

tical position so fortunate that the imagination is overcome by the fair prospect which seems to await the young and vigorous nation that possesses them. In the luminous and statesmanlike speech in which the Secretary of State for the Colonies introduced the Bill he showed that he was conscious of the historical character of the occasion, and proud of the privilege, as he rightly termed it, of formally presenting to the mother of Parliaments this great achievement of the sons who have borne her civilisation to the other side of the world. He spoke with a dignity not unbefitting the birth of a new nation within the limits of the British Empire, with a sympathy merited by the arduous and patient efforts to which this memorable advance in Imperial consolidation is due, and with a fairness and a judicious regard for all of the complicated interests actually or possibly involved in its accomplishment which must everywhere command the respect and the appreciation of sincere Imperialists. The history of the movement for federation with which he prefaced his account of the Bill shows how serious were the difficulties which Australian statesmen like the late Sir Henry Parkes, Mr. Barton, and Sir Samuel Griffith—to mention but a few out of many eminent names—had to overcome before they could bring the great scheme, now on the point of adoption, within the range of practical politics. The consolation which those of them who are with us now enjoy, that their labours have been fruitful labours, and that they have laid broad and deep the foundations of a commonwealth surely destined to act a great part in the history of mankind, must afford them a satisfaction such as rarely falls to the lot of public men. Their work is worthy of all the pains and all the toils that it has cost. It is, in Mr. Chamberlain's words, "a monument of legislative competency." The whole Empire will agree with him in congratulating them and those they represent on this palpable proof that they inherit in the highest degree the practical legislative sense to which Great Britain and her self-governing colonies owe their position in the world. No praise, as Mr. Chamberlain said, can be too high for those whose moderation, patience, skill, mutual consideration, and patriotism have been able to produce so great a result.

A measure of so wide a scope, dealing practically with the chief subjects which go to make up the political life of a people, may naturally arouse considerable differences of opinion even in the minds of the most friendly critics. Mr. Chamberlain did not deny that, if the Home Government had been invited to frame the constitution, or consulted upon its provisions there are points which they might have wished to see settled otherwise than they have been settled in the scheme now before Parliament. But the Colonial Secretary, speaking the mind of the immense majority of British subjects, drew a sharp distinction between matters in which it is admissible and right to insist upon such differences, and matters in which the Home Government and the Home Parliament are not morally competent to do so. He repudiates altogether—and on such evidence as is available we believe him to be justified in repudiating—the view upheld by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman that the Australian people regard the Imperial Parliament as merely a court for the registration of their decrees, and that they will be offended or insulted by any amendments of any kind to the Bill. But at the same time he is deeply sensible of the duty we owe to Australia of paying the utmost regard to her labours and to her desires. We have come to a period, he said, in our relations with the great self-governing colonies where we recognise that our relations with them depend entirely on their free will and consent. At the same time Her Majesty's Government cannot ignore the fact that they are trustees for the Empire as a whole, and cannot honourably assent to action by any part of it calculated to prejudice unduly any other part. Guided by these principles, they ask Parliament on the one hand to accept every clause and line and word of the Bill sent Home by the Australian Colonies which deals exclusively with the interests of Australia. On these interests they recognise that the judgment of the Australian people is decisive.

(b.) At the rate of 120 words a minute. Takes 10 minutes.

Mr. Chamberlain said,—I have no doubt there are many members of the House who will be inclined to envy me the privilege that has fallen to my lot in introducing this Bill for the federation of some of our greatest colonies—a Bill which marks an era in the history of Australia, and is a great and important step towards the organization of the British Empire. This Bill, which is the result of the careful and prolonged labours of the ablest statesmen in Australia, enables that great island continent to enter at once the widening circle of English-speaking nations. No longer will she be a congeries of States each of them independent of the others, a position which any one will see might possibly in the future, through the natural consequences of competition, become a source of danger, and lead, at any rate, to friction and to weakness. But, if this Bill passes, in future Australia will be, in the words of the preamble of the Bill which I am about to introduce, "an indissoluble federal Commonwealth firmly united for many of the most important functions of government." After it has been passed there will be for Australia under one Administration a uniform postal and telegraphic service, and provision is made making it possible hereafter for railway communication to be under similar control. In the meantime everything which has to do with the exterior relations of the six colonies concerned will be a matter for the Commonwealth, and not for the independent Governments; a common tariff will be established for all the colonies; there will be at the same time intercolonial free-trade, and, what is perhaps more important than all, in future there will be a common form of control of national defences. Now, this is a consummation long expected and earnestly looked for by the people of this country. We believe that it is in the interest of Australia, and this has always been with us the first consideration. But we recognise that it is also in our interest as well; we believe the relations between ourselves and these colonies will be simplified, will be more frequent and unrestricted, and, if it be possible, though I hardly think it is, will be more cordial when we have to deal with a single