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Dr. Johnson when he told a lady, who had played to him and had asked whether he liked music, that he regarded it as "the least disagreeable of noises." A considerable number, however, cannot manage to place themselves even into this slightly contemptuous frame of mental indifference. They profess to draw a hard-and-fast line between those pursuits which are productive and those which are not. The grower of some table dainty designed to tickle the palate is occasionally inclined to class himself as a "useful" and the musician as a "useless" member of the community; yet if a fair comparison of the ultimate results of the labours of these two be made—namely, the gratification of an ordinary legitimate taste of the people—the ministrations of the musician stand on a higher level than those of the producer, because they cultivate a high mental instead of a merely physical faculty. Students of music, therefore, should never allow themselves to be dissuaded from following the natural bent of their tastes simply from any outward pressure of the notion that the profession is a comparatively useless one. Such impressions are only the result of ignorance. As a matter of fact, the more real progress society makes in advancement and civilization the larger will be the proportion which the intellectual—as compared with the purely material—needs of the people assume. So far from the majority of students of music being prone to overrate the value of their art, it is certain that a very large number of musical enthusiasts take altogether too low ground. They devote themselves to the mechanical to the neglect of the constructive and intellectual aspects of music. How many of the pupils now about to begin their studies at the Conservatorium have ever cultivated the habit of viewing their various "pieces" as compositions to be studied? How many of them could analyse, with any degree of intelligent insight, the simplest sonatina, the performance of which would offer to them no difficulties whatever? It is for musicians and students to remember that, if they would gain real respect for their art and for themselves, they must show that, whether they manipulate the piano, the organ, the violin, or some wind instrument, they use their minds as well as their fingers. If the Conservatorium can succeed in emphasizing and recommending this view of the study of music, it will indeed have accomplished a great work.

OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM.

OPINIONS OF AN EXPERT.

The Rev. W. Potter, F.R.G.S., who has visited Adelaide for the purpose of attending the recent annual congress of the South Australian Public Teachers' Union, and also of examining into the working of our system of national primary education, was last evening seen by a member of our staff with respect to the impressions he might have received during his school-visitations.

It may be mentioned that Mr. Potter's connection with the working of the Victorian State School system has extended over a period of a quarter of a century. As honorary secretary of the Education League—one of the most prominent members of which was the late Chief Justice Higinbotham—that secured the passing of the Education Act of 1872, and as the first and present editor of the "Australasian Schoolmaster," a journal now in the twentieth year of its existence, and which is admitted to be an educational authority of high repute in these colonies, Mr. Potter must have looked at our schools with somewhat of a critic's eye. Coming here with credentials from the Minister of Public Instruction in Melbourne to our Minister of Education, he has had every facility afforded him for carrying on his educational enquiries.

Mr. Potter prefaced his remarks by disavowing any belief that the cursory visitation of a number of schools entitled him to speak ex cathedra upon the system as a whole. He had, however, enjoyed the privilege of a brief personal acquaintance with the late Mr. J. A. Hartley, whose spirit and noble ideals of education still evidently continued to pervade both the department and in some sense the public mind, and he had also made himself familiar with the literature bearing upon the South Australian primary school system. One object of his visit was therefore to see the practical working of the schools, and to take notes of whatever he considered might with advantage be grafted on to the Victorian system.

Looking at the fact that the law dealing with primary education in the two sister colonies embodied the same grand democratic provisions he was struck with the marked divergence of the lines upon which the two systems had been developed. For instance, the law in both colonies—1. Made it obligatory upon parents and guardians—irrespective of social position or wealth—to have their children, from 6 to 13 years of age, educated up to a given standard. 2. Laid it upon the Government to found and maintain a sufficient number of schools, wherein the children of the whole colony could obtain a sound elementary English education without the payment of any school fee whatever. 3. Enforced that the school curriculum should be secular, thereby totally excluding sectarian and dogmatic religious instruction from the schools. 4. Provided that the system of education so established should be administered by a Government department under a Minister of the Crown holding a seat in Parliament, and that the teachers and the administrative staff should form a branch of the Public Service.

And yet you think this same system has been differently worked by our department?—Yes.

In what way?—"Well, in three ways:—1. Your department recognised that 'the power to produce wealth is the measure of a nation's prosperity,' and it set about educating the children on lines best calculated to give them that power. Brain craft and hand craft, it appears to me, are correlated in the South Australian school to a very fair degree, and this is extended through your School of Mines and Industries. Whereas our education department has confined its efforts almost exclusively to brain craft, following in the wake of the English primary system. 2. While our administrative branch has all along shown a distrust of its teachers, and looked upon them more in the way that a private employer looks upon his employes, your late Inspector-General and the inspectorial staff have always believed in the integrity and the honor of their teachers as a body, and have regarded them as co-administrators of a department into whose hand the educational training of the larger proportion of the rising generation had been entrusted by Parliament. I infer this from the fact that you do not pay by results, that the inspectors of schools take a most active part in all the concerts, school functions, educational congresses, and their attendant festivities, and this upon a footing of perfect equality. That there would seem to be but little complaint of grievance amongst the teachers, who act unitedly, and evince a readiness to loyally carry out the policy adopted by the Ministerial head of their department. 3. Your department interpreted the term 'secular' in the Act of 1875 in a broad commonsense way, and therefore fostered the inculcation by the teachers of a high moral tone in the schools without disturbing the religious feeling of the public. On the other hand, through the culpable imprudence of one of our early Ministers of Public Instruction the Victorian department interpreted 'secular' in such a narrow way as to cause the stigma of 'Godless' to attach to it for a very long time, and to evoke a prolonged agitation on the part of prominent religious men of various denominations in favor of the reintroduction of Bible lessons."

What are your impressions as to the effect produced by our department developing primary education on the more modern and more enlightened lines?

In reply Mr. Potter said that he did not overlook the influence which the difficulties and the responsibilities attaching to the administration of the larger school system of Victoria ought to exercise over his mind when comparing the working of the two departments. For instance the position of primary schools in the two colonies, according to the latest statistics,

South Australia—Total number of schools, 665; attendance, 65,152; number of teachers, 1,240.

Victoria—Total number of schools, 1,883; attendance, 235,517; number of teachers, 4,497.

But giving due weight to this aspect of the case his observations had deepened the impression first given that the divergent lines of administration to which he had alluded had had a marked beneficial effect in favor of South Australia in respect to the school children, the teachers, the school inspectors, the departmental officers, the press, and the public. When I remember the bright-faced, neatly-attired, perfectly disciplined body of scholars assembled on the platform of the school concert in the Exhibition Building, the remarkable marked precision with which the class conducted by Inspector Clarke before the congress read off an extremely difficult piece of tonic-solfage music from hand signs and sound without ever having seen the piece, and then add the impression produced by the methodic quiet way in which work was done in the schools I have visited, the excellence of much that was done by the children under annual examination by the inspectors when I was present, it is not possible to come to any other conclusion than that the children have been well trained so far as the school curriculum reaches.

Then how favorably does the treatment accorded to the Teachers' Union at the recent congress meetings contrast to that shown to the annual congress meetings of the similar union in Victoria?

From his Excellency the Governor of this colony and the Chancellor of the University downwards, no courtesy or consideration was left unpaid that would have been paid had the gatherings been those of a congress of learned societies. While the addresses delivered by the Chief Justice, Sir Langdon Bonython, the Minister controlling education, Professor Lowrie, and the delegates from the Victorian teachers fully justified the position in public esteem these congresses have now acquired. The full reports given of the proceedings by the Adelaide daily press will, no doubt, greatly benefit the teachers throughout Australia.

You have, of course, noticed the proposal of our University to take over the training college for teachers, and relieve the Government of the cost of training pupil teachers and teachers. Would it be a judicious step?

Certainly, provided that ample security be given to ensure that practical skill in teaching and the economic or modern side of education is not sacrificed to "culture." The able speech upon the subject delivered by the Chancellor of the University will do much to secure the acceptance of the liberal offer. It devolves upon the Board of Inspectors and the Minister to devise means to attain this. Doubtless they will soon do so. There already exists a much closer connection between the University and the primary public schools in this colony than that existing in Victoria. The union now projected, if the training college should take somewhat of the position of the day colleges affiliated with our English universities, would draw still firmer the cords of union, to the mutual advantage of the university and the public schools.

Have you visited any of our great secondary schools?

Yes. But as I arrived here just as they were breaking up for the Michaelmas holidays it has been impossible for me to see the whole of them at work. Those I have been privileged to visit impressed me most favorably. The Collegiate School of St. Peter, Prince Alfred College, and Way College are noble institutions, established on three different systems, evidently ably and successfully conducted. South Australia need well be proud of them. As I have to leave for Millicent to visit a school there on Thursday morning I very much regret my inability to visit the Christian Brothers College.

You have also been interesting yourself in promoting the erection of a monument upon the grave of the late Baron von Mueller. Have you met with much support in Adelaide?

Not much, I regret to say. Professor Tate has given a donation, and his Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, Mr. Lindsay (the explorer), Mr. G. O. Tepper, and a few other gentlemen have intimated their intention to subscribe to the grave monument fund. I have also brought the subject before the Premier. It does appear to me to be a reflection upon my own colony more especially, and upon all the Australian colonies, for which the late distinguished Government Botanist of Victoria did such unselfish labor for more than half a century, that his executors should find it so hard to get his dying wish carried out when the sum required is only £500.

Mr. Potter expressed himself as being deeply sensible of the lavish hospitality shown to him by the president of the Teachers' Union (Mr. M. Manghan) and Mrs. Chapman, of Walkerville, at whose houses he and Mrs. Potter have been guests during their stay in Adelaide, as also with the marked courtesy shown him by the Board of Inspectors and the headmasters of the schools and colleges he has visited. After going to Millicent Mr. Potter returns direct to Melbourne.