

Register 25th May 1901

EDUCATION IN THE COLONIES.

CRITICISM OF THE AUSTRALIAN SYSTEM.

(From our Special Correspondent.)

LONDON, April 19.

In a belated review of two bulky volumes, compiled during Diamond Jubilee year, which embody reports upon public education from each of the seven colonies of Australasia, as well as from Canada and South Africa, the "Daily Chronicle" is far more complimentary to the Dominion, and in particular to Ontario, than it is to your part of the world. In its judgment, as the following extracts will show, laissez faire dominates the school systems under the Southern Cross. After describing and, it must be added, giving quite undue prominence to certain points, some of them quite without significance in the regulations in force in New South Wales and New Zealand, the writer commits himself to the statement that "the Otago Scots and the English Squires of the Canterbury Association, who between them took up the greater part of South Island, took care that education should be a vital part of their settlement schemes; and Britain never sent forth emigrants more personally and devotedly attached to the motherland, whose institutions they reproduced as faithfully as possible in their new homes. There is something quite novel in the idea of a Radical organ giving credit to English squires for showing a burning zeal in the cause of general education, but let that pass. The writer next brings this startling indictment against what are now the States of the Commonwealth:—

In Australia the feeling was, and is still very different. Careless in education matters, ready to believe that his unaided wit does well enough, and so rather contemptuous of experience gained in older countries, the Australian leaves his children's training almost entirely to centralized autocratic departments. This is of a piece with most of his administrative arrangements; he prefers that the central Government should provide funds for all non-private institutions out of the general (mostly indirect) taxation, and as he rarely identifies himself with the Government, regarding it rather as a well-meaning but slow-brained and sometimes heavy-handed demigod, he is moderately willing to let those who pay the piper call the tune. In matters that touch him nearly he pays some attention to the tune, and interferes decisively when exasperated, but school training does not interest him much, and the central authority is allowed its own way. Each of the six provinces has local boards as part of its system, but their duties are practically confined to arranging for minor repairs in the school buildings, enforcing (in some colonies) compulsory attendance, and making suggestions to the Minister which the permanent officials usually neglect or overrule. The departments thus left in sole control combine, as might be expected, the virtues of system and organization with the faults natural to a permanent officialdom of narrow experience and lacking initiative. Speaking generally, the better the organization the worse is the narrowness.

The critic endeavours to point the moral of this last observation by a reference to the state of affairs in New South Wales, and is careful to state that centralization is not pushed to the same extent in other colonies. He illustrates this by referring to the encouragement given to training in outside institutions, such as universities; and then, doubtless with some reason, delivers himself of the opinion that everything depends on the permanent officials in chief control. "The temporary Minister," he remarks, in language which is too sweeping, "rarely has any ideas on the management of his department if he is appointed purely for political reasons, not because he is interested in or qualified for the work of his office. His business is to avoid friction and keep down the estimates. So the value of each colony's educational work has been dependent upon the influence of single men—generally officials—such influence as Dr. Badham exercised in New South Wales and John Hartley in South Australia (it would be invidious to speak of men still living). Where such influence is lacking education is a failure; and the mass of the people is not easily stirred to see this or to remedy it." No one in South Australia will have any inclination to question the conclusion here drawn as to the incalculable value of the services rendered to the school system of the colony by Mr. Hartley; but are not some at least of the local Ministers worthy of having their names handed down to posterity as men who have helped forward in a practical way the cause of education in the colony? A high compliment is paid to the Victorian Royal Commission of 1899, and the article concludes thus:—

If Australia will rouse itself and use the material to hand, it may yet have little to be ashamed of in a comparison with Ontario. But as long as the voters are intensely individualist about the material welfare, and leave everything else to uncriticized officialdom, we at home shall get little but warnings from the study of their social machinery.

June 1901

Correspondence.

(We are not responsible for opinions expressed by our Correspondents.)

PHARMACEUTICAL EDUCATION IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

SIR,—In order to bring ourselves in line with the other States, the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of South Australia saw that provision for the education of pharmaceutical students was necessary.

Unfortunately, until 1892, South Australia had not a regulated system of examinations, and then only one of a farcical standard. Even under these conditions the candidates who presented themselves to the Examiners were so unfit for the standard required that the Board considered it high time some arrangements were made for their instruction.

In 1894 the Board succeeded in coming to an understanding with the Adelaide University, whereby pharmaceutical students could obtain instruction in Inorganic Chemistry. I may say here that it is a significant fact that not one student who presented himself for the standard examination succeeded in obtaining a pass before the opening of these classes.

In the following year or two Botany, Organic Chemistry, Materia Medica, Practical Chemistry, Volumetric Analysis, and Pharmacy were added to the list, and now our examination compares favourably with that of Victoria, with her subsidised College of Pharmacy. Unfortunately, within a year of the opening of the Pharmacy class, the instructor was accidentally poisoned, and another has not been appointed in his place. The greater burden of the apprentices' education has thus been taken from the master's shoulders, and he is responsible only for his apprentices' education in pharmacy and dispensing. Your correspondent complains that the Board has not supplied the proper course of study. After the foregoing remarks, I think any sensible man must agree that the Board has provided an excellent course second to none in the States.

Your correspondent complains that the education of the apprentice has been taken out of the master's hand, and the ignominious failure of the candidate in Pharmacy and Dispensing (the only subjects left to the master) conclusively proves that it was high time some one stepped in and gave the poor apprentice a helping hand. For if the master is not capable of giving the necessary education in these branches, how much less would he be in the others?

It is perfectly easy to explain why the master cannot take the same interest in his apprentice. It is because he is at the disadvantage of being incapable of giving his apprentice the instruction required for the Standard Examination. He has not had the same privileges as his apprentice, and apparently can neither appreciate them nor his position. When the apprentice knows more than the master it is a sorry position for the master. But they must rise superior to these humiliating experiences for the sake of the apprentices and pharmacy in general. The tendency of the times is progress, not retrogression.

There are wide fields for pharmaceutical and chemical research, and it behoves us to place them within the reach of the apprentices (the chemists of the future) by providing a sound and scientific course of education. If we wish our calling to remain a trade absolute, then abolish examinations altogether. If we wish our calling

to be recognised as a profession, make the examinations worthy of a profession. Then, and not till then, will the calling be recognised as a profession. There can be no doubt that the feeling of the times is towards this recognition. We have the moral right, so let us fit our young men to be worthy representatives of this profession by a liberal education, and not revert to old and obsolete forms of education, which mean social and political insignificance and sweet obscurity.—Yours, &c., Semaphore.

SIR,—I am glad that the education of our apprentices is getting aired. It is quite time our Pharmacy Board and Pharmaceutical Council had a change of members. What we want on both are real live chemists who have the boys' interest at heart, and who come in contact with, and are interested in the daily requirements of the retail trade. The present system of our education is simply wrong from beginning to end, and is waste of money.

What can you have better than the books prescribed? I am sure if the boys are well up in the Pharmacopœia, Squire's, Materia Medica, and Atfield, and know them well, it is simply all they require. As for blaming the assistant Lecturer, it is simply a lame excuse, as the students can verify, especially the volumetric class.

What we want is, as your correspondent "An Original Member of the Pharmaceutical Society of S.A." puts it so ably, a School of Pharmacy, or what would suit is a similar class to the one Mr. Harrison, a former President, conducted some years ago, to which some to-day can look back with pleasure. We have one qualified man at least still in our midst who could conduct such a class, and I believe the cost would be less than the students are paying at present.

Where do the boys at the present time learn Materia Medica? Most of them do not know that there is such a subject. As for the "Pharmacopœia," it is simply a reference book. How many boys are there that make tinctures to-day, much less plasters and extracts (fluid)? You can buy them so cheaply that the apprentice does not require to make them, and therefore does not get the training thereby.

The boys may learn chemistry at the University suitable for the B.Sc. degree, but it is most certainly not suitable, nor does it pertain to the trade of a pharmacist.

It is quite time each and every one of us aroused ourselves, and put in only live members, active and young, who will exert themselves for the better training of our young men, so as to teach them more of the requirements of every-day life of the retail trade.—Yours, &c.,

ONE WHO HAS BEEN THROUGH IT ALL, 49,245.
Norwood, South Australia, May 5, 1901.

THE PHARMACEUTICAL SOCIETY OF TASMANIA.

SIR,—In your last issue I read with interest Mr. Lawrance's letter re the Pharmaceutical Society of Tasmania, and congratulate you on your remarks in the same column.

Our society are doing their best to uphold our profession and raise the status of the pharmaceutical chemist, and I regret to read that Mr. Lawrance expected the society to pay his expenses, considering the issue of the case was to directly benefit himself and no one else. I would urge all our chemists to join the society and take an interest in pharmaceutical affairs, for "Union is strength," and our weight would be felt more and more every year. Therefore, I hope Mr. Lawrance will join with us and help the society to carry out its objects, which, after all, are to benefit and protect the qualified chemists.

In conclusion, I trust the society will be able to remedy any defect in the Act, which allows unqualified men to either manage or keep open a business, or grocers to sell drugs or patents, and I for one am ready to give my quota to reach that end.—Yours, &c.,
The Pharmacy, New Norfolk, T. F. BROWN.
May 21, 1901.

Register 27th May 1901

Advertiser 22nd June 1901

Mr. Arthur Somervell, who visited Adelaide last year as examiner for the Associated Board, recently gave a concert at St. James's Hall, London, that was entirely devoted to works from his pen. These consisted of two song cycles and some pianoforte music. "The Musical Times," in criticising the performance, concludes thus:—"The whole concert, while serving to enhance one's estimate of Mr. Somervell's powers and his originality, left one with a doubt whether his range is wide enough to make a concert entirely devoted to his works a complete success." It will be remembered that Miss Gull Hack, A.R.C.M., sang some of Mr. Somervell's songs at a Conservatorium concert given while that gentleman was in Adelaide, and that they created a highly favourable impression.

On July 5 Mrs. D. Walter Duffield, of Glenelg, will leave by the Narrung for England. She will be accompanied by Mr. W. Geoffrey Duffield, who will continue his studies as Angus engineering scholar at Cambridge University.