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THE UNIVERSITY AND THE SCHOOLS.

Criticisms of the University examinations for school boys have appeared from the head masters of St. Peter's College and Prince Alfred College, the principal of the Christian Brothers' College, and other authorities on education. They would all probably be found supporting Brother Magee when he said:—

I feel inclined to offer a protest to the marked tendency there is abroad to measure the merits of a school by the performances of a small section of the students in these examinations. The results certainly tell a part of the truth, but the school that caters best for the average boy will not always show to the best advantage in these public tests.

Even more specific in his references than the principal of the Christian Brothers' College, the head master of St. Peter's College complained of a growing unsuitableness of University examinations for school purposes. Mr. Girdlestone's remarks on the point call for an explanation from the University authorities:—

I think it is becoming more apparent every year that some of these University examinations are less suitable for schools than they used to be. If a boy is naturally gifted above his fellows he can take a good place without any undue pressure; but the normal boy must either be restricted to two or three subjects or driven over his strength to obtain a distinction. What we want is an examination for the ordinary school boy, if we must have one at all. I can remember the time when schools were exempt from these uncertain tests. Some misguided person, like the man who introduced rabbits and snails into Australia, conceived the idea of schools' examinations. I hope we shall soon reach the crisis of the craze; for I am quite certain that a slow boy is harmed by being crammed or told he is no good; and the quick boy wants all his time to learn to be human before he becomes a genius.

Still more pointed charges were made by the head master of Prince Alfred College; and Mr. Chapple, long prominently connected with the governing body of the University, has raised interesting and important questions in this paragraph:—

This practice of letting a boy who has done well in an examination one year take the same course for the next year is spreading, and it seems on many grounds undesirable. . . . Another matter that needs attention is that candidates over age are examined and classified with their juniors. By this the examiner is led to expect maturer judgment and more developed power of thought from all, and liable therefore to refuse credit to candidates who in an examination confined to those of their own age would have secured it. In the senior English, for example, out of 21 credits 15 fell to those over age. It becomes, therefore, increasingly difficult to persuade the able boys to take up this and some other important subjects. If they must win scholarships so as to secure that priceless boon, a University education, they feel that science and mathematics offer greater prospects of success than English or classics. We fight for the literate humanitarians, but fight with the odds against us.

The principal of University College, North Adelaide, discussing the evil of "cramming," deplored the examination craze, and accused the University of going out of its way to promote it. Mr. Macgrath also gave the testimony of an experienced banker, to the effect that the certificates of the Universities of Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney, issued to successful candidates, were not helpful to employers. Thus there are five counts against the Adelaide University public examinations:—1. That they are insufficient, and therefore misleading tests of the merits of both schools and candidates. 2. That they are increasingly unsuitable for schools. 3. That they unduly interfere with the choice of courses of study. 4. That they are educationally unsound and mischievous. 5. That the value of the certificates issued to successful candidates is declining.

Assuming that in due course the University authorities will answer the indictment, an enquiry of a more far-reaching nature might be meanwhile made concerning the necessity for any public examinations whatever in connection with our colleges. An explanation of the cause of certain complaints is suggested in the report of the Edu-

cation Commissioners of New South Wales in alluding to British secondary education. Professor Knibbs observes:—"Strictly speaking there is no organized secondary education in the United Kingdom, at least in the sense that secondary education is organized in Europe. Consequently it is necessary for the Universities to appraise the work of the secondary schools by a system of examinations, and to decide matriculation by those examinations." The same commissioner, after noting the existence of "cramming" in New South Wales, adds:—"Before public examinations held under the auspices of the University can be dispensed with, it is absolutely necessary that secondary education be properly and definitely organized, and that the teachers in the secondary schools be professionally educated and trained." Though, as Mr. Girdlestone has intimated, South Australia is fortunate in her high schools in comparison with English schools, she has inherited the English system which, "through want of organization, lends itself to the evils of outside examinations, whereas in better systems the pupil's progress is appraised by those who are familiar with his everyday work." One must not overlook the fact that the public examination institution is a source of increasing profit to the Universities, for this consideration naturally has a substantial influence in the determination of the existing methods. Under a rational system of uniform curricula, registered teachers, and possibly modified inspection by a University visitor, certificates of proficiency issued by the colleges would be accorded the highest public value. In many kindred establishments in Europe a maturity certificate at the close of a complete course is accepted as a mark of qualification for professions, and entitles the holder to pursue his studies at a University, as it is in a sense equivalent to a matriculation pass in Australia, though its intrinsic educational merit would probably be a great deal higher than the latter. Though there are difficulties in the way of achieving the purpose, is it quite impossible for the well-equipped colleges to bring their methods into line with those of corresponding European scholastic institutions, so as to render their own certificates of equal worth in the public mind with the University certificates, and to make them practically exchangeable documents? Subject to due safeguards, the alteration would represent an enormous educational advance. It would enable the college to prepare the student with uninterrupted thoroughness, and consequently it would elevate the plane of University work. Further, it would secure the identity of secondary education up to the latest possible period, and increase the options with reference to specializing for a career. Lastly, it would make the subject of "cramming" in connection with college life one of curious speculative historical interest.

"We fight for the literate humanitarians, but fight with the odds against us." Mr. Chapple's remark suggests, quite apart from the connection in which he used it, the great change which has come over the education world relative to classical and scientific training. According to Professor Knibbs, normal secondary education is Latin, science, and one modern language, besides the mother tongue; while the classic course has become a variation, and the new scheme consists of modern languages and science. Trade and commerce are the latest branches. The Sydney Education Commissioner heartily approves of the widespread ambition to become broadly educated—an ambition which has, he thinks, much more to commend it to the people of Australia than is possessed by the general ideal of the English public school, that "lends itself somewhat to classical culture as a particular type-discriminant as regards the classes of society." Without reference to the relations of classics and caste, Professor Knibbs, after carefully weighing the pros and cons, arrives at these conclusions:—

Those countries which have made the most extensive and important contributions to classical research, and among whose citizens are to be found the largest proportion of persons able to speak and write Greek and Latin freely, have abandoned insistences upon them as obligatory subjects in all branches of higher education, and have allowed modern languages to be substituted in lieu thereof in certain cases. This option, where so desired, of substituting modern languages for ancient, is practically world-wide. There is an increasing recognition of the cultural value of modern literature.

The ancient languages were once the repository of what was necessary for general education; but that is no longer true, and it is argued that therefore no reason exists for opposing those who prefer to receive their culture through modern languages. Consequently the New South Wales Education Commissioner advocates that the University should not insist upon Latin as a compulsory subject for the matriculation pass. Australians need to be specially careful to avoid following too closely British traditions in educational matters. In a contrast between secondary education in England and in Baden, Mr. H. E. D. Hammond has strikingly indicated the radical difference between thoroughness and specialization in the earlier stages of instruction:—

The Baden head master might reply that the average English boy leaves school having obtained a superficial knowledge, often acquired only to be forgotten again; that he has received a one-sided mental training, and has neither been stimulated nor prepared for scientific or original study. He might assert that the majority of our pupils are sacrificed to the gifted minority in the competition for entrance scholarships at the Universities and for similar distinctions, and he might add that this competition sometimes claims even those who are successful for its victims, since they have been filled too early with much special knowledge, which, in their lack of a broader scientific training, they cannot turn to good account in further studies.

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MUSIC EXAMINATIONS.

To the Editor.
Sir—I was glad to see that London Truth is drawing attention to the uselessness of the so-called "music examinations" held all over the world. The associated colleges of London have introduced in Australia a series of so-called school examinations; three in number, costing £2 12/6 in entrance fees, to replace the old Adelaide University primary, costing 10/6. Would the authorities concerned inform the public what the percentage of failures is? Most of the examinations are held at the premises of the various ladies' schools. I have reason to believe that it is rarely any failures occur at these examinations. I will give three facts for the public to digest. A lady, whose scholars failed to distinguish themselves at University examinations six or seven years ago, transferred her affections to Trinity College. For two or three years they met with even worse disaster. The above beautiful school examinations were then introduced; these are held at the lady's school in question. Since then, two or three years ago, this school has never had a failure. I can produce a pianoforte pupil who learnt the piano for seven years, and holds a Trinity College certificate of 80 marks. She came to me for lessons, I gave her ten, and then told her parents she was a hopeless case. She could not find a note on the piano; could not remember any fingering of scales; could not play any five-finger exercises at all; never knew when she struck a wrong note; did not know the name or value of any note, &c. I can produce a violin pupil who holds a school certificate of the Associated Colleges of London school examinations, who has learnt five years. He cannot tune his violin, and when it is tuned for him you can give the boy 500 tries, and he will never play "Home, sweet home" in time or tune, or the scale of G—not even by chance. These certificates are worse than useless, unless they are an absolute guarantee to parents that their children are being taught properly in a good school. A young lady in Sydney, a pupil of a celebrated violinist, went up for the senior violin examination against her teacher's wishes. She passed. The teacher interviewed the examiner (Associated Colleges), and asked him why he passed her. He said, "Oh, poor girl, she was up for the piano as well, and as I had plucked her for that I let her through for the violin." This sort of thing is dishonest and ridiculous. Besides most of these examiners are organists, and have no right to examine piano, singing, cello, and violin; certainly not the three latter. My name is at anybody's disposal.—I am, &c.,
A TEACHER.