

MONEY FOR UNIVERSITIES.

Appeals for subsidies from the Commonwealth are considered by many people, and not without reason, likely to be successful. So accustomed have many sections of the public become to regarding the Federal Government as a sort of fairy godmother, possessed of the purse of a Fortunatus, that even the staid representatives of all the State universities, sitting in conference, have resolved to lay their needs at the feet of this benign authority. The resolution in which this determination was embodied was, as might be expected, couched in rather more diffident language than the "demands" of a more truculent body would have been. It read:—

That the conference recommends to the different universities of Australia that they prepare information regarding the manner in which they consider a Federal subsidy could best be used in developing their work, and that they be asked to consider whether, in their opinions, representations should be made to the Federal Ministry in respect of such information, and that reports from the respective universities on the subject be brought up at the next meeting of the conference in 1927.

Yet, however tentatively the request may be preferred, it contemplates none the less clearly Commonwealth assistance to essentially State institutions. It is not contended that the Federal Ministry should not concern itself even slightly with university matters. It may be opportune at a later stage in the development of Canberra to establish there an Australian university which could co-ordinate the activities of, and be supplementary to, the present State universities. Even at the present time no exception could be taken to such activities as the establishment of a Federal chair of forestry and assistance in setting up a chair of anthropology. Forestry is of such wide importance that it can profitably be the subject of Federal research, such as has, indeed, already been decided upon. Anthropology is a subject which can be dealt with adequately, and more economically, by one university instead of six; and as it is of all-Australian interest Federal aid such as has been long promised may be properly given. Participation in these spheres, however, is entirely different from granting Federal subsidies for university work generally. Such a state of affairs would be very undesirable, to put it mildly.

There is, unfortunately, a good deal of justification for the popular belief that the Commonwealth Government has unlimited resources which it will gladly allow to be tapped for the benefit of any worthy cause. For many years bounties have been freely given by the Federal Government. Early legislation provided for bounties on such produce as cotton, fibres, rice, coffee, tobacco, and dried fruits, though in many cases they were not availed of to any considerable extent. A fish-preserving bounty was continued for 10 years. The production of sulphur was encouraged in the usual manner, and the same regal hand dispensed bounties in respect of a number of iron and steel manufactures, ranging from fencing-wire to traction engines. Four years ago pastoralists found themselves in difficulties, and were soothed by the fairy godmother with subsidies on the export of beef and live cattle. Later the bounty was paid in respect of live cattle only. Several years ago the Federal Ministry instituted the system of paying bounties in respect of canned fruit, and after several solemn warnings that the latest would be the last ate its own words by having a measure

THE TEACHING OF MATHEMATICS.

From G. G. NEWMAN, Kingswood:—Not the least pleasant innovation of this year has been the invitations issued to teachers by professors of the University to meet and discuss the best ways of carrying out the curriculum. To my regret I have been unable to attend; but to the gathering of mathematical teachers I would like to commend a few particulars. Years ago South Australia held pre-eminence in the teaching of arithmetic. This was due to the efforts of Mr. John A. Hartley to enforce his pedagogical dictum, "Little and well." There are many who will bear me out when I say that it was a common saying, "Send your boy and girl to a public school before you send them to a college; they get a better grounding in arithmetic." At the present time mathematics has never been taught worse in the history of South Australia. This is in no way derogatory to the teachers, for no more earnest, devoted, hard-working, patient section of the community exist than the teachers of South Australia, in colleges, high schools, and public and primary schools. The fault lies solely in the curriculum. When mathematics was arranged in sections pupils knew what they had to learn, teachers understood clearly what was expected, and in consequence there was greater accuracy in each department. Then came in the manual of the Public Examination Board, an extended alteration, and pages were devoted to outlining what was expected to be done. No books were prescribed. Teachers were like the men mentioned by David—"They stagger to and fro, and are at their wits' end." Hastily some Government teachers hurried out certain mathematical volumes, badly and cheaply printed on the cheapest and worst of paper. At the start two pages were taken up with a list of errata, which was quite a modicum of the real errata occurring through the work. It bore no departmental hall-mark; probably some enterprising publisher hoped to reap a rich harvest out of the teachers' dilemma. As a result teachers taught what they could, and trusted to luck for results. Two sums were set which no students solved. Teachers themselves failed; and the rumor flew that they were set by a Melbourne expert, who declared he had no exact answer; he had just set them to see how candidates would reason them out! Take this year's manual. The same long detail of work, covering pages of print; but no books set. The remedy is to cut out all this voluminous, pedantic, mathematical verbiage, and say (1) Geometry—Hall and Stevens, up to page 304. (2) Algebra—Hall and Knight up to page 400, and excluding Binomial Theorem. (3) Trigonometry; Lock, all except the last three chapters. (4) Dynamics—Blakie's. (5) Conic sections—C. Smith. This would thoroughly satisfy both teachers and taught. These are standard works, easily obtainable, used in the best English colleges and American schools; printed on the best of paper, and in the clearest of type and free from typographical or mathematical error. Trigonometry and dynamics should be taken out and made a distinct subject. Read the manual and what do we find—"The papers were disappointing; few satisfactory answers were given; only one-third of the candidates secured half-marks." Then from a superior eminence, the writer says—"It is difficult to see what it is that the mind has been bogging at for so long; but it is safe to assume that no pupil really understands the idea of a limit the first time it is placed before him. It is, therefore, essential that teachers should themselves be very careful to clarify their own ideas and to make sure that none of the loose expressions of which every year a majority of candidates are guilty should ever escape the door of their own lips." The writer, from a plane of superiority, appears to imply two things—None of the students know what they are talking about, and apparently many of the teachers are in the same position. He then recommends three books, one at 12/6, another at 14/, and the third at 8/6. Such being the case, this "bozzle"—according to the dictionary, "a spectre, a nightmare"—has most of its followers in its dreadful tentacles. No wonder the medical board unanimously adopted a resolution that the standard of the leaving mathematics was too high and candidates will be allowed to pass intermediate mathematics as quite satisfactory. No wonder that girls' schools do not teach mathematics at all—this, of course, except at colleges where highly-paid lady mathematical experts teach. Why all this fuss over mathematics? Great men of the past knew nothing of it at all. Writes Thomas Gray, author of the famous Elegy, "I waste my time over mathematics with Professor Nicholas Saunderson. It is very possible that two and two make four, but I would not give four farthings to demonstrate this ever so clearly; and if these be the profits of life, give me the amusements of it." By all means let mathematics be taught; but let the standard for intermediate, leaving, and leaving honors be graduated, simple, easy, and satisfactory to parents, teachers, and scholars.

passed to perpetuate the system. Bounties were given on wine to save the grapegrower from ruin, and the sugar industry was coddled. As a "good provider" the Commonwealth has certainly made a name for itself, and in acting as almoner to the States to enable them to develop their territory with roads it has done its best to "build up" the role.

The legitimate way for the Commonwealth Ministry to assist the universities would be to reduce the taxation which is now such a heavy burden upon the people. That would probably have the effect of inspiring the business community with confidence to add to the national wealth by embarking upon fresh industries and of causing a renewed flow of private benevolence which would benefit the universities in common with other deserving institutions. It cannot be gainsaid that the universities generally have been languishing since the Commonwealth entered the taxation field with confident and heavy tread. The results of this incursion have been twofold. Not only have private benefactions been restricted, but the means of the States have been so straitened that little relief for the universities could be looked for in that direction. To succumb to the not unnatural temptation to become suppliants for the Federal bounty which has been so freely accorded to others would be an undignified step for the universities to take. Morally the University of Melbourne, say, has no claim upon revenues partly provided by States other than Victoria, and the same principle applies to all the others. Until the Commonwealth sees fit to abandon its policy of raising revenues far in excess of its needs and distributing the surplus with a lavish hand the universities should adopt a more self-reliant course. The raising of students' fees is not pleasant to contemplate, especially in view of the need for disseminating culture as widely as possible, but it is an alternative that may have to be faced.

REG. 25.6.26

NIGHT LECTURES AT UNIVERSITY.

Speaking at the laying of the foundation stone of a school building at Welland on Thursday, the Minister of Education (Hon. L. L. Hill) said that a deputation had recently waited upon the Premier, requesting an additional grant to the Adelaide University to enable the council to provide night lectures in the arts for the benefit of teachers and others qualified to attend. The Government had acceded to the request and the night lectures between 7 and 10 p.m. would probably be initiated next year. Lectures might be given in any of the following subjects, provided that not fewer than 10 qualified students apply:—Latin, I. and II.; English, I. and II.; logic; pure mathematics, I. and II.; chemistry, I.; philology; history, I. and II.; ethics; geology, I.; French, I. and II.; psychology; education; physics, I.; and botany, I. Most of the evening lectures (excepting third year subjects, such as English III, Latin III, mathematics III, and History III.) at present given between 4 and 6 p.m., would probably be discontinued. The University Council had put forward this proposal, and the Government had promised the necessary financial support, mainly in the interest of the 1,000 metropolitan teachers and college students, who would be given opportunity for raising their status and improving their education. It had long been recognised that teachers attended evening lectures tired and jaded by the day's work, and that night lectures would afford them better opportunities and better conditions.

ALLAN WILKIE'S LOSS.

The Replacement Fund.

Support in Adelaide.

The destruction by fire, at Geelong, of the theatrical effects of Mr. Allan Wilkie and his talented company of Shakespearean players, has caused widespread regret and sympathy, and the movement started in Melbourne to replace Mr. Wilkie's loss by public subscription was warmly endorsed in Adelaide on Thursday. The prospect of Mr. Wilkie being obliged to discontinue the presentation of Shakespearean plays to the Australian public is everywhere regarded with great concern. At Geelong, where the fire occurred in the Mechanics' Institute, a relief effort was immediately organized, and a fund opened by The Geelong Advertiser reached £60 on the same day. Mr. Wilkie received hundreds of telegrams of sympathy and encouragement from all over the Commonwealth. The Melbourne replacement movement is headed by Mr. W. A. Watt, M.H.R. (formerly Speaker of the House of Representatives) and Professor R. S. Wallace (of the Melbourne University), with Mr. E. A. Vidler as provisional honorary secretary.

South Australian Help. In response to a request from this committee, The Register communicated with Sir Josiah Symon, K.C., and Sir Archibald Strong (Professor of English at the Adelaide University), who gladly consented to become associated with the movement. Sir Josiah expressed himself as thoroughly in sympathy with the purposes in view. The committee in its appeal stated:—"The Allan Wilkie Shakespearean Company has become a national institution in the Commonwealth and New Zealand; and it is not to be thought of that its fine work should come to an end. It is, therefore, proposed to make an immediate appeal to all those who appreciate Mr. Wilkie's efforts during so many years, in order to replace the wardrobe, scenery, and effects which have been destroyed, and to ensure an early resumption of Mr. Wilkie's programme."

"A National Misfortune." Sir Archibald Strong, in a letter to The Register on Thursday, stated:—"The loss by fire of Mr. Allan Wilkie's theatrical properties, and the consequent disbandment of his company, are a national misfortune, and all lovers of Australia and of Shakespeare will welcome the movement just started to make good the loss, and re-assemble the actors. Doubtless Adelaide will justify her title of the City of Culture by subscribing substantially toward this most necessary end. Mr. Wilkie deserves universal support, for he has remained true to his self-sacrificing ideal of producing Shakespeare and other classical English drama throughout the country, although the production of modern melodrama would have been vastly more remunerative. The sporting, no less than the literary, instinct of Australians should be aroused by the present appeal, for during many years Mr. Wilkie has waged a splendid, and increasingly successful fight against the most stubborn difficulties. He has done more than any man yet to forward the love and knowledge of Shakespeare in Australia, and richly deserves the sympathy and practical support of all who themselves enjoy, and wish their children to enjoy, the regular staging of the greatest drama of our race. I have pleasure in enclosing a preliminary contribution."

APPEAL COMMITTEE'S MESSAGE. Mr. R. A. Broinowski (hon. treasurer) telegraphed to The Register from Melbourne last night:—"The Allan Wilkie Appeal Committee would greatly appreciate your helping open The Register columns for subscriptions." As already intimated, we shall be glad to acknowledge amounts sent in.

ALLAN WILKIE FUND. Sir Archibald Strong £10 10 0 Proprietors of The Register 5 5 0

THE ARGUS FUND. MELBOURNE, Thursday. The Allan Wilkie Argus Fund to-night totals £193 15/6.

REG. 26-6.26 The Council of the University of Adelaide at its meeting on Friday granted leave of absence to Professor Osborn to attend the Third Pan-Pacific Conference, which is to be held in Tokio towards the end of the year.