

But Mr. Bagster's purpose, doubtless, was not to obtain evidence as to the inefficient state of the lower State schools; it was rather to have incontrovertible official proofs of the shallowness and utterly untruthful character of some of the assertions made in support of the Advanced School for Girls. It is said, for instance, that when begun in 1879 "it was wanted owing to the low standard of female education in the colony." The returns recently published disprove the assertion. We take three firm positions regarding this school, and most respectfully ask the attention of members of Parliament to the whole question, in confidence that its abolition will be promptly decreed if there be the least honest examination into its management, condition, and results. The first position, known for long to some of us, but now shown in these returns, is that there was no more need of superior girls' schools than of boys' schools. Look under the heading "University Scholarships" in the return laid before Parliament, and it will be seen that notwithstanding the generous offer of £50 a year for three years to successful candidates the condition of the boys' schools was such that during five years, from 1877 to 1881 inclusive, there were not enough of qualified candidates to gain three scholarships each year. There were fifteen offered and there were but eight given; seven scholarships lapsed. The returns officially prepared and presented to Parliament give the reason of this in reply to Mr. Bagster's question; it is—"The other candidates did not reach the required standard of efficiency." There was of course much dissatisfaction during those years. Many letters appeared. On December 23, 1878, it was asked in the *Register*—"Is it very satisfactory to find that out of seven picked boys from the best schools in Adelaide (one of these already in his second year at the University) there should be only one considered fit to receive the scholarships?" Another writer states—"Only one scholarship each year awarded for the last two years." And a most highly competent examiner writing on the state of educational matters speaks of "the schools making a poor show," and yet further—"Of the University scholars in their second year one was plucked in the classical division, and the other awarded the lowest class." It is to be hoped that these returns will put a stop to the stupid parrot-like-of-repeated-but-utterly-false assertion that the state of girls' schools was so low that the Government was justified in interfering. Why was there not the same done for boys? A high official in the University assured the writer of this letter that, curiously enough, the rejected candidates were ignorant of the first principles of arithmetic, and this is a condition of things that has not improved in the Education Department. The failure in arithmetic, an eminently practical subject, was so recently as last year spoken of by the Inspector-General as "scandalous" and "downright."

Our second position is that girls had already passed the University examinations previous to 1879, the year of the establishment of the Advanced Girls' School. The name of a former head mistress of that school might be adduced as that of one of those who received in private schools a better education than any girl has received in the Government school.

The third reply to the argument advanced for the founding of the Government Girls' School is that the country has not gained anything whatever in teaching power or methods by the proceeding, seeing that the persons engaged to teach in the Advanced School were already in the country teaching in other schools. No more ability could be shown by them than was shown previously in the schools conducted by them. The opening, however, of the Government school has occasioned the ruin of other schools which have done better educational work than it has ever done. But it is gloriously said by the advocates for this school, look at its success! And have not all the Ministers of Education (Messrs. King, Parsons, Baker, Cockburn) united in praising the school? I answer confidently, now that the returns lie before me, so much the worse for them. These official statements plainly show the worthlessness of their praises. The facts are soon stated. On September 16, 1879, a grant of £1,200 was obtained from the Parliament of South Australia for the purpose of establishing a higher State School for Girls. Several members opposed the measure with forcible arguments, notably Messrs. Ross, Downer, Krichauff, Darling, Kingston, Landseer, Moody, and Smith; but the Minister, Mr. King, promised that the school was to be similar to St. Peter's and Prince Alfred's Schools, and the grant was on that ground carried. But from that day to this there has been no effort made—no honest attempt made—to do in the school such work as is done in St. Peter's School for boys—no girl has acquired enough Latin at the Advanced School for Girls to qualify her to pass the matriculation examination. Two apparent exceptions are not so in truth, as those girls (the first to pass) had, I believe, private tutors in that language. And yet girls had passed previously out of private schools, and have since been prepared in private schools in both Latin and Greek. I desire to be very explicit upon this point. The grant was obtained from Parliament by

the Education Department, whose "fad" this school was, upon the expressed condition (as it may be read in "Hansard" of September 16, 1879) that the work done was to be similar to that done in St. Peter's School, and now the official return gives answer to the question—"How many pupils have gone from the Advanced School for Girls qualified to enter upon the Arts course in the University; and if none have been so qualified, why have they not been so?" The answer is—"So far as the Inspector-General of Schools is aware, no girls have left the Advanced School prepared to enter the Arts course at the University. The reason is that Greek, which is compulsory at the University, is not taught at the school." Truth should have led the Inspector to say neither Latin nor Greek has been taught, as the former has been begun, I am told, only this year. But why were not these languages taught? Did not Mr. J. A. Hartley know well that Latin and Greek were necessary for the Arts course before he planned and urged the founding of the school? I know that girls have been disappointed at the failure of the Government to discharge its obligations honestly. An arrant impostor of the Crooks

stamp could not more grievously wrong the community. Money can be replaced, but schooldays wasted are irreparable. Is it for Ministers of the Crown or for any Government official to presume to say that this or that subject which the University requires, and which all Universities require, as necessary to culture, shall be left untaught, when a promise was solemnly given to the representatives of the people that all things essential would be taught? The question here arises, which cannot now be discussed, did the University lower the standard of its examination for females on purpose to enable girls to pass with easier and inferior subjects from the Advanced School? The thought of collusion is painful, and yet there is the fact stated in Mr. Bagster's return that during the first four years there were but two girls who passed the matriculation examination from the Government school out of a yearly average of over 100 pupils. But the University authorities were accommodating, and made it possible that what Mr. Chapple described should come about—"those who choose the easiest work will rank the highest in the class list, and will seem to the ordinary observer to have been best educated." Much more might be said upon the lowered standard of female education now prevailing, and of the consequences to other schools, but the limitations of my time and of your space, Sir, render enlargement impossible.

The Advanced School ought, in justice to parents and children and private schools, to be closed, interfering as it does with the occupation and livelihood of some hundreds of highly respectable persons who are engaged more or less directly in girls' schools; but if Parliament does not so decide, certainly there should be no more unprincipled trifling with the education of those entrusted to the care of the Government officials. Enquiry should be made, and the education given should be brought to a level with that given in St. Peter's and in other private girls' schools, and if that cannot be done there is but one course which can be taken with honour. Thanks are due to the member of Parliament who has obtained such very useful information by a few timely questions.

I am, Sir, &c.,

W. H. A.