

The Register.

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EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS.

Schoolboys at least are profoundly unconcerned as to whether Christmas Day is observed on the 25th or the 27th. They want to know how long the holidays will last, and are especially keen about the date of the Christmas breaking-up. No theological questions as to the value of the day's observance or historical considerations respecting the date of the birth of Christ greatly trouble their mind. They have worried through a year of study, and only want to know whether the prizes will be distributed and the school dismissed at an early or a late date. In process of time the colonies will adopt a more convenient period for their examinations in chief, for they cannot fail to awake to the fact that the season observed in England from time immemorial is not necessarily the most convenient in a climate of a diametrically opposite nature. A far wiser plan would be to hold the principal examinations in midwinter, at the same time keeping the longest holidays for the hot weather. But in Australia, which is conservative so far as the observance of old English observances are concerned, we have not yet clearly understood that the circumstances of our life demand a departure from the English custom. We shall understand this after a while, but perhaps not until we have found that a blind adherence to old-world practice has done harm to our rising generation. For it cannot be supposed that boys and girls are as fit to work in hot weather as they are in cool. Yet it is while the hot weather is most oppressive, because people have not become accustomed to it, that the University and the schools hold their principal examinations, the preparation for which involves exceptionally hard work.

During the last few days several of our leading schools have celebrated their breaking-up for the Christmas holidays.

To the remarks made by the heads of these schools much value is attached by parents and others who are interested in the cause of higher education. Some who are anxious to send their children to school next year read these remarks most carefully, because they serve to show on what lines particular schools are conducted. If the object in view is what is called a commercial education or a classical or a mathematical or a scientific education, the parents make up their minds and send their children to that establishment at which their particular fad, whatever it may be, is best represented. The Acting Head Master of St. Peter's College, one of the oldest and most important of the educational establishments in the colony, incidentally revives the old controversy between classics and an English education. He says that St. Peter's was the only school that sent up any candidates in Greek, or, at all events, that passed any. "As a means of culture," he continues, "to refine the mind and to educate the reason, Greek has no rival, and can have no rival; yet for purposes of money making it is practically useless." We must join issue with Mr. Lindon in one or two points along this line of argument. In the first place, Greek is not useless for purposes of money making either here or in Europe. The Greek scholar cannot enter a business house

as a correspondence clerk, but he can become a schoolmaster or a clergyman. The money made in these professions is the price of the recipient's attainments—he makes money by them. It is not strictly accurate to say that St. Peter's was the only school which secured passes in Greek at the recent examinations in the University. In the matriculation only three candidates passed in Greek—none of them with credit; all were from St. Peter's. In the junior examination only four passed in Greek, and of the two who passed with credit one came from the Christian Brothers' College. And, lastly, it may quite fairly be said that the fewness of the passes of St. Peter's boys in Greek is not creditable. The institution is one in which great attention is paid to classics, and of six passes in Greek only one with credit is hardly a certificate of success in a school in which Greek is a distinguishing feature of the curriculum. It does not matter whether the College is right or wrong in fostering classical studies, but at least it may be urged that its representative can hardly boast of the results of the tests applied by the University to ascertain how far these studies have been successfully prosecuted.

It is not to be wondered at that the question of Bible instruction in schools should have been referred to by some of the principals and friends. Bishop Reynolds expressed himself as "glad to see by the agitation for the Bible in schools that the people were awakening to the fact that religion and education should go hand in hand." It is well known that the views of the Bishop, as given in evidence before a Commission which sat a few years ago, are not favourable to the Bible-reading agitation, for the very reason that the mere reading of the Bible is not in his estimation religion or entirely conducive to religion. His remarks on Friday, therefore, must be taken in a qualified sense. Canon Andrews, at the Norwood Public School, likewise patted the agitation in question on the back. There are few men who differ more in their modes of thought than Bishop Reynolds and Canon Andrews.

The State system which would meet with the full approbation of both of them has not yet been discovered—it is, we should think, impossible of discovery. Both of them, however, might without sacrifice of principle agree in leaving things as they are—entrusting secular education up to the compulsory standard to the State, and not interfering with parents and the Churches in the religious education of children. One other matter worthy of note in the reports before us is the high encomium passed on the University by the head of the Christian Brothers' School. In these days, when the management of the University is being freely criticised, it must be satisfactory to the authorities of that institution to learn that the representative of so important a College can speak with unqualified approval of it. We must not forget to mention that some successful candidates for the junior examination passed direct from the Norwood Public School. This serves to show that in the State schools, which are intended for elementary work, are masters who are capable of higher flights if occasion demand.
