The state and the nation

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THE STATE AND THE NATION

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PREFACE

This book is an expansion of a little work contributed nearly twenty years ago to the Temple Primer series, under the title A Short History of Politics, which has for some time been out of print. Of its imperfections no one can be more painfully conscious than the writer. But he ventures to think that the unexpected welcome given to the Primer volume shows that there is a real demand for a popular statement, in simple terms, of the main lines of social and political evolution, and that even the dangers necessarily attendant upon broad and general statements ought not to prohibit an honest attempt to satisfy this reasonable demand.

The study of social and political problems (which are now seen to be inseparably intermingled) is no longer a matter exclusively for experts; though the work of the expert is now more important than ever before. And it is one of the most hopeful signs of the times, that many thousands of earnest men and women, now endowed with political power, are taking a deep and serious interest in such problems. Many of these students have little leisure for large books, and little familiarity with technical language. But they have a keen desire to know something of the way in which society assumed its present complex character; for in that knowledge they believe to lie the key to the solution of many problems of urgent practical importance.

It is the hope of the writer that this book may be use-
ful to such students, and that they may be led by it to pursue their studies into works of authority and research, without failing to realise how closely interwoven are the various interests of mankind, and how a successful civilisation depends upon the hearty co-operation of men and women in all walks of life in furthering the common good.

E. J.

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CHAPTER I

THE SUBJECT AND ITS TERMS

The history of politics is a branch of the greater history of civilisation. And the history of civilisation is the history of human efforts to supply human needs, and, especially and primarily, the history of efforts made conjointly, i.e. in Co-operation, by human beings, to achieve a satisfaction of their mutual needs. For, while it is possible to imagine a civilisation built up by the unaided efforts of isolated individuals, such a civilisation would be a thing very different from the civilisation which we know, and, probably, very inferior to it. The fact of Community, i.e. the fact that human beings can, and do, combine to further common ends, is the cardinal fact in the history of civilisation, and pre-eminently in the history of politics.

It is interesting, and not unprofitable, to speculate about the origin of this vitally important fact. When we think of the immense difficulty, even at the present day, of getting people, even educated people, to work harmoniously for an end which, in theory, they all admit to be desirable, we stand amazed at the difficulties which must have faced the primitive co-operator. Remember, that he was dealing with a group of individuals without any consciousness of a common history, without foresight, perhaps without any articulate speech, liable to sudden impulses of fear and anger, incapable of perseverance, with only the feeblest and roughest mechanical equipment, whether of