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A GREAT BROTHERHOOD.

The Presidential address at the Teachers' Conference on Monday was forcible and comprehensive. Mr. Burnard said the union had passed the experimental stage, and it was established on a broad and firm foundation. It was a great brotherhood, with one common aim—the teachers' mutual improvement, stimulus, and protection. The speaker paid a high tribute to the genius and devotion of the late Inspector-General (Mr. Hartley), and said that the splendid education system was his truest monument. He stated also that the influence of that great educationist still lived, and that there were many still actuated by the noble ambition to perpetuate his life's work. The system was likened to an organism which must have life or vitality. To preserve its vitality there must ever be a readiness to adapt methods to the constantly changing conditions which occurred. The establishment of sixth classes in many schools was described to be a great boon, which was highly prized by a large section of the public. The aim should be to make students, who loved the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and who, having been trained to think and work at school, used those powers afterwards for self-improvement. Appreciative reference was made to the University scheme for the training of teachers, and profound gratitude was expressed to the University authorities for their great generosity. The relative importance of knowledge and training in the art of teaching was fully considered, and it was suggested that in the future working of the University scheme some special provision might be made for the students in certain subjects, as, for example, the important matter of manual work. The speaker dealt with the exemption of certain schools from a detailed examination by the inspector. While recognising excellencies in the plan, he did not think they were yet ripe for a universal adoption of the system. Only schools that had reached a high standard of proficiency should participate in the privilege. In regard to the 1903 regulations the speaker contended that the classification scheme had greatly disheartened and depressed the able young men of the service. The hope was expressed that under the more promising outlook the regulations might be revised to restore hopefulness and ambition to young men now in the service, and to attract that desirable class of teachers so essential to the success of the system.

—The President's Address.—

The retiring President (Mr. R. T. Burnard), who was received with applause, said:—We have gradually changed in the subjects and purpose of the President's address. In the early years of our history, when the foundation of the union was being laid, the address dealt chiefly with the objects and work of the union, and the aim was to justify its establishment and to indicate its usefulness and value. In those initial stages this course was necessary; but I venture to state that we have now passed the experimental period. The union is established on a broad and firm foundation. It has come to stay, and does not need any special pleading on its behalf. It is more than a union in name. Embracing as it does all grades of the service, from the head master of a first class school to the teacher of the smallest provisional school, it is a union in the truest sense, where we are all knit together into one great brotherhood, actuated by one common aim—our mutual improvement, stimulus, and protection.

—A Grand Legacy.—

We have reached an interesting stage of our existence, having practically completed the seventh year since the first conference was held in 1896. That conference, you will remember, met under the cloud of a great sorrow, and with a keen sense of the loss we had sustained in the death of our great leader, our chief as we had learned to regard him. As St. Paul's Cathedral is a fitting monument of its great architect, Sir Christopher Wren, so our splendid education system, which is the product of the late Mr. Hartley's masterly and resourceful genius, is his truest monument. And the grand legacy which our great master has bequeathed to us who are left to carry on his work is the spirit of interest and enthusiasm which transforms and ennobles the daily routine which would otherwise be wearisome and irksome in the extreme. In this sense John A. Hartley is not dead. (Cheers.) The spirit of that great man still lives, and there are many good men and true who have caught his mantle, and are fired with his noble spirit and are determined that his life's work shall be continued and perpetuated. It seems to me not inappropriate at the present juncture to deal with the vital and all-important question of progress or growth in our education system. Our education system may be regarded as an organism, the chief characteristic of which is life or vitality. Now, how does this life manifest itself? What are its signs or proofs?

—Progressive and Vigorous.—

One important sign or proof of life in our education system thus viewed as an organism is a continuous and frictionless adjustment to environment or surrounding influences. This environment embraces a field much wider than our own immediate surroundings. The changing conditions in our own state—the various problems of industrial and domestic life in our midst—it includes also all the changing conditions of the other states in the federation which were by no means lagging behind in the march of progress. And the environment I speak of goes beyond the bounds of these states; it includes progress in education in all civilized countries of the world. For our system to preserve its vitality there must be a readiness to adapt our methods to the constantly changing conditions which occur and the demands which arise. As civilization advances and life becomes more complex, our environment correspondingly varies, and the real test of our life and vigour is, as I have said, our readiness to adjust ourselves to these ever-changing conditions. Stagnation means death; growth, advancement; progress means life. Laying this down as a principle, that the very condition of vitality and progress is a constant adjustment to our environment, let us briefly review the important changes that have been effected in connection with our work since 1896. You will all agree, I am sure, that, under the controlling influence of Mr. Hartley, our system was progressive and vigorous. There was no stagnation, no "resting on our oars." The curriculum was often modified as occasion required and new and improved methods of treating old subjects were introduced. The effect of this progressive policy was twofold, it affected the system and the teachers. The system itself was marvellously improved, for the changes that were introduced led to the elimination of weaknesses and faults and the substitution of a "more excellent way." But what was, perhaps, of greater importance than the improvement in the system was the fact that this constant development and change affected the teachers themselves in a very beneficial manner. They had to keep pace with the times. It necessitated constant application, activity, and preparation. The teachers were thus trained to attack new difficulties, and were made resourceful, courageous, and self-reliant. During the seven years that has elapsed since Mr. Hartley's death some very important developments have taken place. The establishment of sixth classes in many of our schools, and the accompanying extension of the curriculum, place within reach of many the advantages of a comparatively liberal education. This is a great boon, and is highly prized by a large section of the public. While the beneficial results of this extra training can never be entirely lost, full advantages will not be realized unless pupils leave us with a deep interest in study. The school should be the training ground where the love of knowledge is engendered, and the power to think and work has been trained and developed. Those cases in which pupils rejoiced that study was a thing of the past must be regarded as the failures of our work. The period of a boy's life just after leaving school is one requiring the most earnest care. It is a critical time, which so often decides the future life of the boy, and it seems necessary that some provision should be made for that transition period, so that previous education may be conserved and continued. The Boys' Institute and field clubs fulfil a most important mission, but we shall need to face the question whether something more comprehensive should be done to grapple with the problem. In the meantime every endeavour should be made to induce elder boys and girls leaving school to enter upon some useful course of study. In proportion as parents realize their responsibilities will the prosperity of the state and the happiness of its people be assured.

—Training the Teachers.—

If we were asked what has been the most important step taken during the last few years in connection with education, the answer that would instantly occur to us would be—the University scheme for the training of our teachers. The value and importance of this magnificent provision cannot be overrated, and the profoundest gratitude is due to the Chancellor and the authorities of the Adelaide University for the splendid offer which they made to the department to carry out the work free of cost, and also for the excellent instruction imparted to the students, and the generous welcome extended to them. Now, in regard to the all-important question of the preparation and equipment of a teacher, no one will deny, I think, that there are two essentials for a teacher—knowledge and training, or culture, and the power to impart knowledge to others. Speaking of the

qualifications needed by a teacher reminds me of a humorous allusion to them by an able American educationist, Mr. C. W. Bardeen. In a careful compilation of the characteristics ascribed to the ideal teacher Mr. Bardeen enumerates 26 valuable qualities—one for each letter of the alphabet—that the teacher must be affable, benignant, courteous, decorous, &c. "My subject, therefore, naturally divides itself," he says, "into 27 heads—the 26 I have mentioned, and which I shall omit, and a twenty-seventh, which is that he should be a man." Reverting now to our previous statement as to the necessity for both knowledge and training, this is pointedly illustrated by Principal Adams in this way:—It was once regarded as all-sufficient to know Latin (that is, the subject), and nobody thought it was equally necessary to know John. Nobody denied that it was necessary for the master to know his subject, but John (the mind of the child) was either taken for granted or held to be not worth knowing. Now, you will remember that under our former regime—the old pupil teacher system—much attention was given to the power to teach and manage a class of children, and the weakness was in the lack of culture in the young teachers. A bright, promising candidate who showed capability for control, entered at once on a course of four years' teaching. Under such conditions it is surprising how much good work was done. For we must be impressed with the fact that a large part of the staffs of our schools consisted of untrained and uncultured young people. Then the serious question suggests itself—What was the effect upon the characters of the pupils in the charge of these crude young teachers? And we must remember that these pupils were under the influence of these untrained and uncultured teachers just at the most susceptible and impressionable period of their lives. Now, we must regard it as a matter for congratulation that under the present arrangement not only a much smaller ratio of pupil teachers are engaged in the schools, but these enter upon their important work only after two years' special tuition. They are not only two years older, but much wiser. The advantage of our schools being now staffed by a much larger ratio of trained and experienced teachers must be very great indeed. As to the vexed question of the relative importance of knowledge or culture versus training in the art of teaching (embracing, of course, discipline, or power of control), the statement has been made by a high authority that of the two knowledge is the more important, admitting, of course, the necessity for both. In support of this assertion it is claimed that in Germany, where a liberal education is a sine qua non for a teacher, students are as far advanced at 16 years of age as they are at 19 years in some countries where training is regarded as the main qualification for the teacher, but where a lower standard of personal culture obtains.

—A Many-sided Education.—

A many-sided education—that is, knowing a great deal about a large number of subjects—is the necessary qualification for our teachers. They must know a great deal more than they desire to teach. Thanks to our present splendid University system of educating our students, their equipment in knowledge is very liberal indeed. It is gratifying to find that the students are intensely interested in their studies and quite absorbed in the fascinating research for knowledge. Mr. Scott has expressed the utmost satisfaction at the diligence of the students, and their evident desire to make the most of their golden opportunities. And we must ever bear in mind that, apart from the mere acquisition of knowledge, which is to be the teacher's stock-in-trade for his future work, there are other advantages of the highest value to be gained from the University course. The word culture expresses in a comprehensive way what I mean. The experience of the students at our highest seat of learning, and all the influences and surroundings of their University life, must have a refining and elevating effect on their character. Now, think of the enduring and far-reaching influence of this culture. Consider the unconscious influence of the teacher; that the characters of his pupils are day by day being moulded and fashioned according to the model ever before them in the person of the teacher, and this will give some imperfect idea of the transcendent importance of the culture I have referred to. It is important to keep in view that teaching is the great work for which all this preparation is made, and it may be worth while to consider to what extent the subjects in their curriculum of special value to a teacher may be chosen. No doubt the excellent lectures on education and psychology by Professor Mitchell are of the highest value from the standpoint of training, and the special knowledge of the theory and principles of education they gain from these lectures should form a useful foundation for their future work. As time advances it may appear necessary to provide for the students special training and instruction in certain subjects that may be required. For example, it may be deemed advisable to curtail a part of the classical course with a view to increase the scientific. And as the demand arises it will probably be an advantage to afford facilities for such manual training as shall fully prepare and equip these young people to successfully teach this important branch to their pupils.

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SOUTH AUSTRALIAN TEACHERS' UNION.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

EXCELLENT ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT.

There was a large gathering of teachers in the Trades Hall, Grote street, on Monday morning, when the eighth annual conference in connection with the South Australian Teachers' Union was begun. The President (Mr. R. T. Burnard) occupied the chair, and he was supported on the platform by Inspector Plummer, the first President (Mr. G. Gill), the past President (Mr. A. H. Neale), the Vice-Presidents (Messrs. C. Charlton and G. Charlesworth), the treasurer (Mr. V. J. Pavia), the secretary (Mr. John Harry), and the minute secretary (Mr. John Donnell).

The treasurer (Mr. V. J. Pavia) presented the annual financial statement, which showed a credit balance of £83 18/5. He moved the adoption of the report. Mr. J. Harry seconded the motion, which was carried.

—The Year's Work.—

Mr. J. Harry (corresponding secretary) gave a brief resume of the year's operations of the union. He stated that the attention of the executive had during the past year been directed to a great many subjects of interest to teachers, and of importance in the working of the schools. Representations have been made to the department on the subjects of claims of monitors to appointment, spelling tests from The Children's Hour, the introduction of Children's Hour in class 2, Children's Hour and graded readers, irregular attendance, arithmetic and spelling in class 5, withdrawal of children in class 5, and a withdrawal of the sewing course. The results of those efforts had, in some cases, resulted in changes which it was hoped, would be of benefit to the scholars. Several matters of great importance were still under consideration, the chief being the work in class 5, the sewing course, the drawing course, and the regulations of sport. The minute secretary (Mr. J. Donnell) gave particulars of the meeting of the union. The reports were adopted, on the motion of Mr. J. W. Scott, seconded by Mr. C. Bower.