

College. It is particularly unfortunate that the change should be made at a time when withdrawals on the grounds of economy will be numerous. It is not improbable, indeed, that the raising of the fee will have the effect of extinguishing the fifth class altogether in not a few of the public schools. The new regulations on the subject have just been issued in the *Education Gazette*, and from them we learn that the fifth-class fee will be 1s. per week as a general thing, but in some cases it may be a good deal higher. It is provided that "if the total fees received in any school are insufficient to meet the extra cost of teaching the fifth class in that school the fee of 1s. per week may be raised at the discretion of the Minister." From the last phrase it seems plain that Dr. Cockburn is prepared to assume the responsibility of setting aside the mandate of the Assembly upon good cause being shown. The resolution says that the fees must cover the whole cost; but the new regulation merely provides that the fee may be fixed according to the discretion of the Minister.

The full meaning of the change was not, perhaps, fully appreciated by some of those members who voted for it. To provide for the teaching of a class of a dozen pupils, attending on the average ten weeks per quarter, an outlay will be required which even a fee of three guineas per quarter from each pupil will not cover. From this it will be seen that unless the Minister freely exercises the discretion which he has assumed the chances of establishing a fifth class in any ordinary provincial town will be just as remote as before the passing of the resolution; probably more so. On the other hand the country districts will, under the new regulations, have more opportunities of enjoying the benefits of such agricultural teaching as can be imparted in the State schools. Ten per cent. of the total marks obtainable in the examinations are allotted to "special and moral lessons," and it is now provided that half of this amount only will be available if practical instruction has been given in agriculture, woodwork, metal-work, clay-modelling, or plaster-work. We confess we have no great faith in the absolutely practical nature of the instruction likely to be imparted in such a subject as agriculture. Digging a small plot of ground with a spade will not give a boy much idea of how he would have to set to work if he had to use the stump-jumper and the harvester on a three-hundred-acre farm. Still, it is a good thing even to have the thoughts of the young people systematically directed to the importance of agronomy. The tendency of a constant round of reading, writing, and arithmetic is to breed up, as it has been well expressed, "a nation of quilldrivers," and to induce our country lads to feel ambitious to be practical farmers will be worthy of the best efforts of the teachers. As for the proposed lessons in working in wood, metal, clay, and plaster it is intended no doubt that these shall be the occupations of the town boys, and a very considerable mess the schoolrooms will get into if any attempt be made to make the class instruction universal throughout the schools. Such subjects as these really demand quite separate teaching accommodation, and in the present depressed times there is not much chance of new rooms being provided.

Lastly, a word may be said in reference to the regulations for the granting of day

and evening scholarships at the University. The subject has already been dealt with more than once in our columns, so that the general purpose of the scholarships need not be specifically referred to. From the regulations it is made apparent that the three day scholarships are intended for candidates who have already done a fairly wide course of study, such as that which is pursued in the various grammar schools and Colleges; and these will not be awarded to any persons over eighteen years of age. The evening scholarships, on the other hand, may be awarded to persons up to twenty-one years of age, and the examinations will be so arranged as to give a chance to those who, while possessing abilities of a higher order, may not have had the advantages of a collegiate education. The examiners will be instructed to make due allowance for the "previous opportunities" of each candidate. In this mode of opening the door to candidates of comparatively neglected education there lurks a certain danger that efforts may at times be made to minimise the previous opportunities of a candidate in order to win for him more marks than would otherwise have been obtained. It seems to us that the obvious purposes of the framers of the new scheme would have been better attained had the examiners been directed to set such papers and make such assessments of the answers as would best conduce to show the native talent rather than the book-knowledge of the candidates. There is, however, reason for congratulation that nine scholarships will be available this year, and although in the case of an evening scholarship £10 must seem a very small sum to offer, it may reasonably be expected that a fair amount of competition for the prizes will take place. If the desire for improvement be really strong it usually requires but a small amount of assistance to induce efforts at self-help in mounting the ladder of learning.

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RETURN OF DR. PENNEFATHER.—Dr. F. W. Pennefather, one of the Professors at the Adelaide University, returned to the colony on Thursday by the M.M. mail steamer *Polyneesian* after an absence of twelve months. Dr. Pennefather was called to England on urgent private business, and was granted leave of absence from his duties by the Council of the University. It is the Professor's intention to resume his duties at once. During his absence the Professor worked on Murray's Handbook to New Zealand. To a representative of the *Register*, who met the Doctor on board the mail steamer, he said he had been very much interested during his stay in England in the latest developments in University work, and there were a number of suggestions with regard to points of detail which he intends to make, and which he hopes will be for the good of the University here. Soon after his arrival in England Professor Pennefather went to Cambridge, and was at once questioned about colonial appointments. One of the Professors at the Auckland University was recently told that his services were no longer required, whereupon two other Professors resigned their positions. This, it appears, has given rise to a very strong feeling in England, and the treatment accorded the Professor has been adversely commented upon. The insecurity of tenure of office in the colonies has been noted, and the matter has gone so far, says Professor Pennefather, that a combination has been formed amongst the learned people in London and Cambridge to boycott colonial vacancies when they occur.