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before. The result was that France possessed an excellent system of public education worthy of that great nation, and if France and Germany were to meet in deadly conflict he did not know how it was likely to terminate.

These colonies followed the example. There was always a demand, more or less, for a State system of education; but he believed that the Colony of Victoria was the first to set the example to the others of a purely public system of State education, when in 1872 (25) they passed the Bill providing for the present universal system. (Applause.) She led the way, and other colonies followed her example. It was twenty-two years afterwards that the colony of South Australia allowed the free system to be established.

The Minister of Public Instruction had that morning referred to what he (Mr. Hartley) had always considered a source of strength. From the beginning Victoria was fortunate in establishing the system in the love of the people. He knew there was an element of danger in this, because it was likely to produce the feeling that it was impossible to improve the system of which the people were so proud. The experience in South Australia was a very different one. The system there and those who established it came in for a fair amount of abuse; but now the people were fairly content with the schools. If all these colonies had been foolish to spend so much money, it behoved them to ask questions, "Why has it been done?" and "Why is it maintained?" He would present to them a few views on the subject.

First of all he would mention a few objections to popular education. There was a strong party in South Australia, called the Conservative Party, which seemed to have an intense dislike to the system. They objected by asking if it was right that the education of the son of John Brown, the gardener, should in any degree be paid for by John Brown's master. That was the objection they had to meet. It might be a wrong thing to take the money of one man and apply it to teach the son of another. If those premises were granted, then it followed logically that State education was wrong, but there came a great wave of popular feeling, and when that arose in its might, logic went down before it—logic always did. (Laughter and applause.) There was a sort of feeling in the minds of all classes, however, that opportunities—fair opportunities—should be given to everybody to make use of talents that God had given him. It was a marvellous thing that the Conservative Party at home in the old country did not seem to sympathize with the feeling of the party of the same name in South Australia. Nothing had been more marked than the observations of the Marquis of Salisbury and the Minister of Education on the subject of State education. Lord Salisbury had said it was not his intention or the intention of his party to do anything to impair the efficiency of the schools. (Loud applause). Sometimes objections were made against the system in South Australia, by some man who would get hold of a boy and ask him, "What is the capital city of Western Australia?" and the child would say, "London."



Australia?" and the old "herring and a half" puzzle—(laughter)—and the chances were he would not get an answer. He then enquired—"How long have you been at school, my boy?" And having been told, wrote off at once to the newspapers, relating the shocking ignorance of the boy, and pointing out that the State system of education was a failure. (Renewed laughter.)

It was said that there was a strong desire on the part of young men to become clerks—to wear a black coat instead of a serge jacket. The last thing one ought to attempt to do would be to judge a broad social question by the experience of any one particular child who wanted to become a clerk. What they had to do was to compare themselves with other people, learn what was passing in other countries, and then only put forward a tentative opinion. Social



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questions should—and, indeed, could not—be judged by units. Teachers were not wholly free from the temptation to judge educational questions by units. When Mr. Tynan, the Victorian Secretary of Education, was over in South Australia he told him about the teachers just over the Border, who, if asked why a certain big boy was in a low class, would reply, "Please, Sir, he comes from Victoria." (Laughter.) And in the western districts of Victoria it was just the same. If a teacher in similar circumstances was asked the same question he invariably replied, "Please, Sir, he comes from South Australia." (Renewed laughter.)

The story he was about to relate came within his own experience, but before beginning he might as well tell them that when a man was about to tell a "tall" story, and protested that it was "within my own experience," they should be careful what they accepted of it.

(Laughter.) At any rate, this story was within "my own experience." He had been more than twenty years head of the department in South Australia, and only once in his life he received a letter stating:—"I have the honour to report that I took charge of such and such a school upon such and such a date, and I am pleased to add that I found the school in excellent order, and that the children have evidently done well during the past twelve months." (Loud, prolonged laughter.) He had only received one such letter, and never expected to receive another.

There was a great desire on the part of a large section of the community to get into the Government service. The pressure brought to bear to get this or that boy or girl work in the State service was very natural, for it was fairly permanent so long as they behaved themselves. He could not say that the boys who had gone through the South Australian schools wanted to be clerks. If a carpenter, a butcher, or a blacksmith wanted a boy, he believed that a supply of lads had been found willing and waiting for the demand. He did not think that the criticism that the boys wanted to be clerks was a fair one. The question was—"Are we giving the lads the education that will fit them for the positions they will have to fill in life?" (Hear, hear.) As to the question, too, of taking each other's money and applying it to educational purposes, he thought that of that also a broad, general common-sense view should be taken. A whole generation had grown up between the Murray and the sea who had had the advantage of popular education.

If they wanted to know what popular education had done they would have to try a rather difficult flight of imagination, and ask themselves what this colony would have been now if during the last thirty years we had not had State education. We should tremble if we could fully realize it. What it must have been. (Cheers.) "Private enterprise would have stepped in," some one might say; but he was perfectly certain it could never have adequately met the requirements. (Hear, hear.) In this and in other large towns private



enterprise would have done, without doubt, a great deal; but certainly in Melbourne and Adelaide there would have been a great residue of parents who would never have sent their children across the door of a school kept open by private enterprise. (Applause.) But to fully answer the matter he had to turn—not to Ballarat, Melbourne, or Adelaide—but to the remoter districts of the colony. It is there where the true work lies. Last week he was talking to a high dignitary in the Church of England in South Australia about the State system of education, and he told him there were places where the foot of no missionary could ever penetrate away out in the bush or on the mallee fringe. There might be seven or eight families scattered about, living a quiet and lonely life—each, perhaps, belonging to different denominations. No minister of religion ever went there to baptise their children or to bury their dead. They could not afford the time, and further they had not the means. But the State sent a teacher, and that teacher was a missionary,