

VISITING TEAM SUCCEEDS ON MERITS.

VICTORY FOR DEMOCRACY.

The Imperial debating team carried off the honors for actual debating in their contest with the University of Adelaide, but the audience were almost unanimous in declaring that democracy had not proved a failure.

Fresh from their success in Canada, Sydney, and Melbourne, the Imperial debating team engaged in verbal combat with three representatives of the University of Adelaide in the Liberal Club hall on Saturday night. Considerable interest had been taken in the coming of the young Britishers, and there was a good attendance to welcome them at their opening debate. It was unfortunate that they were without two members of the team, Mr. T. P. Macdonald (son of Mr. Ramsay Macdonald), of Edinburgh University, was unable to make the journey from Melbourne owing to influenza. The same complaint seized Mr. R. N. May, of Birmingham University, and manager of the team, on his arrival in Adelaide on Saturday morning. He rested at St. Mark's College in the hope of being able to participate in the debate, but this was found to be impossible. His colleagues, Mr. A. H. E. Molson, of Oxford University, and Mr. P. Reed, of London University, were therefore assisted by Mr. J. R. Kearnan, of the Adelaide University, and together they took the affirmative on the question, "That Democracy is Proving a Failure."

The University of Adelaide trio, speaking to the negative, were Messrs. M. R. Kriewaldt, R. G. Griff, and S. Pick. Sir Archibald Strong made an ideal chairman, and the warmth of his welcome was highly appreciated by the visitors. He spoke of the value to the Empire of such debates, and said he had no doubt the young students would become excellent missionaries for Australia when they returned home. Sir Archibald then launched the debaters on their task. The subject selected may be regarded as a fairly easy one, inasmuch as it is by no means difficult either to find flaws in the democratic system of government or to extol its virtues. The debaters admirably succeeded in doing both. It was left to Mr. Reed to get in the first knock at democracy, and he achieved one of the oratorical successes of the evening. He is a rapid, forceful, and pleasant speaker, with a perfect enunciation, and delivered his verbal broadsides with the air of a thoroughly practised orator. He has a dry sense of humor, which he uses to marked advantage. Mr. Kriewaldt, of the University of Adelaide, was the initial speaker to laud democracy and all its works, and he did his part well. He has a graceful style of oratory, which is capable of development. Mr. Kearnan made a very capable substitute for Mr. May. Mr. Pick and Mr. Griff also worthily upheld the reputation of the University of Adelaide, although it seemed clear after Mr. Molson had spoken for the visitors that the last-named would succeed so far as the actual merits of the debate were concerned. Mr. Molson, who, with his colleagues, has been thriving on oratory for several months past, is a very attractive speaker, and knows well how to present his case. When the last sentences of the debate had died away it did not take the audience long to decide that the merits of the debate should go to the visitors. Democracy was equally safe in the hands of the audience, only thirteen of whom ventured the view that it had failed in its purpose.

Empire Missionaries.

Sir Archibald Strong extended a most cordial welcome to the visitors on behalf of the students and the community of Adelaide. He regretted that Mr. May and Mr. Macdonald were laid up, and hoped for their speedy recovery. He could not help feeling what an excellent thing it was for the Empire as a whole that visits of this kind should occur, because these gentlemen knew English political and social conditions, were keen observers of things in Australia, and he hoped when they went home they would not enlarge too strongly on any weaknesses, if they had discovered any, but rather see the elements of strength and hope in its national life. If he was not presuming too much, he hoped the visitors would some day go into Parliament, and be sure the experience they would gain from this tour would not only be a reinforcement to themselves in their political career, should they adopt one, but an advantage to the Empire as a whole. (Applause.) He was very much impressed at home last year to find the great interest taken in Australia. He believed the people there were anxious, not only to wave the flag, but to get down to business and know the facts about this part of the world. He could not help feeling that these young visitors would in some sense act as

missionaries, if not for Australia, then for the Empire as a whole, and he was quite certain they would be able to give sterling help to the great cause of the race. He was sure the people of Adelaide would all wish to be associated with his assurance of the great happiness it was to have the visitors among them. (Applause.) He explained that each speaker would be allowed fifteen minutes, and the leaders seven minutes each to reply.

Democracy Disappointing.

Mr. Paul Reed first took up the case for the visitors and warmed quickly to his work. He asserted that democracy had seriously disappointed all the hopes held out by those who were instrumental in bringing it into being. He spoke of it as a system of practically universal franchise, and on the theory that the Government of a State rested entirely in the hands of the people. That kind of democracy was advocated at the beginning of the last century by such political thinkers as John Stuart Mill, and they held out hopes that by widening the franchise and educating the electorate the day would come when the millennium would be at hand. Was there any sign that such a democracy had brought them any further? He submitted with emphasis that "we are faced to-day with many of the same problems with which the world was confronted a century ago." It was contended that by the extension of the franchise the best men would be elected to Parliament. He believed Australia had, according to population, the largest number of politicians of any country in the world. (Laughter.) In any case there was, generally speaking, widespread distrust and suspicion under the democratic system which in many cases was too well founded. They were almost inclined to the belief that the only man who ever went to Parliament with good intentions was Guy Fawkes. (Laughter.) However, it was a fact that in the great democratic countries to-day the attitude towards the politician was one of distrust and suspicion. The existing system by which Governments were run seemed, indeed, to have largely killed the spirit of service in the community. When a piece of political work had to be done for nothing most people turned up their noses. A politician who was paid for his services felt that he must do something to earn his money, with the result that in every democratic country they were working overtime passing a large number of laws, the majority of which were not constructive, but restrictive and prohibitive. The liberty of the subject was in real danger of being undermined by that flood of restrictive legislation. He gave a number of amusing instances of Bills passed in the United States, such as rendering it illegal to make "googly eyes," which he described as legislation gone mad. The worst consequences of such restrictive and prohibitive laws were that they were universally discredited and universally held in contempt. In Canada and some other countries it was hard to get criminals brought to justice, and juries would not convict. It was also obviously difficult to convict people not a thousand miles from Adelaide. The first thing he asked in Australia was as to what time the sale of drink stopped. He was told 6 o'clock, "but that does not matter, you can get it at any time." (Laughter.) He also took a tilt at the bookmakers, and went on to say that throughout the world democracy was in a critical situation or was breaking down. In America, where corruption among politicians was found in the most flagrant forms, the functions of government were being handed over to independent officers, and in other countries public undertakings were being entrusted to commissioners who were independent of elective interests. Mr. Reed, therefore, maintained that democracy had not lived up to expectations, and that in every civilized country there was a great tendency to turn away from democratic means of government to some other which would be less liable to abuse. (Applause.)

A Plea For Democracy.

Mr. Kriewaldt, who followed for the home team, said there was much in Mr. Reed's speech deserving of criticism. He claimed that democracy had not been cast aside, and said there would always be some small class to carry on government. Democracy, after all, was a method of selecting and controlling, and most important of all, of dismissing any group placed in power. With regard to restrictive legislation, he did not think they ought to blame the system of democracy for that. The true reason was that there were meddlesome people all over the world who tried to make men good by Act of Parliament. Some people mistook the true function of government, and forgot "that you cannot make a saint out of a sinner by Act of Parliament." In any case, restrictive laws were not typical of democracy. They might not get the best people into Parliament. He submitted that the proper test for democracy was not that it had not come up to expectations—nothing would. The real test was its record, which was good. No other form of government was possible under conditions operating to-day, and no other form would be tolerated. Where people had a sufficient amount of education and realised the political power they now enjoyed, they would not stand for a change, and be deprived of their powers. All the autocracies, monarchies, and tyrannies of the past did things which it took years to find out, whereas under a democracy the reverse was the case, and all the doings were known. Democracy came into being because the shoe was pinching. In America the reason for democratic government being established was the interference of George II. If any oligarchy

were established to-day, there would be a democracy fifty years hence. No other form of government was possible. "No matter what form you substitute, the same forces that brought democracy will operate to bring it again." He found no escape from that argument. In a real and vital sense democracy was, he repeated, the only form of government possible at all under the conditions obtaining to-day. (Applause.)

Too Much Government.

Mr. J. R. Kearnan, Mr. May's substitute, argued that democracy had proved a failure, and that it would continue to do so. Whether something else would arise in its place remained to be seen. Democracy was an ideal, but not necessarily of the best. He pointed out that at the last Commonwealth elections a large number of people objected strongly to exercise the powers with which democracy in its wisdom had clothed them. People at present were, as a whole, disinterested in government, and that was one reason why democracy was a failure. He alluded to the many Governments in Australia, and said there was far too much government here. Democracy at present was simply a means whereby people could elect a number of representatives to Parliament, and then expect them to do something. They said, "We put you there; carry on as best you can." America was always put forward as one of the greatest examples of democratic government. "If America is such a fine example," he said, "I would say we should be very careful before we laud democracy up to skies." (Laughter.) Democracy might be suitable for some people. India would be in grave danger with a democracy. His opponents had forgotten that the great masses of people had not been educated "to make use of the franchise. Then again, in America they had glaring examples of Tammany Hall tactics. Was that democracy? In cases of crises in Australia such as the industrial and conscription affairs a democratic Government almost seemed afraid to act. People in power hesitated for fear of offending the people and each representative was thinking of the small section that put him in power instead of the interests of the country as a whole. The great point was that democracy was not working. Even if it were not proving an arrant failure it was only turning over on two cylinders. (Laughter and applause.)

Arguments and Frills.

Mr. S. Pick, for the Adelaide University, thought that anyone attacking democratic institutions would at least bring some heavy arguments to bear, instead of treating the subject somewhat as a joke. Their arguments were more like frills round a petticoat which adorned but did not cover the ground. (Laughter.) He submitted that democracy was not proving a failure, and that there was no better system of government. The functions of a Government were to secure safety from outside oppression within the State, and to secure the greatest good for the greatest number. The Great War was caused by the aggressive conduct of the Central European monarchs, but it was won by the democratic countries fighting together. The termination of the general strike in Great Britain was a triumph for the sanity of democracy. He thought the fact that judges were elected in America militated against getting the best men, and pointed to the differences in England, where during the last hundred years, or within the Empire, there had never been a reproach against the judiciary. Democracy, generally speaking, had weeded out many injustices which existed under monarchies. England would never again tolerate a hanging judge, France a Bastille, or Spain an Inquisition. Who could say that democracy did not secure justice? It was ruled by average men from whom miracles were not expected. Under democracy there had come national insurance, workmen's compensation, arbitration, and many other benefits. If a Government secured the happiness of the people it must be said to have succeeded. Democracy had tried to brighten the whole horizon, and was an educational factor of vast importance. They could not evolve a perfect system but the democracy thus far had induced Egypt and India to demand it. The average lot of mankind, materially and intellectually, was far better now than 200 years ago all due, directly and indirectly, to the influence of democracy. It had worked better than any other system, and nothing could retard its growth. It would not fail. (Applause.)

Abuses Under Democracy.

Mr. A. H. E. Molson, speaking for the visitors, said that under autocracies in the past it was known what abuses were being carried on, but to-day the rulers took care to keep them in the dark. In the United States it was merely by chance that the people discovered that the general and other members of Cabinet were making a large income from corruption in connection with oil leases. The United States was a very large democracy, and its faults and virtues were more patent than in most other countries. They were told that the administration of justice there was unsatisfactory, because the judges were elected. If that were so with the judges, why did it not apply to the politicians? Part of the failure of the judiciary in the United States was the large annual increase in crime. There was one murder a day in Chicago. In a democratic country they had the country organised in different sections, and when politicians got elected they had to promise to pass legislation. People demanded new measures to solve some problems which they imagined were confronting the coun-

try. He would not express any opinion about prohibition, but the fact remained that in America there was a large section of the country in favor of it, and another large section opposed to it, but the measure was difficult of enforcement. It was said that the police in the State of New York confiscated liquor in the name of the Government, and sold it back to the boot-legger in their own name. (Laughter.) It could not be denied that lawlessness and corruption were rife, and that statutes increased because they formed good subjects for electioneering speeches, but most of them were never enforced. America had a genius or a "kick" for organization, and wherever that obtained in democratic Governments they would always find corruption. Each organisation had a big party fund, and everybody in the country who held a Government post stood to lose his job. Even the village postmaster was no exception. The result was that every effort was made to keep the Government in power, and more corruption followed. He referred to the failure of democratic government in France, which was now on the verge of bankruptcy. There had been recently the spectacle of the French Chamber devoting an afternoon to passing a Bill forbidding the manufacture in France of rubber feeders for babies, while a great financial crisis was hanging over the country. Politicians in all the democracies of the world were invariably demagogues. (Applause.)

Achievements for the World.

Mr. R. G. Griff wound up for the University. He said that under democracy they could get a constitutional change when those in authority were not carrying out the wishes of the people. The case brought against democracy seemed to be corruption in America, and unfortunately, that could not be denied, but the dishonesty practised there was nothing compared with what had taken place under monarchies and oligarchies. It was true some people to-day did not care to vote, but why seek the punishment by substituting an oligarchy or a tyranny for a democracy? So far as organisation in America went, he said party systems existed years before democracy was thought of. It had one merit—it raised enthusiasm in the people to vote. Some people would even blame democracy for the existence of rabbits in Australia. He was content to rest his case on what democracy had done for the world, and he submitted that no other form of government was possible. It provided for the needs and well-being of the people, and he was convinced that it would survive. People believed in it, as they believed that oligarchies had failed. Democracy had always been opposed to tyranny, inequality, and injustice, and one of its principles was the maximum of happiness for all. They could look to the future with contentment and without any fear of the failure of democracy. (Applause.)

Mr. Kriewaldt, in reply, said democracy was only a human institution, and consequently not perfect, but at least it was working better than any other form of government had done. It satisfied the political needs of mankind. Their opponents had not even said what kind of government they would substitute for it, but they certainly could not say with truth that democracy had been a failure. (Applause.)

Mr. Reed wound up the debate, and said a government of limited monarchy was preferable, constituted as it would be by cultured people of leisure, who did not need money to keep them in office. He pointed to the good conditions under which Germany was governed before the war, and submitted that, generally speaking, democracy had failed.

On a vote of the audience, the honors for merits in the debate went to the visitors, and with this the adjudicators agreed. On a vote "That democracy is proving a failure," the audience voted very largely in the negative, the opponents of the system registering only 13 votes.

The adjudicators were Messrs. H. Thomson, F. Kelly, and A. Grenfell Price (master of St. Mark's College).

The subject for the debate to-night is—"That the introduction of colored races into Australia would be opposed to the best interests of the white races of the world." The Adelaide team will take the affirmative.

Professor E. H. Rennie and Prof. R. W. Chapman, of the University of Adelaide, left for Melbourne on Wednesday afternoon to attend a conference which matters affecting the Universities in the various States will be discussed. The conference, which will begin on Monday next, will be attended by representatives of all the Australian Universities.