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ADULT EDUCATION.

A DISTINGUISHED VISITOR.

Mr. Albert Mansbridge, M.A., the general secretary of the Workers' Educational Association of England, who is paying a visit to the Commonwealth, will reach Adelaide from the eastern States tomorrow. The association, of which Mr. Mansbridge is the secretary and founder, represents an important movement which has in the course of a decade grown to vast dimensions. It is one of the natural results of popular primary education, which has in a limited degree been secured to all the children of the United Kingdom. There is nothing which will so stimulate the thirst for knowledge as the acquisition of knowledge. One of the most marked effects of all true education is the desire it gives rise to for extending the scope of learning. The increased efficiency that comes with a careful training of the mind and the wider outlook on life are so apparent that it only requires that the advantages of rudimentary principles of education shall be enjoyed by the children of any community to ensure a demand for a more generous provision for the succeeding generation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Workers' Educational Association in England should have had its origin amongst the workers themselves, or that it should have met with such large response in its appeal to the people of the country. Although it is but ten years old it has already grown to considerable proportions, with 130 local branches and 2,000 societies. Some 50,000 adults are availing themselves of the opportunities offered by the association to further their studies.

No doubt organisation has played an important part in the success achieved by the association, but such far-reaching results could not have been secured unless the need it supplies had been felt and the country had been ripe for its work. Mr. Mansbridge has explained that "it is the workers' own system," also that it is "non-party in politics, unsectarian, and democratic in government." These conditions are both necessary and natural to such a scheme, for the movement has grown into the shape which corresponds with its



Mr. Albert Mansbridge, M.A.

origin and membership. Speaking on the subject in Melbourne the other day, Mr. Mansbridge said:—"A group of workmen started a school for improvement in a small attic at Sheffield, and the classes which attended workmen's colleges, first in London and later in the big industrial centres, grew day by day. The Nottingham Trades Council made application to the University authorities for teachers, and formed one of the first sources of the present educational movement in Great Britain. It was recognised by the promoters of the movement that it was essential there should be the companionship of scholarly men. The leisured people of Great Britain began to dominate the university extension movement, and gradually the working people began to go out of it. It was at this stage that the Workers' Educational Association sprang into existence. It was decided that it should be non-political and non-sectarian, and although democratic in aim should be open to all. The chief aim was to bring about a companionship between workmen and scholars—to give all an equal and fair opportunity to do the best for themselves morally and spiritually. Many trades unions joined the movement, and classes were established for instruction in various subjects to the great advantage of the various branches of the workers."

It is one of the cardinal features of Mr. Mansbridge's scheme for the development of the movement that it should be guided and controlled by the workers themselves. His aim is to associate education with life in such a way that it shall contribute to the enrichment of the individual, whether on the intellectual, the moral, or the physical plane. It is not the life of any particular class, but of the whole people, he has in view. This is, of course, in keeping with the spirit of the age. Opportunities for gaining knowledge have been enormously increased within the last generation or so. Not only have secondary and higher schools been multiplied to a great extent, but cheap books by the great masters have given to the people at large access to the best learning. A good home library is unquestionably a valuable asset to the student; but if he is to make the best use of the books at his command he must have systematic training, so as to acquire the habits of study and assimilation, for education means much more than the storing up of facts. The mind must be trained to think logically, and to draw right deductions from facts. This is an age of great possibilities in all departments of activities. Its demands are great, and they can only be fully responded to by those who have qualified by a well-applied and systematic education to make the best use of their opportunities. Knowledge is power only when it can be successfully applied to the problems of the moment. It is in recognition of this fact that so much attention is now properly paid to training the mind and hand simultaneously. Technical education has demonstrated its value in a hundred fields. The victories of the future will go to the most efficient, both in individuals and nations. Such a movement as that which Mr. Mansfield has guided for the last ten years must have a far-reaching influence on the future of the nation. His theory that the universities must be based upon the mental and spiritual power which comes from labor is both democratic and reasonable. The Workers' National Association, he explains, "has been organised to provide education for the most simple and the least equipped of the workers," but its mission is to bring within the reach of everyone the highest education he is capable of assimilating.

The movement embraces university-tutorial classes, which are comprised of small groups of students—they do not usually exceed 30—and they represent different ages and both sexes. One condition, however, of joining these is that members shall undertake to attend the classes for three successive winters. Each season a course of 24 lessons is given.

Mr. Mansbridge takes a comprehensive view of education. "What," he asks, "is education after all but the physical, mental, and spiritual development of the whole being? What is it but the power which revives the sense of wonder at the beautiful and pure things in Nature, in Literature, in Science, and in Art, which sense, in the rush of life towards material possessions, is so often rubbed off as the bloom off the peach? What is it, to use the words of Bishop Gore, but the power which enables a man to co-operate with the laws of progress? No one who hears education for the people decried, but will turn away in dismay, as he thinks what the lack of education means—drifting hither, whither, co-operating not with the forces which build but with those which destroy. If education be not allowed its opportunity, ignorance will have its revenge."

With this view there will be general agreement in South Australia at least, where the education of the people has for so long been held as of the utmost importance. And Mr. Mansbridge is right when he concludes that all true education will tend to make technical instruction more highly appreciated amongst the workers. He is enquiring into the educational systems of the Commonwealth. Already he has seen something to admire in these. "Casual visits paid to the Victorian State schools," he has written, "reveal in abundance orderly work under cheerful circumstances well done. School buildings have been remodelled with wonderful

wisdom; the old type imported from England still remains, but that type will go. It is interesting to observe the excellence of the literary portion of the work done by the children of 12 and 13; it is every bit as good as the best work done in English primary schools, and one thing which must strike the observer more than anything else is the wonderful and skilful blackboard work, in which elder children as well as teachers participate. To someone or to some group of people in the State much praise is due for the development of this art, for it is nothing else."

While in Adelaide Mr. Mansbridge will speak at the University, the School of Mines, and the Trades Hall, and will hold several conferences.