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WORKERS' EDUCATION

Among the many great movements making for pure democracy is that of which Mr. A. Mansbridge, M.A., who is now visiting Australia, is the driving force. It was a splendid conception of man's duty to man that induced Mr. Mansbridge to organise the Workers' Educational Association of Great Britain, and inspired him and his wife to enlist for their great undertaking the services of some of Britain's most talented and cultured scholars. The story told by Mr. and Mrs. Mansbridge indeed reads like the tale of "A Messenger from Mars." For generations university training had been confined almost wholly to the leisured classes. The historic institutions of Oxford and Cambridge were regarded as the preserves of the sons of men of wealth and leisure. The idea of the benefits of those great seats of learning being conferred upon costermongers and wharf laborers, upon factory girls and hoop-la experts, would have appeared to the last generation like the suggestion of a huge joke, or as a piece of fine irony fit for the pages of "Gulliver's Travels," or of such a book as "Erewhon." Yet not only has this dream been dreamed but it is now so firmly established a reality that no sane man would question the permanency of its place in the established order of things.

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The success of this new educational movement is no less a tribute to the university professors, who left the cloisters of culture and exquisite refinement in order to diffuse the light of knowledge in mean streets and crowded hovels, than it is to the workers for their splendid and oftentimes heroic efforts to acquire knowledge. The recitation of the difficulties that the new students have been called upon to face, of the "grit" and determination displayed by men and women in their desire to widen their sphere of classical and other lore, are as inspiring in their own way as any record of the exploits of a Dr. Livingstone or of an Arctic or Antarctic hero. Mr. Mansbridge mentioned, among other cases, the instance of a dairymaid walking three-quarters of an hour through a foot of snow to the lectures; of all the working women of a class in a Lancashire town attending the lectures on a night when the snow was so deep as to stop all traffic; and of factory girls who, after working at their callings from dawn till dark, cheerfully sacrificed their leisure in order to improve their minds. Such are the true deeds that have won and are winning the Empire. Who could read without being deeply moved of the class formed by hoop-la men; of farm laborers petitioning for a class of their own; of railway men, after a 10 hours' working day, spending the hours of 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Sunday in the company of a teacher?

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Mr. and Mrs. Mansbridge have very properly insisted on the importance of maintaining the democratic character of the association. In the classes the greatest scholar has no more voice in the matter of government than has the humblest student. Nor are class distinctions in any way recognised. The knight rubs shoulders with the barrow-man, the lady of importance with the factory hand. A spirit of comradeship pervades the meetings of these seekers after knowledge. And, as Mr. Mansbridge has so finely suggested, the university professor, who so ungrudgingly places the result of years of scholastic research freely before the students, finds that in the process he not only gives but receives. He who came to teach remains to learn. As a result of his contact with the workers a new conception of humanity breaks upon the great scholar's mind; he sees history, law, economics, or whatever the study may be, from a new angle, and he takes the new view back with him to the colleges of Oxford, or Cambridge, or of St. Andrew's, and thus is university life democratised. The movement, in short, has not only brought the university to the everyday world, but has brought the everyday world to the university. The narrowness of scholastic training thus tends to give place to a broader and saner conception of things, and new books on polemics arise that owe their origin perhaps not so much to research among books as to enquiries elicited in some obscure class of the new association. Could any work be finer? Mr. and Mrs. Mansbridge need not wonder at their cordial reception here in Australia from the Trades and Labor Council and the workers generally. Education has ever been the foreword of every progressive platform. We only trust that Australians will take occasion by the hand and firmly establish here a sturdy branch of the Workers' Educational Association of Greater Britain.

DENTAL HOSPITAL FOR ADELAIDE.

From H. Hayes Norman, D.D.S.:—"My attention has been called to a report of a deputation that waited upon the Chief Secretary a few days ago, asking for the establishment of a dental hospital for Adelaide, and for a grant of £200 towards its formation. Now, I give place to no one in my desire to see the public protected and afforded skilled attention, in the all too prevalent dental decadence, and its sequelae of general systemic disease, and my appreciation of the advantages to be derived by special education at the hands of a faculty—if such could be obtained in Adelaide. Aye! there's the rub; for I venture to assert that we have not the men fitted by professional attainment to constitute such a faculty. There is, as far as I know, not a single man here with English degrees, other than the minor one of L.D.S. (Licentiate of Dental Surgery). The degrees, in dentistry, obtainable in England, are the one already enumerated. Then a rise to Bachelor of Dental Surgery; and thirdly, Master of Dental Surgery. Now, touching the first of these English degrees, I met the other day a graduate, who, in addition to his other degree, has just taken his L.D.S., and he described it as simply a waste of time. There are graduates of U.S.A. dental colleges here, but they are, in my opinion, not properly fitted for chairs in a dental college, where properly trained professors are alone able to hold the respect of students; only the other day I saw the result of an operation by one of our L.B.S., and found it difficult to believe the patient's statement that it was the work of the person she named—so crude was it. But, apart from all this, we have not the population, and Sydney and Melbourne, with each of them as many people as we have in the whole of South Australia, have only just begun to contemplate such a project, and I trust the Government will give pause, and well consider the subject before being cajoled into getting the thin edge of a wedge into the mouth of the Treasury, that will rapidly eventuate in an expenditure of many thousands of pounds sterling. It is not, as it was in my youth, necessary to go to the other end of the earth for proper training. There are great facilities in Sydney, and again in Melbourne, only a few hours away, and I cannot help thinking the promoters of this idea have self-glorification more in view than patriotism."

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BROKEN HILL, October 20.

Mr. A. Mansbridge, secretary of the Tutorial Educational Association of England, arrived today and was given a civic reception at the Town Hall by the mayor, aldermen, and citizens. He lectured at the technical college to-night.

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UNIVERSITY COUNCIL.

The University Act of 1911 provided that the Parliament should select five members of the council, three of whom should be members of the Assembly, and two of the Legislative Council. The late Sir John Duncan was one of the representatives of the Upper House, Sir Lancelot Stirling is the other. In the Council to-day some one will be chosen to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Sir John Duncan, and it is generally understood that Sir John Downer will be selected. He was a member of the University Council many years ago, but resigned when he was elected to the Federal Parliament.