

be reached in some far distant future; it remained to them (the teachers) to do what they could to struggle towards it. And something might be done in that direction by their country associations. Why should they confine all their meetings to teachers? Why should they not discuss educational questions of wide and general interest seeking the co-operation and assistance of the many interested men and women they undoubtedly had throughout the country? The hygienic conditions of the schools, the ventilation, lighting, and furniture, were matters of the very greatest importance to the physical health of the children; and only as the outcome of a healthy and vigorous public opinion could they hope for any improvement upon present conditions. He believed that in some places, at least, if the people could only be shown the importance of that question, local committees would be formed, which would soon find the means to make the necessary alterations and additions in their schools."

—What Mr. Price Recognised.—

The Hon. T. Price had long and anxiously been considering the need and mode of reorganizing the Education Department, and before Parliament prorogued at the end of

1905 he told the Assembly that he proposed during the recess to undertake the work. After the death of the late Mr. J. A. Hartley the department had been placed under the control of a board of inspectors, but later that system of divided responsibility was abolished, and Mr. L. W. Stanton (Inspector General) was given complete charge. Without implying any reflection upon the zeal and industry of that gentleman, the Minister felt that the time had arrived to effect a radical change, the necessity having been illustrated by the departure for Tasmania of several of the brightest teachers, and others throughout the State had been complaining that under existing conditions there were no appreciation of special ability and no reward for undoubted merit. In addition, an impression prevailed that the whole system of State education in South Australia required to be revised and brought up to date. No adequate provision was being made for training the rural teachers. Further, the Ministry recognised the urgency of co-ordinating educational agencies throughout the State, and of having the assistance of an undoubted educational expert, in whom the teachers and the public had confidence, to introduce pressing reforms.

—Promotion to Directorship.—

Mr. Price realized that his hopes of promoting educational efficiency and economy depended almost entirely upon securing a thoroughly capable Director of Education, and he did not spare himself any pains to obtain the best information and advice available on the subject, both here and in the other States. It is understood that negotiations were opened with Professor Henderson, of the Adelaide University, who was highly recommended for the position, and that, indeed, the position was under offer to him. If he had accepted it the department would have been reorganized on the basis of Mr. Williams, who was noted for his power of organization, being appointed chief of the staff to Professor Henderson. After carefully considering the matter and consulting his friends, Professor Henderson declined the appointment upon grounds which were purely personal, and had no bearing whatever upon the terms of the offer. Having fully weighed all the circumstances of the case, the Ministry then decided to ask Mr. Williams to fill the office of Director of Education. Surprise was felt at the Minister passing over the inspectorial staff and promoting a teacher from the ranks to the highest position in the department, but it was generally considered that he was justified in the boldness of the step on the ground of the special qualifications possessed by the Norwood head master, by the success which had marked his work as a teacher, and by the confidence which the teachers generally possessed in his fitness and personality. It was decided that after he had fairly started the work of reorganization the Ministry should send Mr. Williams to other countries on a commission of enquiry concerning the latest educational ideas and methods.

—Travel Abroad.—

Travelling in company with the Victorian Director of Education (Mr. F. Tate), Mr. Williams left in May, 1907, for a seven months' sojourn in Europe and America, and returned with a much wider experience of matters educational, and the knowledge and insight gained during his travels proved of great value in connection with recommendations which he made from time to time to the Government of the State. He went away with the idea, from certain things he had heard, that England was in the backwardness compared with America and Germany, but he was particularly im-

pressed in the motherland with the forward movement that had been established in more recent years, and with the magnificent schools, furniture, and equipment which he saw. He came back determined that South Australia wanted well-lighted and well-furnished schools, and more attention than had previously been given to the comfort and convenience of the teachers. After his return Mr. Williams presented to the Government a voluminous and comprehensive illustrated report on his observations in England, Scotland, Germany, Denmark, Switzerland, and the United States of America, and it was laid before Parliament.

—Public Secondary Schools.—

One of the most noteworthy features of Mr. Williams's regime was the establishment of the high school system of organised public secondary education. That achievement alone ought to ensure him a permanent place in the roll of honour of men who have done great and worthy things for the country. An admirable standard was set for the district institutions by the parent establishment, the Adelaide High School, in Grote street, in which Mr. Williams took special pride. From the outset his ambition was to have it housed in the present handsome and well-adapted structure, and to engage a carefully selected and thoroughly trained staff of teachers. On his recommendation many of the older school buildings underwent radical reconstruction for the improvement of lighting, ventilation, and seating.

—Devotion to Duty.—

In 1910, 1911, and 1912 the continued ill health of the Director marred the otherwise bright educational outlook in South Australia, and he vainly tried to regain strength by visits to Queensland and Fiji. It was a pathetic circumstance that his illness was due to overwork and almost superhuman labours on behalf of the children in the schools. In connection with the busy years following upon his appointment, and up to the time of his enforced leave of absence, it was recognised that there was no similar period in the history of education in South Australia, except the inaugural years under the late Mr. Hartley, which could compare with it, and while Parliament found the money it was the fertile brain of the Director which was the main moving factor in the development and progress. Mr. Williams on one occasion remarked that he did not think he worked harder as Director of Education than he did as a schoolmaster. In the former case, however, the field of activity was greater, the responsibility heavier, and the life altogether more strenuous and harassing. "When one thinks," he said, "what an educational system under ideal conditions might do for the children of the State, one finds it difficult to restrain impatience and irritation at apparently needless delays, to defy and keep at bay a feeling of despondency, and always to maintain a hopeful and optimistic spirit." He had always regarded the outstanding feature of the South Australian educational system to be the devotion and loyalty of the great body of the teachers to the cause of education. His ambition was to see the schools gradually improve, and to witness a complete system of education providing for the many and

various needs of the whole community—such a system as would enable the girls and boys of the State to enrich themselves not only in material things, but in the graces which go to produce healthy, happy, contented, and noble lives. His Excellency the Governor (Sir Day Bosanquet) at the annual Teachers' Conference in 1911 recalled an occasion when he was accompanying the Director on a visit to a big school, and Mr. Williams addressed the students in the principal classroom on the word "Duty." "I thought," remarked His Excellency, "this man is sacrificing himself, if any one ever did, in his devotion to duty." Mr. Williams was connected with various public institutions outside the Education Department, and notably was President of the Spence Scholarship Committee and a life member of the Wattle Day League. He was a member of the Council of the Adelaide University.

—The Family.—

Mr. Williams has left a widow and six children. The eldest son, Alfred, is assistant resident engineer in the Railways Department at Port Wakefield; and other sons are:—Reginald (Tourist Bureau), Ralph (B.Sc., who is connected with the mining industry), Eric (who is on the land in the Port Wakefield district), and Hartley (a High School student). There is one daughter, Miss Dorothy Williams. Mr. Williams's mother died a few weeks ago in Broken Hill.

ACTING PREMIER'S TRIBUTE.

The Acting Premier (Hon. R. Butler) on being informed of the death of Mr. Williams, said:—"I would like to express on behalf of the Premier, myself, and other members of the Ministry our deepest regret at the untimely decease of the Director of Education. As a teacher he stood in the very first rank, and during the time he was Director he applied himself unsparingly to the duties of his office, which were of a specially harassing nature. It

is more than probable that he shortened his life a good deal by the immense amount of labour he put into his work. As a Minister of Education some years ago I had an opportunity to realize how important are the duties of leadership in the department, and how great a tax is imposed on the man, however physically and mentally strong. It will be a satisfaction to the late Director's wife and family to know that not only the Government and members of the service over which he presided, but the general community as well have appreciated his self-sacrificing labours in the cause of education."

ACTING MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

The Acting Minister of Education (Hon. J. G. Bice) was much grieved by the news of the Director's death. "Although Mr. Williams's health has been failing for some time," he said, "the end has come so suddenly and unexpectedly that it is a great shock to me. I fully recognise the great work he has done for education, and I believe that his strenuous labours in this direction were the original cause of the breakdown in his health. He has done a

very great deal. He took over the management of the educational system at a time when the services of a master and were required, and he devoted himself with all his energies to the task. His work as an educationist was appreciated not only in South Australia, but all through Australia, and it will be hard to replace him. In taking over the administration of the department during Mr. Peake's absence I shall feel very severely the loss the public service has sustained in the death of Mr. Williams."

"HE FOLLOWED THE GLEAM."

The Chief Inspector of Schools (Mr. M. M. Maughan, B.A.) said:—"Mr. Williams has been my friend for years; how many years I hardly know. He was the friend of my friends, John A. Hartley, Joseph Sunter, Andrew Scott—men whom I loved and revered. I have been associated with him in office from the time that he was made Director of Education in January, 1906, and we have worked together, day in and day out, by sunlight and by lamplight, in work time and in play time. He had many interests, but he became a man of one idea—how to do the best for the children of the State. He was determined that, so far as lay in his power, every boy and girl, whether the child of poverty or of wealth, should have the opportunity, at least, to make the best of the abilities God had given him. Nothing was too hard for him in following his aim; he followed the Gleam, always promising to rest when he had done the work before him, but always finding more beyond it. He was like a traveller in a great mountain range, eager to reach the summit, he climbs and climbs, only to find fresh heights before him; his whole soul is absorbed in the quest, and he toils on and on, only to fall at last, but with his face turned to the light; he has not reached his goal, but he has led the way thither. Alfred Williams has done a great work for the State—more than the State knows; but every year will reveal something of the value of his work, and those who profit by his plans and thoughts shall call him blessed."

TEACHERS' APPRECIATION.

Mr. Victor J. Pavia (President of the South Australian Public School Teachers' Union) voiced the sorrow of that organization at the news of Mr. Williams's death. The late director served a term as President of the union when he was one of South Australia's leading head masters, and is the first of its ex-Presidents who has passed away. Mr. Pavia said:—"The sad event reported this evening is undoubtedly one of the greatest losses that the Education Department has ever experienced. It is difficult to express adequately the amount of benefit that has been derived by the children and the teachers during Mr. Williams's regime. I believe the great characteristic of his work was his intense activity, particularly before illness undermined his constitution. The influence which emanated from him at the head of the department seemed to inspire all his officers, right down to the lowest grades of the service, with a desire to do their best in the cause of education. At the beginning of his directorship the bulk of the teachers realized that his task was to inaugurate practically a new system, and they rose to the occasion. Mr. Williams was loyally supported by all the leading masters who had worked shoulder to shoulder with him for years prior to 1906. The Director showed a strong desire to improve the status of the teachers, and undoubtedly he has done this. His keen appreciation of the necessity for increased culture has resulted in a teaching staff at the present time equal to almost any in the Commonwealth. He fought hard to make the service attractive, and used his influence to secure a remuneration more fitting for the work. A monument of Mr. Williams's practical application of what he saw during his investigations abroad will probably always exist in the building alterations which were begun after his return. Many old premises have been improved almost out of recognition, and transformed into well-lighted and ventilated structures. In this direction he was ably supported by the Superintendent of Public Buildings (Mr. Owen Smyth, J.S.O.) and his officers. The rest