

A STATE UNIVERSITY.

MEETING IN SUPPORT OF THE MOVEMENT.

INTERESTING SPEECHES.

A meeting in connection with the movement for the establishment of a State university was held in the Queen's Hall last night. The meeting included members of Parliament, educational authorities, and representatives of the professions.

Dr. J. W. Hackett, M.L.C., chairman of the University Endowment Trustees, presided, and accompanying him on the platform were Dr. Hill, Master of Downing College, Cambridge; the Anglican Bishop of Perth, the Rt. Rev. Dr. Riley; the Speaker, Mr. T. F. Quinlan; Dr. Davy, Dr. Smith, Dr. Summers, and Mr. T. Bath, M.L.A.

Dr. Hackett explained with regard to the meeting that the members of the University Extension Committee and all those who had the work of a university at heart had decided that the time was fitting to call upon the people of Western Australia to take some steps to found a Western Australian university. (Applause.) And they had availed themselves of this opportunity because of the presence of Dr. Hill, with whom they were all familiar, and whose heart was equally in this work. He had in his possession apologies for inability to attend and expressions of strong sympathy with the movement from the Premier, the Minister for Works, the Minister controlling the Agricultural Department, the Dean of Perth, Rev. Mons. Bourke, Archdeacon Watkins, Revs. Mead, A. S. Wilson, D. I. Freedman, and W. Shenton, and Messrs. W. Kingsmill and Faulkner. He had a letter also from Sir Edward Stone, who, however, held that the time was not yet for a university, because there were not in the community men able to give £20,000, £50,000, or £100,000 to the movement; and he had suggested in lieu of a university a good agricultural college. Proceeding, Dr. Hackett said they were met there that evening to consider whether, in the first place, they ought to take steps to found a university. It was a cause many of them had had at heart for many years, and had made many unavailing efforts to push forward. The fight had been somewhat disheartening, for they had had to struggle against the strangest prejudices—prejudices which were obsolete even in England, long regarded as the chief conservative home of the old university tradition. They had been told that a university meant a receptacle for young men of means who wanted to get rid of two or three years of their lives; who at best went to a university to learn a little Greek and Latin and some higher mathematics, and fill up their time by athletic exercises. That was the idea of the past everywhere except, perhaps, in parts of Western Australia. The idea held by all of those in earnest on the matter was, in the first place, to put the practical side of life and its higher elements before our youth, to induce the boys and girls to learn something which would enable them to butter their bread better—shortly, to permit them to develop their faculties to something like their full capacity and permit us and our children to compete in the race for life on something like even terms with those outside as well as inside Australia. It had been asked where they were to get their students from. To that he would reply that he was very well aware that if the old idea was to be transplanted, viz., that they were to confine their education to certain walks of instruction, and above all to look out for boys and girls able to pay fees and support themselves to a great extent during their undergraduate course—if this was to be accepted then he would say they might give up their hopes as an idle dream. But if, in addition to those invariable stock subjects of education for the youth of the civilised world for over 2,000 years—he meant Latin and Greek—if they were to descend from these heights, and from the higher mathematical altitude, down to the practical subjects of everyday life, they had only to look around them to see numbers of the youth of both sexes eager to improve themselves, and advance themselves in the business of life. (Applause.) To begin with, they had a number of institutions already in existence from which they hoped to draw numbers of recruits. There were, for example, the grammar schools and the secondary schools generally, where boys and girls were absolutely unable to proceed beyond the school curriculum. They also had the Technical School, the Schools of Mines, the agricultural classes, and all those lesser arts, as they might be truly called, although the name arts used to be considered too good for them; such practical subjects he quoted from the English University curriculum—as dentistry, brewing, and even shorthand writing, and other

things of that kind. In fact, there was a whole long catalogue of practical subjects to which they ought to devote themselves. It was said that the time had not come for a University, and that the population was too small. It was a happy thought of somebody who translated the initial letters of Western Australia into meaning "Wait awhile," for during his experience of 24 years in Western Australia no great object having for its beneficent purpose the elevation of the people had ever been introduced but it had been received with the general cry, and as much from the new-comers as from the old—"The time is too soon; let us wait awhile." Well, that had not been so in other parts of Australia. In Sydney, when the University was founded in 1849, the population of the whole State was 189,341, or more than 70,000 fewer than they had in Western Australia at the present moment. (Applause.) When the Adelaide University was started in 1870 there were only 200,000 people within the borders of the State of South Australia. Lastly, there was the Tasmanian University, which was started in 1890, when the State contained only 145,290 persons. (Applause.) All these facts were enough to make them blush. Certainly to silence for ever the cry of those whose only words were "Wait awhile." There was a far more serious cry, however, than the want of population and the want of students, both of which were mere bogeys. There was another question, and the most serious of all, to which it was not so easy to give a satisfactory reply—he spoke of the great difficulty not alone with Universities but with most of them at some time or other, the cursed lack of pence, the want of money. And there was no doubt that Sir Edward Stone struck the nail upon the head when he said that the want at the present time was money. In this connection they had ever to lament that this great work was not taken in hand when thousands of pounds were to be had for the asking. (Hear, hear.) They had not the wealthy men in this place that they had elsewhere, but he would remark in regard to this that the wealthy men, with the single exception of South Australia, did not found the Universities of the East, but it was the united, determined desire of the people that they should have better education for their boys and girls that brought them about. (Applause.) It did seem hard and curious that Western Australia should be calling out for the moderate sum which would enable her to start this University when they heard that in the United States of America the funds bestowed by private gift upon University education amounted on an average to £3,000,000 per annum. Yet Western Australia could not obtain the £1,000,000 or £5,000 a year which he took it was all that was necessary to give them a fair and promising start. Of course, they wanted buildings, teachers, and examiners, and all of these required money, and besides there were the various expenses of a University. Towards that all he could say was that they should throw their weight in one direction or another to raising a

couple of thousand pounds per annum. If they were content with the simple buildings, if they could make use of those couple of thousands, and if it were supplemented to some degree by the Government and Parliament, he believed they could make a beginning with this University under auspices most favourable for its ultimate and even its immediate success. (Applause.) It would be remembered that in January, 1904, a Bill received the assent of his Excellency, called the University Endowment Trustees Bill. That was the result of the admirable work—the most admirable in his list of political deeds—of Mr. Walter James, and it provided that 4,000 acres of land, mostly suburban land, which in time must become extremely valuable, being set apart as a permanent endowment for the University of Western Australia. He had the honour of being the chairman of that body of trustees, as he had also the honour of being the chairman of the University Extension Committee. The expenditure had been covered wholly by voluntary effort, neither solicitor nor secretary nor anybody connected with them having received anything up to date. They were endowed last year with a gift of £50 from the Colonial Treasurer, and this year he was in hopes that the same handsome sum would be placed at their disposal. (Laughter.) Even with this endowment it was impossible for them to do anything unless they got a little money. The land must be surveyed. The expense of putting it up for sale would be inconsiderable, and they had nothing but these two amounts of £50, and the small sum coming from the rents of the quarries, which could not be called a permanent source of income, to meet the enormous demands which would be made upon them if they wanted to turn their lands to proper account. Altogether, they had in hand a balance of £63 7s. 8d., which would not go very far in placing 4,000 acres, or any part of it, on the land market. If they could only tide over the next few years they would get into smooth waters, and do something worthy of the State and themselves. If they looked around they would see that the progressive nations of the world were those who cared most for their Universities, and that those who understood the use and the value of a University most, also showed the utmost solicitude to develop and adopt it to modern needs. (Applause.)

Bishop Riley moved: "That this meeting records its opinion that the time has come when a University should be established in Western Australia." He stated that the future endowment of the University had been provided, so the State might be said to have committed itself to the fact that they must have a University. Mr. Mosely, the chairman of a commission which had visited America, reported that the people of America believed absolutely in the help of education in the task of making a nation. The next point was whether they should have the university now; and he would ask why should all the young men and women of to-day wait till the time had gone by for their education before the university was provided? It was asked could they afford it? He would answer this by asking could they afford to do without it? Again, a university was required for the sake of the teachers in the elementary schools. They wanted the best teaching they could get for their children. (Applause.) His last point was that the present is a democratic age, and the university he desired to see established was strictly in accordance with democratic ideas. He wanted every boy and girl in the State to have their chance—everyone that did well in the elementary schools to have free education in the upper schools, and all successful students in the secondary schools to have free education in the university. (Applause.)

Dr. Hill said that some two or three weeks ago a compliment had been paid him of which he was totally unworthy—he had been summoned to the Police Court to give evidence in a case of typhoid fever. (Laughter.) It was useless for him to contend that he was not an expert—that he had not seen a case for 25 years. He was accepted as an expert and obliged to give evidence under oath. He felt in a somewhat different position in addressing an audience on the question of universities; because he thought that in some sense he could claim to be an expert on that question. For 18 years he had occupied the leadership of one of the colleges at Cambridge; for two years he had served the office of vice-chancellor, and was head of the university, with very large responsibilities in arrangements, in appointment of officers, and in finance. But it was not on that ground that he would venture to appear as an expert in this case. Indeed, he thought it might be contended that his knowledge of Cambridge almost disqualified him from expressing any opinion about the needs of Western Australia. He had left a town of 50,000 inhabitants—a town that had no commerce, no manufactures, no trade, and whose only product was knowledge. He knew something about universities from the largest and oldest to the smallest and least ambitious; because it was not alone the position in Cambridge that had given him knowledge of university questions. Five years ago he had been appointed one of two commissioners to prepare a report to Parliament on the universities and university colleges of Great Britain. It was a most delightful task. The knowledge he gained by this investigation had shown him that there was a very common popular misunderstanding with regard to the way a University grew. It was too often supposed that it had to be put down ready-made in the town which was to be its home. That was not the principle upon which the University of Dublin, or the English provincial Universities had grown. Such things did happen in America, and it might suit that plutocratic country, but it would not suit democratic England. All their Universities had gradually grown up, and in many instances from beginnings quite as humble as was the case with Trinity College, Dublin. Suppose they took the University of Mr. Chamberlain, which was a one-man University, to a certain extent—the University of Birmingham. Fifty years ago there was there a small college—Queen's College. It was really a theological college, and had its professors of classics, history, mathematics, and divinity. Then Josiah Mason thought he would like to amalgamate with the college a medical school, and he gave further endowments, and established professorships of botany, chemistry, and physics. A little later the college applied for permission from the Privy Council to allow itself to be called the University College of Birmingham, the reason being that the Cloth-workers Company wished to establish in connection with it a department of dyeing. Then the Brewers' Company established a department of brewing, and now there was a department of commerce there. Well, now, why did the dyers wish to have a department of dyeing, or the brewers one of brewing? What reason was there to suppose that a University department of brewing would in any way be better than the great laboratories maintained by Bass, Alsopp, and Guinness? The belief of these great brewers, that it was better, was amply shown by the funds they contributed to the department. The reason was that the University of Birmingham already had professors of physics, chemistry, and bacteriology, and the problems which were connected with brewing, to take perhaps, the most technical of all the subjects, were some of the most difficult with which human ingenuity had to deal. No human being was qualified to deal with all the difficulties which the brewer was faced with. But in the University College, Birmingham, the professor of brewing

and his staff, found that they had the sympathy and co-operation, and help at any moment of the professor of physics, and of the equally eminent professor of chemistry and pathology. It was exactly the same in the department of dyeing. The chairman had quoted a passage from Sir Edward Stone's letter, expressing the hope that there would be a College of Agriculture here. He, himself, was very much in-

terested in agriculture. He helped to found the Department of Agriculture at Cambridge, and probably it would come to a great many as a surprise to know that Cambridge had the most flourishing Department of Agriculture in Great Britain. (Applause.) He had had the satisfaction of helping to found that department, and for seven years he ran a large farm in order that the department might have land on which it could carry out experiments. The knowledge of physics, chemistry, and geology, his practical farm hand had not got. His bailiif on that farm was perfectly useless to him. He was what they called a practical man, and the practical man was a man who knew no science, and never would know any. A man of science might be a practical man or not, but if they were going to make a man of science, they must begin to prepare him for his work from the cradle. The practical man could never go backwards and pick up science. There they had three departments, which he happened to have named, of the most technical nature—dyeing, brewing, and agriculture—clustered about that University, as they were clustered about the other provincial Universities of Great Britain. And why were they there? It was because this growth was a natural one. They could not begin with a University which taught dyeing, brewing and agriculture. They must begin with a nucleus. The nucleus consisted of those old subjects which, as their chairman had said, had been the foundation of education for the last 2,000 years. To these were added the subjects of pure science, and then came the application of that science. He asked the Professor of Naval Engineering, in connection with the Durham University, who was a practical man, whether he was able to find positions for his students. He received the answer that the difficulty was in finding men for the positions. Secondary education and university education went hand in hand. There was no use in laying the bottom step if they could not induce students to ascend it, and why, indeed, should students go up the bottom step if there was no apex to which they could attain? Why should they submit themselves to a rigorous course of secondary education if they had no opportunity of gaining higher education? He would show how a college could adapt itself to local needs. Consider, for instance, the University College of Nottingham, which consisted of a museum, a library, and some comparatively small college buildings all under the one roof. It was entirely subsidised by the municipality of Nottingham. During the day they would find a small number of students, a hundred at the outside, and consisting largely of young ladies, attending lectures on history, literature, classics, and science. In the evening, on the other hand, they would find no fewer than 1,500 students who were engaged at business with their minds or at some craft with their hands during the day. One reason for the stability of the university colleges in Great Britain was the work of training teachers. The growth of these provincial university colleges in Great Britain during the last ten years had been phenomenal. What were university colleges at Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, and Birmingham in 1901 were now full universities. Birmingham had been endowed during this period entirely by private munificence with more than one million sterling. The phenomenal growth of these university colleges had shown that the people of Great Britain were entirely with Mr. Chamberlain in believing that the assets of a nation consisted of the brains of its citizens—that there was no such thing as extravagance in education. A mistake had been made in the establishment of training colleges for teachers, because instead of their minds being open, generous, and sympathetic, this system of shutting the teachers off by themselves as a clique had rendered their ideas rigid and narrow and their minds hard and inelastic. Another great disadvantage of this policy was that they were not encouraging the teachers to connect themselves with university colleges. As for Western Australia and its people, they had at Claremont a college for training teachers. He maintained that anybody fit to train teachers was fit to teach other students. They had an observatory that was a credit to the town, and one of which any State might be proud. What an opportunity for the teaching of astronomy, and of some of the branches of physics and mathematics. They had a well-appointed museum, zoological gardens, and a hospital. Why not utilise them all for teaching purposes? They had fine Law Courts—there was an opportunity to undertake the training of law students. Then, again, there were the Government officers—the geologist, the electrician, the bacteriologist, and so on. He had met some of them, and could say that they were eminently fitted to occupy University chairs. Nor could