

EDUCATION CONFERENCES.

Organised education, as we are beginning to understand it, is of comparatively modern growth and is manifesting rapid development. One need not be a patriarch to remember when the commonplace ideas of to-day found rare expression and obtained still less frequent consideration. Germs of the principles which have taken deep root and are producing excellent results may be recognised in the utterances of a few advanced thinkers, but there was no general disposition to reduce them to practice. Schools were for the most part independent of each other in their operations, as were schoolmasters in their methods. Concerted action was almost unknown, and the notion of a national system had scarcely appeared above the horizon. Among the school workers there was a good deal more of competition than of co-operation, and a complete sense of what education signifies as a factor in social life was practically non-existent. While the average standard ordinarily aimed at was low its attainment was hindered by difficulties of many kinds. Accordingly a training which would now be regarded as elementary and inadequate was deemed in most cases to be a sufficient equipment for life's duties, and illiteracy was the rule rather than the exception. The changed estimate, the higher standard, the improved methods, and generally the enormous development that has taken place, result from the concurrent action of several causes, some of them almost world-wide in their range. We may attribute to the spread of democracy the abandonment of the old idea that higher education is the exclusive prerogative of the rich, and the provision of means by which its advantages are thrown open to all classes. To the increased facilities for intercourse and communication are largely due the stimulating effects of association, the free exchange of views, and the comparison of methods which aids in the selection of the best. Educational congresses and conferences have had an increasingly wider range, and have made large contributions to the science of the subject, the value of which it would be difficult to exaggerate.

Preparations are being made for two such conferences in the metropolis of the Empire, and in both of them we are directly interested. The Imperial Universities' Congress of 1912 is being arranged for by the University of London, and recent events indicate that it will probably exercise a profound effect on the life of the Empire. Its scope is so wide that it might almost be termed international, for not only will it include the British Dominions and the English-speaking race, but a most important Asiatic section will be represented. Few movements are more noteworthy or pregnant with greater possibilities than the extension of higher education among the Oriental peoples on Oriental lines. Sir Frederick Lugard's scheme for a University at Hongkong—much the most important of all Asiatic seaports—has found favor throughout China and Japan. Shortly after the proposed visit of the King and Queen to India next year had been announced the political leader of the great Mahomedan community proposed the foundation of a Mahomedan University at Aligarh to commemorate the event. These are striking illustrations of what is going on everywhere. A new value is placed on learning, and the spread of education is recognised as an essential element of general progress. Contentment with a mere smattering is a thing of the past, and the conviction gains strength continually that the greatest benefit to the race comes from the topmost boughs of the tree of knowledge. In his sketchy autobiography, entitled "Random Recollections of Men and Events," Mr. J. D. Rockefeller pays a characteristic tribute not only to higher education, but to the highest—the department of scientific research. Other agencies, he says—the school and the college—may

benefit a locality, a community, even a nation, but this yields world-wide advantages which promote the welfare of the entire human race. By the side of the plutocrat's appraisal may be placed the democrat's ideal of aiding whoever has the requisite brains to overcome the handicap of circumstances and climb the ladder to its highest rung.

Within a few weeks an Imperial Conference on Education will assemble in London, at which delegates are expected to assemble from India, the self-governing Dominions, and the Crown colonies. The Canadian Department of Education will be represented. The Directors of Education from New South Wales and Western Australia (Mr. Board and Mr. Jackson) are to be present. South Australia is to be represented by the Rev. Bertram Hawker, the founder of the kindergarten system here, and Mr. Kirkpatrick, the Agent-General, Mr. Williams being unable to leave Adelaide at the time. This gathering will be a development of the conference organised by the League of the Empire in 1907, but will be held under the auspices of the Imperial Government. Its programme of subjects will necessarily be wide and important, if for no other reason than because of the expansion which is constantly proceeding. In all progressive nations this condition is to be witnessed, and it is increasingly apparent that in both national and racial rivalry it will have a profound if not a determining influence. Within what is now understood to be its legitimate scope everything is included, and the onward march is swift as well as sure. Children of school-going age especially, but in a sense before and after that period, are accounted the most valuable of national assets, of which it is the surest economy to make the most and the best. The hungry must be fed; the ill-clad provided for; the physically defective, whether in sight, hearing, dentition, or other respects, specially treated; the dull and feeble-minded helped by appropriate means; and all this either apart from, or in addition to, the regular curriculum. Yet further, truancy is to be checked, families

in sparsely-populated localities are to be provided for, and the crusade against ignorance or neglect is to be prosecuted in every possible way. Human nature is much the same everywhere, though circumstances differ, and the result of experience in dealing with it under diverse conditions constitutes a fund of knowledge which may be transmuted into educational wisdom.

Journal, Feb. 11, 1912.

—What is It?—

For some years we have been asking ourselves the meaning of the delightfully picturesque wooden framework which adorns the front of that fine building on North terrace, the Adelaide Conservatorium of Music. At first we were afraid that it was only a temporary structure, but it has long since assumed the hue and general appearance of permanency. We figured out that, when wire-netting was put around it, it would be a capital fowlhouse; but, of course, there is no need of such a place in connection with Conservatoriums of Music. Again we thought that when covered with old bags it would make an ideal blackfellow's wurlie, but a wurlie in that position would be inconvenient to the classic music centre of the Culture City. Corrobborees and music wouldn't mix very nicely. Some people might easily mistake it for an artistic gothic porch, if it were not so palpably a few miserable sticks of timber pinned to the buildings so as to render it an eyesore to North terrace and the public. Anyway, it is there for some purpose or other, no doubt—perhaps to encourage white ants, and also blasphemy from any spectator who grows choleric over the sight of it. Will somebody steal it?

EXAMINATIONS AND "HOWLERS."

From "Bunyip":—"Amusing though it be to read references to examination 'howlers' committed recently, one feels it a pity that the cudgels are not taken up more seriously on behalf of the students. Surely the genus small boy is not endowed with such weird intellectual qualifications as to evolve spontaneously a literary style far from lucid and a hideous nightmare—like confusion of facts that would shame a politician. Say what the University professors will, the fault is not with the students, or with their teachers. The chief complaint levelled against candidates is a lack of terseness and clearness of style; and the chief field of faultfinding is in English history. How are candidates of 16 years of age to be expected to write with the terseness of Emerson when faced with halting and ambiguous questions and supplied with material crammed from a textbook which is nothing less than a huge farrago of facts put together in a most uninteresting, uninstrucive way, cumbersome in treatment, slovenly in language, and with neither instinct for treatment, eye for the picturesque, nor historical perspective? Surely it were better if our professors realized their responsibility to the State in thus setting a textbook which will be the sole historical dietary of many thousands of minds, and which is guaranteed to destroy any budding craving for further reading and research in the wonderful realms of history. Foster Fraser said that we are utterly unread in the fundamentals of history. Why?"

Advertiser, Feb. 13th

ADDITIONS TO THE UNIVERSITY BUILDING.

To-day Mr. W. B. Bland, who secured the contract for the construction of additions to the main edifice of the University building, will begin work, and at the special request of the council and the architects (Messrs. Woods & Bagot) he will put in the reinforced concrete floor over the present single storey structure first, in the hope that it will not be necessary to throw the lower lecture rooms out of use during the first term. The contract is to add a storey to the northern part of the block for the purpose of providing additional library accommodation and lecture and other rooms, and it will therefore be necessary to remove the whole of the roof of the single storey apartments before the additions can be started. Mr. Bland will begin the demolition of the roof to-day, and as soon as possible the requisite framework will be fixed to carry the reinforced concrete which will act as a ceiling for the existing rooms and floor for the new apartments, and he hopes to have the whole of this work completed by the third week in March, when the rooms on the ground floor will be required for lecture purposes. It is intended to use Sydney freestone for the exposed walls, as the rest of the building is constructed of that material.

Advertiser, Feb. 13th

THE MARCH UNIVERSITY EXAMINATIONS.

To-day will be the last day on which students can enter for the March examinations in connection with the University, the branches concerned being the senior examinations in law, special examinations for entrance to the medical school, and the supplementary examination in medicine. The special examination is provided for in accordance with the new regulations passed last year, which require that students shall pass in physics, chemistry, and biology before being admitted to the medical course.

Register Feb. 12. M. G. Ambler.

The local University Committee has resolved that Prof. Henderson's extension lectures shall this year be on "St. Francis of Assisi." They will be held on May 24, 25, and 26. It has been decided to convene a meeting of parents and musical teachers, and to request the presence of a representative from the Adelaide University to discuss the way the musical examinations of the Associated Board of London attract many candidates every year in opposition to the Australian Universities.