

News of the Week.

Education Again.

No measure initiated by the Government now in power at Home has been the cause of so much earnest and bitter controversy throughout the country as the Education Bill. In the fierce battle that is being waged, the question at issue is chiefly the proposed change in the administration of the educational system now in vogue, and so wrapped up are the combatants in that point that they have no time to call in question a matter which is really of much more importance, namely, the efficiency of that system. It is being called in question, more and more insistently every day, by those who realise how much before Great Britain the Germans, and even the Americans, are in the matter of educating their citizens. To them it may well appear a matter of minor importance whether the control of public education is in the hands of the clergy or laity, as compared with the necessity for a reform in the system of education altogether. In his presidential address to the British Association for the Advancement of Science recently, Professor Dewey put the case against the present system very clearly, and not less strongly. The people of Germany, he argued, have reached a point of general training and specialised equipment which it will take England two generations of hard and intelligently directed educational work to attain. Further, he is convinced that the loss Great Britain has sustained through the rivalry of Germany, in many valuable industries, is due to the failure of British schools to turn out thoroughly-trained youths. By trained youths the Professor does not mean men who have a technical training—that comes later—but what he means is that our system of elementary and secondary education does not give that sound basis of knowledge and preparation of the faculties without which a thorough training in the future is almost impossible. "Mental habits are formed for good or evil long before men go to the technical schools," says the Professor. "We have to train the population from the first to think correctly and logically, to deal at first hand with facts." This is the criticism of an expert on the education system of the Old Country. How far is it applicable to the system in this colony? In my opinion it is altogether applicable. Fundamentally we are not a whit more advanced in our educational ideal than they are at Home. Our system is borrowed from theirs, lock, stock, and barrel, and we are groping in the dark after a true system just as much as they are; that is, when we trouble ourselves about the matter at all. Now we are troubling ourselves over the question of the Bible in schools—a most important question, no doubt—but I would like to see public opinion roused to a sense of the inadequacy of our educational methods—an inadequacy to which every parent who observes and reflects can scarcely be blind.

The Wanderer's Return.

Our Premier will be home again on Saturday, and Auckland is to be the first to welcome him back to the colony. Why the Northern city was singled out for this honour is a point on which there has been a good deal of speculation. Perhaps Mr Seddon considers that the Aucklanders need both to be impressed and conciliated. It may be that when he was last here he was not met with the degree of enthusiasm which he looked for, and so means to dazzle us into admiration with what Coronation glory may still be clinging to him. Or it may be as some have suggested that he is coming to take a long last farewell of New Zealand from the historic shores of the Waitemata. I say "long last" advisedly, for it is not to be supposed for a moment that if the Premier contemplates leaving us he will take his leave of the colony in one brief speech at Auckland. His farewell taking will

be a lengthy business, whatever else it is. Not merely the chief centres, but all the second, third, fourth, and fifth-rate towns will be visited and have to submit to the ordeal. Valedictory addresses, resplendent on velvet, will be the order of the day, the floodgates of adulatory rhetoric will be opened, and amid all the spectacular impressiveness the colony can command the Right Hon. R. J. Seddon will depart from these shores. There is nothing the people of the colony are more anxious to find out about Mr Seddon than what his future movements are to be. Rumour has persistently declared that he is going to South Africa. Perhaps he will be so good as to tell us the fact, and tell us early. He has enjoyed our confidence so long now that in this particular we might be permitted to enjoy his. It's a point on which we are all really anxious, from Mr Ward downwards. If it is that he has decided to leave us, but hesitates for our sakes to say so, let him have no apprehension for us. We can bear it; indeed we can.

The Outlook.

The violent scene which marked the opening of the British Parliament last week, and necessitated the application of the closure before the House had been many minutes in session is not a happy omen. The support and encouragement which Mr O'Donnell's disgraceful behaviour was accorded by the Nationalists points to a determination on the part of that body to make as much trouble as possible. From other sources come evidences of a similar resolve, and one paper at Home goes so far as to declare that the Nationalists, in their hatred of Great Britain, have joined hands with that section of the Boers still hostile to the Empire, with the intention of waging an open and secret campaign. The paper indicates that the prolonged presence of the Boer leaders in Europe is not unconnected with the aid which they have been promised by the Irish malcontents, who regard their co-operation as a providential weapon with which to wound England. Let us hope that the journals which publishes this rumour is not correct. At the same time there is unfortunately no great reason to suppose that loyalty to the Empire would stand in the way of either Irish Nationalist or Boer entering into such a league. As to the possibility of carrying out such a policy of harassment, as it is said they contemplate, we know what the Irish foes of England have been able to do before this, and the union of the Boers would assuredly be a strong reinforcement, for it would bring with it what support in the shape of anti-British feeling the Boer war has inspired on the Continent. But even were Boer co-operation of less value to the Irish cause than the Nationalists may reckon, the possibility, in their eyes, of worrying England through its means is quite enough to inspire hostile Irishmen to renewed agitation against the Mother Country. The outlook from this point of view is the reverse of bright, and unfortunately—the general outlook in England at present does not afford a pleasant contrast. There are signs of a hard winter at Home: According to the report of the Board of Trade, just issued, the unemployed are rapidly increasing and wages are falling. Taxes, on the other hand, continue to press heavily, and there are loud complaints regarding the increasing burden of local rates.

Yet One Short Month.

The settling of the date of the general election for the 25th of next month, though doubtless a relief to the candidates already in the field, or who contemplate entering it, only disposes of one of the numerous uncertainties which beset the electoral paths. It is something, if you are a candidate, to know definitely the decisive day, so that you can make the most of the time that is left you to prepare against it, but the very fix-

ing of the date concentrates attention on the occasion and emphasises those misgivings to which even the most sanguine candidates must confess themselves subject. The next short month will be for the combatants an anxious as well as a busy period. The wind of popular favour blows whither it lists, and you hear the sound thereof, but not even the most electoral-wise can safely predict how it will blow on election day. Therefore, to continue the Scriptural language, let him that standeth take heed lest he fall. It is a tenet of the average candidate's creed to assume an assurance of success which he very often does not feel. No doubt it is good policy to adopt this attitude with the average elector, who is certainly influenced in his choice of a candidate by the chance the latter has of winning. Nobody wants to be on the losing side. I have had chats with several of the men in the field, and not from one of them have I heard a whisper of apprehension regarding his political fate. They have no doubts as to the issue; they have met with quite an unexpected degree of support; their friends have told them they were as good as elected. Beware! Beware, the voice of the flatterer! But it must be admitted that the candidates do not relax their efforts one whit on account of these comforting assurances. Night and day they are on the warpath, armed cap-a-pie with all the electoral armour they can muster—the honeyed tongue, the courteous bow, the eager smile, the generous hand-shake, the open pocket, and the rest. If you are an observer you can recognize the candidate in the street by these signs almost as plainly as you would a returned South African trooper by his dress. There is a nervousness about his gait that is unmistakable. His eye wanders loosely around him, fearful to miss the slightest sign of recognition from the passer-by, his hand falters uncertain half way to his hat that no second may be lost in saluting a lady. Poor man! When you consider all he goes through you may well ask yourself "Is the game worth the candle?"

labour and expense of providing such an area is taken into consideration the asphalt pavement has much to recommend it. As to whether the authorities would object to the street being used in this way is a point that has not yet been considered by the enthusiasts who contemplate the innovation. I am not aware that rinking in a public thoroughfare is contrary to any existing by-law any more than is cycling. If the rinkers like to amuse themselves they can do so at their own risk. That risk would be not inconsiderable at the busiest times of the day and evening, but after eight o'clock the traffic in Queen-street is not so large as to be inconvenienced by rinking parties. And on Saturday evening, when it may be supposed a fair proportion of the usually large concourse of pedestrians would prefer wheels to walking, vehicular traffic could be suspended. But the thing would not stop there. We should soon have the length of the thoroughfare devoted to rinking parties far into the summer night. And the change might be made an aid to business as well as a recreation. Why, for instance, should we walk down to work in the warm summer morning to arrive at the office moist and clammy, or travel in a stuffy bus, when, by the aid of a pair of roller skates and the law of gravitation, we could glide down to business with a maximum of comfort. The idea seems strange no doubt, but so did the idea of cycling at one time; and the roller skate has a distinct advantage over the cycle in many obvious respects. The latter, though most useful for taking one quickly over distances, is not suited for moving about in the crowded pavements of the public streets. Mounted on a neat pair of roller skates, on the other hand, there is nothing to prevent a skillful skater pursuing his daily business as conveniently as on foot, and with not a quarter the muscular effort.

A SMILE AND A MORAL.—"What the dustman is to the dwelling in which we live, that Haysal James is to the local habitation of the human spirit." Thus writes a well-known medical writer.

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Rinking in the Street.

The delightful smoothness of Auckland's chief thoroughfare, now that the street has been asphalted, appears to have suggested a rather novel idea to some of the younger members of the community. Mention has been made in the daily papers of a movement to revive roller skating, and in connection therewith it is proposed to utilise Queen-street as a rink. I understand from those well acquainted with the art of rinking that the roadway would be admirably suited for the purpose, provided it was kept well swept. No doubt a specially prepared wooden floor would be very much superior in many respects, but if the

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