

Empire Day at Delroy.

SPEECH BY MR. J. H. RITTER.

Though Empire Day was not celebrated at Delroy on the day set apart for its general observation, yet the postponement was not inopportune, for besides being commemorative of the glory of Empire, it marked yet another day of Imperial rejoicing, the forty-ninth birthday of King George V., the head of the Empire of which Young Australia is so proud to belong. The day was ideal, the warm rays of the sun being tempered by a cool breeze. The country, too, looked at its best, the green fields stretching away on every side into the dim distance, a pleasant contrast to what has obtained after a season of dry weather, when the red, sun-baked earth was broken only by drooping unhealthy-looking scrub. But the scrub, too, is rapidly giving place to smiling fields; indeed, looking at one's pleasant surroundings, it seemed almost impossible to imagine that a few years ago the land was practically a run. "I used to drive my father's ration cart out here," remarked one of the visitors, "and the hut was just over there"—pointing to a cluster of pine trees. "There were plenty of wild horses and cattle over on these ridges," he added, indicating the ridges to the west, "and the scrub was infested with wallabies, but the drought must have killed them. There's not one there now."

The rallying place of the people of Delroy is the school, the fortunes of which are presided over by Mr. Guido Weber, the life and soul of the district. Mr. Weber is also Secretary of the Parents and Citizens' Association, and he so directs that almost everything the members do is more or less—generally more—directed so as to be for the benefit of his charges. No wonder then that the school children of Delroy are such a happy, smiling family.

Well, to go on with this Empire Day story. Arrangements had been made for holding it at the usual time, but Mr. Weber, in common with some 20 other schoolmasters, was ordered into Dubbo to undergo a course of drill and what not. But every preparation had been made, and the postponement mattered but little. A strong committee had been hard at work collecting funds for the prize list, while the ladies were

had been hard at work collecting funds for the prize list, while the ladies were only waiting for the word "Go" before they buckled into the task of preparing the delicious fare provided for those who came along. Everyone had worked with a will, the result being that Empire Day at Delroy was an unqualified success, this being due to the efforts of the committee—Messrs. C. A. Carrett, W. Baker, C. Branton, L. Taylor, C. M. Wheeler, S. Cross, W. J. Ison, P. O'Keefe, W. Gould and J. Barry—directed by the Hon. Secre-

(Mr. Weber) and a number of ladies, prominent among whom were Mesdames Carrett, Baker, Wheeler, Taylor, O'Keefe, Ison, Astill, Blekemore, Weber and Pascoe, and Miss Taylor.

The proceedings opened about 10.30, when a large company assembled at the school house to listen to addresses by Mr. J. H. Ritter (Mayor of Dubbo), Rev. W. H. Ash and Rev. M. Bembrick. Mr. C. A. Carrett, President of the Parents and Citizens' Association, presided over an audience of at least 100 children, there being a large gathering of parents, the grand total at that time being close on 200, a figure which was considerably increased as the day wore on.

The Chairman having, as President of the Association, briefly, but heartily, welcomed the gathering, and with a statement to the effect that he had no desire to unduly prolong the preliminaries, called on Mr. Ritter to address the children.

Mr. Ritter, who was loudly cheered, said it was a duty he owed them to thank them for their many previous invitations to him. Unfortunately, however, public and business engagements seemed to have entered into a conspiracy against him, with the consequence that at the last moment he had found it impossible to get over. But he was here, and for the hearty welcome extended by Mr. Carrett, and for its endorsement by all those present, he was very grateful. He certainly did intend to talk to them about Empire, but there was just one thing he must do before going on, and that was to congratulate them on their exhibit at the Dubbo Show, an exhibit which spoke volumes for what was being done at Delroy—a credit to the teacher, to his method, and to themselves. He (Mr. Ritter) must confess that there was such a sense of magnitude in the words The Empire that he was almost unable to comprehend the phrase. Em-

unable to comprehend the phrase. Empire Day was being celebrated, or had been, in every part of the globe—in the United Kingdom, in Canada, in India, in the Straits, in New Zealand; amid the never-ending hum of the cities, in the solitudes of prairie, of bush, of mountain and plain; in icy fastnesses, on the sun-scorched islands which sprang out of the sea, acting as sentinels and connecting links between the parts of the Empire. They owed a debt of gratitude to those who gave them that day, not merely because it was a holiday, but because it also helped them to understand what Empire really meant, what really were the achievements of the Empire-builders; and he could not pass on without reference to Queen Victoria, who had been such a power for all that was noble and good in Empire. To his mind the Empire was as a great tree. The trunk was representative of Great Britain, and the main limbs stood for the Dominions and Dependencies—for Canada, New Zealand, and India, while the lesser branches stood for the smaller Colonies, and the twigs and so forth for the States, counties, shires, and parishes. The great leaves would represent the great cities, such as London, Sydney, Melbourne; the smaller leaves the smaller towns, such as Dubbo; and the budding leaves the little places, such as Delroy—for Delroy had as much its place in the Empire as any other town or village. We went on Mr. Ritter, represent one of the little leaves, and without the little leaves the Empire would be a very sorry thing indeed. We may not realise it, but we play an important part in the Empire, both for good and for evil; and the more we work for good the better will it be for the Empire. Let us feel determined, concluded the speaker, that when our time comes to leave this Empire we shall do so happy in the knowledge that the part we have played has been towards helping it to grow and to flourish. (Applause).

Mrs. Weber then hoisted the Union Jack, which, on the call of Mr. Ritter, was heartily cheered.

Rev. W. H. Ash said he had been a good many times at Delroy, but it was one of the places to which he liked to come, because such good work was being done there. Why did they feel so glad to-day? Was it not because they realised that they were part of an Empire which was all for good? But empires were not always so. There

But empires were not always so. There was the Roman Empire—just to mention one—where the captives of conquest were either sold to slavery or butchered to make a Roman holiday. We, however, were different, and even after the horrors of the Black Hole of Calcutta, and, later, of the well at Cawnpore, our advisers had advocated measures which were devoid of the harshness, of the terrible cruelty displayed by the Romans, for it had been, and still was, our endeavour to show that if we were stronger, we were also better. He had been out at Yeoval the other day, and in order to bring out which was numerically the strongest religion in the Empire he had asked a certain question. But he sought in vain for an answer, until one bright youth held up his hand, and yelled out, "Please, the hypocrites." (Laughter) Well, let them hope it was not so. But that was getting away from the subject. **Our Empire was for good; dis-**

ease, famine and other such calamities were being banished, and every endeavour was being made to develop the children into good men and good women. (Applause).

Rev. M. Bembrick said that all the way out he had been thinking of what to say, but had come to the resolve to leave it unsaid, and to speak from his heart; and he might add that he had a heart brimful of sympathy for boys and girls—not only for their souls, but also for their bodies. He knew they wanted to get away and eat all the good things provided for them and to play, so he would not keep them long. He also wanted to congratulate them on their teacher, and he wished to congratulate the Parents and Citizens' Association on the success of their efforts, which were apparent everywhere. The Mayor and Mr. Ash had given them philosophy and history, and he hoped they would remember what had been said. They must, however, bear in mind that Empires which had been had fallen, but so long as it was of use, had its place in the world and kept it, the Empire would flourish. Some sneered at Empire Day. With those he did not agree. Mr. Bembrick then went on to touch upon the courage of Nelson, and hoped that they would try to follow him in that respect—that they would be courageous; not wasters, but workers; not sneaks, but frank and

but workers; not sneaks, but frank and open. It was the spirit of big-heartedness which he wanted to impress on them, and so long as their hearts were big and good, so long would the spirit of all that was best in Empire endure. (Applause).

Mr. Weber said that so far as the children were concerned, they had enough of their teacher on school days, but he could not let the occasion pass without reference to the members of the Parents and Citizens' Association, to whom he wished to express his deepest gratitude. So far they had contributed about £70, which had been well spent, and as for the sewing machine which they saw inside the school, that had been nearly wholly paid for by the prizes which were won at the Show. (Applause).

Mrs. Carrett and Mrs. Weber then pinned on the badges, and the usual votes of thanks having been awarded, lunch was served, after which the sports programme was proceeded with. The prizes for the boys consisted of first-grade tools; for the girls, of work boxes, etc.; and for the infants, of dolls, tea sets, and so on. We have no hesitation in saying that the prizemoney was spent in a thoroughly acceptable and practical manner, the cost of the awards in the various divisions being the same, and the only preference shown was that the winners, in order of merit, took their choice. We say: "Well done, Delroy!"