

PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Although the report of the Education Department for the year 1910 is on the whole a depressing document, it is full of interest to the public, and the appendix supplied by the Director (Mr. Alfred Williams) is particularly suggestive and valuable. It is disquieting to observe an apparent decline of appreciation of the public school system, when special efforts are being organized to increase its efficiency and popularity. The Government's total expenditure on primary education during the year was unprecedentedly large—£167,426, about £11,000 more than was spent in 1909. Exclusive of 20 "high schools," 713 separate teaching establishments were maintained and 1,429 teachers were employed, and these figures also were unparalleled. Yet the number of children under instruction (52,929), the average attendance (37,549), and the pupils presented for examination (38,927) were fewer by several hundreds than in the preceding year, and the statistics compare very unfavourably with those for 1901:—Number of schools, 700; teachers, 1,331; children instructed, 63,183; average attendance, 43,789; total cost to State, £149,795. Epidemics reduced the attendances last year, but they do not explain the decreases on the rolls. It is remarkable that a rapid increase in the total population of the State should have been attended by this falling off in the number of children at the public schools. Are the many thousands of other boys and girls going regularly to denominational or private schools and receiving a profitable education? The Superintendent of School Visitors (Mr. Curtis) says that a "considerable leakage" exists; and if returns, uniform with those furnished by the public schools, were obtained from all other schools, the source of that leakage would most likely be found. The State should by every reasonable means ensure that all children capable of doing so shall at least attain to the compulsory standard set in its own primary schools. In view of the increasing demands on the taxpayers, the present position of uncertainty on this subject is altogether unsatisfactory.

The expenditure for each child in average attendance during the year advanced to £4 9/1. The details are:—Management and inspection, 6/6½; Training College, 2/8½; teachers' salaries and school sundries, £3 18/3½; cost of applying the compulsory clause, 10d.; retiring allowances, 8d. The amount spent on buildings is not reckoned, except by way of rent. A liberal policy is pursued by Parliament and supported by the people. Additions were granted to the teachers' salaries to the extent of £15,000, and much trouble and expense are willingly incurred in providing accommodation for the children of settlers in newly opened areas. Generous provision is now made for scholarships and bursaries. "High schools" are in operation in the chief centres of population, and an elaborate scheme for imparting secondary, technical, and agricultural education and training is awaiting Parliamentary approval and adoption. But, in spite of all the costly machinery in use, there is a seeming lack of enthusiasm and driving power relatively to its working.

Otherwise, how can the decline in the attendances and the fewness of the aspirants for scholarships be adequately accounted for? The department has probably suffered through the severe illnesses and consequent absence from duty of its Ministerial head and of the Director; but it would be unfortunate if the influence of the teachers and the quality of their labours were injuriously affected by any extraneous cause. Mr. Williams recognises the paramount importance of having in the teaching profession men and women of the highest mental and moral calibre. He forcefully observes:—"The desire to lift our children to higher planes of thought and action can only be realized by associating them during their school life with highly capable men and women, teachers imbued with a strong sense of duty and devotion to their vocation." There is need for attracting more of such people to the State service; but

pecuniary considerations alone will not produce the result desired. No one is truly competent to mould aright the plastic mind of a child unless he loves the work, and has in a very real sense consecrated his energies unselfishly to its performance.

The ideas which have fertilized in the Director's mind will necessarily be discussed when the Education Bill is before Parliament. Meanwhile, it is desirable that intelligent public interest shall be aroused in them, and proof afforded of the Government's ability to materialize its schemes. New educational enterprises ought not to be undertaken as mere experiments. A failure in one direction might seriously weaken public confidence in the capacity of the department, and thus lead to its temporary undoing. The State must make manifest the facts that its educational system stands unrivalled, or that it is at least thoroughly efficient, and that the public cannot afford to treat it with indifference or in a niggardly spirit. At the same time, conservative ideas and methods are preferable to chimerical adventures which would entail heavy outlay for incommensurate results. Some sections of Australians, who in every other respect are capital patriotic citizens, would not be sorry if disaster befel the national educational system. They should be confronted with the practical proofs—afforded by increasing attendances at the schools, and public eagerness for South Australia to come into line with other advanced countries relatively to secondary and higher education—that the system commands the fullest confidence, and is accomplishing its beneficent objects. The Director's references to healthful surroundings, medical inspection, and physical training will be generally endorsed. Every one must desire that children shall have a fair chance of developing a good physique and sound bodily organs, and the school and its playground may be exceedingly helpful to them in this respect. The supreme aim of school teaching, however, is to develop and enrich the child-mind. As Mr. Williams remarks, we live in a time of rapidly changing conditions; and educational methods and ideals can never remain permanently fixed, but must be adjusted to the changes which have been, and are still being, effected by the fast-extending range of human knowledge. This is why the school and its curricula and teaching staff will always command the profound attention of thoughtful people.

ANOTHER LOSS.

Mr. A. E. V. Richardson
Resigned.

Appointment in Victoria.

[By Agricola.]

Not long since a prominent visitor from Sydney paid a glowing tribute to some of the young manhood of South Australia. "You have bred and educated in this State," he said, "many of the finest men in Australia, but," and he paused, "you never learnt how to keep them." He was right. No sooner does a young man give evidence of unusual ability and intellectual capacity than he is promptly snapped up by one of the other States. Only a few days ago the Register announced that Mr. Norman Jolly, who was connected with the Forestry Department, had been appointed Director of Forestry in Queensland. Now it has become necessary to chronicle the resignation of Mr. A. E. V. Richardson, M.A., B.Sc., Assistant Director of Agriculture, and his appointment to the post of Agricultural Superintendent and Chief of the Division of Agriculture in Victoria.

—A Big Loss.—

There was every promise that Mr. Jolly would soon have made a conspicuous name in connection with forestry work. Mr. Richardson has already established a splendid reputation throughout the wheat-growing areas of the State, and his departure will mean a big loss to the farming community. Since he became associated with the Agricultural Department about three years ago Mr. Richardson has devoted himself enthusiastically to the performance of his various duties, and at all times has displayed an eagerness to do all in his power to practically assist the men on the land. Indeed, without in any degree detracting from the merit of the achievements of those who have worked with him, it may be



MR. RICHARDSON,
in his academic robes.

fairly said that the farmers have come to regard him as a helpful guide, a wise philosopher, and a true friend. His lucid, instructive, and admirable addresses have

been invariably a feature of the agricultural conferences, which he has attended, and at all gatherings the producers have hailed his appearance on the platform with unbounded appreciation. They have found him ever ready to sympathize with them in their trials and troubles, and have accepted his advice in the cordial spirit in which it has been given. At the dry-farming congress, in Adelaide, in March, Mr. Richardson materially enhanced his reputation by delivering an address which Sr. McColl, of Victoria, said was the clearest and best exposition of dry-farming methods he had heard since he left America. The compliment was heartily applauded, and other speakers warmly referred to the excellence and comprehensiveness of the dissertation.

—Rapid Advancement.—

It falls to the lot of few men to make such rapid and solid advancement as has distinguished the career of Mr. Richardson, and fewer still are able to say, as he is, that every step has been won absolutely by his own unaided effort. Blessed with a magnificent physique, he has absorbed knowledge by studying and stewing every precious minute and hour at his disposal. As a scholar he was remarkably successful. He was dux of the Adelaide Agricultural School for four terms and gold medalist; he secured a first-class diploma at Roseworthy Agricultural College, and at the Adelaide University took degrees in the following order:—1907, Bachelor of Arts; 1908, Bachelor of Science (Agric.); 1910, Master of Arts. He obtained the John Howard Clark Scholarship for English language and literature at the University, and was highly commended for his thesis for the science degree by the Sydney University authorities. It is a noteworthy