

EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA.

The time has gone by when Australians could reasonably be expected to regard as a very high compliment the appearance of outside] comments on their methods of life. Especially is this the case in regard to what has been vaguely and rightly called the impressions of visitors. Gentlemen who have honoured these colonies with their presence have related their experience in a more or less interesting form, and, as a general rule, their remarks have been valuable in proportion to the extent of their stay. Our visitors for the most part seem to be impressed with the idea that the light which their countenance has shed upon colonial affairs is sufficient to present our history in telling lights to all who seek to enquire into it. Noblemen and commoners have written books about these colonies—books which are worth, as history, about one hundredth part of the amount of time expended on them. Without special knowledge, or, at least, special means to attain this knowledge, scribbling visitors are useless guides. They say what they are told to say by prejudiced informers, and, as a result, their information is not trustworthy, and possibly also misleading.

Inasmuch, however, as it is open to any man with proper credentials to get at the facts respecting our institutions, and to describe them in terms which must be accepted as accurate, or at least probable, we are not disposed to admit the correctness of the postulate so often advanced that an English visitor is *ipso facto* incapable of speaking the truth about the colonies. An instance in point is the series of articles in the *Contemporary Review* from the pen of Dr. Dale. He came amongst us lately. He applied to the proper quarters for information, which he confirmed or rejected on subsequent examination. In the February number of this magazine he tries to explain the systems of education which obtain in these colonies. Of course his duty would have been much simpler if through a beneficent arrangement of Providence the system which commended itself to Victoria had been equally popular in New South Wales. Much of his partial failure to represent our educational systems aright is due to the fact that the absurd jealousy between these colonies, which ought to be and must eventually be members in an Australian Federation, compels those responsible for the conduct of affairs to introduce or to continue differences which vary in importance. We in this colony are mainly concerned, as things are now, with the system which prevails here. Dr. Dale's article confirms us in the impression that the method pursued in this colony is in the main a good one. The writer found abundant evidence of special knowledge. In a small mining town of this colony he spent a night with a minister who was intimately acquainted with Oriental learning. In Adelaide itself he found from a leading bookseller that "to meet the demands of his customers he was obliged to keep the best and most recent books in all departments, and that of the very best books large numbers were sent up into the 'Bush.'" He found too that in Adelaide a University had been formed under exceptional circumstances. Dr. Dale attributes the initiation of this University to Dr. Jefferies alone, whereas the

primary credit belongs to one or two other ministers as well. Nor are we quite sure that the reviewer is right in saying that in all the colonial Universities "useful knowledge" is held in less honour than the old learning. On the contrary, it is our belief that all of our Australian Universities honour most those schools of learning which lead to direct practical—not to say monetary—results. In any case it is simply misleading to say with Dr. Dale that "the traditional studies of the ancient Universities maintain their supremacy as against the modern sciences." Dr. Dale's memory, moreover, has distinctly failed him with regard to the scholarships enabling Australian youths to study at European Universities. The Gilchrist scholarship never directly applied to the Adelaide University, Dr. Dale, as was natural, confounding the extinct South Australian Scholarship with this benefaction.

As readers know, we have only regretted this extinction on the ground that it destroys the link between the State schools and the highest European education. With Dr. Dale we "should not be disposed to encourage the most brilliant young Australians to come to an English University." The men that we have sent were good men, and every one of our South Australian scholars has turned out well. But they might all have done as well in the colony, and the country was quite justified in holding that with a University here we should do wrong to it and ourselves if we paid our most promising students to go away. Dr. Dale, if he fails at all, fails in pointing out how our State schools form themselves into an avenue to the University. In his interesting article he makes no mention of the aids which the State gives to promising pupils—how they can obtain free entrance into secondary schools, whence they may gain free entrance into the University course. But at least Dr. Dale has done these colonies sufficient justice in the matter of our elementary schools. With the other Australasian Colonies we share the praise meted out in such sentences as this, in which Dr. Dale says that "the skill and vigour which every colony has displayed in constructing and maintaining a system of effective elementary schools are admirable." The writer devoted some considerable time to South Australian schools. He penetrated into the mysteries of the government of schools by the Minister of Education, the Inspector-General, and the Boards of Advice. There was no clashing of authorities, and Dr. Dale bears witness to the public spirit which dominates the Boards. He is quite correct in thinking that local educational authorities such as these, even without any educational power, form an important element in the system. We do not propose to weary our readers with a detailed account of the result of Dr. Dale's explorations. Most of what he says is as well known to them as the alphabet. But we have pleasure in recording the estimate which Dr. Dale, who has been largely concerned in educational movements in England, formed on the chief executive officer of the South Australian educational system. He writes of this gentleman in the article before us as "the extremely able Inspector-General, Mr. Hartley," and he invites special attention to Mr. Hartley's new system of teaching arithmetic. We congratulate