

Register 31/5/22.
Universities Conference.

UNIVERSITY PROBLEMS.

Interstate Conference Opened.

MELBOURNE, May 30.

Professors from all the universities in Australia met in conference in Melbourne to-day. The Chancellor of the University of Melbourne (Sir John Macfarland) presided. The object was to discuss proposals designed to bring into closer conformity the various university systems. The personnel of the conference was as follows:—University of Melbourne—The Chancellor (Sir John Macfarland), Sir James Barrett, Dr. Leper, Dr. Sugden, and Professors Skeats, Scott, Mason, and Woodruff. University of Sydney—Professors Holme, Carlisle, and Lawson. University of Adelaide—The Vice-Chancellor (Professor Mitchell), and Professors Naylor and Hayward. University of Western Australia—The Vice-Chancellor (Professor Shann), and Professor Mitchell. University of Brisbane—Professors Minchie, Steele, and Mayo. University of Hobart—Professors Dunbabin and Burn.

Differences between the degrees granted by the various universities were discussed, and the conference affirmed the desirability of having a uniform system of degrees in arts, science, and the professional faculties. It was pointed out, during the discussion, that several of the States have not the degrees of Master of Science, Master of Laws, or Doctor of Letters, and that Victoria is the only State which grants more than one engineering degree. In several instances higher degrees are granted at Melbourne University than in other States, and the effect has been to attract applications from people outside Victoria, who desire the degrees.

The authorities of the University of Cambridge are to be asked to give greater recognition to students who, having taken a degree course in Australia, desire to do additional work in England. The London University is also to be requested to recognise the Australian matriculation examination.

It was agreed that there should be common vacations in all the States, in order to encourage the holding of competitive games and to facilitate the holding of interstate conferences on educational subjects.

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Universities Conference.

UNIVERSITY TOPICS.

INTERSTATE PROFESSORS' CONGRESS DECISIONS.

MELBOURNE, May 31.

A series of motions dealing with a proposal that facilities should be given for university examinations to be held in provincial centres, to suit the convenience of country candidates for degrees, was discussed yesterday at a conference of professors, from all the universities in Australia. The Chancellor of the University of Melbourne (Sir John Macfarland) presided. The following motions were agreed to:—1. "That this conference believes that no student can obtain adequate benefit from any university course without attending lectures, and without having the constant use of the library, and other educational equipment, of the university, and without taking part in university life." 2. "That this conference, while recognising the necessity for attendance, resolves that if it be necessary to make regulations to meet the case of candidates who cannot attend the university, such regulations should be framed in such a way as not to offer an inducement to those who might attend to abstain from attendance." 3. "That whenever an external degree examination is to be conducted it should not include professional or scientific subjects, nor should it waive any of regular oral or practical tests." 4. "That the conference affirms that the aims of the Australian University should be research, teaching, and the provision of a good community life for its students, and that the function of examining should be treated as incidental." 5. "That for students whose circum-

stances do not permit their attendance at university lectures, a system of exhibitions, or bursaries, should be provided by public or private benefaction, or established by local authorities." 6. "That if a scheme of external study be found necessary to meet local needs, it should be regarded as a transition scheme, the aim being to secure that all who are fit to profit by university studies should be enabled to attend and take an adequate part in the general intellectual life of the university."

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UNIVERSITY CONFERENCE.

CENTRALISED TRAINING.

Melbourne, May 31.

At to-day's conference of representatives of the Australian universities, a series of resolutions was passed, laying stress upon the advisableness of decentralising university training. It was reported that the Pan-Pacific Congress, which on the last occasion met in Samoa, was prepared to receive an invitation to meet in Australia, the next congress being due in 1923. The conference decided to urge upon the Commonwealth Government to offer facilities to this end. With a view of ensuring a more sympathetic administration of the Customs tariff, as affecting university requirements, it was decided that a deputation wait on the Controller-General of Customs. It was also decided to request the Commonwealth Government for a concession similar to that granted by the P. and O. and Orient lines to students desirous of proceeding to Europe to continue their studies.

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RELATIVITY.

LECTURE BY PROFESSOR WILTON.

The University extension lectures will this year be delivered by Professors J. R. Wilton, A. T. Strong, and Brailsford Robertson. The first of a series of three on "Relativity and the Modern Theory of Gravitation" was given by Professor Wilton in the Prince of Wales Theatre on Tuesday evening. There was a large attendance.

Professor Wilton said the theory of relativity, both restricted and general, was the creation of a single mind—that of Albert Einstein, the most clear-sighted intellect of the present time, and one of the greatest in the history of science. When, in 1905, he enunciated what was now known as the restricted principle of relativity, he was 26. Ten years later he wrote the epoch-making papers, in which he described the general principle of relativity. When Einstein was 15 he settled in Switzerland, and shortly after became naturalised. He was still a Swiss subject. He attended the Polytechnic at Zurich, where he studied mathematics and physics under the famous Minkowski, who, however, had a poor opinion of Einstein's ability. When the latter was growing famous Minkowski said, "I should never have believed it of Einstein; in Zurich he knew nothing." Einstein himself said, "The problem of relativity seized upon me in the early days of my University course, and it has never since let me go." In 1914 he removed to Berlin to take up the duties of the post he still held, that of Director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Physics.

The most widely-known results of the general theory of relativity, said the professor, were those which could be tested by astronomical observations. On those there were three. The first was the solution of the long-standing puzzle of the unexplained portion of the motion of perihelion of the planet Mercury; the second—probably the best known—was the prediction that light from a star would be bent as it passed close to the sun; and the third was a prediction that the dark lines would show an exceedingly small systematic displacement towards the red end of the solar spectrum. The difficulties of the last observation were such that it was as yet uncertain whether the effect predicted existed or not. The prediction of the bending of light was verified at the last total eclipse of the sun, on May 29, 1919.

Those results, however, which had seized upon the popular imagination, were the almost accidental, and certainly only incidental, outcome of a far-reaching theory, whose fundamental doctrine was that time and space were not absolute, but relative, dependent; that was, upon the person who observed, and who measured, the time between two events, or the distance between two points, &c.; dependent, however, not upon his individuality or upon the accuracy of his instruments, but upon his motion relative to other observers, and upon the presence or absence in his neighborhood of material bodies, such as the earth or the sun. The concepts of absolute space and absolute time were so familiar, so apparently fundamental, that they seemed to be an essential condition of intelligent thought about the universe in which we lived. Absolute space and time had equally conditioned the thought of physicists, and the development of physics through centuries of progress, until in 1905, and far more boldly in 1915, Einstein developed the consequences which would follow from the relativity of time and space.

According to the first law of motion a body upon which no force was acting would continue for ever to move in a straight line with a constant speed. Moreover, if a force was acting on the body the change of velocity in any interval of time was quite independent of the original velocity of the body. It was thus impossible by mechanical means to detect uniform motion in a straight line. In a train moving with perfect uniformity, with no acceleration and no oscillation, it would be impossible to tell whether or not the train was moving except by looking out of the window. Of course, the moment attention was given to the scene outside it was evident that the train was moving relatively to the earth. In the same way until astronomical observations were called in to give evidence it was quite impossible to detect the motion of the earth in its orbit, although the orbital velocity amounted to 18 miles a second, or more. The question arose, was it possible to detect uniform motion, in a straight line, that is, absolute motion, such as that which it was conceived the earth had through space by means which were not purely mechanical; for example, by electrical or optical experiments?

The many experiments which had been devised with a view to giving a positive answer to the question all depended upon the theory of the ether (the medium which, pervading all space to the most distant stars, and permeating all matter, served for the propagation of light, radiant heat, electro-magnetic waves, and gravitation), and upon the hypothesis that the ether provided an absolute standard of rest and motion, so that it should be possible to determine the absolute velocity of the earth through the ether. But those experiments had all without exception failed to detect any such absolute motion of the earth, although the most famous of them, designed by Michelson in 1881, and carried out with increasing refinement by Michelson and Morley in 1887, and by Morley and Miller in 1905, was so delicate as to be capable of detecting a hundredth part of the effect that was anticipated. The uniform failure of all such experiments led to Einstein's formulation, in 1905, of the principle of relativity, now spoken of in contradistinction to the general principle of Relativity, as the Restricted Principle of Relativity, which would form the subject of the second lecture.

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ELDER CONSERVATORIUM.

PIANO AND CELLO RECITAL.

The names of Mr. William Silver and Mr. Harold Parsons, Mus. Bac., were a sufficient guarantee of something particularly fine in the pianoforte and violoncello recital at the Elder Hall on Monday evening, and the expectations of the large audience were fully realized. Each musician threw himself fully into the interpretation of the music, and the varied and well chosen programme afforded full scope for their artistic and characteristic handling. Mr. Silver possesses a clear, crisp, sympathetic touch and striking technique, but what is most remarkable about his playing is the way in which everything is subordinated to his artistic and intuitive rendering of the soul and meaning of the music. Mr. Parsons imbues his cello with intensely human qualities, and makes it speak and sing and grieve and laugh. He, too, throws his whole undoubted power of execution into the interpretation of the composer's thought. Mr. Silver's first piano solo was the strikingly descriptive writing, Chopin's "Polonaise in E Flat minor, op. 26, No. 2," the so-called

"Revolution" Polonaise. He gave to this a wonderfully expressive and dramatic interpretation. First the strange boding chords, then a song—it might have been a hymn—but as it persisted a rising tide of feeling made itself felt more and more intense. Then, again, the strange chords; but now these held the restless throb of an angry multitude. There followed the lovely "Etude in E major, op. 10, No. 3," a ripple of laughter, a torrent of intense emotion. Mr. Silver invested this with its full measure of poetic feeling. He next played the "Ballade in A flat, Op. 47," in which the full beauty and character were brought out. As an encore Mr. Silver played "Tambourin" by Rameau.

Mr. Harold Parsons, accompanied by Mr. George Peare, submitted Tchaikovsky's elaborate and difficult "Variations for the cello." This composition, sometimes termed "Rococo" from the old-world character of the melodic character of the theme, which differs strikingly from the writer's essentially modern style, introducing courtly ceremonious dance measures and rhythms. In this number Mr. Parsons was at his best. The composer in his treatment of the solo instrument demands from the executant complete command of all the resources of modern technical skill; there are passages where the fullest range of the instrument is called into play—notes high as those of a violin, others rich and deep and resonant, and others intricate in the extreme, but these were rendered with delightful ease and effect, and the picturesque old-world character was charmingly brought out. In response to an insistent recall, Mr. Parsons played a slow movement from Schumann's "Concerto."

Mr. William Silver's second bracket of pianoforte solos opened with a "Prelude in E flat minor, Op. 11, No. 14," by the Russian composer Scriabine, given to harmonies startlingly modern. The "Prelude," however, belongs to his earlier style, while still under the influence of Chopin. Debussy's "Catherdrale englonic" followed, and in this Mr. Silver's rendering was wonderfully artistic. He made the audience hear the confused muffled chiming of the bells of the lost cathedral; they rang louder, clearer—the chanting of the priests was heard, then the sounds faded as the waves once more submerged the building—as the old legend tells. Two short numbers by Scriabine, "Prelude in C sharp minor, Op. 1, No. 10," and "Poem in D major, Op. 32," were also delightfully rendered. Ravel's intensely descriptive "Jeux d'eau" was another triumph. The programme was concluded with "Humoresque, Op. 17, No. 1," by Dohnany. Enthusiastic and persistent applause showed the feeling of the audience, but Mr. Silver returned to the piano only to play the National Anthem.

Advertiser 12/6/22.

MUSIC EXAMINATIONS.

From EDWARD HOWARD, Angas-street:—In a circular the University Examinations Board invite music teachers to support the local examinations in music held under the auspices of the University, four reasons being given why they should co-operate. 1. That the standard of the syllabus is unquestionably high. 2. That such profits as may be derived from the examinations are expended entirely upon musical education in Australia. 3. That, on the other hand, all fees paid to examining bodies from overseas are appropriated to the benefit of English music students. 4. That our own examinations are in our own hands, and can be moulded to our own artistic ideals. Practically this is asking us to support the University Conservatorium, the status of which depends, not on its being a Conservatorium, but on its being a University Conservatorium. May I therefore be allowed to give my fellow-teachers and the public four reasons why we should not support these examinations:—1. The University is not called on to teach elementary music any more than it is called on to teach elementary arithmetic. Such a procedure is unnecessary. 2. In so doing it unfairly affects the interests of outside teachers, and in addition a certain set of teachers are benefited at the expense of others equally competent. Such a procedure is unjust. 3. The status given by the University should not be used to exploit from a business view point the natural desire of the public for musical accomplishment. Such a procedure is unedifying. 4. It is a good thing that music teaching in Australia should be judged by the same standard as in other parts of the Empire, and by independent experts. Doubtless the accredited secretaries of Trinity College and the Associated Board will be able to inform the public whether it be true that "all fees paid to examining bodies from overseas are appropriated to the benefit of English music students."