

COMMERCIAL EDUCATION.

THE "JOSEPH FISHER" COURSE.

The Conservatorium, North-terrace, was well filled on Thursday evening when the course of commercial studies, founded by Mr. Joseph Fisher—who gave £1,000 to Adelaide University for the purpose—was successfully inaugurated, the lecturer being Mr. H. Gyles Turner, the Melbourne banker.

The Chancellor of the University (Sir Samuel Way), who presided, introduced the lecturer in a felicitous speech. Mr. Fisher, he said, was a grand old colonist, and one of the worthy pioneers of the State, and he had decided to be his own executor, so that he had distributed a portion of his fortune for various educational and charitable purposes. (Cheers.) He had given the University £1,000 to found a chair of commerce. (Cheers.) Mr. Fisher's health did not permit him to go out in the night air, and so he was unable to be present, which was to be regretted. It would have been more suitable if the Vice-Chancellor (Dr. Barlow) had presided, for he was the founder of the course of commercial studies at the University. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. Turner, after dealing with the rise of British commerce, said 30 years ago commercial education was a kind of training looked down upon in England as something below the level of a gentleman's requirements; something that it was hardly fair to call by so dignified a name. In view of what was understood by the phrase, even in good secondary and public schools, it had little attraction for any but the average clerk—none at all for the ambitious. The established supremacy of British commerce tended to make the mercantile class contemptuous of foreign theories, and resolute to ignore their example, educational or otherwise. They declared that it was not possible by any theoretical training, however specialised, to equip a man competently for mercantile pursuits. Experience alone, often very dearly bought, was the only possible means of acquiring a mastery over the varied ramifications of commercial enterprise. Conservative opposition died hard, and it was within the last decade that the fall value of higher commercial education had commanded the attention of England and Australia. The establishment and initial success of special or technical schools or business colleges were largely due to a recognition of the fact that foreign clerks were invading the merchants' and bankers' offices in London, and were often securing preference by reason of a fitness due to superior training. Mr. Carnegie had said that the youth who went into an office or a bank without a firm resolve to use a partner or a general manager was wasting his time. To the English or Australian youth who had that laudable ambition the business colleges did not cover all the ground. Something higher was required. He did not suppose that the most strenuous advocates of commercial education expected it to turn out every pupil as a capable businessman; no educational scheme ever devised or dreamt of could do that—certainly not while mental and physical variability remained, whatever might be done under the uniformity of the coming socialism. There had been plenty of young men on whom a wealth of education had been lavished under most promising conditions, who had turned out failures in the walk of life towards which their studies were directed. There were always things which could not be learned in a course of study, such as urbanity, tact, a wise reticence, and, perhaps most important of all, a demeanor which commanded approving confidence of others. A sound judgment of character was rarely acquired in college days, and yet it was probably one of the most essential factors of success in business. In England and her dependencies there had been growing up for the last 20 years—mainly as the result of private effort—a materially improved method of both technical and commercial training. Under that impulse the scope of general teaching had been greatly widened, and the producing power of the country had been stimulated, and the rank and file of the officers connected with its output and distribution disciplined and rendered more efficient. The lecturer then dealt with what Germany, France, the United States, and other countries were doing in the direction of commercial education. He believed that the movement inaugurated by the Adelaide University—and which bade fair to be followed in the other Australian States—would be highly valued by banking institutions. Every winner of the commercial certificate would be an apostle of the higher commercial education, and besides stimulating others to follow in his footsteps, he could hardly fail to recognise that he had acquired something of value, not only to himself, but to the whole community. The demand for commercial training had been a marked feature in educational circles during the last decade, and there was the strongest reason why it should be taken up in Australia. (Cheers.)

On the motion of the Chairman, a hearty vote of thanks was accorded the lecturer.

COMMERCE.

FIRST JOSEPH FISHER LECTURE.

ADDRESS BY MR. GYLES TURNER.

The first Joseph Fisher lecture on commerce in connection with the University of Adelaide was delivered in the Elder Hall on Thursday evening by Mr. H. Gyles Turner, the eminent Australian authority. There was a large and representative audience. The Chancellor (Right Hon. Sir Samuel Way) presided, and among those on the platform were the Vice-Chancellor (Dr. Barlow), Warden of the Senate (Mr. F. Chapple, B.A., B.Sc.), the President of the United Council of Chambers of Commerce (Mr. S. J. Jacobs), the President of the Chamber of Commerce (Mr. W. Herbert Phillips), Professors Bragg, Mitchell, and Salmond, and Messrs. J. R. Fowler, M.A. (Chairman of the Board of Commerce Studies), B. D. Colvin, M.A., J. Shiels, J. E. Thomas, and W. Neill.

The Chairman said they had met that night to hear the first Joseph Fisher lecture on commerce. They would all remember that early last year their much-respected fellow-colonist, one of their grand pioneers, Mr. Joseph Fisher, determined to be his own executor in the matter of munificent benefactions for the advancement of learning and art, and for the promotion of commercial studies. (Applause.) Mr. Fisher gave the University of Adelaide £1,000 and a gold medal to establish a lecture on commerce. (Applause.) Unfortunately Mr. Fisher's health did not permit of his being out at night, and they had not the gratification of his presence on that occasion, but he was well represented by his son and son-in-law. It would have been more appropriate if the Chairman of the Board of Commercial Studies or Dr. Barlow had occupied the chair. Dr. Barlow more than any one else in the state was entitled to the credit of being the founder of the course of commercial studies in the University. (Applause.) Commerce was one of the most flourishing and most useful branches of study which were being pursued within the walls of the institution. (Hear, hear.) They had been singularly fortunate in the first Joseph Fisher lecturer. Mr. Gyles Turner was well known in the southern, northern, and western hemispheres as the literary banker of Melbourne. (Hear, hear.) If they wanted his prototype they would have to seek it in the middle of the last century on the other side of the world. Mr. Turner was the Walter Bagshot of Australia. (Applause.)

The lecturer, in an easy but forceful manner, and with perfect articulation, spoke for nearly an hour and a half, and his fine literary style and stately phraseology were much appreciated. Mr. Turner's effort was powerful and comprehensive and brilliant.

The lecturer opened with a humorous reference to the old English couplet—

Let laws and learning, arts and commerce, die,
But give us still our old nobility—

and he pointed out how preposterous such sentiments were at any time, but particularly so in connection with Australian life. Commerce, he said, was the basis on which the supremacy of the motherland had been reared, and that evening he was to speak on the roads which led to its successful command. Through the enterprise of the University, Adelaide enjoyed the honourable distinction of being the first city in Australia to make provision for giving to a high form of commercial education the dignity and prestige of a share in that University recognition hitherto practically monopolized by students in classical, legal, artistic, or scientific lore. (Applause.) It had placed within the reach of most of them the opportunity of winning the hallmark of capacity in the life's work to which they had devoted themselves. While eulogizing the action of the council, he was strongly of opinion that the present system of an examiner's certificate was only one step in the evolution of commercial education, and he was emphatic in declaring that to make the higher walks of this important branch of study more attractive to young men with business careers before them it must eventually receive that wide public acknowledgment which crowns other university studies. The day was not far distant when every university of standing would include a Faculty of Commerce and Economics, and would confer degrees therein at least as honourable and advantageous to the recipients as those in relation to arts, law, and medicine. (Applause.) Their generous fellow-citizen, Mr. Joseph Fisher, had provided the University Council with the means of honouring the student who had most distinguished himself in the advanced commercial course, and also for a course of lectures, with the intention of stimulating public interest generally in commercial education. (Applause.) After commenting in appreciative terms on what had been done in Adelaide, the lecturer referred to the forthcoming report of the royal commission on the Melbourne University, and expressed his belief that in the matter of commercial education it would recommend that a course be established much on the Adelaide lines, which the University might consider "the sincerest form of flattery." (Laughter, and Hear, hear.) Mr. Turner then proceeded to trace the growth of the demand for a higher commercial training, which, he said, was almost entirely a matter of the last 30 years. He touched briefly upon the

trend of British commerce, from the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth to the apex of its triumph in the middle of the last century, and remarked that during that long period the mercantile man had to fight hard against the deprecatory shrugs of the landed aristocracy, who looked down contemptuously upon the trader. From 1870 onwards the mercantile competition of other countries began to arouse attention, and the press, backed by the Chambers of Commerce and kindred bodies, demanded a better educational equipment for the neophytes of banking and commerce. The progress of the movement through the numerous channels offered by private business colleges, commercial schools, and working men's colleges was traced to its culmination in 1902 by the establishment of a Faculty of Commerce in the Birmingham University. The commerce of to-day was not a matter of that shopkeeping which evoked Napoleon's sneer at the English people. The ever-recurring fresh discoveries of science, the practical annihilation of time and space in the means of communication, the rapidity with which new markets were springing into existence, the subtlety of keen rivals, and the drastic changes which an acute financial crisis or a war might work in a country's position, were interesting problems which 50 years ago were calmly put aside. To-day they demanded the alertness of mind which was born of a knowledge sufficiently wide to enable the merchant rightly to estimate accurately what was going on in the world beyond the horizon of his own daily duties. (Hear, hear.) After an epitome of what had been done and what was proposed to be done at the Birmingham University, under Professor Ashley, Mr. Turner summarized what had been done in this direction in Germany, France, and the United States. Dealing with the courses now under study at the Adelaide University, he highly commended the progressive and evolutionary form adopted, and declared that the enterprise which founded the Board of Commercial Studies would be equal to providing for its highest University development when the demand—which it had had so large a part in creating—became sufficiently recognised.

In summing up the lecturer touched upon the whole wide question of education and its importance to the community equally

with the individual, and urged strongly that on its commercial side it was of vast importance to Australia. "The mercantile future of Australia," he said, "must be largely in touch with India, China, Japan, the Malayan Archipelago, and the islands of the South Seas. We are on the eve of great trade developments in little known lands; the sooner we make ourselves acquainted with their resources and their wants the better chance shall we have of maintaining that commercial supremacy of which we are proud, and for which we shall have to contend with the keenest of rivals." At present there was probably no merchant or general manager of a bank who could hold the knowledge which the Birmingham Faculty of Commerce proposed to pour into him. (Laughter.) It would be an immense relief in times of stress to have men about them who could intelligently discuss the problems of the hour, and bring to bear upon them the knowledge garnered from wise teachers and shrewd experts. Such were the men for whose laudable ambition in the direction of self-improvement the Adelaide University had offered a way of usefulness. (Applause.) The fact that they were striving for a distinctive mark of excellence, predicated industry and self-reliance, qualities which, when capacity were shown, would make them welcome everywhere. While the demand for specialized training had been so marked a feature in educational circles during the last decade there was the strongest reason why it should be warmly taken up in Australia, for on extended production and judicious distribution of her products the future importance of the Commonwealth mainly rested. Even to-day the volume of her trade relatively to population stood in the front rank. Her exports of domestic produce exceeded £58,000,000 per annum. Her imports for home consumption from countries beyond her borders exceeded £42,000,000 per annum, while the total of her interstate trade touched another £50,000,000. If those impressive figures could be quoted for a population of less than four millions, what might they expect in another generation? The population of the Commonwealth had more than doubled in the last 30 years. The volume of its external trade in the same period had increased threefold. If they might base estimates on those figures, if they were not thwarted by suicidal legislation—(applause)—another 30 years should give them 8,000,000 of people. (Hear, hear.) To minister to their local needs—in a material aspect—to find the most profitable outlets for the results of their labour and skill, would demand the services of men well trained in the ramifications of commercial enterprise, men sufficiently well grounded in sound economic principles not to be led aside by the fads of hasty tentative legislation, which might indeed hamper but could never override the laws upon which the world's commercial progress was founded. (Applause.)

The Chairman said no vote of thanks to the lecturer had been arranged, but the rapt attention with which the large audience listened to the eloquent and able address was sufficient testimony. (Applause.) Mr. Turner, in a brief reply, said it was a great honour to have had the privilege of inaugurating the Joseph Fisher lectures on commerce, and he wished that the laudable efforts of the council of the University might be crowned with deserved success. (Applause.)