack equal representations in the Senate or the counting of the electors by States, in a referendum dealing with proposed amendments of the Constitution. Reid came to the Conference trembling because of the danger of his position in New South Wales and the Conference at once felt that he was at their mercy. He brought with him as counsellors Mr Coghlan, the statist, as his adviser upon financial issues and Mr Garran, the author of **The Coming Commonwealth**, as his counsellor upon legal and constitutional matters. His own weakness was illustrated in the most remarkable way by his frequent withdrawals from his colleagues in order to consult Coghlan and Garran, who for that purpose were provided with an adjoining room. Often when a discussion appeared closed he would retire and after being closeted with them return freshly primed to reopen the debate. But if he was unable to make up his own mind he was equally unable to conceal the fact that he must needs accept whatever they were pleased to give him. All his attacks upon the Bill proved to have been merely tactical except the censure of the requirement of a three-fifths majority at joint sitting and the essential vote-catching proviso, that the capital should be in New South Wales and if possible in Sydney. In point of fact in the last resort he must have been content with the local bribe alone if it had not been the wish of a majority of the Premiers to take advantage of the situation and liberalise the measure before a second referendum and to justify taking it. Consequently the two important amendments, providing a simple majority at joint sittings and widening the power of amendment by allowing either House to remit an issue to the

electors, were adopted by them as much as by him. They were alterations desired, independently by and for their own sakes, by Turner and Kingston and to which Dickson assented to appease the Liberals of his colony. Braddon, like Reid, was prepared to take what he could get. Only Forrest opposed them. The alterations allowing the Federal Parliament after ten years the power of revising the Customs distribution and financial arrangements generally, and requiring the assent of electors before changes are made in a State's boundaries, were trifling variations of procedure which would have been so expressed at any time. Reid's one and only achievement was in securing the permanent capital for New South Wales. Turner's condition that it must be of at least 100 square miles and 100 miles distant from Sydney were suggested to him by Deakin. The securing of the first meeting of the Parliament for Melbourne was his own device. Reid even in this regard had practically to accept whatever he could get. If he had been a little more exigent, the last provision in favour of Melbourne would not have been insisted upon. The Victorians were quite prepared to have accepted a share of the parliamentary annual sittings pending the choice of a permanent capital and to have allowed Sydney a similar compliment and if necessary Brisbane and Adelaide as well. Reid's situation did not allow him any latitude, as became manifest when he presently accepted the rest of the Constitution just as it was. The many baits he had employed during the late campaign to arouse the suspicions, alarms and jealousies of the constituencies were now discarded without a struggle or a complaint. Forrest was equally insincere, for while pressing for special consideration for Western Australia he did not exert his utmost influence on their behalf. He wished for the concessions but was prepared to wait for them, not wishing to strengthen the case for the Bill in case it should pass in the eastern colonies. As a fact he was convinced that it would not be adopted in New South Wales and that in any case it would not be accepted in Western Australia. It was his desire to pose as a Federalist in his own colony as well as beyond but at the same time he aimed at delaying the union of the colonies for a few years and in Western Australia for five or ten years, even if she stood alone outside the Federation. The key to the whole position in the Conference was held by Dickson, whom Reid had proposed to use to further his own ends, regarding the consent of Queensland as entirely dependent upon his own. When asked his requirements at the very outset Dickson contented himself with the power to subdivide his colony for the Senatorial elections and this being promptly conceded, declared himself satisfied with whatever else his fellow-Premiers might agree. Seeing that the adhesion of New South Wales was still uncertain and Reid's future policy unpredictable even by himself,

this declaration was of the first importance. It not only allowed Turner and Kingston to have their way in their liberalising aim but rendered Reid's position and that of his colony too so isolated that he could not even haggle long over the details of his surrender. He had not obtained the abolition of the Braddon blot, or of the book-keeping, or of the principle of the return of the surplus, or the control of inland rivers, or the immunity of all money bills from Senatorial amendment, or the uniform appeal from State Courts, all of which he had proclaimed essentials of Union. He had got nothing more than his fellows thought fit and much less than they were prepared to concede if necessary. Dickson, though free from most of Reid's embarrassments was equally determined, though in a quieter way, to be the Federal leader in his colony. His adhesion, utterly unexpected by Forrest as by Reid, weakened both and overcame Sir John's strong objections to those provisions which he also detested. Not having the courage to stand alone he fell in with the policy of his fellow-Premiers and a unanimous decision of theirs became in this curious way the means of launching the Federal movement once more. Dickson's position was from a public point of view honourable, that of Turner, Kingston and Braddon was honourable, consistent and patriotic, that of Reid and Forrest was selfish and discreditable. They were dragged at the heels of their fellows, but in their agreement all was willingly forgotten and forgiven them.

The decline of his reputation [and] of his Ministerial strength coupled with his ambition to secure the Federal Premiership and to take Barton's place as leader of the movement in New South Wales led Reid to conduct the second Federal Referendum Campaign with characteristic vigour, capacity and effrontery. He did not hesitate to admit that his change of front was due to the fact that formerly Barton led and that now he himself was the chief figure in the fray and entitled therefore to the chief reward. His old allies of course bitterly upbraided him and his new allies regarded him distrustfully askance, but to such considerations he was comparatively indifferent. The Premiership of Australia would compensate for and cover all that led up to that eminence and induce the people to forget the devious ways by which he had been driven to accomplish the end he had so long sought to defeat. His platform addresses were far the brightest and most effective of the time but at the same time they scarcely produced the anticipated effect. The alterations made in the Bill in a democratic direction had detached from the anti-Federalists several of their most effective debaters. The Ministerial influence which was formerly adverse was now favourable. Federal feeling had been steadily growing and the slanders of the provincialists fell into the contempt bred of familiarity and reflection. The second referendum was a great victory in every colony, greater than its

predecessor and conclusive as to the feeling of the voters. Even the Legislative Council of New South Wales recognised that the battle was over, and the addresses to the Queen submitting the Bill to the British Parliament passed in every colony including Queensland where except for a visit paid by Mr Barton, the honours of carrying a colony hitherto unrepresented since 1891 lay first with Mr Dickson and Mr Philp and then with Mr Drake, Mr Higgs and the Brisbane **Courier**, always staunch to the cause.

There followed a backwash of a totally unexpected character and within a few months Mr Reid, Sir George Turner, Mr Kingston, Sir Edward Braddon and Mr Dickson were all ejected from office. After a very short interval Mr Holder in South Australia and Mr Philip in Queensland reconstructed the defeated Cabinet and Mr Dickson himself took office as lieutenant instead of leader. In these colonies as in Tasmania and Victoria the change was brought about from local reasons. The Turner Ministry fell because it had outlived its usefulness and its reputation. The fact that the new Premier, Mr Allan McLean, had been the leader of the country wing of the anti-Federalists was a mere coincidence. He was the ablest debater available to head the attack upon his old colleagues and hence his selection for a post which one or two others declined. Mr Reid however fell because the Federal Opposition owed him no allegiance, his own party were becoming weary of his tergiversations and the **Daily Telegraph** had been transformed into a furious enemy by his somersault back to the Bill. But his place was not taken by Mr Barton, who resigned the leadership of the Opposition in order that Mr Lyne might secure the support of members who found him a more malleable chief and more nearly akin to themselves. The anti-Federal feeling was against Reid sufficiently to turn the scale, because Lyne who openly opposed the Bill at the first Referendum while Reid did so in an underhand fashion, had again opposed it in its amended form at the second Referendum and though he had neither the ability nor platform power which rendered him at all formidable, as the ex-leader of the Opposition and of the Protectionists his name carried a certain weight. He had some estimable and some amiable qualities which attached his friends [to him] in private life and in personal relations. In public life, like Reid, he had but the one aim—his own aggrandisement. Reid's one consistency was his adherence to Free Trade, though his last Budget was regarded by the fiscal stalwarts among his supporters as a betrayal of its principles. Lyne's one consistency lay in adherence to Protection and though the necessity of opposing Reid doubtless counted for a good deal in hardening his faith, he appeared to be sincere in this regard. Beyond this his politics were a chaos and his career contemptible. Though a Tasmanian

born he appealed at all times to the narrowest Sydney and New South Wales provincialism by the pettiest and meanest acts and proposals. He was an anti-Federalist from the first except upon terms which should ensure the absolute supremacy of his own colony as a stepping-stone to his own elevation. He cut the sorriest figure of any member of the Convention and was one of the feeblest leaders of an Opposition ever beheld in Australia. Slow-witted, clumsy of speech and figure, suspicious to the last degree and parochial in every conception, he was little more scrupulous than Reid whose brilliancy, aptness and readiness in debate he set off to the utmost advantage, acting as his butt and chopping-block with a painful pertinacity, whose only merits were its patient endurance and dogged resistance. As an administrator and financier he was sounder in a plodding way than his dazzling rival, perhaps from sheer want of capacity to kite-fly with the same royal magnificence. His one idea of leadership was to obey his party and keep them together. Their principles were his and his one test of a policy was the votes it commanded. Weak and obstinate, stubborn and plastic, cunning but slow, the electors of New South Wales welcomed with cordiality if not with enthusiasm this drab, doleful and monotonous Premier as a relief because of his contrast with the scintillating insincerity of his jovial predecessor. Conservative by disposition and by opinion so far as he had any, he purchased the support of the Labour party and by the help of Mr Wise, who was his Attorney-General, and of Mr See, his Treasurer, continued to clutch the coveted keys of office in momentary terror lest he should lose them. Under an exterior of unpretentious plainness he cultivated the ambition of repaying the debts he owed to Barton who had placed him in power by either translating him out of politics or superseding him as opportunity might arise. He cherished no more regard for the ally who had saved the party than he did for his antagonist, Reid, who had so long mocked at him and at his paltry schemes for office which that dashing soldier of fortune foiled with derisive address for so many years. Neither to Reid nor Lyne did the Federalists remain under any real obligation. Aiming only at their own advantage, they rendered great services to the cause not for its sake but to serve themselves. The same reproach in some degree attached to Parkes and even to Turner at one crisis but in their case these were but aberrations and in Turner's was not based merely upon personal considerations. Parkes too was fired by an adequate conception of what Union must mean and by an honourable ambition to found it upon the broadest principles. Reid and Lyne would have founded it upon anything the electors wished, but only either under pressure of necessity or because of its promises of power. Forrest in his clumsier way used the movement for his own ends as well as those of

Western Australia. Dickson adopted it somewhat later. The Premiers are the chief figures with Mr Barton in the history of the movement but their part in it is by no means the most praiseworthy.

16 Delegates to England, 1900

WHEN IT BECAME CLEAR that the Commonwealth Bill would pass, Barton's friends proposed privately to the Government of Victoria through Deakin that he should be placed in charge of the Bill and sent to London to superintend its passage through Parliament. To this Sir George Turner declined to accede on the ground that no ambassador was required and that his presence might tempt proposals for amendment. The South Australian Government were understood to be equally unresponsive and as the suggestion of his appointment was to have been made through them, the project fell to the ground. The suggestion had been made with a double purpose. First, to as far as possible secure him the Premiership of the first Federal Government, and next with the idea that he might, for such a mission, be asked to accept a handsome retaining fee and thus recoup him to some extent for the losses he had sustained by his devotion to politics and particularly to the Federal cause. Although occupying a leading position at the Bar and in receipt of a considerable income for many years, Barton resembled Fox and the politicians of his day not only in appearance but in his inability to live within his income and his indifference to resulting embarrassments. The next movement privately conducted was to raise a fund among his friends which should start a public subscription for the purpose of paying his debts and if any surplus accrued, of investing it for the benefit of his wife and children. While this was hanging fire an unexpected event occurred which postponed this purpose and promised to achieve the first and higher aim of his admirers.

Early in 1900 Mr Chamberlain came to the conclusion that it would be necessary to amend the Commonwealth Bill which he was about to lay before the House of Commons in his capacity as Secretary of State for the Colonies. There was the further prospect that amendments might be moved in either House, of a character which, if they were aimed at the most radical portions of the measure, a Tory Government could scarcely resist, except under pressure of those responsible for them. There was also the circumstance that explanations might be demanded of matters upon which the Colonial Office was but imperfectly informed. In order if possible to divide the responsibility of any changes which might be made, and to prevent these from being multiplied so as to render the Bill unacceptable in Australia, he took the natural course of confidentially cabling an invitation to the federating colonies to appoint representatives and despatch them at once to London. No reference was made to the possibility of amendment. No explanation whatever was offered as to the purpose of the mission. It

was an invitation in the nature of a command.

Probably the two men in Australia most exasperated at this occurrence were Reid and Lyne, for if New South Wales were to be represented at all it was plain that there was but one man whom the public voice would without hesitation or division indicate as her representative. Slow and secretive as usual, Lyne pondered as to what was best to be done for New South Wales and for himself, deciding that as Barton must go it would assert the supremacy of the mother colony if her delegate were chosen to represent all the group. Before he had advanced so far in his purpose and perhaps before he had even acquainted Barton with his intention, he was informed by telegram that his more enterprising neighbours to the south were already acting. The Victorian Government had appointed Deakin at the first moment they could obtain an acceptance from him, while South Australia, ever economical, proposed that one representative should act for all and mindful of the previous plan expressed its willingness to accept Barton. This may have been the origin of Lyne's later action. Tasmania certainly and Queensland probably would have been quite content to adopt the South Australian proposal. It was Victoria that blocked the way, though that colony had always been friendly to Barton, and Deakin his close ally throughout all the Federal campaigns. A Conference of Premiers was called to consider the situation but by the time it had assembled Victoria had acted and its emissary was on his way to England. Kingston had ceased to object to undertake the task and Dickson of Queensland was eager to join him. Each colony agreed to despatch a representative of its own, though all were to unite in appointing each of them so that each would represent the whole of the federating colonies. Their task was defined with most unequivocal plainness. They were to secure the passage of the Bill without amendment of any kind. A fortnight after Deakin left, Barton, Kingston and Dickson embarked, meeting him at Marseilles and arriving in London within a day of each other where Sir Philip Fysh as Agent-General for [Tasmania] acted in its name. Shortly afterward Sir John Forrest appointed Mr S. H. Parker, one of the oldest and ablest of the politicians of Western Australia to follow them and endeavour to obtain such alterations of the Bill as would encourage him to submit it to his Parliament and people. The Premier of New Zealand cabled his Agent-General, Mr Reeves, to take action to protect the interests of that colony and provide by anticipation favourable means for its entrance into the Union at pleasure. Consequently in April 1900, in response to Mr Chamberlain's cable every colony of Australasia, though two of them had not been included in his invitation, was represented at the centre of the Empire engaged in a struggle with one another and with the British

Government in the interests of the several communities from which they came. The contest was nominally but only nominally, Australian. As a fact each delegate was in direct touch by cable with his own colony through its Ministry and was prepared if necessary with or without instructions to maintain its rights and fight for his own hand in more or less Federal fashion and with more or less Federal aims according to the ideal he most cherished and the interests of the colony for which he spoke.

But for the persistency of the McLean Ministry there was every probability that Lyne's hand would have been forced and that Barton would have gone to England as sole representative of Australia whatever his Premier's wishes were. If the Turner Ministry had remained in power it is almost certain that this course would have been followed. When Deakin, having been confidentially asked to accept the post of Victorian delegate and [having] taken time to consider the situation, waited upon Mr McLean to accept, he attached three preliminary conditions. First that as the purpose of the invitation was not plain, he thought that if amendments were contemplated the request ought to be respectfully declined with an intimation that the colonies were unable to sanction any alterations of a measure adopted by the electors or to nominate any persons who could sanction them. If the invitation was merely a compliment and for the purpose of ceremony, he thought it might be waived or some persons already in England appointed. Second, if no important amendment was to be proposed, one delegate could be selected to speak for all and recommended that Barton be chosen for the post. Finally he expressed himself willing to support the appointment of Sir George Turner or Dr Quick who polled higher than he did for the Convention, or of Mr Isaacs who was then on his way to England to appear as Counsel before the Privy Council in a Victorian appeal case. The latter would be an economical appointment for the Government and involve Isaacs in no loss, while to him acceptance meant the sacrifice of half a year's professional income at least. Mr McLean's position was so peculiar as to amuse even him with its irony. He allowed it to be seen that he was anxious in no respect to fall behind Lyne and was eager if possible to anticipate him before the public, both being anti-Federalists and both eager to give them the most unequivocal evidence of their official loyalty to the Bill now that its fortunes were to some extent committed to their charge. McLean was already keenly on the watch for some of Lyne's characteristic tricks by which he would seek to exploit the situation to his own profit. He put the whole position to Deakin with pleasant sincerity. He was anxious to demonstrate his Federal zeal, and his selection and that of the Cabinet had not been dictated by any affection for Deakin or any desire to do him

honour. He was under no obligation to them for their choice which was simply that of the man to whom they thought the least objection could be taken. He scouted the names suggested, emphatically affirming that the Government meant to accept the invitation because to decline would be discourteous. They meant to send Deakin as the recognised Federal leader in Victoria so as to put their policy and themselves above suspicion. He pressed acceptance very strongly and was eager to announce the appointment in the press. Upon Deakin's insistence upon the necessity for further delay to learn the intentions of the other colonies, he very reluctantly consented to wait a few days longer till the following Tuesday but his apprehensions lest Lyne should forestall him led him to break his agreement. He telegraphed Deakin, who was at the seaside, on Friday that he could delay no longer and on Saturday the announcement appeared in the papers. As it then transpired that South Australia had suggested Barton, Deakin saw McLean again and offered to withdraw in his favour; a proposition to which the Premier absolutely refused to listen. Deakin then warned him that if Barton would accept the sole representation he (Deakin) would not consent to be the means of preventing this, but McLean at once retorted that the Government was resolved some Victorian should be sent and if Deakin declined another would take his place. The Ministry was subject to so much suspicion because four of its members were anti-Federalists that it was determined in its own interest to insist upon having its own delegate and one as wholly Federal as they could find. All he would agree [to] was to propose that Barton and Deakin should together act for Australia. To this however Queensland took exception as by this time apparently Dickson had decided to accept and in the end as usual each colony relied upon its own envoy. McLean made offers to Deakin similar to those made as was announced to Barton and Kingston, of a handsome allowance to compensate him for his professional losses during his absence, but these were declined by him on the ground that as a member of Parliament on public service he was only entitled to have expenses. Barton and he, having been in communication, understood each other's position before he left but few if any realised that it was simply because McLean as an anti-Federalist felt bound to advertise his full acceptance of the Bill which the electors had twice accepted and he had twice opposed, that Barton was prevented from being the sole ambassador. He would have welcomed such a distinction but on his return publicly rejoiced that the invitation had been accepted and that he had been associated with colleagues who could share the burdens it imposed. Not foresight but the accident of McLean's position decided that for him.

Barton, Kingston, Fysh and Deakin were old comrades in both great

Conventions and knew each other well. Dickson was not a stranger but a comparatively recent Federalist. The oldest of the party, bald, white-haired and whiskered, below the middle height, with blue unexpressive eyes, an almost roman nose and a dapper figure, rather spare but in which the stomach was beginning to be prominent, he carried himself with the smartness of the city man of business. He was commercial by instinct and training, cold, cautious, calculating and Conservative, somewhat distrustful of his fellows and with the cynicism of the counting house in his conceptions. In private life he was stiff and punctilious but with a warm heart in his family and a brightness among friends which his general demeanour hardly promised. As a speaker he inclined to be tedious and monotonous and his tone had a complaining or querulous ring, but he was clear, precise, logical, employed good English, could strike a good blow and with an effort impart a good deal of heat to his address. A quiet, unobtrusive man, fully conscious of the dignity of his position, very sensitive to slight or ridicule, easy to appease but slow to forget, his methodical mind debiting his adversaries' account or crediting it according to his own reckoning of what was due. When annoyed he retained something of the auctioneer's strident and insistent gabble and a certain spitefulness but was at most times frigidly polite, circumspect and self-contained. There was much to respect and something to admire in this elderly politician, who like so many of his contemporaries had become a Liberal in spite of himself and in contradiction to all his tastes and inherited opinions. The sudden death of Byrnes had left the succession of the leadership an open question. Philp, by far the more popular of the eligible Ministers, was a strenuous Federalist and when he withdrew to the second place in Dickson's favour it appeared to be upon condition that the latter should espouse the same policy. This he had resisted as stoutly as Byrnes when the subject was discussed in the Federal Council at Hobart, where both displayed much bitterness towards the Convention movement and combined to prevent Queensland from being represented in it. When to be Premier it became necessary for Dickson to become moderately Liberal and strongly Federal, he did so with a good grace and from that time forward pursued his new course with admirable consistency. When Barton and Deakin visited Queensland as Federal missionaries he took his place beside them upon the platform and was unhesitating in his declaration for union though his Government was by no means unanimous, Parliament itself distinctly critical, the Assembly about equally divided, the Council emphatically hostile and Brisbane as a whole against a measure which was supposed to threaten its trade. He faced all these odds and fought the Referendum through with a quiet unflinching fealty and ability that did a

great deal to secure its victory. No man in Queensland had a better right to represent the colony in London. The Federal debt to him for his invaluable aid was in no way discharged by this compliment. Out of the weaknesses, waywardnesses, personal antagonisms, pettinesses, ambitions and party necessity of the Premiers the movement shaped its own course and arrived with very varying obligations to those who were most prominent in giving effect to the deep, instinctive, popular will for unity.

Mr Parker, the representative of the tardiness of Western Australia, despatched at the last moment to haggle for further concessions, was a plump, well-mannered and pleasant little lawyer, fluent, astute, and flattering. At the beginning of self-government in Western Australia he had been long looked upon in society as its certain first Premier and leading politician but though he was everything that Forrest was not, quicker, brighter, more sympathetic, better educated, better read, more polished, more presentable, a constitutional student, and fertile in political expedients, his instability, want of principle, and stamina soon left him hopelessly in the rear. Whether as colleague or opposition leader, he was equally powerless against the downright vigour, robust common sense and homely hard-headedness of Sir John, whose envoy he now consented to be, discharging the difficult task allotted to him with much address and judgment, despite the rather contemptuous treatment he received both from Mr Chamberlain and the Colonial Office and the Australian delegates in opposition to whom he appeared in London. His was a forlorn hope from the first though the Secretary of State for the Colonies was most anxious to secure some concession for a colony still retaining a closer relation with Downing Street than its neighbours, partly because it had scarcely outgrown its Crown Colony habits and partly because Forrest himself had been so long in power before and after its enfranchisement that he was almost a permanent official. All the future States of the Commonwealth were represented upon the stage at the last scene of the last act which closed the contests of ten years with a last wrestle against no less antagonists than the British Government in general and its most capable negotiator, Mr Chamberlain, in particular.

17 Queen, Prince and Ministers

PUBLIC LIFE IN AUSTRALIA is impaired to some extent by the almost entire absence of respect for the privacies of official life and for the persons of those in power. The press, partly stimulated by its jealousy of prominent rivals for the common ruler public opinion and partly by its own rivalries in the race for news, invades the Cabinet and the office of Ministers to subject their occupants to peremptory cross-examination. The passion for equality which sways the multitude contains a spice of envy which encourages the belittling of even those whom they are delighting to honour. The crowd always retains to itself the privilege of chastising its gods in times of adversity while worshipping them in days of prosperity. The tendency to create legends and personal myths still remains among them and popular leaders while they are popular can do no wrong in the eyes of their admirers. But these are never free from acid criticism while they are Ministers and suffer as do all their tribe from the pettinesses, intrusiveness and impatience of those who surround them. The process is not infrequently injurious to the transaction of executive business of a purely local and internal character. It is always injurious when it is intercolonial in aim or farseeing in intention. To govern with a reporter at the elbow, to find all confidential discussion difficult and sometimes impossible, and to be treated at all times more as a servant of the press interviewer, of the casual caller and of the department-trotting member than as a servant of the public, is to handicap the Governments which are censured for their want of success on occasions when it is forbidden by the conditions under which they are compelled to work. Colonial Governors are to a considerable degree protected by their social position and the formalities which surround them, though they are strictly constitutional sovereigns who reign without governing. The Premiers and their associates who actually govern and are chosen by the people to preside over their destinies for longer or shorter terms, are without this shelter and if weak soon accept the position of heads of departments obeying the instructions which they receive from day to day from the journals of their party or other irresponsible agencies appearing for the time to convey the mandate of a public opinion, while imperfectly instructed and under the influence of a transient wave of opinion. Public life in the colonies suffers and must continue to suffer until the decencies of official procedure are formulated, its reticences appreciated, its burdens recognised and those who bear them, while bearing them, are treated in their public capacity with the consideration which high and important responsibilities and the national

interest demand.

Public life in Great Britain possesses such protections and indeed a foreign policy would be impossible without them. The existence of a social hierarchy and the prestige of the sovereign render aristocratic distinctions real, and place those who occupy whether by birth or ability the foremost places in public affairs, within triple lines of fortification, title, tradition and usage, reinforcing and expressing the innate British reverence for order and degrees of quality. The instinct of the mass of the community is supported by the astute use made by the nobility and all official classes of the mystery with which those in authority are shrouded. Even the well-informed confine their criticisms to the circle of their friends in their own class, and maintain before the rest of the nation an imperturbable air of veneration for the powers that be and credulity as to their qualifications absolutely foreign to their private judgments. The thoughtful do this out of regard for the office in spite of the person who holds it, while the Conservatives exploit all the fables and loyal fictions of the hour for their own party purposes. These attach principally to the Throne and its hereditary supporters though in a minor but very useful way it still attaches to the Ministry of the day, especially if allied with the Tories. But the legitimate, natural and necessary reverence paid to eminence of station and function do not suffice for the Court party. Their feelings, as a rule genuine, run away with their judgment. Their eyes are blinded by awe and wonder. They respond at once to the suggestions which underline all ceremonial that something exceptional and transcendent is transpiring because of its unfamiliar apparatus of conventional approach. They cannot see clearly what is happening or who[m] they are regarding and repeat with bated breath the most ridiculous legends with implicit faith and unreasoning enthusiasm. This snobbishness, as it is termed in its paltrier phases, pervades English society from top to bottom and though not in the majority of cases as base or trivial as it appears at first sight, and often redeemed by true patriotic acceptance of a person as symbol of a people and its history, remains today a potent factor in every sphere.

The Royal family are the chief objects of this cult and the practice of idealization proceeds in their case naked and unashamed. The Queen's popularity which suffered a long eclipse during her retirement blazed out again at the Jubilee and still more resplendently during the [Boer] War, when she became more and more a national emblem. Advancing years and many sorrows had told mentally even upon her remarkable health and vigour, but it was the fashion everywhere to speak as if her faculties were absolutely unimpaired and as if she continued to discharge the political duties of her station with the same vigilance and energy as thirty years

before. When she received the Australian delegates to the Imperial Conference of 1887 she stood to receive them, her large clear blue eye undimmed and her voice as she read her reply, ringing and resonant within its moderate compass. She was then an elderly lady but in no respect superannuated. It was obvious then that she knew little of the delegates except what she was told at the moment and only said to any of them what Lord Knutsford first said to her. In 1900, though she still took her daily drive in all weathers and seen at a distance in her carriage seemed marvellously well-preserved, on a nearer view it was plain her great age was having its natural effect upon her. She received the Australians sitting, her voice was low and indistinct, she was partially deaf, requiring to be reminded in a loud voice of who they were and her eyes were lost to sight behind large clumsy spectacles of great power but with which she could only read the largest writing. With limbs and senses failing her, it was only reasonable to assume that her intellect also suffered. She smiled upon the delegates but this time not royally as in 1887 but with the weakness and weariness of an old woman. She remarked to Deakin that she remembered his previous visit though as Mr Chamberlain's loud tones reminding her of the fact were perfectly audible to him and to his colleagues and their wives around him, he was unable to join in their chorus of amazement in the anteroom at her astounding memory. Although he told them that he had heard Mr Chamberlain informing her of the circumstance, they were as deaf to him as they had been while perfectly able to hear his admonition themselves and repeated the story with ecstasy then and afterwards. Those of the Queen's household to whom they at once recounted it, though perfectly aware of the routine in such matters, gravely concurred that her capacity approached the miraculous. The incident was significant as bearing upon the trustworthiness of apparently unimpeachable evidence in regard to Her Majesty from educated persons accustomed to public ceremonials. It seemed highly probable that whatever part she played in the politics of Great Britain at this time must have been small and confined to few matters. She must have been absolutely dependent upon her Premier who in his turn from advancing years, sorrows and infirmities was scarcely the fittest, though doubtless the most suitable counsellor for his very aged Queen.

The Prince of Wales was of course older, stouter, balder and more florid than in 1887. He also appeared more mature in that the speech he made at the Empire League Dinner was, considering the narrow limits within which he was free to move, perhaps as good an utterance as could have been expected from a Prince. Whether prepared for him or not, it was delivered as if it were his own in a natural manly way. The Princess Mathilde, no

mean critic, confessed to De Goncourt that she found him the frankest of royal personages and it did seem as if his straightforwardness, tact and good humour entitled him to a share of the great popularity he enjoyed since his recovery from typhoid, recently refreshed by the failure of Sipido's attempted assassination in Belgium. Apart from his regular discharge of the dreary round of social functions with amiable consistency and the kindness invariably displayed towards all his associates whether creditable or discreditable [in] character, there was not a feature of his career which could be made public without detriment to the popular idea. A genuinely good-natured George IV, always in bad company and not too proud to borrow from the shadiest nouveaux riches, he was yet surrounded in England with an atmosphere of reverent admiration almost amounting to worship by a society in which he was distinctly below the average in morals and ability; and absolutely deified by many of the middle class who were unaware of and the masses who ignored his protracted devotion to the idlest, poorest and most unintellectual pleasures. The Duke of York was a still more commonplace edition of his father and his wife reported to be but little more individual than that palest of pale personalities, the altogether artificial modiste the Princess of Wales. Negative virtues among the women and ordinary vices among the men of the Royal Family seemed to exhibit a marked deterioration from the relatively very high standard set in conduct and character and governing capacity by the Queen and the Prince Consort, who appeared like Titans among Pygmies when contrasted with their children and grandchildren.

Great Britain is buttressed by a hierarchy whose influences are almost entirely without parallel in all those great communities of hers which are springing up across the seas. If we suffer from the absence of the restraints, decorum, respect and courtesy which [are] visible in the mother country, at least we enjoy a freedom from many insincerities and formalities that have lost their meaning. In the future the closer our relations grow, these unlikenesses may be expected to balance and correct each other. At present the loyalty of the people of the Empire who live remote from the British Isles is probably more personal and more fervent than that of the British Islander and this inevitable enchantment lent by distance is likely to continue, unless shattered as it was in America by the wilful hostilities and blunders of the powers now revered, a consummation which under modern Constitutional government seems very improbable. The future of the Empire in this connection appears to be with the Tory democracy for the next term in which political prevision appears to be worth attempting.

Lord Salisbury reaped the benefit of the forces generated by Disraeli and revived by Randolph Churchill but he sowed himself no seed of any

fertility in any field. His great abilities and high type of character were marred in statesmanship by feebleness of will, or rather lack of courage in great affairs. He was by nature cynical, sceptical, caustic and reflective. A man of science by taste, he would probably have discovered nothing except the errors of his contemporaries even in that field. He clung, if not with fervour, with tenacity to all that was, considering it quite a secondary consideration whether it proved good, bad or indifferent. The thing that was, because of its existence, was sacred in his eyes and to be defended against all comers. With uncommon intellectual power, considerable critical skill, a personal character above reproach and gifted with fine flashes of observation, his function in public affairs was that of a brake. It was his resistance to Gladstone, and above all to Home Rule, which made him and kept him Premier. His speeches contained indiscretions enough to have ruined a dozen Cabinets in the colonies but scarcely shook him in the estimation of his countrymen. As a man who constructed nothing and opposed all innovation, he was in their eyes a 'safe man' and therefore the idol that middle-class Philistinism most loved to rest upon. But for his birth he would never have been a politician at all and in truth it was not the field for which he was best fitted, and but for his rank and family, he would never have been Premier. Upon social and general questions he was hopelessly out of date and out of touch with his time and its needs. At the Foreign Office he was a timid, slow, conciliatory and pacific master, adopting a policy which pleased the bulk of the nation because it was timorous, unadventurous and procrastinating. The apostle of tradition, while nominal leader of the nation he was really reluctantly dragged at the heels of his more progressive colleagues, his hand being forced in most cases by the march of events. A dignified figure with a spotless private history and many noblenesses of disposition, he was well-qualified to retain the confidence of the Queen to whom his devotion was unfeigned and absolute. Perhaps it was because the Australians saw so little of him while in London and never heard him mentioned as a factor in regard to their own measure, that they were enabled to suppose him to be rather the titular than the active head of the Cabinet and to credit the reports that he simply continued to hold office for the sake of his sovereign and his party, interfered as little as possible with his colleagues and looked anxiously forward to the retirement to which his years, his domestic bereavement and his long service entitled him.

The second member of the Cabinet, the Duke of Devonshire, was still less qualified than his chief for the public part he had been called upon to play. The average guardsman with the tastes, courage, manners and ideas of his class, he was pitchforked into politics in order to preserve him from

less creditable pursuits. He admitted to Deakin that he still enjoyed life and all the amusements to which he had devoted his youth. He had sacrificed himself on the altar of public duty as unwillingly as Lord George Bentinck and without achieving such a success. His indolent nature, phlegmatic disposition, slow-moving mind and dull though common-sense speeches would have been fatal to any man not the heir of a great Dukedom. He was body and soul and every inch of him the English country gentleman with his love of out-of-door sports and pre-eminently racing added to the love of gambling and gallantry of a deliberate and regulated kind which belonged to his ancestors. His library at Devonshire House consisted of official publications and statistics apparently never opened. His great collections of famous pictures inherited from more cultured ancestors were said to be without charm. He kept up his castles and country seats, subscribed to and fought for his party in politics and spent most of his time in London, because he conceived it to be his duty to do so. In a sense therefore his life was that of a martyr though he contrived to extract a great deal of more or less innocent amusement by way of distraction. He was absolutely without affectation, conceit or pretence, a shred of imagination, a hint of poetry or a touch of oratorical art. Honourable according to his creed, loyal beyond reproach, manly in every thought and act, a grand seigneur in whom the pride of race served as a constant spur to the doing of distasteful things, he was yet as unfitted as an upright well-meaning man could be to preside over the Educational interests of his country. There must have been some thousands and probably tens of thousands of men available with far superior qualifications for the post, but owing to the aristocratic system supreme in England, this best of cross-country squires ruled perhaps the most important of all government departments for years because he was a great peer by birth and a great magnate by inheritance. Could the sarcasm of Swift [have] devised a more telling commentary upon modern wisdom?

According to the current gossip of the Clubs the momentous visit of the Queen to Ireland [in 1900] was not proposed by her Ministers and was received by them with some anxiety. The story went that it was first communicated to the Duke of Devonshire who happened to be visiting Windsor when the project was first conceived, and he was charged by Her Majesty to submit the proposal to the Premier so that he might be prepared to advise her upon it, on his next visit to the Castle two or three days later. But when the Duke left in the afternoon it was to resume the lessons in the new game of Bridge, which he was either just receiving or practising at his own home; and with such an important occupation, it was of course impossible for him to travel a few hundred yards to Arlington House to acquaint Lord Salisbury with so trifling a matter. Next morning he was late

and next afternoon [had] another engagement at some sports. In the evening Bridge again engrossed his attention, and so the whole proposal passed out of his mind. Lord Salisbury's presence of mind when his deliberate judgment upon the plan was at once asked by his Royal Mistress alone saved the situation; and perhaps his assent to a step upon which he had wit enough to see that the Queen was bent was only obtained because he was unable to find time to foresee difficulties, and obliged to approve on the spot. True or not, such incidents must be perfectly possible while the fortunes of an Empire are forced upon nobles like the Duke of Devonshire.

18 Balfour, Chamberlain, Rosebery

MR BALFOUR OWED HIS POSITION in the first Ministry of which he was a member to the fact that he was Lord Salisbury's nephew and this relationship was again a very important element in his selection as leader of the House of Commons. In 1900 he was practically the head of the Government, not in the sense of dominating its policy which was probably best defined as that of Chamberlain minus Hicks-Beach, but as the reconciling arbiter to whom both Tories and Unionists paid allegiance. He was a rare compound of the university student, the aristocratic society man and the practical politician. His tastes were all intellectual, his tendencies speculative, and his habit of mind sceptical; though with him as with Newman and Lord Salisbury, his reason refusing the common beaten road, scaled the heights of Faith where apparently most inaccessible, finding foothold along the very face of the precipice of the unknowable where it immediately overhangs the sunless gulfs of doubt. In a similar way it was by excursions through the realms of radical Pyrrhonism that he arrived at his orthodoxy in politics as well as in religion. His policy was defensive and wholly dictated by expediency. He clung to the vested interests and established powers because in his opinion their existence proved their necessity and rendered it perilous to alter them except when change was inevitable. Amiable in disposition, bright and engaging in manner, with the flattering deferences and complimentary allusiveness of the drawing room, a quick flow of nervous entertaining conversation, frivolous or serious according to the person addressed, he was extremely popular both in his party and out of it, in the political world and beyond it. He was a cultured gentleman, a thoughtful observer of men and things, a resolute and resourceful administrator, a genial and tactful manager of men and women. Successful with individuals he was a successful leader of the Commons; his followers were attached to him and his adversaries respected his honourable and dignified dealing with them; but his control was sympathetic and not masterful, he did not keep in touch with the House as a whole either by the quiet address of his predecessor W. H. Smith or by the supremacy which Gladstone and Disraeli exercised over it. He did not even lead his party as a whole and was often conspicuously out of harmony with the public. The masses did not appeal to him except through his pity; he did not respect them, trust them or understand them and they realised it.

His speeches in spite of their often fine inspiration and quality, even on great occasions not infrequently fell flat. He failed to directly persuade or masterfully convince the nation. It was here that his student tastes and

literary habits enfeebled his campaigns. He was no orator, certainly anything but a mob orator, and what depth of passion or flight towards his ideals he may have cherished in his own bosom, his sceptical reflectiveness stifled in his speech. His style was strictly parliamentary and excellently suited to the every-day business of the House; it was colloquial, free, clear, homely, to the point and moving at even rate from step to step of a common-sense argument based upon well-informed handling of facts, and conducted on party lines with sober effectiveness. Emotional himself but timid in yielding to and more timid in expressing his sentiments, he combined a fine delicacy of personal feeling with that sufficient dash of party spirit and aptness in appealing to class or sectional prejudices which English parliamentary life requires and excuses. Gentle and strong, courteous and yet ready to give or take blows, he was an eminently lovable personality and chivalrous chief but not a statesman, except after his uncle's pattern, and with as little constructive capacity and perhaps only the same permanence of purpose, i.e., that of resisting change.

Chamberlain in every respect presented a clear-cut contrast to his colleague. He was neither student nor philosopher nor man of culture, of birth or of society. He was according to British ideas a self-made man, a commercial mind. Assuredly he was and represented the average Briton of the middle class without a single extra or original quality but with all the faculties of the business man raised to their highest power, applied to public affairs and concentrated upon one end. Balfour could have followed half a dozen different careers with almost equal satisfaction to himself. Chamberlain might have been simply a millionaire of the Carnegie type, every whit as ruthless and more aspiring, but no wealth however vast could have contented him. His ambition was to express and shape the policy of his nation and he had achieved it for many years. He had first forced Mr Gladstone's hand with his unauthorised programme, next broken the Liberal power and party to prevent Home Rule and finally brought the Tories unwillingly under his banner of social reform. Fixity of purpose, energy of character, force of will, were united in him to an uncommon degree. His capacity for organization and administration was great and distinctly upon mercantile principles. He paid others to do the work under his direction and made them do it without exhausting himself. His intellect was clear, cold, keen and practical. Superficial in his standards compared with Balfour, he was far more realistic. In most respects he resembled Disraeli more nearly than any other statesman; he had his vigour, his abandon, his independence, his broadly constructive genius but not his poetic fire, his dramatic pose, his skilled rhetoric, nor his oriental dreams. He was much closer to the man on the street and more akin to him than the

marvellous Jew, much weaker in foreign politics but stronger in his grasp of domestic needs and affairs. Both were born gladiators in debate, capable of failing but not of yielding, splendid guerilla chiefs, indomitable, self-contained, full of ruses, surprises, somersaults and daring adventure; fighting each for his own hand and subduing their parties to their masterful rule. Disraeli, like Balfour, always had another side to his nature, an inner life removed from the crowd and but partially expressed in his books. Chamberlain had no other life than that of public affairs. A consummate politician and nothing but a politician. 'All thoughts, all passions, all delights, whatever stirred his mortal frame' was political in its essence. Toil, patience, endurance, stoicism were his and his also at need, relentless hostility, bitterness, venom and rancour. None of these belonged to Balfour or belonged to him only for the moment. His was a pale and colourless personality in politics beside the intense glow of grim determination which quivered under the icy accents of intense animosity with which Chamberlain pursued his foes while they were his foes or were dangerous. The debate over, he bore no malice, remembered no wound when he was victorious and welcomed any useful ally no matter how previously hated or despised, with an unfeigned cordiality. He had passion in abundance but only in relation to his ambition and so absolutely governed by his interests as never to need any effort to control it. He spared neither himself, his colleagues nor his opponents. Balfour, who carefully studied his written style, took no pains whatever with his speeches, regarding them as ephemeral utterances like those of a daily paper to be heard, used and forgotten or replaced next day. Chamberlain took immense pains with his speeches—as much as Balfour did with his books—and evolved by incessant application a style which was a model of clear, incisive, convincing exposition. In them he expressed not only himself but all his class, and often all his party, sometimes all his nation. They could scarcely have been better, unless indeed he had been able to add those qualities of imagination, insight, learning and philosophic meditation which made Burke supreme and whose touches occasionally elevated Gladstone's harangues above his subjects and enriched his treatment of them. There was nothing in Chamberlain that was not useful, that was not manufactured and highly finished and though the raw product of his ability was excellent, it was only by infinite labour that he made it as perfect as possible. He understood and to some extent sympathised with the masses whom Balfour ignored, while little affected by individuals who were always to him pawns in the game. He was consequently as much disliked as Balfour was liked and as much detested as he was loved. But this to him was comparatively unimportant. He was admired, accepted and obeyed. He fulfilled his

purposes. What could such a man desire more? The trappings of power had no attraction for him. He wanted and wielded its reality. He was the driving wheel of the Salisbury Cabinet, of the party behind it, and more than any other man, of the British Parliament and people.

When Mr Chamberlain was young, even party leaders were accustomed to write their speeches and have them set up in type by the papers in which they were to appear before they were delivered. To this practice which deprived the deliverance of the appearance as well as reality of spontaneity, he distinctly refused adherence from the first. When remonstrated with by a friendly representative of **The Times** [he] replied: 'If the public are interested in what I say you will be bound to report me. If they are not interested I don't care to be reported.' The characteristic self-confidence was justified but the wisdom of the decision proved how well he had gauged his task. He studied his public carefully and provided for it just what it needed, guidance good for the moment, clearly laid down and sufficiently well-linked to what had preceded it to have the air of a continuous policy. He was an Imperialist largely because trade was world-wide, a patriot largely because trade flourishes under the flag's protection, a radical chiefly because business men dislike unfruitful expenses and realise the importance of having the best men available to do the work of the hour. Quite insular in his views and prejudices, he knew little and cared little for questions of foreign affairs except so far as they affected imports and exports or the prestige which, whether in the case of a firm or a nation, was a valuable asset. Not that he took merely the broker's view of any issue, but that he was steeped to the eyes in such considerations and had been greatly shaped by them. He was within his limits a sincere man. Of course the Tory alliance meant sacrifices to his partners which he made as cheerfully as if to his associates in a business venture. He paid the price of his position without hesitation like a practical man, but took the best of care for all that to get the best of the bargain and to ensure that their sacrifices to him both in Ministerial offices and in policy should be greater still. He was well satisfied with the transaction and with good reason. His choice of the Colonies* showed his customary acuteness and foresight and also his judicious sense of where his own strength lay. By comparison with most of his predecessors he was an ideal head of this Department. He was no whit more devoted to his task than Lord Knutsford or Lord Kimberley, but he had more experience of colonists because they are largely business men, more power of controlling subordinates bred of his mercantile experience, more initiative and far more weight with his colleagues, so that he could both resist interference and obtain an endorsement for projects which they would have pressed in vain and which neither of them would ever have

forced forward as he did with strenuous, coercing and controlling will. He was certainly the most formidable man the Australians could have met. His great experience in party negotiations and electioneering treaties, added to his dominating disposition and unbending temper, his power of debate and his sense of the advantages of his position rendered him sufficiently supple to avoid offence, wise to foresee pitfalls, penetrating to gauge his adversaries and obstinate in maintaining his own ground, especially when surrounded, as he had the art to arrange, by a phalanx of capable subordinates, his counsellors in private and the witnesses in the encounter of his dexterity, resource and strength.

The remaining members of the Ministry owed their positions mainly to their birth or fidelity to party. Lord Halsbury, whose evil propensity for jobbery was the most pronounced feature of his reputation, was really a man of great business capacity, sound worldly wisdom and dogged pertinacity. In appearance physically insignificant and in face too much resembling the missing link, the brightness of his eye and the grace of his speech atoned for these defects sufficiently to render him presentable. An able advocate of the old school, a good lawyer and a fine crusted Tory with a flavour of flunkeydom and good fellowship, he appeared to be a man for whom life had few illusions and a great many opportunities for profit and pleasure of which he took cheerful advantage for himself and his family. Sir John Gorst was another Minister whose knowledge was wide, courage great and capacity undeniable. He was somewhat soured by his intellectual contempt for most of his own party as well as for more of his opponents and by the subordinate position in the Government assigned to him, while men in every way his inferiors were exalted to Cabinet rank. Mr Wyndham was an understudy of Mr Balfour's without his metaphysical depth and with many more physical and literary attractions. He was the brilliant young junior of the team, somewhat too much of the dandy, dilettante, too volatile in character and too polished to an even finish of mind to promise an originality equal to that of his Chief. The body of the Cabinet, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, Lord Lansdowne, Lord George Hamilton and Mr Goschen were all men of parts able to manage departments and to take their places in Parliament but without leaving in either sphere any trace of original ability. Of them it was clear that they influenced their departments [less] than they were influenced by the permanent officials and though they contributed to form the opinion of their party, were much more formed by it and willing to echo its opinions. Lord Ampthill, Lord Selbourne, Gerald Balfour and Austen Chamberlain were in bud apparently what these seniors were in flower, except that the two last inherited a dash of family vigour wanting in the others. The Attorney-General, Sir Richard Webster,

created Lord Alverstone while the delegates were in London and Sir Robert Finlay who succeeded him, were two good specimens of the English Bar. The first had a Shakespearian head and face, an active taste for field sports, and a very dignified bearing which made his high professional attainments more impressive. The second was distinguished by a sweetness of disposition and deference of demeanour which made him a much more universal favourite. He was as good a lawyer, and though less authoritative as a speaker and more retiring in disposition, was more amenable to argument and a more conciliatory negotiator than his old chief, who assumed to be something more than he was, while Finlay was actually more than he at first appeared to be. Webster had the wider scope, the more ambitious aim, and the more developed self-esteem. Finlay was kindlier and simpler, more accurate and painstaking, more careful and more even in quality of work.

Outside the Government the leading figures were chiefly those of men whose hereditary advantages had greatly contributed to their prominence. Foremost was the late Leader of the Liberal party, Lord Rosebery, whom good fortune had made the spoiled child of politics. His literary gifts and tastes were as undeniable as those of Mr Balfour and Mr Wyndham, though in aim and style the last was much more allied. He had the gift of style, and of a certain insight both in writing and speaking; was handsome, graceful and winning even after middle age, had married great wealth and increased his own, had gratified his sporting instincts by winning the blue ribbon of the turf while Premier of England, after a political career of many successes and no serious reverse. As a Premier he suffered from insomnia brought on, said some, by the notorious dissensions which prevailed in his Cabinet; by the excesses of his debaucheries which had shattered his nerves, said others. Under the circumstances success had scarcely been possible and the failure was more that of his party, visibly going to pieces after Gladstone's retirement. In 1900 he was and wished to be the enigma of the hour—attacking the Ministry in fine speeches but defending them upon some lines of their policy—officially apart from the Liberals, though strongly represented in their counsels by a party of devoted friends and coquetting with the dissatisfied Conservatives who condemned the feebleness of the Ministry. His policy evidently was to keep the Liberal party in opposition until it should have been subdued by its reverses into accepting him and his policy, which under the new name of National or Liberal Imperialism should detach enough of the middle-class support of the Tories to give him a majority for progressive measures at home and a spirited foreign policy abroad. In the meantime he darted across Europe after making a sensational speech or two to keep himself before the

English public and disappeared to write in solitude, said some; to wanton, said others, in a Circean style. Having visited Australia in 1884 and having been President of the defunct Imperial Federation League, he was quick to entertain the delegates and attended several banquets in their honour. There and in his own house they had excellent opportunities of seeing him. The impression was not favourable.

His nervous instability was painful, his poses perpetual and his vanity colossal. He was petulant as a child, irritable to a degree at the least criticism, oscillating between apparently unaffected indifference to public opinion and the keenest appetite for its applause. The genuine indifference was that of the jaded man who has lost self-confidence and is thoroughly weak of will. His affected indifference was part of a theatrical part he played with foolish ostentation. He was such a mass of weaknesses and wilfulnesses and insincerities that he leaned for support upon any who could win his confidence, which could always be accomplished by flatterers or intriguers. His undoubted capacity, versatility and all the prestige he had acquired were being dissipated in the most helpless fashion by his utter instability. He sought rest only in perpetual physical motion. At the City Liberal Club where a great speech was expected from him, [he] fell far short of his capacity in the main toast and suddenly resumed his strength when replying impromptu to a splendid speech which evidently awoke his emulation. He utterly failed again at the National Liberal Club when he had another great chance of carrying an audience that was altogether in his favour but, because the speeches before his [had been] delayed and because he had been unfortunate in the day's racing, first would only speak for two minutes, then changed his mind while upon his legs and changed it several times; made a speech which had nothing remarkable in it and sat down dissatisfied with himself and with everybody. He seemed to be on the brink of such a physical break-up as wrecked Randolph Churchill and his career. He was timorous, changeable, inconsistent, erratic, gloomy and absorbed, then sparkling and excitable by turns, his fine face pale and puffy—his fine head rapidly turning grey—his figure growing too portly—his hand trembling, his eye restless, his demeanour that of one who drifted in and out of dreams and some of them bad dreams. Was he like Hamlet crushed under the weight of responsibilities which tempted him, but which he could not bear or like heroes of eighteenth century tragedies haunted by remorse for his dead wife or as his enemies said by fear of exposure of a recent present? He appeared to have no religious faith or fervour or hope for the future; to covet and yet to question the worth of the world's prizes; to live like an epicurean and yet be shadowed by a sense of misspent possibilities; to

question all principles either of morals or politics, and to be unable to resolve as [to] their truth or efficacy. He was in truth just what a man of highly-wrought temperament would be who in a world from which God and the Soul, the Ideal and the Ethical had been banished was surrounded with temptations like those of Tantalus from his pride, ambition, appetites, culture and wealth to which he yielded by turns and by stealth, until at last all were confused before him, and all was confused around him as half-awakened to the impending tragedy of his fate, he fled from that which could not be escaped and which, because he could not deny himself, he had not courage to conquer or defy.

* When Salisbury's third cabinet took office in June 1895, Chamberlain, to the surprise of many people, took the Colonial Secretaryship, a post hitherto generally regarded as a comparatively minor one.

19 Liberals, Radicals, Irish

THOUGH THE ACTIVE OPPOSITION contained within its ranks a greater number of men who had won their positions by ability and proportionately more marked personalities than the Ministerial benches, they were disunited, repressed and distrustful to such a degree that they scarcely counted in politics and appeared to have no future before them. The one great figure among them, Sir William Vernon Harcourt, remained like Lord Salisbury only waiting to be relieved at his post. He had resigned the Liberal leadership in the Commons when it became plain that the long and much coveted Premiership was beyond his reach. Like the lion that has missed his spring, he was disappearing to his forest haunts but cheerily and not sulkily and keeping a brave face not merely to his foes but to the pack around him. In everything except scientific knowledge and titular rank he was Lord Salisbury's superior; perhaps his political conscience was a little more elastic but on the other hand he possessed a mind more open to the light and was as progressive as it was possible for an old Whig to be. At least as intellectual and a more potent force in the House, on the platform or with the pen, his career was as long, as honourable and more rich in achievement. He was perhaps, because of his superior force, a more egotistic and more aggressive cynic and therefore made many more enemies but he was also a genuine humourist, a great conversationalist, and far more versatile in acquirements and talents than the rival whose better fortune had made him so much more conspicuous. A greater suspicion of insincerity attached to Harcourt, and probably his more mobile disposition was less consistent and perhaps less loyal, but the Whig position was more difficult than [that] of the Tory and its very principle in modern times was compromise. Physically as huge but with a far finer and more striking face, carriage and presence, with a longer and more distinguished lineage and a more distinctly political capacity, Harcourt would have been a more ideal Tory chieftain and might well have succeeded Disraeli. Only the tremendous personality of Gladstone, superior in vitality, flexibility, sympathy and picturesqueness to any contemporary could have cast him into the shade. He was of the race of noble rulers who like Grey, Melbourne and Peel preserved the great traditions of the great families who gave themselves with lofty courage to the more popular cause, while themselves remaining apart and above them in their order. Winning the love of his few intimates, the admiration of all associates and the reluctant homage of his foes, his stately figure passed from the scene veiling the depth of his disappointment beneath the unfeigned heartiness of his

penetrating jests at his time.

In 1887 when Deakin had previously visited London the Salisbury Government appeared to hold office insecurely while the Opposition benches still retained Mr Gladstone and the corner was led by Parnell. Randolph Churchill having shot his bolt and missed, sat chewing his moustache, a moody and silent figure, immediately behind the colleagues from whom he had separated, not sufficiently notable to withdraw attention from the two great figures confronting the Tory majority. Gladstone, despite his years, was probably in mere physique the handsomest and finest man in the whole Assembly. His manner in addressing it on the Crimes Bill was full of fire and indeed often appeared theatrical in suddenness and vividness of gesture. His fluency, fecundity and grace of expression, the vibrating eagerness of his eagle glance and resonant ring of a slightly failing voice still carried through his ornate periods the electric properties which roused and thrilled. Parnell at this time ill-dressed, almost shabby and even in some degree unkempt with pale, absolutely impassive face, keen and hard in outline, a cold, clear unimpassioned voice and quiet deadliness of speech and demeanour, was at the very opposite pole of parliamentary style and appearance. Only once did his voice for a single brief instant rise above the even level of its flow when he stigmatised the letter published in that morning's **Times** as a forgery. There was at once an answering yell like that of a pack of hounds from his followers, after which in the same monotonous almost weary manner their chief continued and concluded his featureless explanation of his views. Still, while men like these remained, Parliament was the absorbing centre of national life and interest upon which every eye was fastened and where the people's destinies were decided. This was the field of combat and here were the heroes in full panoply engaged in deadly combat while as of old from the walls of Troy the readers of English in both hemispheres, the nation at home and abroad, and indeed the whole civilised world looked on as spectators and cheered the fortunes of the fray.

In 1900 the theatre of interest was elsewhere—in South Africa—and the stage was emptied of the four romantic figures which embodied English Liberalism, Whiggism, their Irish allies and the Tory Democracy, triumphant but still insecure in its seat. In Gladstone, Churchill, Harcourt, the three greatest debaters, and in Parnell, the most potent of party leaders were withdrawn. In 1887 John Bright was a very elderly, infirm and somewhat splenetic little gentleman greatly petted by the ladies in Unionist circles. 'You appeal to us as your Mother Country while you tax all we sell to you' said he sharply to one of the Australians [Deakin] and was apparently annoyed when the young colonist retorted, 'You appeal to us as

daughter colonies and yet trade with your bitterest foes if they are cheaper, instead of your own household.' His masterpieces of oratory were still in men's mouths and the tradition of parliamentary debate was being worthily maintained. Chamberlain alone, not at the height of his power in 1887 besides occupying a dangerous and isolated position, connected the two periods. Then he was one of the front rank. In 1900 he was practically the master of the House of Commons. The Opposition benches contained no peer of his after Harcourt withdrew. The dispirited and divided Liberals fairly cowered before their old colleague. When he misquoted Mr Asquith while introducing the Commonwealth Bill, it was Mr Asquith whose contradiction was apologetic in manner while Chamberlain accepted the correction with the air of one conferring a favour. The overwhelming Tory majority, the ascendancy of Chamberlain in debate, the patent fact that in maintaining the war the country was behind them, added to their own jealousies, had reduced the Commons to a chamber of registration for Ministerial proposals and of apparently unanswerable expositions of the soundness of Ministerial policy. The Opposition existed, but was powerless to oppose with either force or effect, and therefore merely preserved the forms of debate without its reality. The transformation in thirteen years was complete. The Government no longer looked to the House or even over the heads of its members but directly to the electors for support and proceeded on their way with more apprehensions of mischief from their own supporters who were, so to speak, unemployed for want of an enemy to encounter, than from those who were nominally their antagonists, always supposed to be engaged in the endeavour to turn them out of office but as a matter of fact conscious that this feat was impossible and only seeking to keep them from dissolving at once, lest they should return with an even less respectable minority.

The official leader of the Liberal party among the Peers was the Earl of Kimberley, a sturdy, steady, staunch, hard-headed, clear-sighted counsellor, a sage administrator, a loyal follower and a sober gentleman whose speeches from end to end breathed caution, common sense and responsibility. In the Commons Campbell Bannerman was the Scotch equivalent of Kimberley without his long experience and strength of purpose but with a certain canniness [and] pawkiness that were national and a humorousness that was both national and original. He was a poor speaker except when thoroughly roused and well prepared and his timidity was increased by the very precarious and painful position he occupied between the Rosebery section of Imperialistic Liberals who were for the war, and the radical pro-Boer and anti-Rosebery section who regarded their colleagues as little better than Conservatives. The best speaker and readiest

intellect among the Rosebery party was Asquith, already proved an energetic and progressive administrator, an effective and polished speaker and a colleague who understood compromise. What he appeared to lack most was a sympathetic manner and resolution to give effect to his ideas. Sir Edward Grey was much more thoroughly a politician of at least equal capacity but even more cold-blooded, cautious and realistic. He had apparently no illusions, no passions and no predominately great ideals. He had the official manner, imperturbable and impenetrable, which would have made the fortune of an ambassador in Bismarck's eyes. What he wanted even more than Asquith was fire, energy and expansion. Sir Henry Fowler was a capable speaker with a typical middle-class mercantile intelligence, very valuable in Liberal Cabinets.

By far the most notable figure among the Pro-Boers, and indeed on the Opposition front bench, was that of John Morley, the brilliant man of letters who represented the tendencies to scientific opinion applied to literature and history, the Puritan by temperament and training who began as an aggressive atheist and though not a Comtist or formalist in any sense, never consciously outgrew the religion of Humanity, though his intuitions flowered through his grim and gloomy philosophy into a high ethical purity and aspiration as mellow as those of his master, John Stuart Mill, in his later years. In 1887 Morley's severe features might have been those of a fierce dissenting parson, a keen successful north country employer, or a judge of the strong constructive type sometimes found upon the Bench. In conversation he was swift, something imperious and a little censorious. He had a cut-and-dried political gospel and a creed of life which were, if not final, fully efficient and satisfactory in his eyes. He was still smarting under the defeat of Home Rule and the only instant for which he relaxed was when, on hearing of some vagaries of the Irish Catholic electors in Australia, he leaned back with a sudden burst of laughter that had in it a note of regret and pain as he cried 'They are sometimes intolerable.' In 1900 almost withdrawn from the House to write his life of Gladstone, doubtful of his own re-election because of his opposition to the war, all his expectations of the attitude of his countrymen under such conditions falsified by the event and his express prediction of the refusal of the colonies to co-operate still more crushingly contradicted, he was a changed man and strange to say inexpressibly sweetened and softened by the self-distrust which these experiences had promoted. There was quite a spiritual light upon his face when he spoke of the future and he was very tender even of the present with all its imperfections on its head and all its antagonisms to his own ideas. Radical to the core as ever, he was at the same time sympathetic to an extraordinary degree and had the humbleness

of a child seeking information. In public and on the platform he was still the party man dealing swingeing blows at his opponents but in private he was another man, ripened in mood, enriched in sentiment and elevated in thought as if by constant communion with high ideas in his study, until lifted above the grosser ways and lower aims of the workaday world. His colleague, Bryce, sharing his opinions, did not share his enfranchisement of mind. In 1887 he was the Professor rather than the politician and in 1900, though the former was much less and the latter much more manifest in him, he was unlike Morley embittered by his reverses and those of his party. He cherished a bitter animus against Chamberlain who treated him with unconcealed disdain, as well he might on the floor of the House. A learned, conscientious and highly cultured man, it was by his books rather than by speeches or counsel that he was of service to his friends.

Separated from the front bench only by the gangway, that narrow path in his case forever impassable, sat the most pathetic figure in the British Parliament, one of its ablest and best-trained sons who had grown and matured under its traditions by the most patient devotion to its lore, one of its own breed and of its true stock in spirit, temper, manner, to whom in due time the House of Commons would have submitted itself as to its natural leader, if an untoward fate had not ostracised him and shattered at once his nerve, his reputation and his future. Sir Charles Dilke, in breadth and copiousness of information, in sound judgment of affairs, within the limits of his temperament, by a tact partly inborn and partly acquired in dealing with the great assembly to which he now again belonged, had probably no superior and possibly no equal as a Parliamentarian. He had not only the peculiar qualities of the House but their defects, so obvious and puzzling to the outsider because apparently without effect upon the influence of the member over his fellows in their corporate capacity. His statesmanship may be questioned for it was never really tested; his administrative ability was confessed and his sagacity as an interpreter of public opinion rarely at fault. But he was not so much noted for any single qualification as for a general all-round capacity, which enabled him to hold any office without discredit and without leaving any special mark behind him. His courage must have been considerable in his earlier years, but after his great ordeal his self-confidence was gone and he could not have been trusted to sustain the tension of a great emergency. He was more ambitious than most of his rivals, more industrious, more teachable and more versatile, and steadily rose to recognition as one of the most trustworthy and intellectual of radicals. After the catastrophe he strove in vain to satisfy his craving for distinction by literary work of a solid character such as might re-establish him in public opinion. Knowledge was his forte and

omniscience his foible. He set out to be an authority upon both foreign and home affairs, social and colonial questions, naval and military problems, an art critic, a reader abreast of poetry, fiction and belles-lettres ancient and modern, with a sufficient knowledge of sport, racing, hunting and country pursuits to preserve his English air, while he courted foreign acquaintances and intimacies in most countries of Europe. The extent of his achievements proved the hunger of the heart, which spurred him on to follow his old pursuits with despairing energy rather than any real taste for many of them. The courage he exhibited in bearing his lot and painfully struggling back into some kind of prominence, if it had been as spirited at the time of his trial as it was patiently continuous afterwards, would have enabled him to avoid the shipwreck of his life and all his hopes.

The one representative in the Commons who belonged to the wage-earning classes of the country and who had retained public notice there was John Burns, the sturdy, handsome, honest workman who spoke in the House with something of an apologetic air, modifying awkwardly what must have been a good out-of-doors platform manner. He was self-educated and vain of his reading, of his knowledge of history, of his taste for art and of his own self-made fortune with a harmless child-like desire to outdo those with more advantages than himself. A simple, whole-some, manly upright nature only vitiated by a little egotism and a little class feeling, as was natural in one whose sympathies were all with his own people and their sufferings and who was deeply desirous of serving and elevating them himself.

The Irish party, ill-supplied with funds and poor in men, was no longer the phalanx with which Parnell had broken the ranks of the Gladstonians at the height of their power. Redmond, his successor, was a pleasant, sufficiently able man, though inferior in picturesqueness to Dillon and Davitt, prisoners of old and rebels of all time, who during their romantic careers and under their romantic exteriors cherished a bitter hatred of everything English, which was at the same time the source of their power and influence and their weakness, because it perverted their vision and prevented them from striving for or accepting the concessions towards Home Rule for which Saxon public opinion was steadily ripening. Redmond had rivalled them in violence but had developed under parliamentary auspices and by sheer pressure of the necessities of the situation into a comparatively constitutional line of policy. There was the same love of country in him as in Dillon and Davitt but not the intensity either of that love or of the hate of England which consumed them in impotent rage against the over-mastering power. The man of by far the greatest intellectual originality among them, and indeed in the whole

House, was Healy, in whom a truly Irish sense of humour was employed by a keen and powerful intellect which, if accompanied by more self-restraint and deeper sympathy with his fellows, would have made him a parliamentary O'Connell in power, though never an impassioned popular orator or hero. His analytic insight and prosaic reason stripped all the poetry and a good deal of the truth from his associates as well as from his opponents, while his undisciplined temper left him equally ready to expend his biting wit upon those nearest or furthest from him in aims and attachments. He had never understood Parnell and had turned upon [him] viciously just when standing at bay against all the world he presented the most magnificent spectacle of haughty, self-reliant and overmastering bravery that modern political [life] has witnessed. How different would have been Dilke's fate if he had been quickened in the hour of danger by a spark of the splendid dauntlessness which sustained him fighting in a bad and hopeless cause against all the world and sacrificing for a woman and for his ambition all the fruits of a lifetime of successful intrigue and endeavour, his reputation, his allies, his party, his country's opportunity and his own life. Healy, quite incapable of entering into this tremendous tragedy or even of being affected by it, jeered and sneered at the dying lion and at Kitty O'Shea as furiously as at his deadliest enemies. He remained a thorn in the side of his friends and of the Ministry, long an obstacle to the union of his party and unwilling to sacrifice his Ishmaelitish jibes even to his country's cause. Sexton, the orator of the party in 1887 though never one of its chiefs, had fallen silent and his place was taken by Blake the Canadian, a man of fine figure, face, manner and disposition, whose rich voice, rounded periods and easy good nature recalled the typical Irish advocate of good family and education inspired by the cheery idealism of his race.

But in truth the House of Commons in 1900 was not rich either in effective set speakers or debaters. Blake was formal, Asquith cold, Grey colder, Morley academic, Goschen painful, Wyndham as yet too wanting in weight and inclined to sparkle out of season. When necessary Chamberlain outshone them all though he rarely soared and too frequently lapsed into mere personalities or partisan jibes. In debate he was still more over the heads of his adversaries, for Dilke lacked fire and courage to face him and Healy was too irresponsible to achieve a lasting success. Under Balfour's wing he remained quiet but ready to swoop whenever necessity should arise. [Balfour], the Leader of the House, himself was more than a match for any of these antagonists, readier, gayer, more popular, and after the House's manner always prepared to attack and defend in an offhand, unpretentious, sometimes slipshod but always straightforward unaffected

manly fashion that brought the cheers at the right point and the votes at the right time in a brave, breezy British fashion, very satisfactory to the majority inside and accepted peacefully by those whom they represented. It was a dying Parliament with the shadow of dissolution hanging over it deeper every day but even that did not stimulate its members to declare themselves. It was dull, decorous, of grave deportment, heavy, nonchalant in style, unimpressive except for its order and uninspiring except for its memories. In a clumsy way it did most of what it thought to be the absolutely urgent business of the nation at vast expense of health, time, money and patience. The nation was apparently contented. That being so who can complain? Even radicalism can desire no more.

20 Chamberlain's Divide and Conquer

THE GENERAL ATTITUDE of the British Government to the Australian delegates in 1900 differed considerably from that of 1887. At the first Imperial Conference the work had been preliminary, general and tentative. The Home Government then occupied the position of advantage in every respect while the colonies were divided among themselves. The occasion was of importance because it was the first attempt at formal co-operation of the Empire as a whole and its success made it memorable. But if it had failed neither party would have been injured and no bitterness would have arisen. Sir Henry Holland [afterwards Lord Knutsford], most lovable of men, courteous, conciliatory and firm, was supported by the Premier himself both at the opening of the Conference and at the secret session with reference to the New Hebrides, by the Admiralty on the discussions relating to Naval Defence and by other Ministers when matters affecting their Departments were debated. He was the Chairman of all the meetings but the mouthpiece of his Government only on special questions, while his deference to his Chief when he attended was punctilious and marked. When the inevitable photograph of the representatives present was taken, with the modesty and politeness that were natural to him he took his place in the back row, his head just appearing behind three ranks of his guests whom he had placed before himself. The man and the motive of the gathering which was to bring the colonies to the front were dramatically expressed by this grouping.

The second occasion when all the colonies were again present in London by invitation in 1897 was chiefly ceremonial in character. The discussions held were with the Secretary for the Colonies alone, brief, unimportant and without special result. They were not only subsidiary but in the nature of a second thought. The British Government was host and the colonial representatives its guests assembled to do honour to the Queen at her Jubilee. The photograph taken was again significant in itself as well as by contrast with that of 1887. Mr Chamberlain occupied a chair in the centre of the front rank of the picture, the only person seated while the Premiers of all the Colonies stood in respectful attention around him though they were his visitors, present in response to his invitation. The motive of this assembly was partly to use the colonies for the benefit of the Ministry of the day. In 1900 there was no photograph. If it had been taken, it ought to have shown Mr Chamberlain and his officials on one side of a table and the Australians upon another, both parties preserving a polite antagonism to each other. They were present again by invitation and to assist the Ministry

of the day, but theirs was a business errand of a serious character and upon its issue depended the relations between the mother country and her most distant dependency, that of which the future was most promising, the habitable area largest, the wealth greatest, and whose isolation rendered it more than any other part of the Empire capable of standing alone.

Unlike Sir Henry Holland, Mr Chamberlain brought no other colleague to his Conferences and was from the first to the last himself the British Government so far as the delegates were concerned. He was supported by his Under-Secretaries who said not a word, by the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General who spoke at his bidding upon legal issues only, and the Chiefs of the Colonial Office who merely listened to all that transpired and doubtless privately advised him afterwards. But nothing was clearer than his position of absolute supremacy and theirs of entire submission to him. He and he alone directed the whole proceedings, deciding who of his subordinates should speak and when and upon what topic, reserving entirely in his own hands the settlement of every point and particular, large and small, and making it patent at every step that he and he alone had to be considered. He met the delegates as he would have met foreign ambassadors, if sole representative of his country; he had specific objects in view in meeting them, but relied wholly upon his own force of will, genius for debate, official prestige, and tact in negotiation to win him the victory upon which he counted to add another laurel to his brow. Again all the advantages of the position were his. The delegates were there to ask for the passing of a Bill which he could postpone at pleasure, and without apparent desire to do so, beyond the period for which it was possible for them to stay in England. He had behind him an all-powerful and obsequious majority of both Houses, while the Opposition were utterly incapable of resistance to his will so that by the exercise of the power he possessed he could amend the measure upon which Australia's hopes were centred without difficulty and to any extent he pleased. The press and the public of the mother country followed the Ministry almost unanimously, so that inside or outside of Parliament the delegates had no effective allies and no independent court of appeal. His proud, self-reliant, aggressive and dominating spirit, realising to the full his official dignity, reinforced by the consciousness of all the means of coercion he enjoyed, and inspired by the successes which he had recently achieved against his enemies in Parliament and by the victories of the British arms in South Africa which appeared to justify by the event the policy he had pursued and upon which he had been challenged, was also stimulated by a sense of the helplessness of his guests, the possibilities of division among them, and the necessity they were under of arriving at a speedy settlement with him. The odds were

thus so heavily in his favour that he may reasonably have anticipated, and did in fact anticipate, an easy triumph in dealing with the Bill as he desired, with the consent of those who had been at his request sent to London as its custodians but who faced him without any power for its protection other than that conferred by the character of the measure itself, its popular sanction and their own confidence in themselves as spokesmen of the Australian people and representatives, who had in the Convention taken part in its making.

How the Salisbury Ministry had intended to treat the Commonwealth Bill when Chamberlain first invited the colonies to send representatives is not likely to be known, but there were slips of the tongue which indicated that other amendments than those submitted to the delegates had been originally intended, though what they were did not transpire. There was evidence that the powers conferred upon the Federation by Section 51 would have been curtailed if possible by the omission of XXIX, External Affairs; XXX, the Relations of the Commonwealth with the islands of the Pacific; XXXVIII, of delegated powers at present exercisable only by the British Parliament; and possibly X, Fisheries in Australian Waters beyond territorial limits, with other minor alterations. It can only be surmised why these amendments were not suggested but it is at least possible that the Conference of Premiers which unanimously instructed the delegates to endeavour to secure the Bill without any alteration whatever, warned the Colonial Office that unless it reduced its demands to a minimum it might arouse the whole of the colonies against its proposals. The first intimation the delegates received of the intentions of the Ministry was at the first Conference. This was held on March 15th in the same room as those of 1887, the office of the Colonial Secretary. Instead of taking the head of the long table as Sir Henry Holland did, Mr Chamberlain sat in the centre having Kingston as Privy Councillor on his right, Barton as delegate from the senior colony on his left and Deakin as representing the next senior colony immediately opposite, sitting between the Attorney-General and Solicitor-General. Chamberlain rose to his feet at once and after welcoming the delegates went on to say that the Government had decided not to ask for any amendments of the measure except such as it deemed essentially necessary, specifying as objectionable the declaration that 'this Act shall bind the Crown' in clause II; the provision that the laws of the Commonwealth should be binding upon British ships whose first port of clearance and whose port of destination are in the Commonwealth and the abolition of the right of appeal from the decision of the High Court upon constitutional questions. He also added that the application of the Colonial Laws Validity Act to Federal legislation should be made clear. He made a

special appeal for further consideration of the request of Western Australia that she might be permitted to retain her tariff intact against goods imported from the rest of the Commonwealth as involving but a small concession to colonists whose position was exceptional. His tone, free from aggressiveness or dictation, was stern in substance and unyielding. He held out no hope of compromise and was evidently prepared to pick up any gage of battle on the least provocation. He submitted the irreducible minimum of his demands in a manner which implied that he could not conceive of any refusal as warrantable or possible and though without arrogance, spoke as a lord paramount or at least a predominant partner. Barton's reply while grave and deliberate was somewhat tortuous, as was his habit when unwinding the skein of his thoughts upon his legs. He did not directly deal with any of the points raised and made an unfortunate slip when making his plea for the passing of the Bill 'with no alteration or with as little alteration as possible', the last part of the phrase being immediately taken down and afterwards often used against him. Kingston, Dickson and Fysh confined themselves to reciprocating the good wishes expressed and with indicating in a general way the difficulty likely to be occasioned if the amendments were pressed. Deakin spoke last, introducing in a general way the line of defence upon which he thought they ought to proceed, expressing surprise that requests for amendments should have been preferred at so late an hour and hinting that if any of them were now pressed, they should be referred to Australia itself. As to Western Australia he bluntly told Mr Chamberlain that the entrance of that colony depended entirely upon himself, that its Premier was only hesitating because of his reliance upon Colonial Office interference and that if he were at once informed that this would not be attempted and advised to come in, his position in his colony was such that he must needs accept the Bill as it stood. Chamberlain scarcely appeared to relish this piece of plain speaking but made no further allusion to that colony. The Attorney-General spoke and a conversational discussion followed in which the line of attack was gradually unmasked. The intention was to demonstrate from a legal point of view that some one amendment was absolutely essential, for having once broken down the barrier interposed by the claim for the Bill without amendment, it was evidently purposed to afterwards press for a reconsideration of the points mentioned; while there were ambiguous phrases employed which might be taken to imply that if the delegates resisted, other alterations as yet unspecified would be made as well and over their heads or that when once the breach in the 'no amendment' position had been made with or without the approval of the delegates, the rest of the Bill would be laid open for further incursions. The argument

was prolonged at some length, an admission that the 'Colonial Laws Validity Act' was intended to apply to Commonwealth legislation being also promptly seized upon and utilised by the Attorney-General. According to pre-arrangement among the delegates in the event of any demand for amendments being sprung upon them, they confined themselves to technical comments of a general kind and refused to discuss the amendments asked for until they saw them in black and white and had time to consider them. The Conference closed with an undertaking that the proposed amendments should be furnished next day and an appointment was made with the law officers at Parliament House the next afternoon to receive them. The contest had now fairly begun.

In spite of this unpropitious beginning, Barton and Kingston continued optimistic as to the Government demands, insisting that they were put forward only to test them and that when it was found that the Australian delegates remained firm they would be gracefully abandoned. It was decided however that as the delegates desired to preserve their unity at all costs and had everything to lose and nothing to gain by individual admissions made in the course of debate, it would be best to avoid that means of controversy at all events until they had put on record their case against amendment and so protected themselves against possible misconceptions. It was felt that Dickson and possibly Fysh were better kept in line by this means. Besides none of them felt then as well prepared as Chamberlain and his law officers were to deal with all the developments likely to arise from minor modifications of the language of the Bill.

Barton and Kingston though strong and clear reasoners were not as ready in debate as they were solid in style and little relished the prospect of being pitted against Chamberlain, Webster and Finlay, with the phalanx of legal advisers and official associates behind them. As the attack was legal the rejoinder must necessarily take the same shape, so that Dickson and Fysh at once practically abandoned the task to their colleagues though afterwards criticising and modifying the reply prepared in its general statements. The real difficulty lay to present the case against amendment without making it too manifest that this meant a denial of all argument and, at the outset, a confession that any and all debate was meaningless and superfluous. Consequently the note struck required to be apologetic and the statement an appeal so as to disguise as much as possible the greatness of the demand which was being made upon the British Parliament by dependencies which asked that their own draught of their constitution under the Empire should be accepted practically without criticism or consideration and their legislative independence recognised as amply as was that of the United States after their separation. Chamberlain felt and

resented the implications of such a request. He said to Henniker Heaton that if the delegates thought they were going to get their Bill without some amendment, he would tell them that 'he'd see them damned first' and meant what he said. Apart from the merits of the amendments he was resolved to demonstrate the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament and his own too by insisting upon some alteration however small.

The maxim 'divide and conquer' is old as history and the Colonial Office under its astute chief was naturally alive to its importance and determined not to allow the conflict of opinion to have the British Government on the one side and Australasia on the other. Immediately after the Conference the attack on the delegates began on their flanks. The first clear intimation of this unexpected assault came from the **St James Gazette**, an inconsiderable Jingo evening journal owned by a German Jew, which gleefully published an interview accorded by Mr W. Pember Reeves, Agent-General for New Zealand. Originally a journalist and what is much more profitable, a proprietor of a Christchurch paper, Mr Reeves while yet young entered the New Zealand Parliament and soon after, its Government, as an advanced radical, achieving considerable success as legislator, administrator and debater. His capacity for intrigue, restless ambition, and a cold temperament which rendered him incapable of loyalty caused him to accept the Agent-Generalship rather than continue in a Cabinet in which he could neither be Premier nor master. In London he speedily made his mark for he was energetic, a good business man, presentable and educated. As an old journalist he used the press with persistent ingenuity so as to be admirably advertised and speedily popularised himself with the Liberal party by his speeches and essays descriptive of the success of socialistic experiments in his own colony. He had early resolved to leave the narrow sphere of colonial for the larger radius of British politics and directed his unsleeping activities patiently towards that end. He had the knowledge not only of the colonies and their legislation which no English parliamentarians possessed, but was able to model himself after the current type of public man most acceptable in the mother country. His literary ability was exceptional as witnessed by his **Long White Cloud**. His after-dinner speech at the City Liberal Club was not only far the best delivered there but the best the delegates heard in London, carefully prepared, elaborately finished and brilliant with flashes of humour. A spare, stooping, sallow-complexioned, dark-haired, keen-featured and dark-eyed man whose piercing and rather shifty eyes were much too near together, he was perhaps insincere, selfish and wanting in aggressive courage according to his local reputation but certainly as able and as ambitious as any man then aspiring to a seat in the Commons, where his expectation was that he

would soon achieve an appointment to a seat on the Treasury benches. Hostile to Australian Federation because of its injury to New Zealand trade, its relative importance and that of its representative in England, he like all the Agents-General except Cockburn was jealous of the delegates and eager to defeat their mission. He might have done much to embarrass their labours had he not been unwise enough in the course of conversation with a friendly reporter to speak his whole mind on the matter without reserve, finding to his unmitigated horror and dismay the whole of it reproduced in print next day as an interview which he was unable to repudiate or even correct except in a trifling detail or two. What New Zealand desired was the privilege of coming in at any time after the Union at her own will and pleasure and without the consent of the States already federated being necessary. There was no real anticipation that this would be conceded, but it was to serve to cover the secret hope that the Union might be postponed or defeated. For this reason and to curry favour with the Colonial Office, the amendment of the Bill so as to secure the unrestricted rights of appeal to the Privy Council was ardently advocated. The object was ingenuously admitted by Mr Reeves in the statement that 'This section of the Bill has not received sufficient attention from the Australian electorate. There is nothing to be lost and a great deal to be gained by referring it again to the people. If they wish to retain the clauses then they can say so. Nor need there be any hurry to pass the Bill as it stands nor any reason why after waiting twelve years before becoming a burning question, Australian Federation which we all desire, may not wait a short twelve months more. . . . The delegates naturally wish to pass the Bill on the best terms they can. They naturally wish for their own personal credit as lawyers and representatives of their governments to hurry it through unamended if possible. I need hardly say that Mr Parker of Western Australia and myself will oppose this course, claiming the right as future States under Clause VI to be heard and advocating a new Referendum to the electorate.'

So frank a disclosure of his projects defeated them and him. He had asked the delegates to grant him a Conference and they necessarily could not say no, though to have New Zealand and Western Australia formally asking for the same amendments as the British Government would have much hampered their argument and possible alterations suggested by them in regard to their own colonies might thus come to be considered and perhaps added to the Bill. This interview at once afforded them an opportunity of calling his attention to it and inviting [a] disclaimer in the same paper, as a preliminary to any conference, because of the personal imputations contained. As he was unable to supply this the proposed

conference by his own act became impossible. He could not press for it or complain because he was excluded. Mr Parker of Western Australia, who had by this time arrived, promptly disavowed any connection with him or participation in his plot against the Bill. But though thus happily delivered from a Conference out of which no good could possibly come, but which might have been made most injurious, the delegates could not conceal from themselves that London opinion had been much prejudiced against them by the undeniable fact that both New Zealand and Western Australia had protested against the limitation of Australian appeals to the Privy Council so that the Colonial Office appeared to be merely protecting the interests of the minority of the colonies against the effort of the majority to sever what was always called a link of the Empire. Both colonies were popular in the metropolis, New Zealand by the enthusiasm displayed in sending troops to South Africa and Western Australia by the vast mining interests held in the city and the close relations maintained with the Colonial Office. The whole strength of the delegates lay in their claim that the Bill was Australian and that they spoke for Australia when asking that it should be passed unaltered. At the very outset, and from Australia itself their claim was now publicly impugned.

21 Struggle with Chamberlain

THE MEMORANDA OF THE DELEGATES were prepared by collaboration. First a general discussion as to the lines to be followed with a few notes taken by Barton and a few from Deakin. Kingston dictated long screeds in which he discussed the points at issue and any others that suggested themselves to his feverish energy at great length and with great freedom. These Barton read, appropriating any suggestion and then wrote a first draft usually written in the early hours after midnight which was submitted to his colleagues in council. His style was dignified, flowing, and often figurative but with a tendency to diffuseness, to become involved among parenthetical comments, and to present an indefinite outline. Kingston's task was to cut up his long sentences into several short ones and add phrases giving point and emphasis where he thought necessary. Deakin broke the whole into fragments and sometimes altered their order, finishing off where necessary and substituting simpler or more concrete phrases. When any differences arose between them, he rewrote the passages in dispute so as to meet the various objections urged and thus accommodated the views of Dickson and Kingston who were at opposite poles in regard to some matters. The reply of the Ministry was in much the same tone as that adopted by Chamberlain at his first interview and bore traces of his handiwork in every part. He was master of the situation and made no attempt to conceal it. His style of writing as of speech was peremptory, incisive, clear and in the nature of an ultimatum. A second memo was undertaken and prepared in the same fashion as the first [to] which in their turn the delegates delivered their counterblast declining to stir from their first position. This time however the tactics of the Colonial Office supplemented the attack of New Zealand and Western Australia by bringing over another and much more influential colony under their banner. The first two were not in the federating group and could be ignored as outsiders but the precarious position of the delegates became still more perilous and almost untenable when their important ally Queensland openly separated from them and in the person of her representative, Dickson, went boldly over to the enemy. When the second memorandum was presented it bore the signatures of four delegates instead of five. Mr Dickson wrote a letter of his own intimating his disagreement and declaring in favour of the amendments proposed by Chamberlain. This blow had been long preparing.

The colony of Queensland had not been represented at the Convention which drafted the Commonwealth Bill and though its electors had accepted

it without qualification of any kind, as indeed they were obliged to do if they accepted it at all, there was not the same sense of responsibility for the measure felt by its people or their representatives. Dickson himself like most commercial men was in favour of the retention of the right of appeal in all cases to the Privy Council and had always so avowed. But he was in this matter after all but the mouthpiece of the dominating personality in the northern colony, its former Premier and then Chief Justice, Sir Samuel Griffith, who having entirely changed his opinion since 1891 when he was in favour of abolishing all appeals to England, was now an ardent supporter of their maintenance. His force of character and reputation were such that the ministry became eager to manifest their agreement with him, and the Governor, Lord Lamington himself, ventured to telegraph and speak in open opposition to the Bill so far as it limited suitors to the Australian Court upon constitutional questions. Thus fortified Dickson was ripe for revolt and under the careful handling of the Colonial Office prepared himself to take public part against his colleagues so soon as decency would permit. He somewhat unwillingly consented to sign the first memorandum and made his hesitancy so apparent that after this he was carefully shadowed, so to speak, in his public utterances by having one of his colleagues detailed to follow and if necessary correct him. On April 5th a public conference was held at the Colonial Office at which Parker and Reeves appeared and stated their case. After they withdrew a warm discussion ensued in which Dickson gave evident signs of weakness. Nor was this to be wondered at considering the restrained vigour and emphasis with which Chamberlain addressed them. He had evidently recognised that the crisis had come. There were men before him who would not yield any more than himself upon the crucial question of amendment but he had also one or two who were wavering, who were being privately cajoled and could be publicly intimidated because they would not face the strain involved by a rupture with the British Government. Dickson and Fysh, while not more polite than their colleagues, had a deeper deference towards the authorities and a less assured position and less pronounced views on the points at issue. They were visibly apologetic. Chamberlain was almost tart in manner and led off with something like an attack upon the delegates' position at all points. The case of New Zealand he thought merited special attention as what was asked involved no sacrifice at all to the federating colonies. The case of Western Australia was stronger. It was admitted by the Bill that a special concession was due to her and the extension of this asked was really trifling. It was in the highest degree desirable that the continent at least should enter the Union at once and grave risk was being run by the refusal to make even this trifling sacrifice to attract them. These

questions he admitted were for the federating colonies themselves as being of domestic concern only. As for the matters to which he had called their attention at the previous Conference, they were on quite a different footing. He must reiterate that Her Majesty's Government were still convinced that amendment was essential. The Colonial Laws Validity Act ought to be distinctly accepted as applying, but above all the Appeal to the Privy Council must be maintained intact. Upon that point there could be no withdrawal from the position already taken up. He thought the delegates should ask for power from their several governments to consent to these amendments and should advise them that this enlargement of their appointment and action under it were necessary to secure the passage of the Bill. The omissions from his speech were significant. The Shipping and other amendments were no longer insisted upon. So much the delegates had gained. Barton replied at once that in the nature of things it was not competent for delegates to consent to an amendment of a measure twice adopted after prolonged discussions by the whole body of the electors, and that it was not wise to press for alterations which would involve the delay and expense of a third Referendum. Nor was it reasonable to expect that the various governments should be obliged to face such a contingency, though if any request were to be preferred to them it would come much more appropriately from Mr Chamberlain himself. Kingston followed with the firm declaration that he was not prepared either to ask or accept further authority from the colonial Ministries though he saw no reason why the Colonial Office should not seek their opinion if they desired to have it. On this question it must be remembered that they had to deal with the whole body of the electors and that the Convention of 1891 composed of representative men from the whole of the colonies went the length of prohibiting any appeals of any kind to the Courts of Great Britain. He argued that the Australian Courts were the Queen's just as much as those which sat in London and that they had demonstrated their capacity by the number of cases in which their judgments were upheld and that their knowledge of local conditions was often invaluable. He for one was not prepared to reflect upon them. He concluded with an appeal that the good understanding between the colonies and the mother country should not be disturbed at such an unseasonable moment. Dickson was vague and inconclusive but far less decided, the substance of his remarks being directed to show his anxiety to act with his colleagues and with the Government and his hearty approval of the appeal to Australia. Fysh said little or nothing, leaving early to represent the delegates at a City Lunch for which they had accepted invitations. Deakin dealt first with the claims of New Zealand and Western Australia which his colleagues had simply

brushed aside, pointing out that the chief interest of New Zealand was admittedly that of retaining her imports of £2,500,000 a year into Australia, that the chief task of the first Federal Parliament would be the framing of a tariff devised to meet the interests of the federated colonies and to yield a certain revenue. No such tariff could be framed and no estimates of revenue or expenditure adopted which would apply whether New Zealand entered or not. If after the tariff was prepared and passed New Zealand chose to enter without warning, the consequences would be disastrous and the whole work would need to be done over again. The concession to Western Australia was small but it was entirely the fault of her own representatives in the Convention and of her Premier at the Conference of Prime Ministers in 1899 that this was not then conceded to them. She was trying to repair her own omissions and her own neglect in a Bill which he personally would have been happy to amend in this direction if it were his own private measure, but which neither the delegates nor the Ministers who sent them had now any title to amend. In the same way he did not regard clause 74 as of the first importance taking into account its permission of double appeals from State as well as Federal Courts but it was passed as an amendment of the previous proposal of 1891 to meet Mr Chamberlain's own objections made to the Premiers in 1897, and that inasmuch as it was never challenged by the Colonial Office before the first Referendum on the Bill, nor when the Premiers were afterwards sitting in Conference considering this among other proposed alterations before the second Referendum, they were entitled to conclude that it was accepted as sufficient and that therefore the time was now gone by for altering it. If it was to be altered at all it ought not to be in this Bill but another measure might be passed through the British Parliament at the same time as the Commonwealth Bill giving the first Federal Parliament power by Bill or resolution to restore all or any part of the right of appeal taken away by clause 74. The generosity of the British Parliament would, he felt sure, be repaid by an immediate endeavour in the Australian legislature to meet their wishes as far as possible. Deakin spoke at greater length than his colleagues and dealt more specifically with points made by Chamberlain, though the proceedings as here summarised in brief included a conversation maintained for some time after the speeches and resumed at an extemporaneous lunch prepared in another room of the office. The net result of a debate that was at times warm but never personal and in which the law officers took their share, was that the same evening Chamberlain cabled his appeal to the Premiers while the delegates cabled at the same time to warn them in a general way in regard to it.

Dickson all this time was in constant communication with his

Government upon whom he hoped to place the responsibility for his desertion. Next day Barton, Kingston and Deakin telegraphed suggesting that any proposed reply of the Conference of Premiers had better be submitted to them before presentation, and referring the Premiers to the supporters of clause 74 in the colonies for arguments in reply to Chamberlain's cable. Fortified by the advice of the Federalists, McLean, Holder and Lyne sufficiently influenced Philp and Lewis to prepare a draft answer to Chamberlain which was cabled to London; Barton, Kingston and Deakin hereupon revised it. They struck out of the first paragraph an admission that 'Imperial interests were involved in the question as to Appeals', introduced in the second paragraph the assertion that clause 74 would not work injuriously to any part of the Empire and admitted only that the new Court proposed 'might perhaps present attractions' instead of 'would doubtless' present them as the Premiers persisted in saying. They also urged in vain in paragraph 3 the insertion of the words 'The Premiers feel it their undoubted duty to strongly represent that either of these courses (i.e., amendment or postponement) would be distasteful and harassing and would try the patience of the people.' In the fourth paragraph where the Premiers 'respectfully urge' that 'the voice of the Australian people' should receive 'favourable consideration' the three delegates begged them instead 'to earnestly deprecate' amendments on the ground that 'its adoption would do much to impair the general benefit to the Empire to which recent events have conducted'. They went on to add that 'in their opinion the proposed message would without these alterations probably be taken by the Imperial Government to amount to an invitation to alter the Bill contrary to the decision of the Australian people, and especially are paragraphs 3 and 4 dangerous as they leave room for the Imperial Government to throw the onus of amendments on the Premiers instead of undertaking responsibility of nullifying the effect of successive referendums, giving victory to the minority and at the very least causing aggravating friction or equally aggravating delay. Delegates are hopeful that Premiers will stand firm and they believe that Imperial Government will give Bill as asked rather than accept the dangerous responsibility of delaying Federation by a third Referendum or otherwise. Even if delay results, Australia will not obtain less than is now offered.' The appeal was however in vain, and again the wires were set to work after the reply had reached Chamberlain, to endeavour to counteract its mischief. Barton begged the Chairman to telegraph further to prevent the fatal misunderstanding, created by their retention of paragraph 3, by strenuously opposing any alteration and concluding 'In view of distinct instructions given at departure which have been loyally observed we should not be

deserted.' In addition each of the three cabled his own Premier urging them to severally declare against any amendment even if the result was that Queensland and Tasmania openly indicated their consent. The replies received were all to the effect that nothing more could be done unanimously and if pressed further the Premiers of Queensland and Tasmania would have openly declared against clause 74 and in favour of its omission. Lyne added that Philp in this matter was acting upon the advice of Dickson who strongly advised submission. A day or two after he declined to sign the second memo, in which the delegates nailed their colours to the mast and finally refused to countenance any amendment. Upon his presenting himself at the next meeting of the delegates Kingston refused to proceed with any business or continue any discussion in his presence, and as a consequence Dickson formally withdrew from councils in which he had taken little or no part for some time.

The breach was complete. Fysh, despite his Premier's action, declined to be moved. Whatever his three colleagues thought best he was prepared to endorse and though he too did not practically interfere with their procedure, he continued to support them in the most loyal and uncompromising fashion. Their position, serious before, began to be almost untenable now. New Zealand, Western Australia and Queensland were in open array against them, their own Premiers were giving them but a lukewarm support and cablegrams from their colonies were being published indicating that the press and influential organizations were against them. The London press as a whole was antagonistic to them on the merits of the issue and even the Liberal papers gave scanty encouragement. Dickson, Reeves, Parker, had at their back also Sir Julian Salomons, Agent-General for New South Wales and leader of its Bar whose term of office was just drawing to a close and who publicly attacked clause 74 at the dinner of the City Liberal Club with an emotion which rendered him almost speechless. This extraordinary demonstration on his part was fostered by his own strong anti-Federal feelings and his professional feeling, but largely as a response to the three delegates who, deserted in Australia and officially opposed in London, entered upon a new campaign and in a very novel quarter. Putting their backs against the wall they accepted every one of the public invitations to dine showered upon them by Clubs, Guilds and public bodies and constituting themselves missionaries preached the gospel of the Bill without amendment, no matter what toast they proposed or replied to or what the nature of the gathering might be. It was a new experience for jaded London diners to be pleaded before as if they were juries hearing a patriotic cause and its novelty rendered the experience evidently rather palatable to men even in search of

a new sensation. The situation was in a sense comic but the delegates were in deadly earnest. They were to some extent the lions of the season and they roared their best for their Bill.

The humour of the situation was not all apparent. The Colonial Office in its anxiety to make the most of the visit of the delegates in its own interest and to render them more susceptible to its wishes, had set to work all the social and political machinery of the Tory and Unionist parties to provide as many occasions as possible for parading their overseas guests before the world. They were entertained on behalf of the Government by Mr Chamberlain privately and officially, by Lord Lansdowne, Lord James of Hereford, Lord Hopetoun, Sir Richard Webster, Sir Robert Finlay and by supporters of theirs such as Lord Windsor as well as by Lord Rosebery, Sir Charles Dilke, Mr Bryce and other leading Liberals. At these dinners, at many lunches and at private interviews the delegates managed among them to convey their side of the question in a conversational way to most of the makers of public opinion in London, in Parliament or in the press. Quite a number of Chamberlain's colleagues appeared convinced of the equity of the Australian case; even his seniors, Arthur Balfour and the Duke of Devonshire, must have put to him some awkward questions as to the wisdom of the policy he was pursuing. But it was at the large public dinners, many of them given in their honour, at which they contrived to reach the great body of the politicians, business magnates, and influential personages then in London. The British Empire League brought His Royal Highness and his son the Duke of York with nearly 500 guests to hear Mr Barton; the National Liberal Club not to be outdone brought as many members of its party headed by all its chiefs; the City Liberal Club following suit in similar fashion; the Constitutional Senior and Junior, the Devonshire, the St Stephen's, the Press, the Eighty and the Anglo-Saxon and the Colonial Clubs, the Goldsmiths, Mercers, Iron-mongers, Fishmongers and other guilds, the Colonial Institute, the South African Association, the National Conservative Union, the Primrose League and London Chamber of Commerce were among those who provided them with great gatherings to address and to these they appealed with all their power. At one or two the proceedings became almost stormy; at the City Liberal Club Barton and Sir Julian Salomons came into conflict; at the Colonial Institute, being challenged and contradicted, Deakin broke into a fiery harangue and at the Devonshire, Dickson and he, to the mixed delight and alarm of the assembly, replied hotly to each other as to Lord Lamington's right to publicly comment upon the point in dispute. By this means altogether some three thousand influential persons were reached and many of them favourably disposed towards the delegates' contention. The

Colonial Office had in its own interest presented them with the best possible audiences, which they straightway proceeded to convert into its critics and antagonists. The press very imperfectly reported the speeches, especially as they were always in the same vein, but even their attitude was modified by the constant efforts of the delegates to reach their principals and the success of their efforts in capturing the ear of the leading men of both sides. The irony and novelty of the raid upon what were mainly Tory strongholds made by three Australian Liberals, against their colleagues, against their Agents-General except Fysh [and] Cockburn, against their own Premiers and press, against the British Government, the Tories as a party and the Unionist press, imparted a relish to the affray which relieved the monotony of its argument by the variety of the assemblies to which it was addressed.

The three speakers were of very different style and could therefore afford to speak together as well as apart and often did, all three in one evening. Barton became so indoctrinated with his theme and so habituated to regard it as of the first importance to all who heard him that at a little private dinner given by the proprietors of *Black and White* he gave his amazed and wearied listeners forty-five minutes of close technical legal reasoning upon clause 74. He had no set speech but one fixed line of thought embodied in the memos which he picked up now at one place, now at another, and finished off when he was tired though never having exhausted it. Kingston had two speeches which he alternately separated and mixed, punctuated with patriotic passages delivered with great and genuine fervour and occasionally adorned with a new passage. Deakin sought to suit his speeches to his company and varied his theme as much as possible. His rapidity of utterance and interchange of moods were much more un-English than the deliberate weightiness of Barton or the spasmodic curtness of Kingston. Dickson had a good address and erred only in the length of his address but he had few opportunities of delivering it. Fysh spoke equally rarely, in a pleasant and general way supporting his friends. How far the tactics adopted by the three belligerents were successful it is impossible to determine. They certainly served to impress the Government with a sense of their earnestness and also perhaps with their capacity to influence their own people when they returned. It made them numerous friends and gave them a much better standing both in public and private as it became plain that they were far from being nonentities and might be measured against all but the very best English speakers at the gathering which they attended. They may have achieved much more, but at least they kept the contest alive and full of interest and in the public eye.

22 A Drawn Battle

CHAMBERLAIN DID NOT FAIL to show in a dignified way his disappointment at the trend of the negotiations, speaking almost contemptuously of the fear of responsibility evinced by the Premiers and with scarcely concealed annoyance at the public appeals made by the delegates at whose determined resistance he evinced surprise. Utilising to the full the antagonism of New Zealand, Western Australia and Queensland he was too good a general to be satisfied with a minority support, only one member of which had definitely accepted Federation. Barton and Kingston tried to the last to believe that he would in the end abandon his amendments. Their second memorandum, decidedly stronger in expression than the first, was met by an intimation from the Colonial Office that the written discussion was closed and the final Conference met on May 8th prior to the introduction of the Bill to the Commons where it was set down for the 14th. Coldly with impassive demeanour and sententious deliberation Chamberlain went straight to the central point of the discussion. The federating colonies had been met in every possible way. New Zealand's claims though reasonable had at their request been wholly put aside with those of Western Australia, which were still better founded and more desirable, though at his instigation Sir John Forrest had agreed to summon his Parliament to consider the question of referring the Bill to a Referendum. In the Bill itself the amendments asked had been reduced to a minimum, that affecting shipping was not pressed and others which were only of less importance had not even been suggested. Those now to be dealt with were but two in substance, a declaration that the Colonial Laws Validity Act would apply to Commonwealth legislation and the removal of the restriction imposed by clause 74 and the covering clauses upon the right of appeal to Her Majesty's Privy Council. After this exposition the Minister's voice began to vibrate, his accent to harden and his eye to gleam. The delegates had refused even to consider these amendments as they ought to have been considered. Barton's opening reference to 'as few amendments as possible' was quoted as inconsistent with the attitude since maintained. With an angry ring and great emphasis he declared that he was 'disappointed and pained at the tone of the last memo'. He took particular exception to the imputation attributed to his Government that they had reflected in any way upon the character of Australian judges, and further concluded with the assertion that the attempt to prohibit even the slightest alteration of the measure however reasonable or necessary on the ground that it had been accepted by a vote of the

electors was unwarrantable and indefensible; that no British Parliament could be coerced in this fashion and that the Government of which he was a member felt that it was its duty to insist that these two amendments upon which it set great importance should be made. An Imperial Court of Appeal had been offered and refused but would nevertheless be created without loss of time, but in view of the stand taken by the delegates for the whole Bill and nothing but the Bill, further discussion was clearly useless. The aggressive tone and character of the speech completely took Barton by surprise. He expressed the deepest regret that the negotiations should have resulted in a failure and attributed it to the inability of Ministers to realise the prolonged and often desperate struggle required to secure the Bill, many of whose clauses like that most under discussion were compromises which if disturbed might reopen endless and bitter controversies. With another regretful allusion to the surprise he felt at the determination of the British Cabinet, Barton, to the surprise of his colleagues, sat down without having intimated as they had agreed he should upon such an emergency, that under the circumstances they conceived their presence in London could be no longer necessary to the Imperial Government or useful to their colleagues. It was evident that the crisis to him so unexpected had driven this and other matters from his memory, so that after a few stately sentences of warning he sat suddenly down partly to check his rising temper. As for Kingston he was in danger of becoming inarticulate with suppressed vexation. He too dwelt upon the unutterable disappointment he felt and which would be felt all over Australia when the decision became known, declared the provision limiting appeals one of the most important provisions of the Bill, and protested that if so amended it would probably mean the rejection of the whole measure and shipwreck of the work of years all of which would be at the door of the Ministry. He too spoke with great brevity apparently doubting his own powers of self-restraint if he proceeded further. Dickson who had already by letter criticised the second memorandum and boldly declared for the amendment, now did so by word of mouth applauding the proposed amendment as strictly constitutional and desirable and thanking Her Majesty's Government on behalf of Queensland and the majority of Australia for taking such a step to preserve one of the most valuable links of Empire. Clause 74 was a mere detail, the demand made for the passage of every line of the measure unreasonable and the effort to override the judgment of the British Government and induce them to pass a provision of which they properly and gravely disapproved, was intolerable. Dickson following the others was brief and triumphant.

By this accident it happened again that Deakin was the longest speaker. Before Dickson sat down Kingston apparently just recollecting the threat

arranged, abruptly interjected that if the amendments were to be insisted upon there was nothing left for the delegates but to pack up and go home. The officials present, scandalised and alarmed, looked first at each other and then with one impulse at Chamberlain whose set face gave no sign of his feelings, so that with a deprecatory remark from Sir Richard Webster the speech of Dickson proceeded to its close. Deakin again reviewed briefly the position of New Zealand and Western Australia and their claims pointing out that as predicted Chamberlain's appeal had brought them in without any alteration of the Bill; disclaimed the intention to refuse all consideration of all amendments; patent mistakes would have necessarily to be corrected in some way. He contended that the discussion had discovered none such but had merely proved that the Ministry of Great Britain held different views to the people of Australia as to Courts of final appeal from Australia on constitutional questions. There was nothing strange in this. But why put them in conflict? He did not himself consider the question taken by itself as one of first importance, but only because it involved a grave interference with the approved provisions of a measure twice endorsed by the electors. The amendment was now sought to be made to repair an omission of the Colonial Office which neglected its ample opportunities of asking that the compromise adopted in consequence of the remonstrance of 1897 should be further expanded. If it was essential the amendment should be made it ought to be by means of another measure authorising the Federal Parliament to alter this part of the Bill. If it was necessary to declare that the Colonial Laws Validity Act applied, though he thought it ought not to apply, this could be declared in the same Act. No amendment of the Bill was requisite to give effect to the wishes of the Imperial Government and to insist upon accomplishing its ends at the expense of the Commonwealth Bill was a fatal mistake likely to be fruitful of ill-will. He defended the memo both as to its matter and tone. Its frankness might not be diplomatic but it was a sincere attempt to convince and in no respect dictated by any other desire than to prevent mischief. He replied to Dickson, maintaining that the provision for constitutional appeals was inserted after thought because judges living under a Federal Constitution would be much more likely to interpret it correctly in the light of their own knowledge than would judges living under an unitary Constitution in Britain and seeking the aid of statutes and text-books only, to seize the spirit of Federal institutions. If this part of the Bill were altered any other part might be challenged. The anti-Federalists were those most to the front in the assault being made. If successful here why not upon the other issues upon which they were defeated in the Convention and at the polls? How could the majority of the electors be declared to be against this

particular or any particular clause upon the verdict of their antagonists? Were newspapers, meetings or even Ministries to be taken as expressing the will of the people in face of their two recent overwhelming polls? There was but one constitutional method by which this Bill could be altered in substance and this was by the vote of the electors. Surely the appeal made to the British Government to allow the Australians who had managed their own affairs so long and so well to have another opportunity of considering this issue in the light of their knowledge of the wishes of the British Parliament and by another Bill empower them to amend the two points in dispute would not be disregarded. The Bill was dear to them all, not because they were among its progenitors only, but because it had been so dearly bought and because since its last adoption it enjoyed so to speak an universal parentage. The pride in it and love of it which the Australian people cherished were sentiments to be studied and not ignored and to be satisfied, not offended, and might be rendered a motive power of perpetual gratitude to the mother country if wise statesmanship in London would consent to achieve its ends without amending the Bill.

Chamberlain who had listened with great attention to all the speakers appeared softened by the speech and after Fysh had manfully endorsed the utterances of his three colleagues from his own standpoint, the Conference closed with less animus than it began. The delegates hastened to their room to despatch their final note of reply written by Deakin and little altered. The die was now cast. The Bill was to be amended after all before being introduced to the Commons. Exactly how far was not definitely known. So far however it was clear that Dickson was on the winning side and his colleagues out in the cold.

Chamberlain's speech to a crowded House of Commons was masterful as well as masterly. Campbell Bannerman read the one stinging phrase he had to deliver from a slip of paper apparently prepared in a party conclave. Dilke's speech, so far as knowledge and sound sense went, was what his nominal leader's ought to have been but it was spoiled by its timidities and would have needed much more spirit to be that of an opponent of Chamberlain, the several weaknesses of whose position were all passed over by the spiritless and vacuous opposition. The announcement of the disagreement with the delegates and of the determination of the Government to insist upon the omission of clause 74 and the consequential amendments created no such interest even from a party point of view as any similar announcement would have created in any Assembly in the colonies. Dickson was triumphant. But within a few hours a compromise had been suggested unknown to him which threatened the overthrow of his rejoicings. Chamberlain invited the delegates to dine with his asking

Arthur and Gerald Balfour, John Morley and his Parliamentary Secretary to meet them; he had Barton and Kingston on either side of him with Balfour and Morley, Dickson, and Deakin, Gerald Balfour and Smith following. The situation was entirely changed. It was no longer of any use to argue that the Bill should not be amended. It was amended and drastically. Clause 74 was gone altogether. The only question was whether any part of it could be got back. Chamberlain had repeated in his speech that the British Government disclaimed all desire to interfere with Australian interests. Those it left to the Australians themselves. Its province was only to protect Imperial interests. The objection to clause 74 therefore was that under it, Imperial issues might be finally determined by an Australian Court which when interpreting the Constitution might enlarge its scope indefinitely to the prejudice of the rest of the Empire. The question naturally suggested itself whether clause 74 might not be restored with a limitation of its operation to distinctly Australian affairs. All this passed quietly between Chamberlain and his two neighbours towards the end of the evening, after Dickson and Deakin had left. On Wednesday 16th, Barton, Kingston and Deakin met to consider a first draft of the proposed clause 74 which came down from the Law Officers of the Crown in this form 'Unless by the consent of the respective Governments concerned to be signified in writing in the case of the Commonwealth by the Governor-General and in the case of a State by the Governor no appeal shall be permitted to the Queen in Council in any matter involving the interpretation of this Constitution or of the Constitution of a State upon the question whether as between the Commonwealth and a State or as between any two or more States any legislative or executive power is properly exercisable by the Parliament or Government of the Commonwealth or by the Legislature or Government of the State.' The first part of the clause relating to appeals by consent was inserted at the express desire of the Colonial Office, Chamberlain having been assured that according to Canadian experience the Privy Council would always be preferred to a local tribunal. The delegates were of an opposite opinion but regarded the introduction of this option with indifference. The remaining part of the clause gave back all they could define distinctly as Australian and shearing away all the vague and comprehensive jurisdiction trenching upon Imperial issues. On the 17th the three had a private interview with Chamberlain at his room in Parliament House at which he was, though somewhat elated, as precise, prompt and calm as ever. They then went to Finlay's room, he having become Attorney-General on Webster's elevation as Master of the Rolls, where a new draft was accepted. When the door closed upon them and left them alone, they seized each other's hands and danced hand in

hand in a ring around the centre of the room to express their jubilation. The proposed amendment was wired to the Premiers who were pressed for an immediate reply. On Monday 21st, Barton being at Cambridge and no reply having been received from Australia, Kingston, Deakin and Fysh signed a short note accepting the new clause adding Barton's name by his authority, thus taking upon their own shoulders the sole responsibility. Late the same night the Premiers' endorsement excepting Philp's was received. The settlement was announced to an astonished House by Chamberlain, to the undisguised wrath and mortification of Dickson, who found himself deserted by the British Government and his colleagues welcomed to their arms. A more dramatic denouement to a parliamentary performance has rarely been witnessed.

Vowing vengeance Dickson, Griffith and the Queensland Government attacked the compromise clause with all their strength and unfortunately Chamberlain's proviso as to appeals by consent of the Executives gave them good ground for complaint. The real situation would have been unaffected by this had it not been for the wave of loyal sentiment sweeping over the colonies in consequence of the war and leading them to eagerly identify themselves with the mother country in every respect. The no-appeal provisions had never been really popular and now became unpopular as seeming to sever a tie, however slight, of the Empire. The Conservative classes, the legal profession and all people of wealth desired to retain the appeal to the Privy Council and had heartily and openly supported Chamberlain's proposed abolition of clause 74. Finding themselves defeated at the last moment they turned upon the delegates with fury. Lyne openly condemned them for arrogance and for ignoring local governments and the press even ventured to declare that an appeal must be made to the Lords against the Imperial Government which was deserting its duty and succumbing to three men in London. Their recall was openly suggested. Resolutions condemning the new clause were carried at many semi-public meetings while except the Australian Natives' Association, the South Australian **Register** and a few staunch allies, Symon, Downer and R. E. O'Connor, the whole of the voices of Australia shrieked censure upon the daring delegates. Though they neither introduced nor approved the introduction of the Executives which was made the chief point of attack, they felt bound to stand by it as part of their bargain with Chamberlain. The South Australian Government amidst stormy denunciatory cables from Kingston withdrew its approval and declared for the original Bill. Under Griffith's direction the Queensland Government announced that a Bill so seriously altered must be submitted to its Parliament before it could be accepted. New Zealand, Western Australia and Tasmania officially joined

in the cry so that at the very last moment the Bill seemed in danger of being withdrawn and the Federal movement foiled, not because the proviso was included, but because the influential classes and the press were determined to strike out clause 74 and preserve an unrestricted right of appeal upon all issues. Under these trying circumstances Chamberlain remained outwardly calm and perfectly staunch to the four delegates, with great adroitness using the occasion so as to prepare for some concession agreeable to them, and which could at the same time save the face of Queensland. A suggestion emanating from Sir Samuel Griffith that the High Court might grant leave to appeal from itself or from a subordinate court to the Privy Council provided the golden bridge over which the delegates passed to union. Deakin who had left London and was travelling on the Continent while suffering from a carbuncular attack was pelted with telegrams every day, particularly by Kingston who was fiercely denouncing the Chief Justices for their intervention in the dispute, and especially his old leader and friend, Sir Samuel Way, for a secret memorandum of his which had been sent to London in advance of the delegates, and was inclined to include the South Australian Government among his antagonists because of their change of front. By letter and telegram Deakin continued to act with his colleagues. At the very moment when all the Governments were preparing and indeed anxious to surrender the compromise and to abolish clause 74 altogether, the intrigues were brought to [an] end by the final acceptance of the High Court for the Executive in appeals by consent. The fact that constitutional appeals remain capable of settlement by the High Court and that the Federal Parliament possesses the power of amending the law relating to appeals is due therefore entirely to the delegates. They prevented other undesirable amendments but they also secured these two important and significant powers to the Commonwealth.

The last stages of the embassy lifted the mask a little from one or two faces. They showed Lyne anxious to stab Barton and to disparage him and diminish his influence for his ulterior personal ends. They showed him also willing to postpone the Federation if an opportunity arose and anxious to magnify his own office and authority without scruple at its expense. They showed Griffith determined to risk the postponement of Union rather than accept a much smaller limitation of appeals than he himself had insisted upon nine years earlier, and obstinately declining to be bound by the Referendum in details as he had frankly declared in public some time before. Lewis and Forrest were willing to take the opportunity to secure the individual views they had advanced in the Convention; McLean was not unwilling to have his hand forced in the same direction by public clamour.

Holder wavered too under pressure but fell back upon the Bill. The four delegates, very alone among the public men of the colonies, remained constant to the popular verdict and the determination of the Convention or as much of it as they could possibly obtain.

23 Retrospect

THE ATTITUDE OF THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO the delegates throughout was unimpeachable. Lord Salisbury offered them words of courteous welcome but otherwise remained unseen. Balfour and the Duke of Devonshire were sympathetic listeners but carefully avoided interference with their colleagues. Some of their juniors were more expansive in their expressions of friendliness, while others like Lord Halsbury [and] Lord James, from the legal point of view indicated their antagonism to their demands. Chamberlain himself was perfectly frank, straightforward, business-like, and honourable in his delicate dealings with them. He either set to work or permitted others to set to work all kinds of influences social and political, Australian and British, to influence them; and contrived by his tactics to foster, if he did not create, the discord among the colonies by which he contrived to secure what he ostensibly aimed at, a declaration of Imperial supremacy and what he almost as much desired, an alteration of the Bill which should prove the vigilance and authority of the Secretary of State for the Colonies. When confronted with the daring demand that he should father the whole of the great measure framed in Australia without presuming to touch a word or a syllable, he had regarded it as equivalent to a request for his abdication, resisting it with suppressed wrath and indomitable determination. He may after the first conference have further desired to remove the ambiguity as to the scope of the High Court in matters of Imperial concern, though he undoubtedly had cherished bolder designs upon the measure. Judging from a survey of all the circumstances, it appears more likely that he really expected to get much more than this with the delegates' consent after applying pressure to them and that his sudden reversal of policy even after bringing down the Bill and striking out clause 74 altogether, was due in part to the prospect of an immediate election at which an Opposition with any vigour could have made excellent use of the public differences between himself and the delegates, taking them to be prophetic of future troubles in Australia such as had led up to strife in South Africa. This would have been easy for them more especially during the public enthusiasm everywhere felt for Australians because of their brilliant services in the war, rendering it doubly difficult for him to seem to refuse anything the colonies clearly desired. In addition to this there was ground for believing that, in consequence of the campaign conducted at public dinners and private interviews, the delegates [had] succeeded in prepossessing very many influential men in the Ministry itself and of all

shades of opinion out of it with the reasonable nature of their case and the danger of refusing concessions so as to chill the patriotic sentiments of even a section in Australia. Some such explanation is necessary to explain the slight ebullitions of temper manifested by Chamberlain and also to justify him and the Imperial Government in ignoring what was practically a league of all the Governors, Governments, Agents-General, the press, the great organisations and financial institutions of the Australian colonies eagerly supporting his own proposal to eliminate clause 74 altogether. He deliberately preferred to retrace his steps, abandon his amendments and concede the demand of the four men who stood alone in London without anyone except the Australian Natives' Association behind them, that the Bill as it had been passed, or the nearest possible approach to it, should be sanctioned by the mother country, and never wavered after so deciding. His astuteness enabled him to bring Queensland into line in a compromise which everyone except the four delegates disliked and would have gladly defeated. Though it is certain he only cast in his lot with them against his will, the whole credit of conducting the negotiations to a successful conclusion is his, with the additional satisfaction of having done so with dignity, consistency, and tact. No better lesson in the management of State affairs could have been given to colonial representatives too accustomed to undress methods of transacting public business in which the pettiness of the procedure, want of reticence, and indulgence in personalities of those engaged in them often disguised the real importance of the decisions arrived at under conditions unfavourable to any impressiveness. The feudal traditions and aristocratic spirit retained in British administrative life are mainly to be credited with this result. In young communities political decorum and even decency is too often sacrificed to what is called Democracy but is in fact only the intrusiveness of interests and individuals pursuing their own ends at the expense of the public interest. In Downing Street the officials concerned were polite, attentive, friendly but strictly non-committal and diplomatically at ease. In them Chamberlain had loyal, devoted, well-trained and capable assistants whose discipline was marked and whose work was efficient, but who never came between the wind and his nobility or for a moment distracted attention from him as their chief, the central and always dominating figure of the scene.

The impression conveyed by public life in London has already been alluded to and need only be summarised here. The British Constitution, democratic in theory because of the almost overwhelming preponderance of the elective chamber, was yet in character and working a class Government in class Chambers representing the class feeling of the bulk of the population. So far as electoral and other machinery was concerned, it

might have been the most radical country in the world but took its colour and style instead as all Governments and Parliaments must from the character of its constituents. The masses talked and read a good deal of politics but were not consistently or systematically politicians, had no fixed aims and even those who might be termed party men were so in a sporting sense rather than with any clearly defined or persistent policy. These were true to their colours, enjoyed contests under them, rejoiced at victories and deplored defeats. They played fairly according to the rules of the games and went back to their businesses and the bosoms of their families to find speedy solace for any misfortunes they might have encountered in the course of events. They did not philosophise, they did not hold their creeds too profoundly, they did not brood over them or debate them except for the amusement of combat or vaticination. They took their politics like their pleasures somewhat sadly and even more spasmodically with as little theory and much less heartiness. The chief end of man was to live comfortably, to make money and to enjoy himself and the relation of the programmes submitted to them by their politicians appeared to affect any of these conditions very remotely. When the pocket was threatened by taxation or the thirst for beer by temperance proposals, the people went to the poll to resist the tyranny and to assert their freedom to do as they liked and live how they could and liked without interference of Parliament. The nation was deeply interested in the war and for the time in nothing else outside its regular and usual sports. Business was brisk, employment plentiful, Ireland quiet and so it was with almost serene indifference that it refused its ear to the advocates of party and particularly to the advocates of reform. The war must be won before the royal elector would consent to listen seriously to any propaganda new or old. Under such conditions any Ministry would have been strong and the Salisbury Government certainly appeared omnipotent and invulnerable as far as Parliament was concerned. The people might break out in the event of a catastrophe to the army or a scare as to the navy, but while their repose was undisturbed by such sensations they were quite content for anyone to call the tune at Westminster or elsewhere. Even the coming General Election could not arouse interest. It was a foregone conclusion that the Administration would come back with a greater majority still. And so the political world slept or only talked in its sleep at random. The Opposition was sufficiently aristocratic in its spirit to render it indistinguishable from the Ministry in this regard; it was even more strongly for Free Trade and more individualistic in temper, and Chamberlain's acuteness having forestalled it in social reform it was practically bankrupt in policy having nothing to offer which could arouse the sympathies of the general public or even

appeal to any of the great interests. The Government supported by all the great interests, the Church, the Publican, the landed gentry, the titled and official classes and their tuft hunters, the professions, had the general public behind them because of the war and the working classes largely mollified by their social leanings. They were consequently in an overwhelming majority though it was far from compact or united. The Liberal party was a chaos, a few unpopular factions contending intermittently and unsuccessfully within it for its control. Without a leader and with but few capable lieutenants its condition was hopeless.

Socially London did not appear to have improved during the thirteen years except that its dinners were shorter and less wine was drunk. Judging by the gossip of the dinner tables, the morals of the nobility were sexually a neglectable quantity; doubtless the great majority were far from being great sinners but the general tone was the reverse of Puritanic. The millionaires were more in evidence; living seemed more extravagant; the women no longer appeared by day in plain morning dresses but in rich and expensive costumes; there were more carriages, more entertainments and more extravagance on every hand. To keep up the pace was more expensive than ever. Social ambitions were at least as keen and there was a more promiscuous race for distinction. The middle classes were apparently less isolated and more infected by bad examples. The wage-earners though employed appeared to be as improvident as ever. The public houses were at every corner and at every few steps in many quarters, busy during the day and thronged at night. The taste of the town was no higher and the morality of the theatre if anything still declining. The music halls had multiplied, the serious drama did not hold its ground. The love-making of the 'Arries and 'Arriets was more conspicuous and the general behaviour of the women less reserved. The height to which ladies of all degrees plucked up their skirts on the least excuse afforded by a wet crossing was a constant marvel to an Australian. Paint and powder were more multiplied and prostitutes if anything more in evidence, especially those of a fashionable type. The faces at aristocratic 'At Homes' were either keen in the business way or in the sensual among the men and the animal healthy or unhealthy was almost equally dominant among the women. A large proportion of both sexes were without visible traces of plain living or high thinking, and a small proportion of high type. The almost universal facial expression was that of worldliness relieved by a great variety of poses, selected to exhibit singularity. The intellectual and cultured elements were strong but subdued to the environment they worked in. When they went into society it seemed as if their souls were still like stars and dwelt apart. It was a Vanity Fair in fact and truth, into which the nobler and purer qualities came chiefly with

the innocent young and remained with but few of their seniors. Of course intellectual gatherings were numerous and intellectual conversation frequent, artists abounded and well-read and well-travelled men and women could be met everywhere, but over the whole of them shone the superficial veneer of a society with superficial aims and tastes. The treadmill of social observances reduced almost all of them to the same mental mien and gait. The roars of the whirlpools of finance and fashion, deafening in the city, still reverberated in the drawing rooms and dining rooms at night, drowning most effectually every still small voice. Crush, rush and push vulgarised the greatest assemblages. Incessant excitement, intrigue, chatter and change forebade serious, continuous or undistracted thinking or working. Vast in size, wealth, appetite, profusion, energy and variety of life, London was apoplectic, stertorous, unwieldy, unhealthy, philistine and gross, greatly in need of a strict regimen and severe reform if it was to continue to be the centre of an Empire and the seat of its intellectual, spiritual and political government as its power, position and resources entitled it to be. Other capitals seemed and were said to possess the same characteristics. Paris, Rome, Berlin, Vienna, St Petersburg, Washington, New York and Chicago were of the same general temper and tendency; all of them the creations of a kind of civilisation at present supreme. It cannot be denied that Melbourne, Sydney and San Francisco were their offspring and retained the family likeness. The huge concentration of London made its characteristics more manifest than in the rest, but all alike appear to be blotches upon the face of Nature when tested by reasonably ideal standards or even by some of the realities of the country life which surrounds them, whose narrowness of range, slowness of movement and other disabilities were not intensified as were those of the cities by a divorce from Nature multiplying hideousness and the massing of millions in over-crowded tenements and monotonous employments, whose lives morally, mentally and physically unhealthy, must needs be ultimately decadent.

What impression the delegates made upon their hosts it would be difficult to say. So far as could be judged, Barton impressed them as stronger and Kingston as less determined than they were. Dickson was himself an Englishman by birth and education of a familiar type as was Fysh, whose height and appearance were rather distinguished. Barton, Kingston and Deakin on the other hand were objects of more curiosity as being of Australian birth and rearing. The breadth and massiveness of the first two and the height of the third, the fineness of Barton's head and face and the great strength of Kingston's profile render[ed] them physically favourable specimens. It was noted with surprise that they had no

provincial accent and that their English was of exactly the same quality as that of their own public speakers. It was evidently felt that in their persons and utterances they proved their kinship, and the welcome extended to them was thus made warmer than was customary. The general impression as to Barton was well expressed by John Morley who likened him to Walpole whose strong sagacity and steady purpose rendered [him] invaluable in his time. Kingston was somewhat more suspiciously treated, especially after his letters attacking the Australian Chief Justices, and he was partly in consequence underrated, except perhaps by those immediately associated with him. His influence upon Barton was great and the letter which the latter published in **The Times** contained in the first draft long passages of personalities inserted at his instigation but which were struck out because Deakin emphatically refused to endorse one of them. Kingston submitted his first letter to **The Times** to Barton who approved and to Deakin who again objected. It was then altered partly in accordance with his suggestions but published as only seen by Barton because Kingston knew that Deakin objected to all attacks upon persons in Australia, except if necessary when made in Australia where they would have an equal and ready means of reply. His theory of conduct was that the stronger and more resolute their action, the gentler and more courteous their language ought to be. Nothing of these circumstances were referred to by any of them, but some hint of the part played even in their secret councils appears to have transpired, since on arriving at Adelaide upon his return Deakin was invited to make an appointment for that afternoon to see the Governor, Lord Tennyson, through whom the Colonial Office had most frequently communicated during the mission and in regard to its various proposed compromises. He privately informed Deakin that he was instructed from the highest authorities in the Colonial Office to convey to him their assurance that they fully appreciated his services because from their knowledge of the facts they were perfectly aware of what they owed to his conciliatory efforts. They wished him to understand that to him more than to any of his colleagues they attributed the finally satisfactory compromise which had been secured. Lord Tennyson was particular in impressing upon him that this intimation came not merely from one source, but from the heads of the Office, presumably Chamberlain, Herbert and Lord Ampthill, and therefore apparently was intended to refer to all the negotiations public and private and not merely those which were strictly official.

All the delegates were welcomed with enthusiasm upon their return, even by those who had opposed them by cable and had censured them in public meetings or through the press. The Bill was passed and all Australia was

rejoicing. The new clause 74 though not popular was more acceptable to the critics than that which it had replaced. There was an undercurrent of surprise and admiration that the four men on the spot and subject to all the influences of London should have resisted so long and so firmly and have at last at least divided honours with the redoubtable Chamberlain and the great Government to which he belonged. In addition to this there were the eager crowd of those who had Federal expectations or ambitions and who hastened to prostrate themselves before the rising sun. Deakin and Barton especially were accorded triumphal entries to their respective colonies where they maintained a strict reticence in regard to their treatment by their Governments and by those who had attacked them in the rear when they were making their stand in London. The mission was over, it was acclaimed as a success, and they were applauded for their services. What more could be desired?

The tale Dickson had to tell was embellished even from his own point of view. He dwelt upon his own isolation at a time when he had his own Government openly and all the other Australian Governments tacitly behind him when he was hand in glove with Chamberlain and the British Government whose guest he was and when every financial interest and organization in England and Australia was sustaining him against his four colleagues. Nothing was said as to the instructions upon which he was appointed and which were never withdrawn or upon the loyalty he owed to his colleagues of first acquainting them with his proposed change of front instead of allying himself secretly with their bitterest opponents for some days before he gave them warning of his intention. Even this however provoked no reply from any of them. The Commonwealth Act was upon the Imperial Statute Book practically unamended and as far as the embassy was concerned 'The Rest is Silence.' (13.9.900)*

Something remains to be added in the shape of an Epilogue. All History takes on the appearance of inevitableness after the event. Looking backward the future will be tempted to say that Australian Union was Australia's destiny from the first and that nothing could have prevented its consummation. But if this be true, it is certainly not true of its present accomplishment, whatever might have resulted in later times, hereafter, with other men and other means. If Victoria had not pressed in the Federal Council after 1884, in all probability Parkes would not have declared for Union when and as he did. His efforts a little later if made at all would have been sterilised by the financial famine and wreckage which obstructed all political action for several years. It seems most probable that if he had not been spurred to action in 1890 he would not have acted at all. It is still more manifest that if Reid had not been in fear of Parkes he would

not have revived the movement when and as he did and that, failing at this time, he would not have been coerced as he afterwards was into transforming himself from an opponent into a supporter of the Bill at the second Referendum. If the Turner Government had not been galvanised into action prior to the first Referendum, the battle in Victoria would have been much more serious than it was and the future conduct of the campaigns very different and in different hands. The coming in of Queensland and of Western Australia depended upon the peculiar exigencies of Dickson and Forrest. These are but a few of the more obvious contingencies which beset its progress at every step, while the death [or] withdrawal of one or two Federal leaders or of Reid by the carriage accident he met [with] when fighting as an anti-Federalist to defeat Barton in the latter's candidature for Hastings and Macleay, would have certainly revolutionised the whole subsequent course of affairs.

The fortunes of Federalism have visibly trembled in the balance twenty times during the past ten years and have from the first moment to the last been subject to endless unforeseen and unpreventable interruptions, any one of which might have indefinitely postponed its triumph. Again and again it was made the sport of Ministries and Parliaments and local agitations and just as often, indeed at every step, it benefited by their necessities and purely selfish actions. It is scarcely too much to say that with very few exceptions the decisive steps which have led to success were taken with other or ulterior objects by the public men responsible for them. Few were those in each colony who made genuine sacrifices to the cause without thought or hope of gain. The stimulus to the electors as to their representatives was chiefly the prospect of financial gain, though the desire for fame and for association with so great a work counted for a great deal among the chief actors. The enthusiasm for union without which the merely selfish energy would have died down and disappeared many times, swayed all to some extent but was the dominating factor only among the young, the imaginative, and those whose patriotism was Australian or Imperial. This feeling of loyalty was the mainspring of the whole movement and its constant motive power. It was mainly unselfish in the masses and was accompanied on the part of some with a willingness to make sacrifices for the general good expected to ensue. With the majority, the emotion was its own reward and the ideal its own sufficient attraction. Regarded as a whole, it is safe to say that if ever anything ought to be styled providential it is the extraordinary combination of circumstances, persons and their most intricate interrelations of which the Commonwealth is about to become the crown. To say it was fated to be is to say nothing to the purpose. Any one of a thousand minor incidents might have deferred it

for years or generations. To those who watched its inner workings, followed its fortunes as if their own, and lived the life of devotion to it day by day, its actual accomplishment must always appear to have been secured by a series of miracles. (14.9.900)*

* Deakin's date, in the MS.

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APPENDIX I: Further Notes by Deakin

A

[These are contained in an envelope marked 'Inner History of Federal Convention—Further notes'. Deakin's abbreviations have been spelt out.]

1. Barton and O'Connor offered Reid their support to carry Bill and make Reid 1st Federal Prime Minister—Barton retiring from politics— Reid replied grateful but was doubtful if his friends could accept the Bill—At close of Melbourne session offer repeated—Reid would not give a definite reply except that he was favourable and his friends not—
2. The South Australian Ministry so far resolved to oppose the Bill at the 1st Referendum that they had an appeal to the people to reject it sent to the Government Printer and set up—This was only cancelled at the last moment before the campaign began.*
3. While Forrest was at Convention Wittenoom was left Acting Premier in Western Australia having been warned not to take any step of importance without consulting Forrest—Issued official definition of alluvial mining as anything to 10 feet beyond that deep which provoked storm and had to be withdrawn at once. Forrest wrote saying expected to have heard from him before this done—Next appointed James Puisne Judge which was almost a scandal—Forrest wired insisting on having such matters referred to him—Then Wittenoom wired him 'Case of Small Pox on mail steamer what shall I do' !!!

* There is some evidence that this should refer to the *second* Referendum.

B

[The following notes on the reverse of three pages of the MS. of chapter x (originally a sheet of official Melbourne Convention notepaper) seem to be reminders for the purpose of the narrative, and may serve to illustrate Deakin's methods. The use made of some of these can be seen in the text. Deakin's abbreviations of names have been spelt out.]

Downer—Medium height sturdy build between prizefighter and priest—Lights up small eyes bull headed and rather necked—amiable and polished.

Lyne—Crude sleek suspicious blustering.

Symon—Blonde medium height tall—bald shiny—poise—mellow voice clear deliberate telling.

Glynn—Slight small pale large nose reddish bald jockey—gentleman scholar.

Forrest—Henry VIII big bluff ruddy rude generous slow of mind quick temper.

O'Connor—Spanish Irish small headed and eyed.

Wise—Cupid adolescent moustached but beardless.

Carruthers—Short insignificant good eye and great voice.

Brunker—Figure head with mutton chop whiskers.

Higgins—Large headed large featured middle sized athletic bald angular.

Isaacs—Little hair in front of ear—steep slope crest to brow jutting—French—sunken—small slight—lean—knotty stumpy fingers—no grace.

Hackett—Blue eyed and whiskered university man.

Holder—Skeleton—extremely thin—dark middle height—voice full even preaching cadence.

Cockburn—Very dark almost swarthy moustache well fleshed.

Braddon—Slight stiff thin distinguished—mousquetaire.

Reid—Full blue eye expressionless when open florid—neck fat double chin—abdomen—small legs—leans on chairs—rolls—reedy voice strong rising to shriek.

Glynn—Carruthers—Douglas—3 smallest.

Douglas—Highland seer—Lochiel's Wizard.

Kingston—Big everywhere—fine outline in profile—powerful jaw—compressed lips.

APPENDIX II: The Speech at Bendigo, March 1898

[This speech, delivered in the circumstances briefly related on p. 96 above, was one of the most celebrated of Deakin's career, often referred to by his contemporaries and by writers up to the present time. Yet Murdoch lamented in 1923 that 'though it was perhaps his very highest flight of oratory, and certainly the most decisive in its results—only a few sentences are given in the Melbourne newspapers next day; without any indication that it was anything more than a commonplace perfunctory after-dinner utterance, and with no hint of the wild and fierce enthusiasm it aroused in those who listened to it.' This is not quite correct. Deakin's speech came late in the evening, and was rather briefly reported in the morning papers, but an evening paper (**Herald**, 16 March 1898) had a good summary and an account of the immense enthusiasm of the audience. The speech itself, however, can be fairly accurately reconstructed from other sources, notably from the **Bendigo Advertiser** (16 March 1898) and from a booklet, **Text Book, A.N.A. National Fête Elocutionary Competitions** (Melbourne, [1898]), pp. 3–7. The late Mr J. J. Keenan of Sydney, a skilled shorthand writer, told the present editor that he had been engaged by the A.N.A. to report the speeches at the Bendigo banquet, and if his recollection was correct (he reported several federal gatherings about this time) the text in the booklet may be from his notes. The date is wrongly given as 1897 but it is certainly the speech of 15 March 1898. Comparison with the report in the **Bendigo Advertiser** shows that after the second paragraph of the version given here from the booklet there was a passage directed against delegates who should now desert the constitution they had framed, and explaining that detailed criticism in the convention by the lawyers, though essential, had confused the public mind. Towards the end of the speech Deakin expressed his pride in hearing that the Association had spontaneously decided to endorse the Bill. The poet referred to at the close was William Gay, who had died in Bendigo in December 1897, aged thirty-two.]

MEMBERS OF THE A.N.A.—We have heard much tonight of politicians and a good deal from them. We have also heard something of the Federal Convention and addresses from some of my fellow-members; but it is in neither capacity that I propose to speak, because I recognise that the united Australia yet to be can only come to be with the consent of and by the efforts of the Australian-born. I propose to speak to Australians simply as an Australian.

You are entitled to reckon among the greatest of all your achievements the Federal Convention just closing. The idea of such a Convention may be said

to have sprung up among you, and it is by your efforts that it must be brought to fruition. One-half of the representatives constituting that Convention are Australian-born. The President of the Convention, the Leader of the Convention, the Chairman of Committees and the whole of the drafting committee are Australians. It remains for their fellow-countrymen to secure the adoption of their work.

We should find no difficulty in apprehending the somewhat dubious mood of many of our critics. A federal constitution is the last and final product of political intellect and constructive ingenuity; it represents the highest development of the possibilities of self-government among peoples scattered over a large area. To frame such a constitution is a great task for any body of men. Yet I venture to submit that among all the federal constitutions of the world you will look in vain for one as broad in its popular base, as liberal in its working principles, as generous in its aim, as this measure. So far as I am concerned, that suffices me. Like my friends, I would if I could have secured something still nearer to my own ideals. But for the present, as we must choose, let us gladly accept it.

I fail to share the optimistic views of those to whom the early adoption of union is a matter of indifference. Our work is not that of an individual artist aiming at his life's achievement, which he would rather destroy than accept while it seemed imperfect. What we have to ask ourselves is whether we can afford indefinite delay. Do we lose nothing by a continuance of the separation between state and state? Do not every year and every month exact from us the toll of severance? Do not we find ourselves hampered in commerce, restricted in influence, weakened in prestige, because we are jarring atoms instead of a united organism? Is it because we are so supremely satisfied with our local constitutions and present powers of development that we hesitate to make any change? The governments from which we take the powers with which the federation is to be endowed are without except less liberal than the government provided in this constitution. We are not to fall into the hands of foreigners. It is not to tyrannical rulers that we propose to remit federal authority. Those to whom we propose to entrust the sole creation and control of the new government are the Australian people.

At a time like the present this association cannot forget its watchword—Federation—or its character, which has never been provincial. It has never been a Victorian, but always an Australian Association. Its hour has now come. Still, recognising the quarter from which attacks have already begun, and other quarters from which they are threatening, we must admit that the prospects of union are gloomier now in Victoria than for years past. The number actually against us is probably greater than ever; the timorous and

passive will be induced to fall away; the forces against us are arrayed under capable chiefs. But few as we may be, and weak by comparison, it will be the greater glory, whether we succeed or fail. 'These are the times that try men's souls.' The classes may resist us; the masses may be inert; politicians may falter; our leaders may sound the retreat. But it is not a time to surrender. Let us nail our standard to the mast. Let us stand shoulder to shoulder in defence of the enlightened liberalism of the constitution. Let us recognise that we live in an unstable era, and that, if we fail in the hour of crisis, we may never be able to recall our lost national opportunities. At no period during the past hundred years has the situation of the great empire to which we belong been more serious. From the far east and the far west alike we behold menaces and antagonisms. We cannot evade, we must meet them. Hypercriticism cannot help us to outface the future, nor can we hope to if we remain disunited. Happily, your voice is for immediate and absolute union.

One word more. This after all is only the beginning of our labours. The 150 delegates who leave this Conference, returning to their homes in all parts of this colony to report its proceedings, will, I trust, go back each of them filled with zeal and bearing the fiery-cross of Federation. Every branch should be stimulated into action, until, without resorting to any but legitimate means, without any attempt at intimidation, without taking advantage of sectionalism, but in the purest and broadest spirit of Australian unity, all your members unite to awaken this colony to its duty. You must realise that upon you, and perhaps upon you alone, will rest the responsibility of organising and carrying on this campaign. The greater the odds the greater the honour. This cause dignifies every one of its servants and all efforts that are made in its behalf. The contest in which you are about to engage is one in which it is a privilege to be enrolled. It lifts your labours to the loftiest political levels, where they may be inspired with the purest patriotic passion for national life and being. Remember the stirring appeal of the young poet of genius, so recently lost to us in Bendigo, and whose grave is not yet green in your midst. His dying lips warned us of our present need and future duty, and pointed us to the true Australian goal—

Our country's garment
With hands unfilial we have basely rent,
With petty variance our souls are spent,
And ancient kinship under foot is trod:
O let us rise,—united,—penitent,—
And be one people,—mighty, serving God!

APPENDIX III: The New Commonwealth, December 1900

[On 29 November 1900, on the eve of the inauguration of the Commonwealth, Deakin wrote for the London **Morning Post** the first of a series of anonymous weekly articles on Australian affairs which were to continue for many years. The following extract from his second article of 4 December, which appeared in the issue of 8 January 1901, will illustrate the fact that he did not allow the emotions expressed at the end of **The Federal Story** to obscure the difficulty of the task that lay ahead.]

On the 1st of January the Parliament of Great Britain will be at last enabled to behold, Jove-like, the new power which has sprung full-armed from a head which is aching after even a perfunctory discussion of the future estate of its offspring. The coming new Commonwealth is already hailed as, in some sense, a portent, having discovered to a surprised Europe even in the hour of birth a fervent loyalty to her parent as unforeseen as was her capacity for service. Loyalty to herself she has yet to manifest, for up till now the artificial barriers dividing the Australian Colonies from one another have weakened their prestige and to some extent their sisterly affection for each other. Now that their forces are combined and concentrated for certain definite purposes they attain for the first time the dignity and potency of a national life, of which the future consequences are certain to be conspicuous and of permanent influence within and without their territory. Ultimately their union will be seen to have heralded within them a revolution, perhaps the more profound because entirely peaceful, but none the less a revolution, political, industrial and social, unprecedented in colonial history. With such a prospect apparent to all onlookers or participators in the achievement, the tendency undoubtedly is to form exaggerated expectations of an immediate transformation in our circumstances which calm consideration must show to be unwarranted. Sudden as the birth will be and richly endowed as is the new-born with the amplest charter of self-government that even Great Britain has ever conceded to her offshoots, much time and toil will be required before we can hope to actually enter and enjoy our inheritance.

The Constitution, long as it is, contains merely the framework of government, whose substance and strength must come by natural growth. Ministers will, of course, be appointed at the outset to accept the responsibility of preliminary preparations, but the Governor-General, acting on their advice, can do little more in the first three months than take charge of the Departments transferred from the States and arranged for the summoning of a Parliament. From this he will next obtain the requisite

legislation providing for the proper control of the public services taken over and the creation of new Federal Departments. Gradually the High Court, the Inter-State Commission, and the High Commissioner's office in London will be created and endowed with the means of discharging their functions. There must be a further period before statutes embodying the policy accepted by the electors can be passed and put in operation. An immense work of administrative organisation must proceed before the new centres of control are firmly established and common principles of action settled through the continent. Fiscal freedom lies still more in advance. The several tariffs of the Colonies now in force require to remain untouched for probably twelve months at least, and the new duties of the Federal Customs House are scarcely likely to be passed without a fierce conflict and prolonged debates.

Others causes of controversy lie thickly around. These are likely to be multiplied and rendered bitter because a considerable proportion of the electors of Federal Parliament are not yet really allied in sentiment nor ripe for concerted action. It is to be feared that the dividing lines which must be drawn before the system of responsible government on the British model can be seen at its best will not appear at the first election, and that much confusion is likely to be occasioned by the absence of even a fairly complete understanding between the representatives who compose the earliest Parliament. These conditions and many unforeseen hindrances will in all probability exasperate the ardent Federalists, fortify the suspicions of their opponents, and disappoint impatient onlookers, especially among the class which has been described by the late Laureate as expecting all things in an hour. Summing up the position, then, it may be taken for granted that the Commonwealth will not begin its reign without much friction, much misunderstanding, and much complaint. Not even an Act of the Imperial Parliament can remove by its fiat the antagonisms of thought, aim, and situation existing among the scattered four millions of independent Australian Britons who are taking their destinies into their own hands on a far greater scale than they have been hitherto accustomed to essay. Because they are enriched by the acquisition of a Federal in addition to a State citizenship they will not be at once inspired with Federal feeling. There will be no complete break with their past. Their horizon will be wider than it was, but in all likelihood will fall far short of the actual field of influence now opened to them. The Union, as begun, will be formal and legal rather than vital. In a few years, no doubt, common interests will supply links capable of standing the strain of local divergences, and by degrees party lines will be drawn, determined not as at present largely by geographical considerations, but by principles of national import. . . .

Each Colony has followed its own line of politics according to what is believed to be its interest. Though men of the same stock, of the same type of thought, and living, broadly speaking, in similar surroundings, our differences, small at first, have been multiplied and increased until some marked divergences have become manifest and have been gradually intensified by various rivalries. When these conditions of Antipodean life are realised it will be seen how vain would be the expectation that the prejudices of years, the ignorance which is the characteristic note of parochialism everywhere, and the inter-colonial jealousies begotten by these are to be dissipated at once by an Act of Parliament, even though drafted and adopted with the approval of the great majority of those whom it is to affect. The Commonwealth Constitution will begin to take effect on the 1st of January, but everything which could make the union it establishes more than a mere piece of political carpentry will remain to be accomplished afterwards. . . .