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EDUCATION AND THE MASSES.

To the Editor.

Sir—Mr. Batcher, M.P., is moving in the matter of further and higher instruction in connection with our State school system. More particularly he desires some plan by which secondary education may be given sufficient to enable the pupils to pass the University senior. The Government propose to meet this demand in a partial manner by means of scholarships and exhibitions. I am in sympathy with the above mentioned gentleman in his desire to give a higher general culture so far as possible to the mass of the people. But it is evident that if we adopt a system of schools duly graded from the primary up to the University that we should need a profound and far-reaching change in the whole plan of our public school instruction. The present primary school instruction is not based upon a plan which properly prepares the pupil for secondary schools and the University. There is not that early initiation into the Latin grammar, into Euclid, and Algebra, which is required as the proper foundation of the higher and highest mental culture. To efficiently carry out Mr. Batcher's idea the above subjects would have to be introduced earlier, and when introduced would have to be efficiently taught. Now, the question at once arises, would it be wise to make such a change in the schools designed to give the average children of the country a reasonable work-a-day education? Would not the majority receive injury instead of benefit, by being obliged to neglect some subjects of great practical benefit to the average citizen in order to spend time on subjects which will only be of great use if the pupil goes forward to the higher grades of schools. Till the question has been more thoroughly thrashed out the policy of the Government to grant exhibitions which will enable the children to enter the secondary schools already established by private enterprise, seems much better than any sudden dislocation of the public schools, and any ineffectual establishment of secondary schools not properly joined to the primary. What, I think, the friends of national education might well turn their attention to is raising the compulsory standard. This would bring about an all-round improvement of the education of the people. If also it is our desire to give our children efficient education, we should raise the proportion of teachers to the number of pupils. I do not know what the Labor Party are about, for the State school system is a vast system of sweating. The classes are unmanageably large. If there was a larger proportion of teachers the scholars would make better progress. The dull scholars would have a chance, which they cannot have when taught in such large brigades. What we need is a system of compulsory night schools to the age of 18, four nights a week. We have the buildings, and only need a staff. This would benefit the whole mass, and not give further privilege merely to those richly endowed with mental power. It would keep the youngsters out of lots of mischief, and if the training was of a practical, technical, and scientific nature would give an immense uplift to the moral character and economic power of the people. There is plenty of room for a Commission to consider what can be done to develop the public education of the people.—I am, &c.,

J. C. KIRBY.

Sir—As there seems to be a general mania at present among the Labor Party over higher education one is tempted to ask what it is all about. I, and I think most other working men, believe that it is all humbug to talk about a college education for our sons and daughters, whilst hundreds, aye thousands, scarcely know how to get enough to eat. What the Labor Party were elected for was to remove the burdens that press most heavily on the industrial classes, but they have not done this, and it seems to me they don't intend to do it, but even propose to increase the burdens of the workers and producers by imposing higher penalties on those who dare to carry on industry in South Australia. I say can we wonder that men are unemployed by the hundred. Why this system is upheld by the so-called Labor Party is a great mystery, but a mystery that will have to be explained at the coming elections. When protection was introduced some years ago it was only asked that certain industries should be protected until such time as they could compete with the outside world. That time has arrived, as is clearly shown by the following figures taken from the "Statistical Register" for 1896. The exports of South Australia produced and manufactured in the colony were in the following lines as follows:—Agricultural implements, £11,609; boots and shoes, £31,796; flour, hay, chaff, 6647,829; leather, £49,955; saddlery and harness, £9,162; engines and parts, £24,904; steam-boilers, £11,721; apparel and cloths, £8,717; candles, £8,992; jams, £21,548; soap, £11,013. As the duties on the above lines vary from 15 to 50 per cent, it naturally must follow that South Australians have to pay from 15 to 50 per cent. more than it will pay the South Australian manufacturer to export his goods and sell them to foreigners. How such a policy can be of benefit to South Australia is one of those mysteries which protectionists when asked to explain meet either with abuse of the questioner or else by the introduction of the old booby that our market would be flooded from Hongkong or Afghanistan, forgetting that they make the conditions most favorable for the Afghans and Chinese to come here and compete with our own overtaxed and underpaid workers.—I am, &c.,

A SPRING.

ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY.  
The TREASURER (Hon. F. W. Holder), in reply to Mr. MACLACHLAN, said the annual value of the benefits which the Adelaide University received from the Government during the last financial year was £4,774. This financial year, if all rents are collected, it will receive £7,800.

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20th Sep. 1898

THE EDUCATION OF PUPIL TEACHERS.

The Right Hon. S. J. Way, in his capacity of Chancellor of the University, seized the opportunity afforded him on Monday morning when opening the annual Teachers' Conference of delivering trenchant observations upon the need of greater facilities for the education of the pupil teachers of the State Schools. With characteristic foresight he had chosen a topic which was peculiarly interesting to the gathering, and although he detained the meeting for over an hour while, with all the skill of a learned advocate, he pleaded for the adoption of a suggestion emanating from the University Council he frequently moved the audience to loud applause. Throughout he had their close attention, and apparently earned their evident approval of the proposition. About fifteen months ago, acting upon the suggestion of Professor Mitchell, the University Council proposed to the Government that they should take control of the Training College. Reverting to this subject His Honor dwelt strongly upon the need of extra education for State School teachers. He praised the work which had been done in the State Schools, and then, taking as his text the phrase of the late Robert Lowe, "We must next now attend to the education of our masters," pointed out that the high standard which had been attained by elementary school teachers was not by reason of the merits of the training system but was owing to the industry of the students and their enthusiasm for personal advancement. What was lacking was not quality; the want was the larger quantity of it. The position was due to the stern exigencies of finance. As Goethe said—"There is nothing more shocking than a teacher who knows no more than the scholars have to learn." He went to other lands to illustrate the educational attainments of elementary school teachers, and then strongly condemned the consolidation of the two offices—Instructor of Pupil Teachers and Principal of the Training College—which had resulted in the students of the Training College being placed on half-time, and instead of having instruction five hours a day for six months receiving only three hours a day. In great contrast to this was the practice in England, where students underwent three years' training at the College, and then after passing another examination had the option of another year's course or twelve months' residence in France or Germany to study. The great success of the University Extension in England was an object-lesson for them, and he elaborated the proposition of the University, which was to take over the Training College and undertake the responsibility of the training of candidates for teacherships in the public schools free of all cost to the public revenue. Going into figures he mentioned that the Training College at present cost £540 a year, besides the cost of drawing masters and teaching outside subjects and the maintenance of students, which was £900. The University made the condition that the period of study should be extended from a nominal one year to two, and he pointed out that the maintenance for the extra year would amount only to between £200 and £400, against the £540 which would be saved. The Minister of Education later on remarked that he hoped shortly to ask representatives of the University to meet himself, and probably the Treasurer, with some Inspectors to discuss the question, and see if they could arrive at a decision which would be satisfactory to the Government, the people, and the University.

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PUBLIC TEACHERS' UNION.

The third annual conference of the South Australian Public Teachers' Union was opened at the Trades Hall, Grote-street, on Monday morning. The president (Mr. M. M. Maughan) reported on what had been done during the year, and the secretary also gave a resume of the operations of the executive committee. Later on his Honor the Chief Justice, in an able and lengthy address, formally opened the conference, and in the evening the teachers were entertained by the University council at the University, North-terrace. This morning the conference meets again, when Sir Langdon Bonython will occupy the chair, and in the evening he will entertain the teachers at the Town Hall.

S.A. PUBLIC TEACHERS' UNION.

THIRD ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

On Monday morning the third annual Conference of the Public Teachers' Union was opened in the Trades Hall, Grote-street. The President, Mr. M. M. Maughan, took the chair, and there was a large attendance of teachers.

The President, in his opening remarks, congratulated them upon meeting in congress for the third time, and upon the spirit of union and trust in themselves and in one another which was growing stronger year by year. (Applause.) Scattered through the length and breadth of the country as they were, opportunities for intercourse seldom occurred, and it was only by making some sacrifice of their convenience that they could meet in this manner. There could be no question as to the value and utility of such gatherings or of their beneficial influence both upon themselves and their work. He proposed to make a brief statement of the principal matters that had been dealt with since the last Conference. During the past twelve months the Executive Committee had closely watched the progress of events, and had not hesitated to take such action as had seemed necessary. The committee had met every month and had dealt with a large number of questions submitted to them by Associations. They had been met in a most kindly spirit by the Board of Inspectors and by the Minister of Education, and they desired to express their thanks to those gentlemen for their consideration. (Applause.) The resolutions passed at the last Congress were forwarded to the Board of Inspectors, and their replies would be read to them. While they regretted that many of them were unfavorable, they felt sure that the Board desired to meet their wishes as far as was possible, and that they were actuated, as they were themselves, by a sincere desire to do everything for the benefit of the whole service. (Applause.) The committee had been unable to deal with several matters referred to them by last Congress from lack of sufficient definite information. The executive had collected a mass of information with regard to the rent of and repair to teachers' houses, and they hoped soon to take further steps in the matter. On the resignation of Mr. Assistant Inspector Gamble a letter was written to the Minister of Education urging the appointment of a full Inspector, and again in June last a second letter was sent respectfully protesting against the appointment of an Assistant Inspector. These letters they believed to express the views of the teachers, and they proposed to ask them at a later stage of the Congress for an expression of opinion on their action. On the appointment of Dr. Cockburn as Agent-General the committee waited on him and presented a letter of congratulation in the name of the Union. (Applause.) They also, in the name of the Union, addressed a letter of congratulation to Sir Langdon Bonython on the occasion of his knighthood by Her Majesty. (Applause.) They could not but recognise that they owed a debt of gratitude to Sir Langdon for the deep interest he had constantly taken in the work of education, and the kindness and consideration he had shown to teachers, both individually and as a body. (Applause.) Last year he referred to the establishment of the Federal Council of the Public Service. This body had met frequently during the year, and had considered at great length the Public Service Bill which the Government had in view. They had made a number of recommendations to the Chief Secretary, and they expected that the results would be beneficial to the whole service. Their representatives had carefully watched the interests of the members of the education service. Much time and trouble had been spent over the formation of a plan for the publication of a teachers' paper. They had made, subject to approval, what they believed to be the best arrangement at present possible. The whole matter would be fully laid before them at a later stage, and he asked their most careful consideration of the question. Another matter of importance was the securing of a sort of clubroom, at which teachers could meet, and which should be at the same time a rendezvous and resting-place for country teachers when visiting the city. (Applause.) The committee had also brought before the Board of Inspectors the question of the issue of certificates to teachers, supply of apparatus to schools, the issue of a new copy-book for Class V., a plan for the benefit of teachers who wished to study agronomy during the holidays, and the reading prescribed for Class II. It had been suggested that branch Congresses might be held in various country centres, and it must be agreed that these would be productive of great benefit. At the General Conference there was so much business to be dealt with that it was hardly possible either to give sufficient time for discussion or to deal at all with many matters of considerable interest and importance. The Easter and the midwinter holidays afforded opportunities for such meetings, and they might hope that next year would see their establishment. (Applause.) Mr. Whittas, Mr. Harry, and the President, who were the delegates at the Melbourne Congress last Easter, were received with the greatest cordiality, and were mostly kindly entertained. They now welcomed with much pleasure Messrs. Lewis and Rennie, and Mr. Potter (the editor of the "Australasian Schoolmaster"), who represented Victoria there that day, and their pleasure was increased by the fact that Mrs. Potter accompanied her husband. (Applause.) It was much regretted that during the past year it had only been possible for members of the executive to visit Associations once or twice. They would like to be able to do much more in this direction, but it seemed hardly possible. Should Branch Congresses be held, it was probable that some members might be able to attend them. He need hardly remind them that the second anniversary of the death of their late revered chief had just passed. Their hearts were full of sympathy with the lady whose loss was greater even than theirs, but he was proud to think their aims were still as high as when he was with them, that his