

ADVICE TO STUDENTS.

Public Examiners' Reports.

The manual of the Public Examinations Board (University of Adelaide) for the ensuing year has just been issued. One of the most interesting and valuable sections is that devoted to notes by the examiners on the work of the candidates viewed as a whole. The comments exceed over 30 pages, and in many cases refer in detail to various test questions. From the general observations the following extracts are taken:—

—Primary Examination.—

English.—There were few excellent papers and fewer really bad ones, but more than the usual number of feeble efforts which required lenient treatment. Many of the failures would have succeeded if they had had more practice in answering examination papers. Teachers would do well to point out the proper way of answering questions, and require their pupils to write fair copies of test papers. Much time is lost in superfluous writing, for which no marks can be given. The arrangement of answers was often poor, parts of the same question being scattered over a book without even a number to identify them. Another evidence of the want of preparation was the mis-spelling of "adjective," "principal sentence," "comma"—words of frequent occurrence in grammatical questions.

—Junior Examination.—

History.—The failures were due rather to inadequate than to inaccurate answers, but there was a little guessing. The instrument of government was variously described as a guillotine, a parliament, an army, and a king. There are many indications that such terms are not clearly understood, and this deficiency was apparent even in the papers that displayed a fair knowledge of history. The Act of Uniformity was "taken," the Puritans were sent to prison or "emancipated," the Elizabethan revival was "the name given to the religious movement in Elizabeth's reign." There is still little evidence that candidates are taught anything outside the covers of the textbook. The absence of any breadth of view in the better papers leads one to suppose that the weaker candidates are not given that assistance which comes from a living interest in the subject matter. Arithmetic.—The most noteworthy points elucidated by this examination is the great reluctance most candidates have to the use of decimals. Algebra.—The harder factors proved stumbling blocks, and so did the simplifications. The graphs were poor, few knowing how to read off the answers. The proofs were well done, but it would be interesting to see a boy lose a quarter of 29 1/3 marbles, or carry a bucket whose capacity was minus 3 gallons. Botany.—Although the general character of the writing and spelling in the papers submitted was good, there is still need for teachers to exercise vigilance. It was always a sign of lax discipline when a candidate consistently misspells so common a word as "stamen" or "mesocarp." In only two cases was writing so bad as to be almost illegible, and in one case a candidate presented a script sloping 45 deg. to the left; they received their reward.

—Senior Examination.—

History.—A candidate evidently did not know the different forms of government tried during the Commonwealth, so after writing sketchily about them he (or she) continued:—"Nevertheless Cromwell had a good secretary and a good foreign policy," and then followed a long account of both. The humour was evidently unconscious on the part of the candidate who wrote "Cromwell chose Barebone's Parliament to govern England because they were crotchety and unpractical," and also on the part of the candidate who stated that "Henry VIII. was tired of his wife and that tiresome feeling was strengthened by the appearance of Anne Boleyn." German.—Most of the candidates showed their ignorance of the mode of commencing a letter. The translation into German prose exhibited a marked improvement on that of the previous year. Geometry.—The examination papers submitted call for little comment this year, the chief defect being, as usual, a slipshod style of establishing both propositions and riders. The three riders set were solved by a fair proportion of candidates, but, as usual, the question involving a locus proved beyond the capacity of most students. Trigonometry.—The majority of candidates were weak throughout. Chemistry.—Judged by the percentage of passes in the last two examinations, the candidates this year are on the whole inferior to those in the past two years. The

sketches or apparatus were again defective. Finished drawings are not expected, but at least there should be some approach to straight lines and to the shape of vessels used, and there should be some indication that the candidate understands the essential points in fitting up an apparatus for a particular purpose. Botany.—The weakest part of the whole work was undoubtedly the physiological. This, being almost entirely experimental, seems to prove most difficult both to teacher and pupil. Such ought not to be the case, and the examiner can do no better than refer teachers to the introduction of Osterhout's experiments with plants. Few ecological observations were noticed by the examiner. It would be an advantage to keep an informal notebook solely for this work, and pupils should be encouraged to make notes quite apart from their schoolwork. There is no doubt that many teachers lavish their fondest regard on systematic botany: some of the books sent in were models of good work, and one feels ungracious in pointing out small flaws. Physical Geography and Geology.—Replies to one question showed a marked ignorance of Australian meteorological conditions, and an inability, without exception, to draw an intelligible weather chart.

—Higher Examination.—

Modern History.—As usual most of the papers written by the Higher candidates gave evidence of careful work, but the examiner still finds room for much improvement in composition. Candidates should aim at simple English prose without slang, but without grandiloquent language. The candidate who began an account of Wellington with "A great light is thrown on a hitherto obscure life by Tennyson's poem" should learn that this stilted opening could not hide from the least experienced examiner the fact that the obscurity (or we might call it ignorance) of Wellington's life existed merely in the candidate's own mind; while the candidates who merely jotted down facts without framing them into sentences could not get the full credit for them, since disjointed facts do not constitute an account of a life. The life of Wellington was not as well done as might have been expected; one candidate said he was originally John Wesley! and another gave Wellington's military career fairly well with dates, but ended "his last act was to pass the Ballot Act of 1877, so it will be seen that his career as a statesman was not long." The origin of the Australian colonies was generally well done, yet one candidate said that South Australia had a convict origin. Few seemed to understand the important difference between the constitutions of Australia and Canada. The examiner wishes to emphasize the need of cultivating a clear, terse style of writing. Greek.—The standard was not so high as in Latin. There was the usual tendency to think that the small words do not matter, and that anything can be taken in any order. Many faults arise from mere carelessness of observation and positive neglect to read. Vocabulary was poor, but grammatical explanations much better than in Latin. The composition was below the level of the Latin. Accentuation was generally bad. Some real knowledge of style and idiom should be expected in this examination. Latin.—The Latin candidates were uneven—the best very good, and the worst utterly hopeless. A good many should not have entered for the examination. The same general remarks about carelessness apply as in Greek. Physics.—Practical work in physics has now been made compulsory in the Higher Public Examination for 1911, and each candidate in that subject will be required to submit his laboratory notebook as evidence of the performance of a suitable course in such work. Chemistry.—The general standard of candidates this year is below that of the past two years, the percentage of passes being considerably less. It must be borne in mind, however, that the standard of this examination is high, being quite up to that of the first year B.Sc. Examination, and that this standard must be maintained in view of the fact that passing in chemistry now exempts from inorganic chemistry in the medical course.

ADVANCED EDUCATION.

The problem confronting the University Commission, which began the collection of evidence on Friday, is how to bridge more effectively the gap between the primary school and the University. The Director of Education (Mr. A. Williams) was examined at considerable length. He said he had no doubt that, if necessary, the curriculum of the High Schools could be altered to enable them to educate students up to the standard required to pass the University senior examination. The attendances at the High Schools were rapidly increasing, and he advocated an extension of the system. He thought the standard attained at the Adelaide High School would compare favorably with that of any similar secondary school in the Commonwealth. Asked whether he thought the doors of the University should be opened sufficiently wide to enable all students to finish off their education there, he said a comparatively small proportion of pupils were fitted for University training. The Director will be recalled when the Commission meets again, and he has been asked to come prepared to go fully into important matters raised at yesterday's sitting.

ROYAL COMMISSIONS BUSY.

The University and Higher Education Commission, which examined the Director of Education on Friday, will take evidence at Parliament House on Monday from Mr. E. Jordan (the recently appointed inspector of schools), and Mr. C. Bronner (president of the School Teachers' Union). On Tuesday the final meeting of the Mangaroo Island Commission will be held and the report as amended will be considered. On Thursday next the Brazeo-Gauge Commission will sit in Adelaide and examine four witnesses. On Friday the same Commission will go to Hanley Bridge to take evidence. On February 21 the Wharfs and Water Frontage Commission will hold its first meeting to elect a chairman, and appoint a secretary.

NEW CHAIRS.

COMMERCE AND APPLIED CHEMISTRY.

SYDNEY, February 10.

"The State Government is negotiating with the Sydney University for the establishment of two new chairs—one of commerce and the other of applied chemistry." This announcement was made to-day by the Minister of Public Instruction (Mr. Beeby) to a deputation. Mr. Beeby admitted that the commercial side of education had been neglected. The university, he knew, was favourable to the proposal put forward by the deputation. It was intended by the Government to considerably increase the grants for University purposes. The director of Education would investigate the administration of some of the more modern universities in England, and, provided certain arrangements could be come to with the university, it was intended to provide sufficient money to establish a chair of commerce and also a chair of applied chemistry.