

THE INSTITUTE FESTIVAL WEEK.

A good deal of widespread interest is being manifested in the arrangements made by the committee of the Strathalbyn Institute for holding a series of musical and elocutionary competitions at the close of their Art Exhibition and Fancy Fair, in September next, and judging by the enquiries made from various outside places there is likely to be a very full programme provided for the three evenings which are to be devoted to the competitions, both in the musical and the elocutionary sections. The value of such competitions as an educational means depends to a very great extent on the standard set by the organizers and the capability of the judges selected by them to properly assess the merits of the candidates seeking attainment to it. Lacking these two essential conditions competitions lose all real value, and their certificates become worse than useless, since they can be utilized to give a misleading idea of the qualifications of the holder, just as bogus degrees may be employed by quacks to gull the ignorant. Happily the committee of the local Institute recognise the great importance of fixing their standards at as high a mark as they can consistently do in view of the fact that the competitions are to be made of interest to the general public, and they still more fully concede the necessity that is incumbent on them to secure as adjudicators the most highly qualified authorities obtainable in the State. Hence it has been unanimously decided to make a strong effort to secure the services of Professor Ennis for the musical items and of Professor Henderson for the elocutionary ones, in virtue of the fact that these gentlemen occupy the top places in their respective classes in the State. They are being urged to take the tasks in hand with a good deal of sound reason to back up the request, for while at first blush it may appear rather like demanding a sacrifice of dignity to ask the occupant of a University chair to judge at a provincial competition it can be urged that the very fact of such an appointment being made will tend in itself to raise the standard aimed at by the competitions, put contestants on their mettle, bring out those who would hesitate to risk the verdict of an inferior judge, and indeed indirectly aid the University in its extension schemes. Should Professors Ennis and Henderson consent to adjudicate, they may depend on it that they will be acting in the best interests of musical and elocutionary education in the south, and at the same time setting a hall-mark on the Strathalbyn competitions, rendering them far more worthy of attention than are a great many which now receive a lot of public support, particularly as no restrictions have been imposed by the committee, all comers being welcomed as entrants. The committee naturally want the competitions to yield the Institute a profit, but they also desire to make them of importance and renown, so that the awards gained at them may possess sufficient value to warrant them being eagerly sought after. This worth to as great an extent will depend on the known qualifications of the judge to award

the certificate as on the standard set by the organizers. We cordially hope therefore that the laudable effort of the Institute committee to secure the services of the highest authorities in the State may meet with success.

Writing on the subject of the competitions reminds us that these are to form but the second half of a week's festivals in connection with the Institute, the first three days being reserved for the Loan Art Exhibition and Fancy Fair which is being arranged for the purpose of raising funds for the Hall Improvement scheme. For the Exhibition, the loan of art works, curios, novelties is asked, and we trust that the committee's appeals will be freely responded to; for the Fancy Fair the ladies of the town are working heartily, but they too need generous help, which should be readily and cheerfully given to them, so that the whole affair, which is for the benefit of one of Strathalbyn's most useful institutions, may prove financially, artistically, and completely successful.

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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SCHEME LECTURES AT STRATHALBYN.

On Thursday evening last a successful realization of the desire of a number of townspeople to have Strathalbyn included in the list of towns benefitted by the Adelaide University Extension Scheme was brought about, a gratifyingly large attendance assembling in the Institute Hall to hear Professor Henderson commence his series of three lectures on the "Poets of the nineteenth century—Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning." In the unavoidable absence of Mr. Wyatt president of the Institute, under the auspices of which the course of lectures has been arranged, Sir J. Lancelot Stirling introduced the lecturer, briefly referring in doing so to the pleasure he felt at Strathalbyn falling into line with other important towns in the University's scheme for encouraging higher culture in the country.

Professor Henderson said that the desire of the University in arranging for its staff to visit the various local centres was to find out whether an earnest desire existed for higher knowledge in them and whether the lecturers would be able to give what was wanted. If they found in the course of a year or two's experiences that the mission fulfilled even part of its intent they would feel encouraged to enlarge its scope. Professor Henderson then proceeded to speak on the life, character, writings, and teachings of Wordsworth, remarking that he had chosen that poet for his opening address for various reasons, not least of which was the fact that his life and works carried a special message to democracy which was of highest import at the present time, when a "return to nature" was heard so much of. Wordsworth was essentially a priest of nature, the attitude of whose mind turned towards the idealization of commonplace things, lifting them to a higher plane than they were found on by him, revealing features seen only with the inward eye of the artist, and pointing out from them lessons that were missed by the matter-of-fact men and women who were in perhaps daily association with them. What Millais did as a glorifier of the rural as a painter Wordsworth did as a poet, and though like others in history he was jeered at for a time he now takes a high place in the lists of English writers, deserving rank with even such great poets as Milton and Shakespeare. Briefly the lecturer traced the early life of Wordsworth from his birth in his beautiful Cumberland home, the lovely scenery of which seemed to have impressed his mind in his earliest years, to his university life, touching on incidents of note in his undergraduate career, and then passing on to review his experiences in France during his long visits there, telling how for a time he became an enthusiastic revolutionist, fired with ardor to support the people's cause, but doomed to bitter disappointment at the sordid nature of their leaders and the cruelties and injustices that marked the great revolutionary proceedings in France. Then it was that the associations of his early days in his peaceful home in the Cumberland hills forced him to contrasts