

The Register.

ADELAIDE: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1904.

SHOULD PUBLIC MEN LEARN HOW TO SPEAK?

A gifted lecturer connected with the highest seat of learning in South Australia recently contended that a Chair of Political Economy should be established at that institution. That proposal seems reasonable. On the whole, even a smattering of economic knowledge would be better than the almost absolute ignorance of that subject which characterizes so many legislators of to-day. By-and-by, when the world shall have grown wiser, one of the most curious anomalies of this era will appear to be the fact that, while a carpenter was not deemed competent to make a candlebox without having learnt his trade, the constructor of laws which, generally speaking, are of infinitely greater importance than candle boxes, was considered not to need any training in the lawmaking business. Surely, as well might one argue that the person who cuts one's corns should be a qualified expert, but that the operator who amputates one's leg does not necessarily require any previous experience in surgery. Coming to the immediate purpose, however, the suggestion by the learned lecturer provokes another question. Granted that the University is doing a great deal to instil knowledge into the popular mind, what is it accomplishing in the way of enabling the possessors of such learning to impart it to their fellows? Are all its own lecturers fairly supplied with elocutionary power? Does every one of them make himself so intelligible as he might be made to the students? Would not a public need, if not a public demand, be supplied if a Chair of Elocution were established at the University? Assuming that it would be impracticable to render it compulsory for politicians to be able to say what they meant, as well as for all of them to have some definite meaning in their minds, may not clergymen and other ministers of religion be expected—in a more advanced state of civilization than that attained at present—to pass an examination and win a diploma in elocution before they shall be allowed to preach?

An actor who was not trained in methods of utterance would not be worth his salt, and would not receive it; and yet the work of the preacher of the gospel is of far greater moment than that of the personator of typical characters. At a time when much complaining is heard to the effect that people, and particularly men, will not go to church—at a time when by far the greater number of churches are very poorly attended—it is consoling to know that, all other things being equal, an eloquent preacher, a man who has studied not only what he has to say but the most effective mode of saying it, has no difficulty in filling his church. Illustrations to prove this would be alike invidious and unnecessary, because they are widely known. There may be a good deal of justification for the plea urged, particularly by devout folk of the older fashion, that people ought to go to church as an act of duty and of worship; and that the sermon should be a mere incident of the service. But human nature is human nature. Against the plea mentioned may be set the idea that where the service is on an unvarying ritual the worshippers might as well be led by a phonograph if the preacher has no higher function than that of a mere reader or reciter, and a very indifferent one at that. The truth probably is that the churches are filled, not by any ceremonial formula, not even by a powerful choir, but by the power and individuality of the preacher who is, above all else, a moral teacher. For practical purposes there is little to choose between a man with no notions and much glibness and a man with plenty of ideas and no capacity for their delivery. It is not enough that a preacher should be full of knowledge and Christian graces, unless he is able to communicate them to others. The day of spiritual sphinxes is past. Even a priestly reservoir is useless if it possess no distributing agency. A system of higher

education that provides engineers for the making of a dam and none for the dispersion of its contents by reticulation, would manifestly be one-sided.

The Register has often pointed out one fault in relation to literary society competitions—a fault inherent in the plan of impromptu speaking which tends to encourage young men to talk, whether they have anything to say or whether they have not; but such trials of merely mechanical speaking power have distinct uses. Elocution is as necessary in making up the full panoply of the public teacher by word of mouth as means of percussion are to the discharge of a gun. On this theme wise and suggestive words have recently been written by Mr. George Alexander, the famous London actor-manager:—"The glory of elocution, rightly used, is that it satisfies him speaking, and pleases him hearing; that it renders inspiration vocal, and opens the gate to the poet's ecstasy; that by it man can confer with men, and persuade them

to his mind. The commonplace may climb to pleasantness; the pleasant to inspiration; the inspired to divinity, by so free a way as this. It is a way for the whole world. With emphasis I would say to all that wish to excel in any art where public utterance prevails—"Whatever you have to say, say it at its very best." And the art of thus saying things at their best, in their fullest meaning, and most musical expression is elocution in the true sense of the word; and to one and all I say—"Be distinct! Be distinct! Be distinct." In church, as well as out of it, how much glorious literature is spilt for the audience by mouthing and mumbling? How often the beautiful prayers of the church are garbled so that they lose their meaning and influence? How many preachers can read with anything like the expression which should be given to it that marvellous drama of the prodigal son? How many can give out a hymn without ruining its rhythm and marring its poetry by a dreary sing-song? How many, taking a familiar example, are trained or are careful to judiciously interpose little pauses of silence between their words, thus avoiding the grim blunder which was caused on one occasion by hasty running-together-gabbling of the shortest verse in the Bible—"Jesus wept." Admitted that men are called to the service of the church, and that preaching is a vocation and not an avocation, there is still no reason why the preacher should not be armed at all points to do battle with the forces of superstition, and error, and sin. Apart from all other arguments, much may be said to recommend proficiency in elocution if only on physical grounds. If voice culture were more general there would be fewer strained vocal cords, and fewer cases of that distressing ailment known as "clergyman's sore throat." And so, regarded from every point of view, the systematic teaching of elocution seems to be an absolute necessity in these days of higher mental culture and intellectual strenuousness; and the example set in this respect by the Romans and the Greeks in classic days ought to be followed in Australia.

Advertiser 22nd February

ELDER MUSICAL SCHOLARSHIPS.

Saturday was the last day of entry in connection with the Elder scholarships in music (violin, piano, and violincello) at the Conservatorium. A number of entry-forms have been sent into the country, and the total number of competitors will not be known for a day or two. However, the number of entries that had come to hand up to noon on Saturday was regarded as satisfactory. The scholarships are to be tenable at the Conservatorium of Music for three years, and will entitle the holders to instruction.

Ad. 23rd Feb. 04

Dr. Helen H. Mayo, who graduated in medicine with distinction at the Adelaide University 15 months ago, will leave Adelaide for London by the P. & O. mail steamer Arcadia on Thursday.

Ad. 23rd Feb. 04

VOICE CULTIVATION.

A valuable little work on "Voice Cultivation," by Miss Guli Hack, just published, not only deserves the attention of those already versed in the subject, but can be read with pleasure and profit by all whose interest in music and singing is in the least degree more than superficial. It is not an elaborate treatise, yet it summarises in clear language the best that is to be said upon the subject. In her theory, and to some extent in her practice, of voice culture Miss Hack admittedly follows the old Italian school, for a revival of which the leading present-day authorities are calling. Miss Hack is not disposed to believe that the mysteries of the methods of vocalisation employed by the great masters of Italy are impenetrable at the present day. She enjoyed the advantage of tuition by Gustave Garcia, through whom she claims to have been able to take a peep back at the secrets of the school as taught by Manuel Garcia the elder. The authoress of "Voice Cultivation" is a thorough believer in the building-up process as applied to the voice, and encourages beginners with the assurance that although peculiar excellence often depends upon a rare natural structure of the vocal instrument, almost everyone may have a cultivated voice. The chapters subsequent to the general remarks on "Voice Cultivation" are devoted to an exposition of the methods employed in breathing, a true conception of which is the first essential in voice production, an anatomical description of the vocal cords and the resonator, the pronunciation of vowel sounds and consonants, and directions as to exercises which will be found fairly complete and easy of comprehension. As a manual introducing the beginner to the art of singing, as well as a medium of conveying to the public the ideas of Miss Hack on the art in which she is at once an accomplished performer and a successful instructor, the little work on "Voice Cultivation" has a wide value. The book is well printed and illustrated by Messrs. Vardon & Pritchard.

Reg. 24th Feb. 04

Dr. Angus Johnson will probably leave on an extended foreign tour early in April, but his movements will to a large extent depend upon international developments in connection with the Russian-Japanese war. His object is to study cancer with famous European experts, and he will be absent for several years. "I recognise that cancer in the coming subject so far as the medical profession is concerned," remarked Dr. Johnson. "By a little care and investigation we would be able to do a lot for suffering humanity. I shall take matters easily in order to enquire thoroughly into this increasingly important phase of medical science. In the past I have been working with Professor Watson, and have been able to cure some cases and give to others two or three years' additional life. I shall return to South Australia, by all means." Dr. Johnson will first associate himself with Professor Orth, of Berlin, and then with Professor Metchnikoff, of the Pasteur Institute. He will subsequently work in conjunction with Dr. Otto Schupp, the great cancer specialist of Cologne, and will successively visit Vienna, Spain, and England, where he will spend some time at the Jenner Institute of Preventive Medicine. Afterward Dr. Johnson will proceed to Buffalo, America, and study with Dr. Gaylord, and then at the Saint John's Hospital, Baltimore, and institutions in San Francisco, Valparaiso, the South Sea Islands, and, if hostilities permit, Japan. Dr. Johnson, who is at present indisposed, will probably resign his seat as a Councillor in the Adelaide Corporation at the end of the month.

Ad. 27th Feb. 04

SCIENCE IN A COMMERCIAL LIGHT.

The next meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science will be held in Adelaide in September, 1906, and will be of great benefit to the State both scientifically and in a monetary sense. The meeting held last month in New Zealand is estimated to have led to the spending of £5,000 in that colony by Australian visitors alone, but much of that outlay was due to the lavish manner in which the New Zealand Government laid themselves out to cater for the pleasure of the delegates. The grandeur of New Zealand scenery is universally recognised, and with a view of inducing the Australians to prolong their stay the Government arranged for a series of outings to the mountain peaks, to the lakes, hot springs, and other holiday resorts. They granted the visitors free passes for a month over the railways to enable them to travel—and circulate their money—and otherwise showered privileges on them. They even printed the whole of the proceedings, which will be issued shortly, and granted £500 towards the expenses of the meeting. What an object lesson to South Australia this is! If the example is followed here in 1906 the attendance at the Adelaide congress may even be larger than in New Zealand on account of the ease with which this State may be reached by railway from nearly all parts of the Commonwealth.