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## TEACHERS AND THEIR WORK.

It may be hoped that the valuable address to the Teachers' Union delivered yesterday by the retiring president, Mr. R. T. Burnard, will receive both from politicians and the general public the careful attention which it merits. It is an admirable presentation of the ideals of an honorable profession, charged with responsibilities to the State the importance of which can hardly be overrated, and suggestively sets forth the view of its most progressive members concerning the proper aims of education, the right qualifications of those who enter upon the work, and the spirit in which it ought to be conducted. Mr. Burnard's estimates of what is to be done, and how to do it, reach at every point high-water mark. One cannot but be struck by the contrast between his conception of education as a living process and the old notion of its purely mechanical character. The modern schoolmaster of the best type, inspired by a sense of his true mission to the young, realising the essential dignity of his calling, and ever ready to improve his methods, has naturally risen alike in self-respect and social status. He brings into his service, as Mr. Burnard says, precisely that spirit of interest and enthusiasm which transforms and ennobles a daily routine which would otherwise be wearisome and irksome. He is not the administrator of a lifeless system, which requires from him no more than the perfunctory discharge of a daily task, cut and dry beforehand. Mr. Burnard makes use of a fruitful analogy when he compares our education system to a living organism, with potentialities of growth, but also of decay and death. Herbert Spencer defines life as an adaptation to environment, and the test to which Mr. Burnard subjects claims of educational progress is whether or not what is known as the "system" exhibits the real principle of life in its capacity of adjustment to changing conditions, its power of satisfying new needs, and its readiness to assimilate all that is best around it. It is gratifying to know that this test is borne successfully. Public education in South Australia has developed, and is still developing. And it should be the policy of the State wisely to facilitate its growth, and to lend the utmost encouragement to those who are seeking to make it even more useful to the community as the most powerful of all agencies for the production of good citizenship.

The Teachers' Union has completed the seventh year of its existence. Its first conference was held under the shadow of a great bereavement—the death of a respected leader, the late Mr. Hartley, who is correctly regarded as the creator of the South Australian education system in its present shape. "His spirit still lives," a stimulus to others who are determined that his life's work shall not have been in vain, but be continued and perpetuated. It was at once natural and fitting that Mr. Burnard should endeavor to appraise what had been accomplished up to 1896, and pass in retrospective review the chief events in the course of subsequent development. Mr. Hartley had put the impress of his genius both on the work of the schools and the workers. From time to time he modified and enlarged the curriculum, while he introduced new and improved methods. The system under his influence was "marvellously improved." But that was not all. The teachers themselves were taught to keep pace with the times. Increase of responsibility laid upon them the burden of more arduous endeavor. They were encouraged to attack difficulties, and made "resourceful, courageous, and self-reliant." Since 1896 there have been important changes, of which one of great public advantage has been the institution of the sixth class in the principal schools. This has been a valuable step in higher education, but still leaves, as Mr. Burnard thinks, room to make provision for the critical period of a boy's life which begins when he leaves school. Something more than is at present attempted should, it is suggested, be done in this time of transition to conserve and continue the primary school education. Mr. Burnard would have boys and girls induced to enter upon some useful course of study, and it may be pointed out in this connection that to a considerable extent his views may be met by taking advantage of the preparatory school which has been established by the School of Mines and Industries. The most important step in education taken during the past few years is, Mr. Burnard says, the University scheme for training teachers. Under the former pupil teacher system the art of teaching received much attention, and the power of management was successfully developed. But the weakness of the regime was the lack of culture in the young teachers, and it is at this point that the University training counts for so much. It equips the teacher more liberally, and sends him to his work not only two years older, but also wiser and generally better prepared.

In a teacher's equipment, there are, it is justly remarked, two primary essentials—personal culture and power to impart knowledge to others. Neither alone will yield satisfactory results. Formerly it was thought sufficient to know your subject, but it is now conceded that knowledge of the pupil—ability to judge of the capacity

of the child-mind—is indispensable. So the teacher must be practically a psychologist. There are many learned persons who, even if they possessed the power of educating others, have not the moral impulse—do not hear the peremptory call—to communicate their learning either to young or old. The spirit of altruism, if they are not strangers to it altogether, does not move them in that way. Now, the ideal combination in a teacher is the passion for knowledge which makes self-education easy, the gift of teaching, and what is very likely to accompany that gift—a compelling desire to use it. Where all these qualifications are united in one individual, teaching cannot be to him simply a profession, a means of livelihood—it is his vocation, his appointed life's work. We are not at all sure that there will be a general endorsement of the German view quoted by Mr. Burnard that of the two essentials knowledge or culture is of greater importance than training in actual pedagogy. A university scheme for preparing teachers which did not adapt its methods to the special requirements of this class of its students would certainly be disappointing. There is no fear that this point will be overlooked, but if anything could add emphasis to the value of the natural capacity and inclination to teach it would be the consideration enforced by Mr. Burnard—that the teacher's highest task is not so much to impart information as to develop character. To this end we need the broadest culture allied to a love of the work and a deep sense of moral responsibility. Considering the nobler inducements to excel, so generally felt by a body of men and women devoted to their calling, it might seem inconsistent to lay stress upon motives of worldly advancement; but we entirely agree with Mr. Burnard that it is an ungenerous and unwise policy for the State to depress and discourage zeal and enthusiasm by dealing with teachers in the excessively economical spirit of the new classification scheme. That scheme embodies an ingenious principle, intended to avoid an undue growth of expenditure, but it is restricted in its application to one class of public servants, and that a most deserving class. We hope that with the return of better times there will be a revision of the scheme so as to ensure such salaries and opportunities of promotion as are earned by service than which there is none of higher importance or more permanent value to the State.

enough to send to other places were they not sufficiently good to retain for South Australia? Why had so many men been replaced by so many women, and why were so many women relatively underpaid when compared with men? In this matter two propositions at least should be carefully pondered:—(1) If they replaced men teachers by women teachers, and pleaded that women were relatively inferior, and therefore might fairly be paid lower wages, they were manifestly cheating the children by applying to them a reduced standard of education. (2) If they contended that the women teachers were as efficient as the men teachers, they were sweating the women teachers by paying them less than they deserved. (Applause.) Payment, however, was not the only element in the problem. Status, among other things, had to be considered. Nothing should be done to belittle the teacher. Everything within reason should be done to magnify his office. It was better that the children should regard him as a benevolent despot—even a little god if they would—than that they should be encouraged to hold him in low estimation. From this point of view what was his position? He was what the Americans would call "a creature of many bosses." There was the Board of Advice, there were the visiting school inspectors, there was the chief inspector, there was the Minister's office, there was the Government, there was the Parliament. Some of those grades of authority were probably unavoidable, and the inspector-general in particular occupied one of the most difficult and irritating positions in South Australia, and should be loyally supported. But he often thought that the child must tilt his little nose heavenward in sympathy, or chuckle with satisfaction as he read in The Education Gazette an announcement that his teacher had been fined for some offence or other; and one might imagine him paraphrasing an old verse, and saying with reference to the teacher:—

Our plaguy banes who hit with canes,  
Have other banes who smite 'em,  
And these again have others still—  
And so ad infinitum.

(Laughter.) He had his own ideas concerning the methods of increasing the general respect for the teachers, but that was not the place to debate them, beyond raising the question whether Boards of Advice had not now almost finished their work now that they had been deprived of power, and whether the head teacher might not safely be allowed to be more of a master in his own school than he was at present. He wished finally to emphasize the claim of the teachers upon the community. Much good was being done by the gradual abolition of the examination test, but they should remember that one effect of that change was to throw additional responsibility upon the teacher, and to increase the need for greater capacity on his part. With the decline of mechanical systems of tuition must be witnessed the uprising of the more completely accomplished instructors. The era

of real teaching was only just beginning. Hereafter the schoolmaster would have to do more of the intelligent directing of the education machine, and less turning of the handle. If Parliament would extend the limits of the education system, let it at least not do so at the expense of the teachers. His own impression was that the parents did not wish to have their children turned into ineffectual tadpoles—did not require anything more than a solid foundational education for the children, but if they would give them more, do not make the teacher pay for it. If the pupils were to have delicacies, do not deprive the teacher of his corned beef. Since so much depended upon him, one of the pressing needs of democratic communities to-day was a proper understanding and recognition of his functions, even though he did commit the social sin of wearing a black coat occasionally. (Applause.) It was impossible to exaggerate the influence of the kindly mentor who was first in the conscious memory of the little child, and last in the failing recollection of the world-weary old man as the passing panorama of life grew dim before his failing vision. And so he ended as he began, with a respectful admonition to them to cherish the teachers—to remember them in kindness, in sympathy, in helpfulness, in admiration, and even in pride. To them was committed what was in some respects the most important work in the community, and that work was done with a thoroughness, a zeal, and an enthusiasm which—displayed in the halls of statesmanship, the legal forum, or the arena of journalism—would win for these mental toilers fitting rewards, both social and financial. Should they not, then, say to the teacher, without limiting the apostrophe to merely mercenary definitions, but including popular appreciation and respect:—

Go! do thy work; it shall succeed  
In thine, or in another's day;  
But if denied the victor's crown,  
Thou shalt not lack the toiler's pay.

(Loud applause.)

At the instance of the President, a vote of thanks was passed to Sir Samuel Way for his admirable address. His Excellency, in reply, said he personally thanked Mr. Sowden for his excellent address. (Hear, hear.) Far from being a member of the fourth estate, Mr. Sowden should seek the popular platform for the exercise of his able gifts. It was a great pleasure to listen to such a racy, epigrammatic, witty, and wise utterance. (Applause.) Mr. A. H. Neale proposed a vote of thanks to the Minister of Education (Hon. J. H. Gordon), Mr. W. J. Sowden, and Mr. W. J. McBride. The teachers liked to hear straight talking such as the Attorney-General had indulged in. (Hear, hear.) Their special thanks were due to Mr. Sowden, who had done a lot for them. (Hear, hear.) There were weighty words beneath all the humour in the admirable speech made by that gentleman. It would do them great good, perhaps more than they could think of for the moment. (Hear, hear.) The audience must have been pleased with the sweet singing of Mr. McBride's pupils, and their effort was undoubtedly the result of weeks of careful training. (Applause.)

The Minister of Education and Messrs. W. J. Sowden and W. J. McBride responded.