

Register June 24th 1906.

PROFESSOR PETERSON AND MUSIC REGISTRATION.

To the Editor.

Sir—If Professor Peterson's style and methods of correspondence were as familiar to the majority of your readers as they are to the Victorian public, it would be unnecessary for me to reply to him. Concerning my letter in The Register of May 21, he says in your issue of the 10th inst.:—"Mr. Mitchell's methods of aspersion are those with which Victoria has already made me familiar. One is to declare that I on some occasion or occasions made certain statements and drew certain inferences. When I reply that neither statement nor inference can be found in my words, the answer is that if I did not make that particular statement or draw that particular inference, I meant it, and if I did not mean it, I at least thought it!" All of which is quite beside the mark. My letter contained no "aspersion;" let any unbiased reader judge for himself. All that follows in the above quotation from his letter is equally devoid of significance in support of his case, having not the remotest bearing upon anything that I wrote. It serves the purpose, however, of indicating to the South Australian public how Mr. Peterson, wherever he goes, is at variance with the musical profession. Is he not sadly misunderstood? I have read most of the correspondence in the press which has passed between him and his fellow-professionals in Victoria, New South Wales, and London, and have been struck with the strange unanimity of misunderstanding of which he complains. How is it, I muse? But I seem to solve the mystery when I recall to mind the jury that was composed of eleven Englishmen and one Irishman (or was he a Scotchman?). The eleven were unanimous as to the verdict. The remaining man took the opposite view. His version of it was "Eleven more obstinate men I never saw in my life."

Mr. Peterson continues:—"I never tried to secure for the University any exclusive rights in regard to the registration of music teachers." What I have done in the matter—namely, to endeavour to secure that only reputable examinations and diplomas be recognised, from whatever part of the world they come—has been, I am glad to say, not at all in vain. What are the facts? Here he pretends he has advocated that which he has persistently attacked. At the first public meeting held in Victoria to discuss the question of registration of music teachers, Mr. Peterson's attitude was one of undisguised hostility to the recognition of the English examining bodies. During my recent visit to Victoria I was informed upon unimpeachable authority that this was the case, and that the statement was corroborated by the Chairman of the meeting. At the representative committee meeting held for the purpose of making suggestions on the subject to the Registration Board, Mr. Thomson (who is Mr. Peterson's lieutenant) moved that no English diplomas be recognised by the Registration Board. This was subsequently denied by Messrs. Peterson and Thomson in letters to The Musical News of London; but authenticated vouchers for the statement were sent to the editor of that journal, with the result that it was absolutely verified, and Mr. Peterson became the subject of caustic editorial comment. After this, the professor suddenly realized the dignity of his position, and withdrew from the fray. Not Mr. Peterson at all, but the whole committee of advice in Melbourne, counselled the Registration Board as to the diplomas to be respectively accepted or rejected; and I have been informed nothing but opposition upon any occasion was offered by him to all English diplomas awarded in Australia. I can well believe it! Therefore, I repeat my former statement that "Professor Peterson for a long time tried, but in vain, to secure for his university exclusive rights in regard to the registration of music teachers in Victoria." If need should arise I am prepared to adduce a sheaf of further evidence in support of this.

Mr. Peterson continues:—"I may mention, for instance, that the diplomas granted by a certain limited liability company, very widely patronized by a certain class of teachers, are not recognised at all by the Registration Board of Victoria." And, knowing the concern to which he refers, I add very properly so, too. But is it possible that Mr. Peterson, seeking to discredit Trinity College in the minds of the public, "meant," or "at least thought," that it would be "inferred" that this latter institution was hinted at? From his past utterances this would appear probable. In April, 1906, he grossly attacked Trinity College in such terms that The Age, for reporting his remarks, was forced by the solicitors to the college to publish a disclaimer, and the professor himself nar-

rowly escaped being involved in serious trouble, nor neither the Associated Board nor Trinity College is a limited liability company. Both bodies work for the public benefit as regards musical art and education, conducting examinations by experienced and impartial outsiders. They deserve, and will long receive, considerable support in Australasia. The attacks that from time to time have been made upon them by Mr. Peterson have only served to defeat his own ends. If those who are desirous that the universities' scheme should succeed in this State would be content to quietly and consistently aim at making it the best scheme within reach, leaving rival institutions alone, there would be some prospect of ultimate success.

I now deal with what appears to me to be an attempt to mislead your readers. In your issue of May 13 Professor Peterson is reported to have said to your representative—"While the Registration Board has fulfilled its duty in recognising to some extent certain high certificates of visiting examination bodies, it has emphatically declared that an additional examination in the art of teaching must be undergone supplementary to these, and that while these examinations are recognised now, the standards will be raised in 1910 to that which it has accepted from the University Examination Board as its ideal." In his letter, which appeared on June 10, he supplemented the foregoing statements by asserting that "the standard for such teachers" (secondary, i.e., highest, grade) "will be that of the diploma in music of the University of Melbourne." I have delayed my answer in order to obtain a copy of the latest circular of official information issued by the Teachers and Schools Registration Board of Victoria; but it contains no authority for Mr. Peterson's assertion that any exception is made in favour of the Melbourne University diploma. I then wrote to the Registrar of the Education Office, Melbourne, making enquiries upon this and other matters. The following answer is now to hand:—"Dear Sir—Referring to your letter of the 16th inst., I beg to forward you herewith a copy of the board's requirements for the registration of teachers of music, and to state that it is the only pamphlet issued by the board on the subject. On reference to section 6 it will be seen that, in addition to the possession of a diploma such as L.A.B., or the diploma of the University of Melbourne, it is necessary for a candidate to pass an examination in the practical teaching of music before registration is granted. . . . The board has not yet determined the qualifications to be demanded after 1910.—Yours faithfully, M. H. Bottoms, registrar." This letter affords proof that Mr. Peterson has misquoted from the pamphlet referred to, and made it appear that the University diplomas were all-sufficient for registration. The truth is that the following diplomas are all placed upon an equal footing:—The diploma of music of the Melbourne University; the diploma of the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music (conducted by Mr. Marshall-Hall); the first-class diploma of the Musical Society of Victoria; the diploma of any Continental conservatorium recognised by the board; the diploma of Licentiate of the Associated Board of the R.A.M. and the E.C.M., London; the diploma of Licentiate of Trinity College of Music, London; the diploma of Associate of Trinity College of Music, London (not gained by examination in the art of teaching). Moreover—and this is the crux of the whole matter—the holders of all diplomas alike, University included, are required to pass "an examination satisfactory to the board in the practical teachings of the branch of music proposed, or to produce evidence satisfactory to the board of competency to teach." Thus no exception whatever is made in favour of the University diplomas. Therefore I quote from my earlier letter, and repeat:—"The question may very pertinently be asked, What authority has Professor Peterson for his assertions? Possibly he mistakes that which he desires for existing facts, and the public may well reserve judgment for further warrant."

In his interview with your reporter Mr. Peterson stated that as the result of his letters to the Victorian press over 3,000 teachers applied to have their names placed on the register. The facts are that the Musical Society of Victoria convened a large public meeting, and it was the result of this and of the public press notices about registration that induced music teachers to apply. An instance will serve to show the limits of Mr. Peterson's influence among the great majority of music teachers in Victoria. Being dissatisfied with what he regarded as the too liberal policy of the registration board, he wrote to the Melbourne Argus, inviting teachers to meet him at the University Conservatorium to discuss the situation. He found it necessary to write again, saying that if only 12 teachers

would ask him to hold a meeting he would do so. But, sad to say, 12 teachers of the 3,000 whom he says he influences could not be found, even at this urgent request. He then wrote a third time, piteously lamenting the failure of his efforts. Towards the close of his recent letter in The Register Mr. Peterson writes concerning me—"This gentleman, who says that he has 'carefully acquainted' himself with what he is pleased to call my 'policy,' chose to absent himself from the faculty meeting, called for the special purpose of discussing with the delegates from Melbourne," &c. This haphazard, random statement is characteristic of its author. I have only to reply that I did not "choose" to absent myself. The Registrar of the University could have told him this, for I telephoned an explanation. Finally, Professor Peterson "supposes" that it was my pen which "indited that precious document" (referring to the annual report of the Music Teachers' Association). Alas! there is too much of "supposition" in the professor's correspondence. I can only hope that, should he write again, he will endeavour to restrain the wild flights of his fancy and keep to facts. But let him not condescend because I chance to be the secretary of my association. My previous letter, and this, have been written entirely upon my own responsibility, and in my private capacity.

I am, Sir, &c., E. E. MITCHELL.

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EDUCATION.

To the Editor.

Sir—That many teachers are being overwrought is clear, inasmuch as 70 of them have obtained leave of absence since the beginning of the year. Presumably breakdown of health is the cause of this large number of instructors leaving the ranks for periods extending from one to several months. Many, if not the majority, of these teachers are being paid full salaries. Taxpayers will see that our education system in some respects resembles war; it has to provide for many who have temporarily been withdrawn from active service. The fact that so many salary receiving tutors have been incapacitated surely calls for comment. To those who understand the mechanism it is clear that the education machinery is being run at hitherto unprecedented speed, with the result that a considerable percentage of the workers have fallen off the platform, and the State has to pay for their hurts. Any private firm employing many hands a number of whom were constantly on the sick list, would, unless they were striving for insolvency, quickly cast around to ascertain the cause and discover a speedy remedy. With regard to the teachers, it is easy to locate the cause of the trouble. They are called upon to perform far too much after school hours for reasons that are by no means clear at present. In other spheres of labour the workers look forward to at least a short period of relaxation ere seeking repose. Not so many a teacher, however—especially one who has half a dozen classes to instruct on the morrow. His real day's work only then begins. This to the general reader may appear overdrawn. It is a fact nevertheless, and this never-ending grind by lamplight is the cause of throwing up the sponge by those who do not possess cast-iron constitutions. There are indications that a considerable section of taxpayers are far from being satisfied with what others are pleased to designate "the best system of primary education in the world." They affirm, on the contrary, that a lot of it is triviality, mere glint and glitter, more of a spectacular showy thing than real drama. It pleases the multitude, and that accounts for much. No, Sir. Unless Mr. Peake can see his way clear to apply the pruning knife to the present course of instruction, instead of there being a reduction of the number applying for leave of absence for reasons referred to, an increase will result. At all events, such is the opinion of many of your readers.

I am, Sir, &c., X. Y. Z.