

SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

To the Editor.

Sir—It would be well for the Education Commission to receive with a grain of caution the evidence of schoolmasters in favor of making school attendance compulsory five days a week. It must be remembered that the teachers of all grades have been very inconsiderate of the necessities of healthy child development, and have always been ready to force excessive amounts of home work on children, and in this way have done vital damage to many children. Compulsory attendance five days a week is only another form of the same thing. Play is itself a very powerful means of education, that is, of leading out the powers of the child's nature, which is a very different thing from cramming the child with information like Aylesbury ducks are mechanically crammed with boiled pollard. Then mothers are deserving of some consideration, and if five days a week is insisted on for boys over 10, mothers should be allowed the help of their daughters one day a week, though for the better working of the school that should be a fixed day, say Tuesday, which perhaps is the most suitable day for the family washing. The mothers have quite enough to do under present circumstances. The Commission should not sanction what would become a cruel oppression of mothers. That which injures the mother is also a great injury to the child. The most precious possession of a child is its mother, and everything should be done to promote, not diminish, that mother's efficiency. To deprive her of her daughter's help for five days a week is in a large number of cases to make the mothers of young families into over-burdened slaves. With regard to infants it would be well to consider if they ought not to have a weekly half-holiday; too much school does them damage. It is most probable that they would make more progress with a Wednesday half-holiday than without it. It is very questionable whether we should continue to allow children under seven years of age to attend the State schools. The growth of the brain is a matter of the first seven years. The brain is the supreme material instrument possessed by man; a healthy, well-developed brain is of more use than all that is acquired by premature instruction. There are various causes of the lunacy which comes in on society like a flood. There are those who think that premature pressure on the young brain in the primary schools weakens the seat of reason and makes many the easy prey of dementia. Sir James Crichton-Browne, that man of vast experience with cases of lunacy, who is looked up to by the whole profession as one of the greatest authorities on dementia, in speaking of education intimates that we should not confuse this great and many-sided thing with such of its factors as instruction or schooling. True education is not intrusion, as much instruction is apt to be, but the guidance of growth. It is devoutly to be hoped that our Education Commission will not be so cramped in their minds as to think that education is only a matter of primary and secondary and technical schools and universities. These are great instruments, rightly used, but the Commission in handling them should keep in view that education as a whole aims at leading forth all the powers of human nature and guiding them in their growth; and that there are other educational means and workers beside those in the institutions of learning. Chief among these is the home, and the chief trainer of the child in all nations is the mother. Let the Commission keep the mothers well in view in all their decisions.

—I am, &c.,
MATER.

Sir—I see that in giving evidence before the Royal Commission on education the president of the Teachers' Conference stated that he was "in favor of making it compulsory on children to attend school every day the school was open." I trust the opinion of parents will be obtained on this important question. The average parent is quite as interested in the educational welfare of his child as the teacher, while he has more responsibility by far as regards the physical welfare of his child, upon which both its mental and moral safety largely depend. Turned into law such a dictum would in many cases be unjust, in others unwise, in others cruel. We hear at times of certain children making record attendances. Can it be shown that these children excel educationally? Is the man who attends the most lectures always at the top of the list? In dealing with children we are dealing with those who are unable to expostulate, even though they suffer. The heart of the parent is as reliable a guide as the professional instinct of the teacher. The question at issue is not that of regular attendance, but a drastic and unwarranted standard of regular attendance, which it is proposed to make compulsory. It has been said that any virtue carried to excess becomes a vice and the above is, I think, a case in point.—I am, &c.,

E. HOWARD

Musical Examinations.

At a meeting of music teachers and others interested in musical education, convened by the local University Extension Committee for Thursday evening, in the old Institute Hall, to discuss musical examinations, Dr. Ennis, of the Conservatorium of Music, Adelaide, delivered an address on the relation between musical education and examinations. Mr. F. H. Daniel, Chairman of the local University Committee, presided. There was not a large attendance, but the audience contained several of the local music teachers of the town.

The Chairman introduced Dr. Ennis with a short explanatory address.

Dr. Ennis told his audience that he wanted to speak to them about the connection between musical examinations and education in music. In the study of instrumental music, whether on the piano-forte, the violin, or other instrument, education proceeded on several lines—technique, due appreciation of music, theory, &c. Education in these branches could not be forced, it must be a gradual growth. Examinations were of value—although it was possible in some cases to get good results without them—in giving a stimulus to the pupils, and making them more painstaking, and that did them a vast amount of good. Unfortunately the tendency nowadays was to use examinations for getting certificates to hang up in the parlor for friends to view, and examinations were not taken at their true value. To be quite right every examination should be accompanied by a written report stating its nature and why a pupil did well or badly. Although this craze for certificates caused great disappointment in many cases, many a time a failure did a candidate more good than a pass. He did not encourage studying for an examination twelve months or so ahead. A subject on which he had been asked to speak was the existence in South Australia of other examining bodies than the University. Many years ago the University of Adelaide inaugurated a system of examinations in the theory and practice of music, and they were very successful. In 1897, he believed, the Associated Board of Music, London, the premier examining body in England, was asked to co-operate, and they worked in conjunction with the University. In 1899 another agreement was made, and expired by effluxion of time in 1906. By that agreement the University accepted the Associated Board's syllabus and examiner, and the University was responsible for the examinations. It was afterwards thought the Universities of Melbourne, Brisbane, and Adelaide could unite to take the work up, and devote any profits that might accrue to musical education in Australia. In 1906 the three Universities began operations together, and the arrangement continued still, but owing to their connection with the Associated Board people began to overlook the fact that ultimately these examinations were owing to the University, and the Associated Board was given the honor of conducting most of the examinations. Another examining body was Trinity College, a privately conducted concern. He pointed out that these institutions, being so far from Australia, were under some disadvantages with regard to examinations. In England all the examiners were experts in the subjects upon which they examined, but owing to the great expense of sending examiners to Australia they could only send one examiner at a time, and he had to work alone in everything. The best results could only be obtainable from a man who was a special expert in a particular subject. The Universities in Australia did not labor under that disadvantage. They had two examiners for each candidate in every grade, and also tried to provide special experts in piano, violin, violoncello, and other instruments that were being learned. In the country they were certainly at a disadvantage in that respect, and unless they received liberal support from the country they could not guarantee experts to examine in all subjects. As regarded the

syllabus their work was perhaps a trifle more complicated and difficult than that of the Associated Board, but they aimed at thoroughness and discouraged cramming, the evils of which he exposed. They made their work as easy as possible, consistent with thoroughness and the laying of a good foundation. He need only say further that the certificate they issued bore the names of two Universities, and no certificate could have a higher value than it had. (Applause.)

Dr. Johnson asked if it would not be advantageous to licence teachers, and not allow unlicensed teachers to teach.

Dr. Ennis said that in Victoria a scheme of registration already existed, under which he understood certain disadvantages attached to those teachers who were unregistered; they could not sue for fees in a court of law or something. Efforts were being made in Adelaide to have a similar scheme in this State. The effect of that would be that all people who had been professional teachers for a certain period would be enrolled at once, and the scheme would apply to future teachers. He was in entire sympathy with the scheme.

Dr. Johnson—Do you mean that you would not allow any unqualified teachers to teach?

Dr. Ennis did not know that they could go so far as that, but he thought it desirable that some alteration should be made. At present all sorts of young ladies took up teaching for the sake of a little pocket money. He would like a scheme under which unregistered teachers would be under a disadvantage as compared with registered teachers.

Dr. Johnson suggested that teachers should be compelled to state in their prospectuses, cards, and advertisements whether they are registered or unregistered.

Dr. Ennis had not thought of such a scheme, but thought it might be a good idea. He would make a mental note of it and bring it forward at the proper time.

A vote of thanks with acclamation was passed to Dr. Ennis, and acknowledged by that gentleman.

FIRE AT THE UNIVERSITY.

A ROOM CONSIDERABLY DAMAGED.

When Mr. H. Westwood, an employe of Mr. W. Bland, contractor for the additions to the University, on North-terrace, arrived at his work at 7.20 a.m. on Thursday he found that the floor of B lecture-room was on fire. After burning a large hole in the floor the fire spread to what is known as the "common" room below, and considerably damaged it. The Fire Brigade arrived in response to a summons, and extinguished the flames. It is thought that the fire started in the sawdust, which was spread to a depth of 6 in. to protect the floor from the rain, the roof having been removed during the progress of repairs.