

News 14-8-30

# MISSPELLING IS MENTAL LAZINESS

## Mr. Byard Knows; He Has Corrected 60,000 Papers

"Poor spelling is the sign of a sloven—and it is a sign that is becoming increasingly common among young South Australians."

This is what Mr. D. J. Byard, M.A., has concluded after having corrected 60,000 papers for the Public Examinations Board.

"THERE is no reason for the growing prevalence of misspelling except the carelessness which seems to be the spirit of the age," continued Mr. Byard.

"Not enough attention is paid to this subject in the school curriculum. Teachers do not insist sufficiently on accuracy. It is no longer a social solecism to write a misspelled letter. Rather is it made a virtue. 'I never can spell correctly' is made a boast instead of a confession of ignorance.

"Yet misspelling strikes at the roots of our language. Admittedly English is not easy. Yet German boys who were in my class at Hahndorf College were generally better spellers than native born Australians.

Mr. Byard does not think that the introduction of Esperanto would solve the problem. "It would be a confession of weakness," he said. "Why should we abandon our native tongue, with all its traditions and its glorious literature, for an artificial language which has nothing behind it?" he asked.

### COMMON ERRORS

"Simple words are most frequently misspelled. For the one who goes astray with 'haemorrhage' 10 are at fault with 'separate.' This is one of the words most commonly the cause of error. Yet 'beauty,' which, after all, has its spelling and pronunciation widely at variance, seldom appears incorrectly.

"That indicates that sheer carelessness is the root of the trouble," said Mr. Byard. "If boys and girls and men and women would cultivate the habit of revising what they wrote, the percentage of spelling errors would be greatly diminished."

Although he is the author of "Essential Spelling," which has recently entered its seventh edition, Mr. Byard admitted that at times he made "protesque mistakes" in spelling—before he re-read his copy.

He did not claim that spelling was an index of intelligence—that the man who could spell necessarily had more ability than the man who could not. Sometimes the facts were the reverse.

"But careless spelling is undoubtedly a sign of mental laziness," he contended. It was an important subject in his youth, which was spent in the classic walks of Clifton College—where he was a classmate of Earl Haig, then just Douglas



MR. D. J. BYARD, M.A.

who says that poor spelling, which is becoming increasingly common among young South Australians, is a sign of mental laziness.

Haig, a thin, pale youth with yet some hint of the warrior in the tilt of his head—and Exeter College, Oxford.

### JOY OF WORD MAKING

"I remember having spent a whole holiday playing at 'verbarium' every evening," he remarked. "This meant making the greatest possible number of words from a given word.

"But I cannot imagine today's youth doing that—not while there is a jazz palace nearby," he added regretfully.

For many years Mr. Byard was head master of Hahndorf College, which has contributed prominent citizens to South Australia. He is now living an active life at Reynella, dividing his time between a vineyard and classical studies.

Reg. 15-8-30

News 18-8-30 RHODES COMMITTEE

## Dr. Behan in Adelaide

Dr. J. C. N. Behan (Australian secretary of the Rhodes Trust Committee) explained to the South Australian committee at a meeting of the University of Adelaide this morning the most important items which were discussed at a conference of members of the trust from Australia, Canada, and the United States of America, held at Oxford, England, last year.

Dr. Behan, who attended the conference, is giving similar explanations in each of the States. He will return to Melbourne tomorrow.

Adv. 18-8-30

### Conservatorium Organ Recitals

From Alan F. Charlick, Rundle-street:—Having been a regular visitor to the Conservatorium mid-day organ recitals, I wish to record my appreciation of Mr. Horner's efforts. The programmes have been of a high order, the instrumentalists and vocalists rendering their selections admirably. The number of patrons who attend each recital is indicative of the public demand for good music, especially that given on the king of instruments. I am sure I am voicing the opinion of those who have attended from time to time—could not Mr. Horner be prevailed on to continue these recitals for a few weeks longer?

# THE NEWS

ADELAIDE: MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 1930

## SPELLING, GRAMMAR, AND PENMANSHIP

MANY business men who in recent times have engaged youths or girls will emphatically confirm the statement of Mr. D. J. Byard, M.A., that poor spelling is becoming increasingly common.

The fault is to be observed not only in those who have left school upon reaching the compulsory standard, but in large numbers who have had the advantage of additional tuition in secondary institutions—high schools and colleges.

Mr. Byard has had wide experience which entitles him to speak with authority. For many years he was head master of Hahndorf College, and as an examiner for the Public Examinations Board he has corrected more than 60,000 papers in English.

Therefore his dictum that the prevalence of misspelling is a result of "carelessness, which seems to be the spirit of the age," must carry great weight.

In recent years the school curriculum has been greatly broadened, and the common experience of business men that in both writing and spelling there has been a definite degeneration in the standard adds strength to the fear that too little attention is being paid to those subjects.

Mr. Byard is of opinion that teachers nowadays do not insist sufficiently on accurate spelling.

"No longer," he says, "is it a social solecism to write a misspelled letter. Rather is it made a virtue. 'I never can spell correctly' is a boast instead of a confession of ignorance."

Incorrect spelling, slovenly English, and faulty penmanship are extremely irritating to people who believe that if a thing is worth doing at all it is worth doing well. Most successful business men are of this type.

Therefore the chances of promotion are all in favor of the boy or girl who shows care in constructing sentences, in spelling words, and in handwriting.

But this is viewing the subject in one of its least important aspects.

Misspelling strikes at the roots of the English language. The "well of English undefiled" can be polluted just as effectively by bad spelling as by breaking the rules of syntax.

Even in the multitude of their duties teachers cannot impress upon pupils too strongly the vital need for correct spelling, proper construction of sentences, and clear and firm penmanship.

If any one of these attributes is lacking when pupils leave school they will realise to their cost how seriously handicapped they are in the fierce competition of the business and professional world.

Adv. 16-8-30

## FREE EDUCATION

### WILL THERE BE ECONOMIES?

#### Comparison With New South Wales

Education enthusiasts maintain that there is not the need for economy in expenditure on education in this State that there is in New South Wales.

There is no evasion in the payment of University fees in this State, according to officials of the Adelaide University, with whom the position was discussed yesterday. It was pointed out that the only students who did not pay fees were those connected with the Education Department as teachers, or students at the Teachers' College, who took courses in arts, science, and commercial subjects. All the students for degrees in law, medicine, and engineering paid their own fees, and the same in the other cases mentioned were provided for otherwise.

The reference in the Sydney letter in "The Advertiser" yesterday to the cost of education in New South Wales was the subject of comment in educational circles, and it was generally maintained that the position in this State, on the question of economy in expenditure, compares more favorably with that in the older State. It was argued that the contention of the Education Department in New South Wales offered the widest scope for more economy did not apply in South Australia.

**State Expenditure**  
The total expenditure on education in South Australia in 1929 was £1,098,412, and this sum included £49,729 for a grant to the university, £18,823 to the Public Library, Museum, and Art Gallery, £11,488 to the Institute Association, £150 to the Royal Society, £300 to the Workers' Educa-

tional Association, £137 to the Chair of Anthropology at the Sydney University, and £2,456 to the Observatory. It is estimated that about a tenth of the total income of the State is expended upon education, compared with about a fourth in New South Wales, where it is said to be the most expensive in the Commonwealth. Primary education in South Australia costs £710,919 a year, secondary education £102,566, and technical education £73,896.

### Question of Payment

The Premier (Hon. L. L. Hill) who is also Minister of Education, intimated in a speech in the Assembly recently, that the Government would have to consider seriously the question of cutting down grants to public institutions in order to reduce expenditure, but to what extent, if any, education will be affected thereby cannot be said as yet. It is well known that the Minister, who is an enthusiast in the cause of education, will be reluctant to sacrifice any benefits and privileges that the public enjoy through free education. The figures quoted with regard to New South Wales show that the need for economy in expenditure on education is not nearly so great here as there, but there is a feeling among many people that some reduction will be necessary. Members of the Opposition have frequently raised the question whether the State is getting full value for the money spent on education, and the suggestion was made that many parents who can afford to pay for the education of their children, especially those attending secondary schools, should be compelled to do so, instead of enjoying the advantages for nothing. The suggestion, however, in New South Wales that a charge of 6d. per week should be imposed for each child attending primary schools was not received with favor by those with whom it was discussed. It was remarked that charges, if any, should be made in the higher circles of education, and that the primary schools should remain as they are, absolutely free.