

DINNER TO SIR LANGDON BONYTHON.

On Friday evening, at the Old Exchange, Pirie-street, a complimentary dinner was tendered to Sir Langdon Bonython by the members of the Adelaide Teachers' Association, whose president he has been for some years. There was a very large attendance of teachers—ladies and gentlemen—and amongst the guests were the Minister of Education (the Hon. R. Butler), the Commissioner of Public Works (the Hon. J. G. Jenkins), Hon. J. H. Gordon, M.L.C., Mr. W. Copley, M.P., Mr. J. Bath (secretary to the Minister of Education), the Commissioner of Police (Colonel Madley), Professors Mitchell and Tate, Dr. Torr, Inspectors Stanton, Burgan, Whitham, Clark, Neale, and Plummer, Art-Instructor Reynolds, Mr. A. Scott (principal of the Training College), and Miss McNamara (lady inspector). The vice-president of the association (Mr. J. Harry) occupied the chair. After "The Queen" had been honored,

The CHAIRMAN, in proposing the toast of the evening, "Our guest," said the toast was one which would commend itself to everyone present. There was nothing he could say which would enhance the reputation of their guest—(cheers)—but it was at least fitting that he should say a few words. Someone might ask why it was they were honoring Sir Langdon Bonython, and perhaps it might be thought it was because he had been for 15 years the Chairman of the Adelaide School Board. (Hear, hear.) His friend Mr. Cherry said "hear, hear," because he knew what the duties of the chairman were. Sir Langdon had done good work in that direction, and the Government might well consider that their interests were admirably looked after by him, the parents be satisfied that their children were safe in his care, and the teachers be assured of his encouragement. But his chairmanship of the Adelaide Board was not the explanation; nor did they honor him because he was president of the Council of the Agricultural College, although they rejoiced in the success of that institution. They were not there because he was connected with the daily press, although they were all delighted to know that the education system of South Australia and the teachers had been supported by the press in this city. It was due very largely to the enterprise of Sir Langdon Bonython that we were able to find each morning on the verandah a penny newspaper to be digested with the maternal coffee. (Cheers.) They recognised, too, in connection with Sir Langdon's position on the press that he had always rendered generous support to the Teachers' Superannuation Fund. He was not exactly the founder of the fund, but those who founded it had in their guest an able advocate at all times. They were also indebted to him for the assistance and sympathy he extended to their late chief (Mr. Hartley) in his efforts to build up the education system of which they were all so proud. (Cheers.) He was the manning—he hoped he would not offend other gentlemen connected with that institution—of the School of Mines. (Cheers.) They were not met, either, entirely for the purpose of congratulating Sir Langdon on the distinguished honor he received a short time ago at the hands of her Majesty the Queen—(loud cheers)—but there were none more ready to tender their congratulations than the members of the Teachers' Association, and they were glad that one so closely identified with education in this colony and so worthy to sustain the position had been selected for the honor. (Cheers.) The chief reason, however, for their meeting that evening was that Sir Langdon was the president of their association. (Cheers.) Some years ago it was thought by the teachers that it would be a good thing to get for their president what had been somewhat inaptly styled an outsider. They found that outsider in Sir Langdon, and it was indeed fortunate for them that he was willing to take up the position. (Cheers.) He was not chosen exactly because he would be a fighting man, but from a different reason. Teachers had always to guard against narrowness in their views because of the limitations of their outlook, and because they did not mix much with men of the world. They had to deal with immature minds, and it was well to have someone at their head whose knowledge of the world was greater, and who could assist them to a wider outlook. Another point in which they were indebted to him was that he was the first in South Australia to recognise the teachers as a body in a social way. (Cheers.) Teachers were very much required on certain occasions when there was work to be done, but it was rarely that they received as a body invitations to social functions such as their president honored them with some time ago. There were some gentlemen—he would not say in South Australia—who had had great educational advantages themselves, but who did not wish other people to have the same. Their president was not that sort of man. (Cheers.) There were even some who were ignorant of the principles of orthography, etymology, and syntax, to say nothing of prosody, or even of the "Three R's" to some extent, who would desire others the advantages they would have been so much better for. There were some who on speech days gave vent to pleasing platitudes, and afterwards instead of pushing on the educational chariot hung on behind. (Cheers.) That was not what their president did. Not only could he make pleasant speeches and write brilliant articles, but he was willing to do real hard work in the cause of education. (Cheers.) He regretted exceedingly that Lady Bonython was prevented from attending by a severe cold, but in drinking the health of their guest they would be honoring also his wife. He asked them to respond most heartily to the toast. (Cheers.)

The toast was honored with cheers for the guest and Lady Bonython. Sir Langdon Bonython, in responding, said:—It is with much more than ordinary pleasure that I rise to respond to the toast which has been proposed in such generous terms. Most sincerely do I thank Mr. Harry for his kind words and the company for the cordial manner in which my health has been received. I can assure you that amongst the congratulations which reached me on the occasion to which reference has been made none gave me more genuine satisfaction than those from the officers and people of the educational institutions with which I am associated. (Cheers.) And having said this, perhaps you will not be surprised when I add that no compliment I have received was more appreciated than the invitation to attend this dinner. (Cheers.) It was good of you to think of me, a gathering, and

I only wish I could believe that my guests quite justified such generous thoughtfulness. (Cheers.) As president of your association I have been brought into personal contact with a large number of teachers whose work and worth only need to be known to be properly valued; but it is as chairman of the Adelaide board that I have chiefly come into touch with public schools and public school teachers. Like my good friend, Mr. Scherk, I have been a member of the board since the 10th of August, 1881, when it was called into existence. The first chairman was Mr. David Murray, and an excellent chairman he proved. (Cheers.) He resigned the office in 1883, and I was appointed his successor. In the seventeen years there have been many changes. Ten gentlemen have occupied the position of Minister of Education. The first was the Hon. J. L. Parsons, then Sir E. T. Smith and Sir R. O. Baker, next Dr. Cockburn, followed by Mr. Johnson, the Hon. J. H. Gordon, Mr. Bews, the Hon. J. G. Jenkins, and Mr. Copley, Mr. Gordon again, Mr. Copley once more, then Mr. Castine, Dr. Cockburn a second time, and now Mr. Butler. (Cheers.) The doctor held the portfolio of Education longer than any one else, and everybody will admit that no person takes a more enthusiastic interest in school children and school work than the gentleman who now occupies the position of Agent-General in London. (Loud cheers.) Ministers have come and Ministers have gone, but their secretary has stayed on all the time; and who could have discharged the duties better than the kind and courteous Mr. James Bath, who was once himself a schoolmaster? (Cheers.) But

there have been great changes in respect to the schools under the jurisdiction of the board. There are now four. Seventeen years ago there were only two. Neither Sturt-street school nor Currie-street school had been built. Mr. Alexander Clark was at Grote-street, and from there was transferred to Sturt-street, where he was followed by Mr. W. L. Neale, both now most efficient inspectors. Where were the present headmasters? Mr. Maughan had charge of the Wallaroo school, Mr. Burnard was at Unley, Mr. McBride was at the Practising School, and Mr. Cherry was an assistant at Grote-street. Of course, each of these gentlemen did not step from one position to the other. It has been a case of gradually climbing the ladder. Yet whilst the changes mentioned and innumerable others have been taking place, during the whole 17 years the members of the present board of inspectors have been examining the schools of the colony; and to Messrs. Stanton, Burgan, and Whitham the community is under great obligations for highly important work, thoroughly well done, over a very long period. (Loud cheers.) As the years passed on they have been assisted not only by the gentlemen already named, but by Messrs. Smythe, Plummer, and Gill, who as very successful headmasters had proved their special competency. (Cheers.) What I have said reminds me that there is one who has passed from amongst us who has impressed his personality on our education system, and whose influence will long continue to be felt. I refer, of course, to the late Inspector-General of Schools. (Cheers.) It is to me a source of much satisfaction that I was in any way associated with him in the establishment and development of the existing school arrangements, which will compare with those of any country, not only as regards excellence, but in the matter of cost. The fact is we have a remarkably good system, and pay remarkably little for it. (Loud cheers.) Mr. Hartley was not only an able man, with a keen intellect and a wonderful power of organisation, he was an unselfish enthusiast. This I can prove. Years ago there was a vacancy in the Civil Service. The salary was very much better than that of the Inspector-General of Schools. As a friend I was asked to find out if he would accept the vacant office if offered to him. I remember the interview well. Having heard what I had to say (and I would like you to remember that the stormy weather in which he took up his work had not yet given place to sunshine) he said—"I have no doubt I could discharge the duties of the office, and I should like the extra money, but I already receive enough for my wants, and in my present position I believe I am doing the work I was intended to do—I feel that it is work for which I am fitted. You offer me an easier life and more salary. To both I must say no, and I want no time for consideration." The men who can make such speeches and act them out in their lives are men whose memories the world does not willingly let die. (Loud cheers.) If I have been able in any way to help school teachers the explanation is that no one realises more than I do the importance of the work in which they are engaged. It has been said that the hand which rocks the cradle rules the world. Whether that be so or not, of this I am quite sure, that those who control our schools to a very large extent make the nation. Mr. Hartley regarded teaching as a vocation. I entirely agree with him. When such work is carried out in the proper spirit, and with an adequate sense of responsibility, it is impossible to express its value in the currency of the realm. (Cheers.) There is no nobler work done in the world. There is no higher calling than that of the teacher. He puts in motion influences that continue to operate when he is no more. There may be drudgery, there may be lack of appreciation on the part of those around, but the true teacher (and I am glad to know there are many such in South Australia) cares little for these things. His heart is in his work, and he knows that the future will bring with it the reward which will fit his deserts. (Loud cheers.)

Mr. M. M. Maughan, in proposing the toast of "The Parliament," said that as a whole the teachers were not of political tendencies, partly because they were too much taken up with little Parliaments of their own where the Government had long tenures of office and where the Opposition had no chance of moving a successful want of confidence motion. (Laughter.) But they were no less patriotic for that, and they were proud of our Parliament for the position it had taken in passing liberal legislation and for the dignity and intelligence with which their deliberations were conducted. There were men in Parliament who were able to hold their own in any body of men in the world, and South Australians had reason to be proud of the high positions they had taken in the political world. (Cheers.) The Hon. J. H. Gordon thanked them on behalf of the Legislative Council for the kind way they had received the toast. If the teachers appreciated the efforts of Parliament Parliament was not behind in appreciating the efforts of the public school teachers of South Australia. In fact if members of Parliament were asked which was the more important—

a member of Parliament or a teacher—soy would, he believed, one and all admit that the latter was far the more essential. Every member of Parliament appreciated the work of their distinguished guest, Sir Langdon Bonython, and especially for his great exertions in connection with the School of Mines. (Cheers.) The public school teachers were none too well paid, but when they remembered that Sir Langdon was a busy man, who gave much of his valuable time without any payment, the appreciation that was being shown of his work that night was well earned. (Cheers.)

Mr. Copley, in replying for the House of Assembly, said he had hardly expected to find ladies present, because he had forgotten for the moment that so many of our teachers were ladies. (Shame and laughter.) He was glad to be present to help to do honor to Sir Langdon Bonython, with whom his relations had always been of the most cordial character, and whose advice personally, and sometimes politically, had often been most useful to him, and especially when he was Minister of Education—a position which he supposed he would be occupying now if everyone was fairly dealt with. (Laughter.) He hoped the time would not much longer be delayed when a Federal Parliament was in existence, as though it might detract from the position of the local Parliament it would eventually be a great and lasting benefit to Australia. He was glad to add his hearty congratulations of their guest on his recent elevation to knighthood, as apart from his great services to education, it was only fitting that the work of those who directed that mighty engine, the press, should be recognised. (Cheers.)

Professor Mitchell proposed the toast of "Education," and said the University teachers were always proud to be associated with the public school teachers in any way. He was specially pleased to be present that evening to honor Sir Langdon Bonython, who, in face of discouraging circumstances, had almost made the School of Mines a rival to the University. He had devoted himself to its interests as though it were his private business and from which he personally derived the revenue. (Cheers.) By discouraging circumstances he spoke as a teacher, and referred to the unpromising material that School had often to deal with. This and many other disadvantages had been overcome nobly, and the School of Mines occupied a proud position. Referring to the discouragements of a teacher he said that parents required as a rule an education given to the children at 12 years which was not possessed by their forefathers at 16. What the schoolmaster wanted, however, was a bright, intelligent boy. (Laughter.) The true aim of a teacher was to give children a good moral training and fit them for a place in society. It was unfortunately true that many boys did not find that place and took up no definite trade or profession. He advocated that a register of children passing through the State schools should be kept up to the time the children were 19 years old. It was in this point—the keeping track of children after they left school—that Germany surpassed us. A delicate subject he would like to mention was that South Australian teachers were on paper the worst educated teachers in the world. Individually he had never met any so good or so eager, but there was no country where there was such a poor provision for the education of teachers. The reason for the superiority of the education in Scotland and Germany was that the teachers there were the best educated in the world. It was not organisation but education that made the difference, and this was the most important point he could think of. (Cheers.)

The Minister of Education, in replying, said they were not there to make long speeches on education, interwoven though it was with the future of the colony, but to do honor to their guest, who, in consequence of his connection

with education, would be long remembered in South Australia—in fact the words "Bonython" and "Education" were almost synonymous terms. He only wished he had the experience, the culture, and the eloquence of his predecessor, whose walk in life had been different to his, but he hoped to do some good work for the department in his new position. He was pleased to see the great interest being taken lately by many country teachers in agricultural education. Farming was in future going to be largely imbued with science, and if country life could be made more pleasant and profitable it would be a great benefit to the colony in attracting people to the producing industries. (Cheers.) He hoped his connection with the teachers would be pleasant and kindly, and that when his time came to leave the office of Minister of Education—and Mr. Copley would probably say, "The sooner the better" (laughter)—he would be able to look back and remember that the cordial relations now existing had never been broken. (Cheers.)

Inspector Stanton said he appreciated very much the pleasure of meeting on social terms the members of the association. The association was a model body. Their communications to headquarters were mainly and straightforward, and—best of all—they never had a grievance. (Cheers, and laughter.) They might laugh, but it was quite true, and he was grateful to them for that. Their guest had been referred to as chairman of the Adelaide School Board and president of the School of Mines. Well, he was a member of the council of the Agricultural College, of which Sir Langdon was also president. Of that institution he was the life and soul. (Cheers.) As a representative of primary education he thanked them heartily for the way the toast was honored. (Cheers.)

The Commissioner of Public Works proposed the toast of "The Association" in a humorous speech. He said he looked on it as one of the most important of the evening, and he would like to add his congratulations to those which had been given to the president. For what reason could a title be better conferred than for great services to the cause of education? (Cheers.) He had listened with attention and appreciation to the speech of Professor Mitchell—a speech which was worthy of every consideration by members of Parliament. Ministers of Education might come and go and might pay an occasional visit to a school, but the real work was done by the teachers—they had the future of the colony in their hands, and it was a great and important trust. (Cheers.) One great point about South Australian teachers was that they were upright and moral men and women, who were stamping on the minds of our children the principles of right and justice. (Cheers.)

Mr. C. B. Whillas, in responding, strongly advocated a University training for State school teachers.