

parsimonious policy in education. It is, as he urges, a matter of real gravity that classes have become too large for efficient supervision and proper instruction. Serious, too, is the undermanning of the inspectorial staff. Systematic inspection of the schools is a vital condition of success. In these matters there is a regrettable tendency to retrogression, and the cost of action necessary to restore and maintain complete efficiency must not be counted in a miserly spirit.

The remarks of his Excellency on various lines of educational development produced by the demands of modern conditions serve to illustrate new departures which have actually been taken. What the public must understand is that if these things are worth doing, which is undisputed, they are worth doing well; but they cannot be done well without the sinews of war. Money spent on education is, after all, one of the very best investments, promoting alike the industrial efficiency, the knowledge, the character, the happiness of the people. If, however, the eternal want of peace that vexes public men stands in the way of a comprehensive programme, we shall do better to limit the work, consider it well, and provide for it liberally, than to fritter away scanty funds on unduly ambitious and ill-digested schemes. His Excellency rapidly passed in review the special educational requirements of the age to which a progressive community must needs direct its mind. With justifiable emphasis he alluded to the importance of technical training. Continental nations, as he says, have in this respect stolen a march on the British Empire, and we must come up to them, and at least keep pace thereafter, or be prepared to lose our trade supremacy. From the colonial standpoint the question of technical education assumes a greater measure of significance with the near approach of federation, which will give a larger sphere for many industries and pave the way for new ones. The princely donation of Mr. Brookman to the Adelaide School of Mines and Industries was fittingly eulogised as an expression of confidence in the practical value of this branch of instruction. Lord Tennyson's plea for encouragement in the primary schools of the study of agriculture was supported by the just reflection that it indicates one means of popularising rural life and restricting the tendency to overmuch centralisation. The Minister of Education, subsequently addressing the conference, did not miss the opportunity of pointing out that this subject has by no means escaped attention. Many schools have their agricultural plots, and some of them are models. In the study of agronomy a link between the elementary schools and the Roseworthy College has also been established. We are still in the tentative stage of this development, but at least we are moving and gathering experience.

Lord Tennyson, as a man of culture and literary tastes, would have surprised his audience had he left his account of the scope and aims of education without proceeding from the utilitarian to the moral and intellectual aspects of the subject. The primary claim may be for instruction that equips the young for the practical business of life and conduces to material well-being; but man does not live by bread alone. We cannot be content to produce mere brain-driven machines, or to confine learning to the facts of science. Without a sense of literature, of its charm, its solace, its stimulus to the highest thought and noblest act, no people, even though it win trade and empire, is truly educated. Not without reason did Matthew Arnold preach, as some thought almost to weariness, the gospel of sweetness and light. In communities like ours, absorbed in the pursuit of the main chance, there is special need for the refining and ameliorating influence of culture. But the first duty of the school, as his Excellency said, is to turn out noble men and women; as Mr. Whillas put it, the training of character deserves a far greater effort than the gaining of percentages. Be our system of education a success in every other direction, its failure in this is fatal. Yesterday's speeches united to leave a vivid impression of the important duties and heavy responsibilities of the teacher. He, pre-eminently, must cherish pure ideals, and labor without ceasing to perfect

his service. The proceedings on the opening day of the conference were especially interesting from the prominence given to the arrangement for the training of teachers by the University. The President of the Union, the Governor, the Minister of Education and Professor Bragg joined in the exposition and recommendation of a scheme which Mr. Whillas does not hesitate to describe from the teacher's standpoint, as the most important advance in our educational system since its inception. Its effect will be, says the Chancellor of the University in his letter to the Minister, to bring the full educational resources of the colony within the reach of every child through the teachers of the State schools. It must be welcome, too, as one more step towards the unification of public education, establishing a direct route from the primary school through intermediate stages to the highest seat of learning.

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### PUBLIC TEACHERS' UNION.

#### THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

The annual Conference of Public School Teachers was opened at the Trades Hall on Monday morning. The President of the Union, Mr. C. B. Whillas, presided over a large attendance.

#### PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

The President's report was as follows:—The South Australian Public School Teachers' Union, so happily consummated four years ago, having completed another year of its existence, it is desirable briefly to review the work accomplished during that period. One feature of the year has been the large number of visits paid by representatives of the Executive to the country Associations within easy reach of Adelaide. While we trust these visits have been beneficial to the Associations by keeping the members in touch with the work of the Union, the visitors have been delighted with the enthusiasm and ability displayed by the country teachers at these enjoyable gatherings. The various matters which have been brought under our notice may be divided into two classes—First, subjects bearing upon the improvement of the curriculum, annual examination, school appliances, &c.; second, matters dealing with the status, promotion, remuneration, and classification of teachers, the condition of school residences, District Council rates, &c. It is unnecessary here to go into detail in reference to these matters, as they have been fully referred to and explained in the monthly circulars. In every instance the representations of the Associations have been carefully considered, fully discussed, and such action taken as was deemed advisable. The monthly circulars sent to every Association by our indefatigable Secretary have kept all members fully posted up, both with the actions of the committee and the many matters of general interest discussed by the various Associations which form our Union. The want of a suitable organ to save much clerical labour and to represent our views more widely has been keenly felt. The attempt to make use of the "Australian Schoolmaster" as a means of publishing our views upon important educational matters has been very disappointing. For some reason this paper failed to meet with that hearty support from the general body of teachers which we fondly anticipated, although the Editor did all that lay in his power to meet our requirements. During the coming year we hope that the practical difficulties in starting a small paper of our own may be overcome, and that all our members will unite in making the effort successful. Our relations with the department have been all that could be desired. We have been met by the Board of Inspectors with uniform kindness and courtesy, our representations have been well received, and several suggestions have been readily agreed to. At last year's Conference the Chief Justice, in his admirable address, referred to the generous offer of the University Council to utilize the munificent bequest of the late Sir Thomas Elder for the training at the University of public school teachers. He strongly urged upon the Education Department the necessity of closing with that offer at once. During the current year a scheme has been formulated by the University Council and the Board of Inspectors by which the benefit of a two years' course of training at the University will be given to our teachers, as well as an opportunity to the more able and industrious to take their University degree. The scheme proposed is somewhat as follows:—After proving their ability to teach in our schools for six months, our young people will attend a preparatory school for two years, at the end of which they will be expected to pass the Senior University Examination. They will then teach for two years in our schools, receiving further instruction during that period, after which they will spend two years at the University. They will be able to continue their studies after being appointed assistants or masters of schools, and by the proposed system of examination in a single subject each year many of them will ultimately be enabled to take a University degree. Even to those who do not pursue their studies to this extent, the passing of the Senior Examination and two years' study at the University must prove an inestimable boon. To the students who successfully complete their course the highest positions in the service will be open, while they will also be eligible for positions in secondary schools. The time allowed to take their degree will be practically unlimited, so that country teachers will not be debarred from qualifying themselves for these examinations. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the many advantages which the scheme presents. The daily contact with other students and general environments of the University should do much to elevate the characters and teaching abilities of our future schoolmasters. They will be enabled to take their proper place in society, and make their influence beneficially felt in every part of the country, and should become the centre of intellectual life in the outlying districts. This movement we look upon as being the most important advance in our educational system since its inception. Fortunately for South Australia, the foundation of the system has been well and truly laid by him whose untimely death plunged our whole colony in gloom four years ago. His great ability, wise foresight, and long experience ensured the stability of our educational structure when carried out upon the lines he laid down, and we can imagine how he would have rejoiced at the completion of the work which owes so much of its success to his enthusiasm. But while rejoicing at the future prospects of our teachers and the consequent improvement in the quality and extent of the instruction to be provided in our schools, we cannot let this opportunity pass without directing public attention to the danger of too rigid an economy in the administration of our educational system. Only a few days ago it was stated in Parliament that the cost per head for teaching in our schools

was less than in either New South Wales or Victoria. These colonies, with their larger centres of population and smaller area, should be able to provide educational facilities at a less cost per head than South Australia. During the last few years the most strenuous efforts have been made in Victoria to reduce the education vote. The Training College has been closed, large schools have been combined under one Head Master, salaries have been reduced, and promotions retarded. Fortunately, the tide has turned, and a more liberal policy will soon be carried into effect there. But the important point for consideration is that, in spite of such rigid retrenchment, we are still able to point to a smaller cost per head in this colony. (Hear, hear.) The evil effects of this rigid economy are materially affecting the usefulness and efficiency of our schools. By the reduction of the staff classes have become too large for efficient supervision and proper instruction. (Hear, hear.) In the larger schools the assistance of young and inexperienced monitors, paid and unpaid, has been utilized to a dangerous extent. Again, some of our most able male assistants, trained in our schools, whose services are invaluable, and whose places cannot be filled for some years, are leaving us for Western Australia, where their services are better paid and their opportunities of promotion much improved. (Hear, hear.) In country schools of certain size the sewing mistress has been retrenched. The staff of Inspectors is so small that the Inspectors have to devote the greater part of their time to flying visits to the various schools. The valuable assistance which their ability and experience so well qualify them to give to the younger and less-experienced teachers is too often crowded out by the necessity of hurrying on to the next school. Under so many disabilities it says much for the enthusiasm of both Inspectors and teachers that such excellent work has been accomplished. Still, every earnest teacher has daily cause to deplore the lack of those facilities to do much better work which can only be provided by a more liberal supply of money. We must be prepared to take our proper position as citizens of Federated Australia, and this can only be done by giving such facilities here as are afforded to the children of the neighbouring colonies. (Hear, hear.) We cannot afford, in these days of keen competition, to lag behind in the race, and we are well assured that whatever money is judiciously spent upon education will be returned a hundredfold. It should be the aim of such a large gathering of teachers to create a healthy public sentiment with respect to our educational requirements. To gain the sympathy of the community it is necessary that we prove ourselves worthy of the responsible position we hold as educators of the children entrusted to our care. Our example is all powerful for good or evil, and the training of character by example and precept should hold a much higher position in our estimation than the gaining of a high percentage of passes at the annual examination. (Hear, hear.) The honest, high-principled teacher in the most insignificant country school, by making this his constant aim, does higher and more lasting work than the most successful percentage raiser who studies his own advancement more than his pupils' welfare. The noble, self-denying teacher, with lofty ideals, exerts a lifelong influence for good upon those young impressionable beings who look up to him as their model, and the greatest need of the age is that of cultured ladies and gentlemen in charge of our schools. (Cheers.)

The Hon. Treasurer, Mr. J. Donnell, presented the financial statement, which showed that on December 31, 1898, there was a credit balance of 12s. 3d. in hand. An approximate statement, brought up to September 17, was as follows:—Receipts, £27 9s.; ordinary expenditure, £10 12s. 6d.; deficit on the "Schoolmaster," £7 9s., leaving a credit balance of £10.

The Hon. Secretary, Mr. R. T. Burnard, in his report gave an account of the executive work during the year, paying especial praise to the Corresponding Secretary, Mr. A. H. Neale.

The reports were adopted.

#### WELCOME TO VICTORIAN DELEGATES.

Mr. R. T. Burnard extended to the delegates from the Victorian Union, Messrs. G. H. Carter, P. Miller, J. J. Burston, and R. W. Smith, a hearty welcome on behalf of the South Australian Union. The visitors were four of the leading and most representative teachers of the Victorian Department, and their influence and suggestions could not fail to be of the greatest value to the Conference. This interchange of opinion upon the foremost educational topics was fraught with the utmost value to the teachers and the public. Not only did it increase their information, but it gave them a clearer and wider view of all matters relating to education, and resulted in a higher standard of efficiency. They were looking forward to the time when a regular Intercolonial Congress of Teachers would be arranged, and the present system was a step in that direction.

Mr. Carter, Vice-President of the Victorian State School Teachers' Union, returned thanks, and conveyed the warmest fraternal greetings and best wishes for success. They intended to stay over the following week, and would have an opportunity of seeing the work of the South Australian schools.—Mr. Smith expressed himself as

highly pleased with the singing at the Public School Concert at the Exhibition Building on Saturday evening, and referred to the magnificent singing of the Grote-street scholars. It was a novelty to him to see the schools combine for the purpose of public entertainment. South Australians should be proud of the singing of their children.—Mr. Miller lauded the schools' concert, and Mr. Burston also spoke.

#### OPENING THE CONFERENCE.

At 11 o'clock His Excellency Lord Tennyson, attended by Captain Wallington, and many members of the Legislature, opened the Conference. The President of the Union welcomed His Excellency, and assured him that it gave them the greatest satisfaction to have the Conference opened by Her Majesty's representative. The Chief Justice, Right Hon. Sir Samuel Way, was also present.

His Excellency, who was received with cheers on rising, said:—Allow me to thank you all sincerely for the very cordial manner in which you have welcomed me. It is with much pleasure that I accepted your invitation to preside to-day at this Conference of the Union of South Australian Teachers. Such an annual meeting cannot but have the happiest results. I only wish that you could enlarge the borders of your Union and include some outside yourselves who have devoted their lives to education. (Cheers.) Let me say that the quality of the teaching in your State Schools that I have seen has filled me with pride and admiration. (Cheers.) A leading newspaper has done me the honour of calling me an expert on education, because I happen to be on the Executive Councils of two great English schools, Marlborough College and the Gordon Boys' Home, and because I also happened to be one of the pioneers in London of the University Extension movement. I assure you that I am by no means an expert in education. It is true that I have always been much interested in education, but education is a science to which a man or woman