

ROYAL SOCIETY OF ST. GEORGE.

EDUCATIONAL CONTRASTS.

THE NEW EDUCATION.

Twentieth Annual Festival Dinner.

Lecture by Professor Russell.

Old Ideas Exploded.

Address by Sir Archibald Strong.

Things of Everyday Significance.

In a scholarly address at the banquet of the Royal Society of St. George last night Sir Archibald Strong drew a parallel between the heroism of St. George in slaying dragons and the attitude of England towards oppressors. Dr. George of the latter character need not always be slain. They could be tamed by the exercise of the virtues of patience, clemency, and courtesy, which were characteristic of Englishmen.

Loyalty to the throne and Empire was the dominant feature of the twentieth annual dinner of the Adelaide branch of the Royal Society of St. George, which was held at the Piccadilly Rooms, North terrace, on Monday evening in the presence of a large and enthusiastic gathering. The festival day in honor of England's patron saint was celebrated in a fitting manner. An appropriate atmosphere was lent to the scene by the distribution in the room of Union Jacks and the flag of St. George, and the decoration of the tables with red and white roses. A portrait of His Majesty the King was hung on the wall near the head of the table.

The president (Mr. Frank H. Downer) occupied the chair. Seated at the head table were His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor (Sir George Murray), the Bishop of Adelaide (Right Rev. Dr. A. N. Thomas), Mr. Justice Angus Parsons, Mr. Justice Richards, the Lord Mayor (Mr. Lavington Bonython), Dr. H. Simpson Newland (senior vice-president), the District Naval Officer (Commander Loudoun-Shad), the Military Commandant (Brigadier-General O. F. Phillips), Sir Archibald Strong, the president of the South Australian branch of the League of Empire (Sir David Gordon), Brigadier-General K. L. Leane, the chief of the South Australian (Adelaidian Society) (Mr. Andrew D. Young), the secretary of the Caledonian Society (Mr. Donald McPherson), Mr. A. A. Simpson, Mr. Lech Winsor (private secretary to the Lieutenant-Governor), Very Rev. Dean Young, Archdeacon Bussell, Mr. F. A. Lakeman, the Hon. W. G. J. Mills, and the honorary secretary (Mr. Fred Johns). The vice-chairs were occupied by the Rev. K. J. F. Bicknersteth, Messrs. W. R. Bayly, W. E. Rogers, R. B. Stuckey, and Brigadier-General S. Price Weir. The toast of "His Majesty the King" was proposed by the president and honored with the singing of the National Anthem.

"Children are different now. They are animated question marks, and come to school and ask questions. Nowadays the question might well be asked whether the child is going to be taught in school or out." The speaker was Professor Russell, of Columbia University, who is visiting Australia under a commission from the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

His subject was "Contrasts in the educational methods of the United States and Australia." The lecture was held in the physics lecture room, which was crowded, for the most part, by teachers and others engaged in forms of tutorial work.

Professor R. W. Chapman, the Vice-Chancellor of the University, presided, and welcomed the lecturer.

Professor Russell expressed his appreciation of the reception he had been given in Australia. He had been able in a short time to gain a knowledge of the educational systems of this country, and specialised criticism from some of the officials controlling it had been most helpful. The points of resemblance between the Australian, New Zealand, and American systems were most striking.

Australia's Centralized System.

Australia had developed a mode of educational work which was as strange to his countrymen as that which could be found in old-time Germany and in modern Japan, New-Heroe time in Australia and New Zealand was there such a highly centralized system. The idea had positive advantages. Australia was without doubt serving its backblocks more than America was; and it might be that the average age of school life was greater than in his country. However, he considered that his country could produce more conspicuous individual examples. As needs differed and as peoples differed, so must modes of operation differ; and in saying that he did not wish to criticise either favourably or unfavourably the systems adopted in Australia. It was so different that it formed one of the most striking contrasts of the educational world. Australia had developed a system which had been looked upon as one of the peculiar products of an autocracy.

American Ideas.

Professor Russell then went on to describe some of the early days of school life in America. Schools there had been begun on the eastern seaboard first of all, and had then spread west. The very fact that groups went forth alone to fight their way past the hostile Indians, made each of them a community in itself. The communities thus established for themselves their own schools, and education came to be regarded as a matter for the community. The people of the village or town elected their own school board, which had the power to levy a property rate on the population, and it was from those funds that the schools were maintained. The teachers were engaged by the school board. In most states there was a form of subsidy that went to equalise opportunities. However, there were many methods in vogue. Such a system placed a great strain on the individual teacher, and it meant the survival of the fittest. The presence of a larger number of women teachers in the United States than men was largely due to historical reasons, but the number of the latter was increasing. The training of teachers was not subsidised as it was in Australia.

Effect of Public Opinion.

The lecturer said it was public opinion which dictated the standard which should be adopted in the schools. Despite their decentralized system, which was one of the most outstanding in the world, public opinion had standardized them. "Children are different now," went on Professor Russell. "Thirty years ago one newspaper was produced in their town, and then they knew the editor, and read every line in the paper, even to the advertisements. Nowadays the increased amount of literature displayed on the stalls at railway stations and other places, is an indication of the hold that reading has taken on the people. The child now is an animated question mark. He comes to school and asks questions. I often think that the reverse order should be adopted, and that the young people should be placed in charge of our schools. It is difficult for us older men to keep pace with this moving world of ours. Nowadays, the child's education is gained out of school. The question might well be asked whether the child is going to be taught in school or out."

The object of the system in the United States was to make the boy and girl attending school a good citizen. The speaker said that spelling books were being cut down, and instead scholars were concentrating on the 10,000 words most used. The same principle was adopted throughout. Professors should not be allowed to dictate the standard of scholarship in elementary schools because they catered for the expert, and 95 per cent. of the scholars would not become experts. In the past the pupil obtained scholarship only by a long process of synthesis and abstraction. To make good citizens it was necessary to develop the idea of putting two and two concrete situations together. They wanted to help boys and girls to form reasonable views of events of the day. The teacher in a democracy had a task before him, because of the three agents which had assisted to build up civilization—the home, Church, and the school—the last seemed to be the only one which remained. The teacher must always build character with scholarship.

Children, says Professor J. E. Russell, should be taught things of everyday significance, and education should be of a character that will help boys and girls to form reasonable opinions.

Educational problems, with interesting comparisons between Australian and American methods, were discussed in a masterly manner by Professor J. E. Russell, of the Teachers' Training College, New York, at the Physics Lecture Room of the Adelaide University on Thursday evening.

Professor Chapman, who presided over a large attendance, said that at the meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in January last, it was decided that the various State Governments should be urged to encourage the interchange of teachers between Australia, America, and Japan. Referring to the dream of universal peace, he said much could be done in the desired direction by the interchange of teachers. People's views were largely colored by what they learned at school. He would sympathise with a young Japanese coming to Australia and endeavoring to teach a vigorous young Australian with national prejudices. They welcomed Professor Russell because he was one of the foremost educationists in the world. The chairman read a eulogistic reference to Professor Russell's work at the Teachers' College of the Columbia University, and the wide influence he had exerted in educational circles.

Similar Ideals.

Professor Russell, who was warmly received, expressed appreciation of the friendly reception he had experienced throughout Australia. He had been able to form an impression of the external of the system of education in Australia. There was something more than that, for if he were to shut his eyes in the schools he could easily imagine that he was at home. The points of resemblance between Australia and America were most marked. He understood they spoke better English in Australia than they did in America. (Laughter.) They heard a good deal of the mixed population of America, but he could assure them that they had a share of good stock. They were studying the same subjects that were being studied in Australia. Was it any wonder that the outlook and ideals of the two countries were similar? He was sorry to see the kind of information that came from America and was published in Australia. He was sorry to see the impressions of America gained through the movies. Similar wrong ideas were held in Australia in America, where some people imagined there were kangaroos in the city streets. (Laughter.)

A Centralised System.

Nowhere else in the English-speaking world was there a more widely centralised system of education than that which existed in Australia and New Zealand. How it was that they had developed in Australia a system which reminded one of the prerogatives of autocracy he could not say. There were various theories. He might get a solution before he left Australia, but he was doubtful. In America they had a different beginning with regard to colonization from that which took place in Australia. In America in the early days they had to provide forts which cultivated the community spirit in defending the colonists against the enemy. The people developed a determination and a disposition to look after themselves. In America education had developed on those lines, and was in the hands of local committees. The people elected a school board by popular vote consisting often of three members, and rarely more than nine. The boards were authorised to levy rates on all taxable property for school purposes. From those funds the schools were maintained, and the boards had the right to engage and dismiss teachers. In districts where sufficient funds could not be obtained the State assisted, in order to equalise opportunities. Responsibility was placed upon the individual teacher, and if it was found that a teacher was untaught he was dropped. This he thought made for success.

Women Teachers.

In the elementary schools women teachers predominated in numbers, and there had been no serious question of their ability. If he had charge of a school of boys and girls and wanted to have it put in order he would chance a woman rather than a man. (Applause.) Some of the largest schools in New York were wholly in charge of women. There was something under the surface which accounted for that. The training of teachers was not subsidised in America as it was in Australia. There were tests and examinations, and personality was taken into consideration. If a woman were too feminine she would not succeed, and if she were too masculine she would fail. She had just to be a womanly woman, and there was an advantage from the point of view of the woman that corporal punishment was prohibited in America. Some time ago men looked upon teaching as a stepping-stone to something else, but changes had come about until now more serious attention was being given to teaching by men. The fact that American schools were separated and highly centralised might lead them to think that there would be different types of schools in different places. That was not so. They would not find as much difference in the schools of America as he had discovered between the systems of education in existence in Victoria and South Australia. Each locality in America was proud of its school, and many places went beyond what they could afford to build a fine school. They did not like to have it said that there was a better school in a neighboring town. So it was with text books and new projects in teaching. They spread like measles. It was a perfectly natural fact just as girls in Australia wore the same kind of skirts as were worn in Paris.

Old Ideas Exploded.

Public opinion in America had been standardised with regard to education. One aspect of the question was the content of the curriculum. He reviewed incidents in his own early education. He had never been able to read "Paradise Lost" since he left school, because he was obliged to parse parts of it. He could never enjoy Gray's elegy in a country churchyard for the same reason. The old idea was that rigorous training should be insisted upon. That doctrine had been exploded during the past few years. It had come to be realised that discipline secured under compulsion. The children came into the schoolroom like animated question marks and demanded a type of information that no one a few years ago had any experience of. It was difficult to keep pace with the times. The question that might well be asked was—where were the children to be educated—inside or outside of school? Education meant the sharpening of the wits, and it might be turned in bad directions as well as in good ones. The public had the right to know what the schools were doing for the welfare of the future. In other words, what were they doing towards good citizenship? It had been found that the number of words in common use was limited. What was the use of teaching words which were not required? The same applied to mathematics. What should be taught were the things of everyday significance. Consequently many old text-books were being discarded. With regard to mathematics, the Professor said, with a pause, "Well, why-why torture the children—that's all." They were beginning to put two and two together in order to see that the results were satisfactory. In America they were not quite sure where they were going, but they were going. Education, in his opinion, should be of a character that would help boys and girls to form reasonable opinions. In America they read Shakespeare, but they also read the newspapers in their class-rooms, and criticised the statements so as to find out the truth. In conclusion, Professor Russell stressed the importance of the influence of education on democracy.

Professor Chapman thanked the lecturer for what he described as an inspiring and suggestive address.

Royal Society of St. George.

Lecture by Sir Archibald Strong.

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Lecture on Education by Professor J. E. Russell.

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Slaying and Taming Dragons.

"Old England and the Royal Society of St. George" was proposed by Sir Archibald Strong, who expressed appreciation of the honor accorded him in asking him to propose the toast. Other members of the professional staff of the University had spoken at the annual gatherings of the society, and he could assure them that they all appreciated the honor. He considered that the character of St. George was significant of the English race. He did not know whether all were aware of the points of a dragon. The chairman no doubt knew the points of a horse. The four points of a dragon were that it must be at least 50 feet long; it must fly by night, breathe fire, and guard a great treasure hoard. Dragons were real beings to their forefathers. The Anglo-Saxon chronicles associated a dragon with the time of King Alfred. Of course rationalists would tell them that it was a comet. On judgment, it was set down that in the year 1672 a dragon was seen flying about Mount Pilatus, in Switzerland. He then reviewed the story of Beowulf, who slew the monster, and showed the qualities of extreme humility. He ventured to say that many Englishmen approach deeds of heroism in much the same spirit as that shown by Beowulf in slaying the dragons. Finally, in slaying the last dragon, Beowulf met with his death, and that was a symbolism of history. (Applause.)

More than once England in her history had to face dragons and slay them. Englishmen had fought dragons in the invaders from overseas. The dragon at Trafalgar had been fought and defeated, and Nelson, like Beowulf, had laid down his life. The greatest dragon of all was that which they had to face in 1914, and many had laid down their lives to prevent the small country of Belgium from being swamped by a dragon. There were dragons still in their lives as nations and individuals, which must be met and slain. Certain things could not be dealt with except by force or extermination. St. George had been pictured not only as a dragon-slayer but as an example of courtesy, kindness, and clemency. St. George had been referred to as not only a hero, but as a great gentleman. He had always thought that St. George had in him many of the qualities which they loved and respected in an Englishman. St. George was a tamer as well as a slayer of dragons. While some dragons might be killed, others might be met and subdued, and become quite serviceable members of society. Clemency less than courage was a creditable virtue of their race, and he thought they had shown that virtue time and time again in their history, and more especially in their recent history. In the Boer War they