

"The Advertiser" August 4th 1898

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SECONDARY EDUCATION.

The debate in the Assembly on Mr. Batchelor's motion for State secondary education is highly interesting, though perhaps somewhat too abstract. The hon. member proposes that "provision be made for continuing the education of boys from the compulsory standard up to the University Senior Public Examination by the establishment of secondary schools for boys similar to the Advanced School for Girls, or other means." His aim is clear enough, and altogether commendable. It is that action should be taken by the State to bridge over the present hiatus between the State school and the University. He is not so sanguine as to dream of absolutely free secondary education, but he wants intermediate schools so cheap that children of the poor, having the capacity to rise, may be enabled to climb from the bottom to the very top of the educational ladder. Sir John Downer, who not only disputes Mr. Batchelor's method but discourages his ideal, says he is quite favorable to further popularisation of the University by liberal reduction of fees. Very good; but this elicits the obvious reply that much more is needed. It does not meet the case to make education free in the lowest branches and cheap in the highest if there remains an impassable gap between the two. We are putting the case as it presents itself to Mr. Batchelor and his supporters, who desire to facilitate the middle passage. With the principle for which he contends we are heartily in agreement, while at the same time strongly disposed to think that the method he specially favors is not the best. The complicated system of State secondary education in New South Wales, which the hon. member admires and holds up as a model, appears to have two disadvantages—it lacks elasticity and it is very expensive. The last words of Mr. Batchelor's motion, "or other means," contemplates an alternative to the scheme he definitely indicates. Would there not be less difficulty on the score of cost, less objection on the ground of State interference, and sufficiently ample opportunities for the bright State-school boy to advance, if a generous extension were carried out of the existing system of bursaries and exhibitions? Apart from the advantage of avoiding a needless duplication of educational appliances, such a system would secure as equal a treatment of town and country as is practicable, whereas State high schools would tend more certainly to centralisation, though that is by no means Mr. Batchelor's object or desire.

In the senior colony the State has established several High Schools in the capital and other large centres of population. These schools complete the course of instruction of which the elements are taught in the public schools, and enable students to prepare themselves for the University examination. Admission to these schools is by examination only. Of late years, it appears, the attendance has fallen off, largely in consequence of the increase of the quarterly fee from two to three guineas. There are also in New South Wales a large number of superior public schools, in which besides the ordinary course the pupils are instructed in such other subjects as will enable them to enter for the senior and junior public examinations. Further, there is a system of scholarships and bursaries for boys and girls at State schools, available for education at State High, or Grammar Schools, while a limited number of bursaries are tenable at the University. Several private secondary schools are also subsidised by the Government. In all this there is no want of liberality, but the results appear hardly commensurate with the outlay, which if concentrated on a system of scholarships would probably yield a more satisfactory harvest. In Victoria a great many of the State schools undertake extra subjects, for which fees are paid; but pupils who gain exhibitions generally pursue their studies at secondary schools. The late Dr. Pearson, when Minister of Education, took a bold step by establishing 200 scholarships to be competed for by State school pupils. The winners were allowed from £10 to £40 annually, or nearly sufficient to defray the cost of their instruction at Grammar Schools. The aim was to give the most deserving pupils the advantages of a higher education. Thus, writes Professor Strong, "Dr. Pearson sought

to establish a link between the primary schools and the University, and many young men, now rising to positions of honor and usefulness, have to thank him for the helping hand extended to them by his wise and liberal measures." Professor Strong contrasts the New South Wales system unfavorably with Dr. Pearson's methods. A few years ago the scholarships admitting to Grammar Schools were discontinued owing to the necessity for retrenchment, but several of the colleges kept up the system at their own expense. A number of exhibitions competed for by holders of State school scholarships enable the brightest pupils to go through a graduate course at the University. Certainly very much more could be done in this direction than has hitherto been attempted in South Australia, and the money required for a large increase of exhibitions, bursaries, and scholarships would be well spent. Let the recent abolition of the fifth class fee be followed by a liberal development in this direction, and public education will take a long and satisfactory stride forward. The University is to be commended for proposing to devote a part of the Elder bequest to the education of teachers, which will help to raise still further the standard of our schools.

The value of education would hardly seem to be a disputable question nowadays, but there is much discussion in the Assembly as to what it consists of, and how much the State can afford to pay for the advantage of an educated people. The suggestion made in the course of the debate that education units for manual occupations is answered by the fact that knowledge is power, and, as is conspicuously the case in Germany, increases industrial efficiency. The growing importance of science in industry makes the educated workman

more and more necessary. Mr. Peake is anxious, however, that the utilitarian aspect should not receive undue attention, and that education should be encouraged also because of its moralising tendency, and the intellectual satisfactions which it brings. Mr. Hutchison, too, takes quite a Ruskinian view in pleading for a cultivated sense of beauty, which would make the mechanic an artist as well as a scientific worker, and give the public a horror of cheap shoddy. The objections of Sir John Downer to the motion are essentially individualistic. He demands a reasonable moderation in the State socialism of education, but he supplies no criterion by which this can be decided. The excellent education of the Scotch, says Sir John, is due to their difficulties; the poverty of their country stimulates self-development. But Sir John Downer will not deny that the educational system of the Scotch is highly democratic, and therein lies a virtue worthy of emulation.

The first of the series of University extension lectures took place in the science-room of the University on Wednesday evening. The lecturer was Dr. A. M. Morgan, who has arranged a course of five lectures, his subject being "Birds." Among those present were Lady Victoria Buxton, Miss Buxton, and Major Guise. The doctor, who to make his discourse clear to lay minds stripped his remarks as far as practicable of technical terms, opened by giving a definition of the science of ornithology. He followed this with a brief resume of the descent of birds from geological ages. Having paved the way he went on to explain some of the principles of classification and the rules by which the student should be guided, and continued by a description of external parts and the topography of birds, concluding with a few words on their anatomy. The lecture was highly interesting, and Dr. Morgan was able to illustrate it by specimens of birds and skeletons.

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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LECTURES.

The dissemination of accurate knowledge by the University to the public at small cost and in a popular form upon subjects of common interest has become popular, and the issue of the syllabus for the third winter series of lectures under the extension system has been awaited with interest. The Adelaide University has done well to follow the example set by the old-world Universities in this matter, and the course of winter lectures begun on Wednesday evening promises to be interesting and instructive. It includes a series of five lectures on birds by Dr. A. M. Morgan, five on the Normans in Europe by Mr. E. G. Blackmore, and a course on the fertilization of flowers, with special reference to Australian plants, by Professor Tate. The first of the course was delivered by Dr. Morgan on Wednesday evening, in the presence of Lady Victoria Buxton and a representative audience, in the Classics Lecture-room. The lecturer first dealt with a definition of birds. He showed the difference between the feathered tribes and animals in their evolution and development from the earliest form of life. It was a popular idea, he said, that anything that flew was a bird, and the lecturer instanced an occasion on which he was offered a bat for his collection of birds. After dealing with the geological succession of bird life Dr. Morgan with anatomical skill in ornithology described the external structural parts, illustrating his remarks by a number of diagrams and stuffed specimens. He referred to the difficulties of classification, and showed the method of grouping by affinities. The nomenclature of birds was brought under notice, and shown to be largely based upon habits and structure. Speaking in detail upon physiological peculiarities, the lecturer indicated the differences, the uses, and colours of plume and feathers. The eyes of birds formed an interesting topic, and the peculiar position of the eyes was shown to be used for special purposes of attack or defence and the procurement of food. The bills and wings were objects of much interest, and largely varied in their uses. The feet and legs were mentioned as the most important parts of birds for classification, their uses and forms being so closely identified with their environments. The lecture was listened to with keen attention.

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PROFESSOR RENNIE.

Among the passengers for London by the P. & O. mail steamer India, which leaves Largs Bay this afternoon, will be Dr. E. H. Rennie, the Angus professor of chemistry and the lecturer on metallurgy at the Adelaide University. His trip is being taken partly for recreation but principally to enable him to make enquiries in respect to the metallurgical work to which he is about to devote his attention. Dr. Rennie is celebrated both for his scholarship and his enthusiasm in the cause of education, so that it is certain that both he, and the University for which he has done so much since his connection with its teaching staff, will be greatly benefited as a result of his investigations he is about to make. At a recent meeting of the Executive Dr. Rennie was appointed by the Governor-in-Council as an honorary commissioner to enquire into and report on the teaching of chemistry and metallurgy outside of South Australia. Dr. Rennie will conduct these enquiries in the principal Continental cities, in Great Britain, and in America.

Dr. E. H. Rennie, the Angus Professor of Chemistry, and the lecturer on metallurgy at the Adelaide University, left for London by the mail steamer India on Thursday. At the meeting of the Marine Board on Thursday afternoon the President, Mr. T. N. Stephens, read a letter from Dr. Rennie, who acknowledged the courtesy which had been extended to him by the Board during his term of office as Inspector of Explosives. Mr. Stephens stated that he had replied to the letter on behalf of the Wardens, and during the morning had taken the opportunity of wishing Dr. Rennie a safe voyage and a successful termination of his visit to Europe.