
This is a book that bears reading and rereading, for into its compass is crowded a mass of information carefully researched and documented with primary materials.

After the brief introductory chapters revealing the necessities that produced the adoption of the Constitution, the book is a roll call of the twelve states which participated in the constitutional convention, with a capsule biography and character portrait of each delegate who had a part, great or small, in the making of the Constitution. But it is much more than this. A chapter is devoted to each state delegation, and each chapter has its own integrity as a unified story in which the author has skillfully interwoven with the biographical sketches insights into the social and political climate of the state. There are fifty-five biographies included. If at times the reader feels bewilderingly as if he is reading the generations of the Old Testament with its recurring “begats,” a patient persistence will prove rewarding. Out of this recital of life experiences, one thing stands out clearly — all the delegates, even those young in years, had achieved a maturity in practical experience in the political life of the state, and many had taken part in the councils of the Confederation. Likewise evident is the provincialism and fear of distant government that challenged the ideal of a stronger union.

This book is a tapestried masterpiece that portrays the ideal of a Federal union against the backdrop of Franklin’s rising sun, but it is an ideal rooted in pragmatism. Like all tapestries its chief beauty rests upon the meticulous detail woven into the fabric. Its chief shortcoming rests in the author’s faithfulness to the muted tones of the tapestry. For all her careful research she has failed to provide any
really new light on the making of the Constitution. An in-depth analysis of the real giants of the convention would have given added value to the book for the serious scholar.

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