

TEACHERS' GRIEVANCES.

To the Editor.

Sir—I notice in the Director's report to the Minister, as given in "The Advertiser" on May 24, several points of interest upon which I would like to touch. He says:—"The chief cause of disaffection among the students seems to be that they are not permitted to devote the whole of their time to studies leading to a University degree." I understand this is not the case. The students fully realise the importance of practical work. What they do object to is the superfluous work of re-writing notes of lectures, &c., and the idea of sitting for an examination after teaching a strange class all the morning. Again, the Director says that it is only reasonable that the country should expect to have its teachers effectively trained for their work in the schools. They should be capable of dealing with every subject in the curriculum. Is the country having these expectations realised? In the January "Gazette" I notice the appointments as assistants in city and suburban high schools of three or four persons who have practically not taught a class in their lives. These "teachers" have gained the honors degree in classics, and no doubt are well able to teach Latin and Greek. Unskilled in teaching other subjects, and with no previous connection with the department, they receive a salary of £150 for the first year's teaching; while the other teacher who has served the department from seven to nine years for a mere nothing, and gained his B.A. degree, receives £100 for the same year. I should like to ask, who is the more serviceable and competent teacher, and who is more entitled to the higher salary—the untrained teacher, with his knowledge of Latin and Greek, or the trained teacher, with his knowledge of the English language and literature, English history, logic, ethics, psychology, education, mathematics, Latin, and school hygiene. I think there must be something radically wrong with the department's power of logical reasoning.—I am, &c.,

INTERESTED.

Sir—The school teachers' position at present is, indeed, a hard one. They suffer from overwork, under pay, and autocratic treatment by inspectors, who seem to take a personal delight in making an already difficult position well nigh intolerable. Did the public know the tenth part of cases of hardship and of the seething discontent in the department they would demand a purification in the administration. The recent strike on the part of the University Training College students was due to more than the fact that they were to be compelled to teach for half a day a week during the time of their terminal examinations, upon which so much depends for their year's work. The trouble is more deep-seated than this. May I ask, regarding the official statement that 500 teachers could be obtained in two months, why is not this done, seeing that many of our teachers are overworked with classes twice two big for them? The fact is five teachers could not be obtained in twice that time to come and work under such conditions, when Victoria, with her Education Department on a sound basis, has a demand for teachers and at better salaries, too. Pupil teachers, after an arduous probationary course of five years' practical teaching and college, are allowed to enter the University Training College for a period of two years, after which they are eligible for appointment as assistant teachers. Having regard to the duration of the probationary period, the Education Department is morally bound (though not legally) to find employment for these students, but this year one student, at least, to my knowledge, was refused employment, although he had done really well in the University examinations and had always been recognised as of more than ordinary ability as a practical teacher. The case calls for investigation. I earnestly appeal to the public to support the teachers in their demands, and to secure their own interests in a matter of vital importance, which concerns them and their children. The teachers of our State (famed for culture) have my deepest sympathy, and I trust that a solution of all their grievances will be speedily furnished, if through no other agency than that of a Royal Commission.—I am, &c.,

PESTALOZZI.

Sir—The Director of Education has made a statement regarding the terminal examinations which the education students of the University Training College have been undergoing. No mention, however, was made of the plane geometry examination, which lasted three hours, from 2 to 5 p.m. on one of the afternoons in question. This examination was attended by more than half of the students concerned, but probably the omission was merely an oversight

on the part of the Director. I would like here to affirm, from an intimate knowledge of the state of affairs at the Training College, that the general attitude of the students is not against the practical and departmental part of their work. They fully recognise its importance, and, as the chief supervisor in that department of their training has unreservedly said, the attitude shown by them is one of earnestness. It is this very fact that impels them to regard with the greatest apprehension the admission into the department of outside students who have completed their course at the Adelaide University, but have received absolutely no part of this essential training. Not only have such students been admitted, but they are being paid exactly half as much again as teachers who have undergone the whole training. Undoubtedly a knowledge of school hygiene, psychology, the history and science of education, and methods of teaching is of the utmost importance to the teacher; it is a great deal more important than the gaining of a degree. In spite of all that has been said to the contrary, the main body of the students recognise this; the department insists on it; and yet outsiders who have not this knowledge are admitted and paid at a higher rate. Is it, in the face of things, consistent? It might be argued that these outsiders are classics degree men. Even so, is not a man primed in the latest methods of teaching, and who has studied Latin and Greek up to the ordinary B.A. standard, and is competent to teach English, mathematics, and science, of more value to the department than a "classic specialist?" Evidently not. But perhaps the heads of several of our district high schools could tell a different tale.—I am, &c.,

CONSISTENCY.

Sir—The Director, in his report to the Minister, states two reasons for the dissatisfaction among the students. The second is that they are unwilling to devote any time to work outside of degree work. This, I claim, is unjust to the students, as both their supervisor (Inspector McBride) and the Master of Method (Mr. Noack) have told them that they are quite satisfied with their practical work, and the students have gone throughout the year to their respective schools, even though they thought it a little hard. Again, in his list of examinations the Director did not mention the one in drawing that took three hours (from 2 to 5) on Wednesday, but instead said that three departmental examinations had been postponed until after the vacation. This was not done until it was known that the University would be closed on Friday, the 20th, when it would be impossible to hold the examination in hygiene. It is nonsense for the Director to compare the students with outside teachers. The latter take their lectures in their own time, and work for them in their own time; whereas the work of the students is to study throughout the day. Concerning the holidays the Director speaks of, it is rather significant that he has comparatively lately learnt that he is unable to give such a thing. The students simply asked for what previous students had received, but this was refused. This had nothing to do, I believe, with the protest entered into by the students last week. As I am given to understand, the students who have attended the schools throughout the year for practical work, in the earlier part of which there were two complete days a week, spent at the Observation School, have now, with no idea of rebellion or disobedience, simply asked for a half-day previous to their examination for the purpose of private study. To my mind, if the head of the department were sympathetic and tried to help his teachers, there would be no strife as at present. The Director has waited until the students have separated and are on their holidays before he sends out any notice to them whatever. Now, however, he sends out to say that if any student will not bow down to him, obey, and serve him faithfully, he must retire. The press tells us that the Director is sending to the parents a threat that if the students wish to remain in the University they must promise to do whatever he pleases. Otherwise they must retire, and pay back the munificent sum received as maintenance. I believe the Director is asking for an early reply. Parents, do not allow this injustice by binding your children to obey faithfully whatever the Director chooses to dictate. Students, show a little will, backbone, courage. Wait until you return to your studies, and see what your fellow-students will do. There is no doubt, with regard to the action of the Director. He expects to hear from each student indi-

vidually before they gather as a body. What I say is, "Student, stick up for your rights." Wishing the students all success in their work and, at the same time, hoping to see them do what they think right and just—I am, &c.,

E. LAMBERT.

Sir—Allow me to congratulate the students of the University Training College upon their firm stand against the arbitrary treatment meted out to them by the controlling body of the Education Department, and to express the hope that they will remain true to their colors and see the thing through until a just agreement is arrived at. To impartial people nothing can appear to be more browbeating than the circular letter of the Minister of Education to the guarantors. To conform to the Minister's wishes the students must declare away their right to protest against unjust measures that may possibly be dealt out to them; and the history of the Education Department will give abundant evidence of its capabilities of dealing unjustly with its servants. The Director's report would lead one to believe that degree work is practically unessential to teachers, especially teachers of lower classes, yet a perusal of the regulations dealing with the promotion of teachers cannot fail to show that success in degree examinations is absolutely necessary to the teacher who would rise beyond barely existence-providing salary. The present disagreement between students and the education authorities is an indication of the ceaseless discontent which is rife throughout all branches of this particular service, for besides being the recipient of insufficient remuneration the teacher is called upon to bear all manner of petty tyrannies, and in the best interests of the children now and of the State in future it would be well to have the teachers' conditions vastly improved.—I am, &c.,

W.J. POOLE.

Ellen-street, Port Pirie, May 26, 1910.

Sir—I do not think the present trouble would have arisen if Mr. Williams had a wider experience in University and other examinations. While many of the teaching staff have taken the B.A., B.Sc., and M.A. degrees, the Director presumably has never sat for any public or University examinations. Had he been through such a course perhaps more sympathy would have been extended to the students in their present demands.—I am, &c.,

A RETIRED TEACHER.

Sir—As one who is most intimately connected with some of the University Training College students, I would be pleased if you would permit me to make the following remarks concerning the recent friction between them and the department. The Director suggests in his report that his refusal to grant a holiday for a picnic had something to do with the dissatisfaction among the students. This is not the case, although it might well have been so, as on two former occasions—once in the pupil teachers' school and once in the training college—this special holiday has been granted by the present Director. The whole trouble was caused by the refusal of the Director to free the students from practical teaching in the schools on the mornings of those days on which they had examinations in the afternoon. As the examinations are only three times a year this meant that no student wished to miss more than three half-days' teaching in the year, and in some cases only two half-days' teaching would need to be omitted. Surely this was a very little thing to ask. The half-day was to be spent, not in amusement, but in assiduous study. Only those who have sat for University examinations can realise what a strain they are upon the nervous system. If a student wishes to meet with success he must enter the exam. room alert, keen, and fresh. Can a student possibly do this, I ask, when the morning has been spent in controlling and teaching a large class of strange children, probably under the critical eyes of a couple of inspectors? The student on leaving the school would have to rush to the University, hurriedly eat his lunch, and then go straight to the examination-room. The student could not possibly do himself justice thus, and so his nervous excitement would cause the whole of his weeks of study, perhaps till midnight every night, to go for nothing, and in his examination he would be badly "ploughed." The students now have either to promise to obey, implicitly in the future, or else to leave the department and put their guardians to a very great expense, which many of them could not meet without serious inconvenience. Again, most of the students are thoroughly in love with teaching. They realise that it is, indeed, their vocation, and it would be unpleasant for them to start in another profession. For these two reasons they will perforce submit to the department's demands. They