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THE EDUCATION SYSTEM.

SECONDARY EDUCATION.

APPRENTICESHIP.

[IV.—By our Special Reporter.]

Some educational authorities consider that there can be no adequately effective State education without an organization of secondary schools. Regardless of the economic aspects of the matter, they urge that the State ought to teach more than the three R's. In the past this branch has been attended to by private institutions, which are to some extent primary schools; but, excepting through the Advanced School for Girls, which has now been merged into the Continuation School, and in one or two other minor directions, the Government has not attempted to provide tuition for those who desire to advance beyond the limits of the fifth or sixth classes. Over the gap between the State schools and the higher branches of education children have had to pass without a State bridge other than that represented by the system of exhibitions and bursaries. Some people contend that the State must organize and control some scheme of secondary instruction; and—without discussing the principle in the matter at present—one may say that the Director of Education has made a start towards this end by the Continuation School in Adelaide and the classes in the country. The cost of the former may be a few hundred pounds, but the latter involve the expenditure of little more than the salary of the head teacher. Speaking on this subject Mr. Williams said:—"Remember one thing, the people of South Australia, now these continuation schools have been established, are not going to give them up. They will seek a State system of secondary education." What has been done is as nothing compared with what is hoped for. The one in Adelaide is on its way to the ideal, but those in the country are acknowledged to be only the germ of greater things to come. Mr. Williams's intention is to make them actual "model" schools, in which teachers may learn how their own classes should be conducted, and students who desire more instruction can receive it in the best manner. The director hopes by these country centres to attract into the department some of the bright boys and girls of the district. As the opportunity arises these classes will be improved until they shall in reality be continuation schools, and, with that in Adelaide, shall fill the hiatus between the fifth class and the higher education.

—Private Schools.—

In the establishment of any system of State secondary education no injustice must be done to those institutions which have so long and so efficiently provided the instruction that has enabled them to send out many fine professional, commercial, and industrial men into the world. If the State enters into competition with these schools they will suffer. Some of the masters of these might, under a complete system of State secondary education, find employment in the public service; but certain schools will always preserve their independence. Over them the State could have no control, unless a subsidy were granted to them; but that question the people of South Australia have decided in the negative. Some of the institutions may not quite have fulfilled the true mission of a school, which is to train the mind; but to the large majority the State is under a debt of gratitude. In this connection is raised the matter of cramming. A few weeks ago a coach stated that, in order to secure a pass at the university for his clients, he had simply to cram them in certain subjects and on stated lines. That may be true in part; but is the University examination the best test of a youth's knowledge? "When," as Professor Murdoch remarks, "efficient teaching meant imparting a mass of information, the examination test may have been invaluable; but when teaching is—as it should be—the gospel of initiation and (as Herbert Spencer says) 'the child should be told as little as possible and induced to discover as much as possible,' the examination is not the invaluable test. It is then a test, not of training, but of coaching." It has been suggested that,

instead of examination by the University and the announcement of matriculation successes—with, perhaps, the cramming of students to pass so that the credit of the school might loom large in the public sight—the University should set a certain curriculum for the private schools, and have a staff of professors to see that it was carried out, and then admit to the University, on the certificate of the head master, students thoroughly grounded in the specified subjects. One head master said there were obvious objections to this, but it might be made a condition that before a University pass was given to the student the master of the school concerned should certify that he or she had attended so many years at the school, and had done certain work in each subject. That would be an effectual remedy for the cramming evil, and it would lead to the gradual extinction of those establishments whose whole year's work consists in filling a pupil's mind with points to enable him to scrape through a certain examination.

—School of Mines.—

The "Polytechnic"—misnamed the School of Mines—on North terrace is divided into two sections—mining (in which many of its students have achieved conspicuous success) and industrial. The woolelassing tuition has already left its mark upon the wool market, but in the education of lads for trades the school has left much undone. A serious feature of the present position of the industrial world is that the apprenticing of lads is gradually being abolished, and youths are not taught their work so thoroughly as in earlier days. It has been suggested that the instruction imparted at the "Polytechnic" might be extended so that a boy could be thoroughly grounded in a trade. At present it is admitted that he cannot be. As one competent judge remarked—"It is an assistants' school, and in certain sections the pupils at night are only those engaged in the same trade during the day. I am afraid that the school could not turn out a journeyman unless he had the experience gained in the employment of a master." It is a question whether the school is not giving too little systematic training for the plumber, carpenter, mason, and bricklayer, and doing too little for the chemical manufacturer, dyer, or soap-maker. Possibly also in some departments the institution is not closely enough in touch with the trades, and does not receive support or co-operation from them. Mr. Mosely (the chief of the British Educational Commission which some time ago went to America), alluding to the intense belief of the Americans in the education of the masses, said:—"They feel that their country cannot prosper without technical education, and that if the people are to be raised it must be done through the medium of education. Not only do they see in it a 'moral policeman,' but they argue also that in the long run it is far more economical to educate the people than to have to support in prisons and workhouses the unfortunates who through an inferior education or none at all are left unfitted to earn their living." Mr. Campbell (the director of the Melbourne Workmen's College) has suggested the following scheme for dealing with the apprenticeship question:—"The responsibility for the training of the apprentice to rest with the employer; a course of training at a technical school as part of the apprenticeship; compulsory examination; administration and detail affecting apprenticeship to be dealt with by the Wages Board." This depends for its success upon apprenticeship, but that is being abandoned; and, as Dr. W. T. Harris points out in The Educational Review, the school is far more potent in the preparation of the skilled labourer than mere apprenticeship; it brings together the devices invented and of the most efficient methods of managing the details of commerce, and places them before the learner with painstaking explanation. Apprenticeship on the other hand, depends for its efficiency directly upon the intelligence and generosity of the employer. It has been suggested that in connection with the preparatory school of the School of Mines—which under a complete system, should be merged into the Continuation School—there ought to be a department for boys who intend to take up skilled trades. Such a boy would not need physics and chemistry, but more practical instruction in drawing and geometrical development. After having passed through this preliminary course the lad could either secure employment with some firm to learn the trade and continue his instruction at the school in the evenings, or be able to complete his trade instruction at the school as a day student.

AUSTRALIAN METEOROLOGY.

To the Editor.

Sir—In The Register of April 10 Mr. C. Richardson, of Fremantle, says:—"In Australia we lose millions of pounds' worth of stock from droughts, heat and cold waves, and floods, and we hand over £5,000 for the exploration of barren ice, yet when meteorology asks for a little assistance to manifest its system to mankind we practically close the purse." Certainly agreeing with him in that "money expended on meteorological science can be turned to good account by yielding benefits of a substantial nature," may I suggest that the portion quoted is somewhat ambiguous? It is likely that Mr. Richardson considers the sum contributed to the Shackleton expedition—for to that I take it he is referring—is wasted as far as meteorology is concerned. But such is not the case. Experiments are to be carried out and evidence gathered from a meteorological aspect by Professor David and staff, and these coming from antarctic regions will be of additional value to Australians, if, as Mr. Richardson suggests, the meteorological conditions of that portion of the earth have any connection with the atmospheric conditions of Australia. Again, it was not "barren ice" that took scientists from their cosy homes, but unique geological formation.

I am, Sir, &c.,

UNIVERSITY STUDENT.