In advance, £1 per year. **Booked, £1 5/-**

THE WEEKLY GRAPHIC

AND

NEW ZEALAND MAIL

VOL. XLVII.—NO. 5 JANUARY 31, 1912

Subscription—25/ per annum; if paid in advance, 20/. Single copy—Sixpence.

The Week in Review.

NOTICE.

The Editor will be pleased to receive for consideration Short Stories and Descriptive Articles, illustrated with photos, or suggestions from contributors.

Bright, terse contributions are wanted dealing with Dominion life and questions.

Unless stamps are sent, the Editor cannot guarantee the return of unsuitable MSS.

University Reform.

THERE are few matters in which there is greater need to proceed with caution than university reform. It is quite easy to find fault and defects in the system both of teaching and examining at the different universities throughout the world. Everybody, whether he is a University man or not, thinks himself fully qualified to deal with all matters affecting higher education. From a schoolboy is the first primer to the occupant of the highest professorial chair, they one and all are willing to give opinions on the very difficult matter of the functions of a university, which is not wholly a teaching or an examining body. While it fulfils both these functions, its primary duty is to train the mental faculties and to create a thirst for knowledge. It has been well said that the honour schools should test the acquisition of a faculty, and the pass degree the acquisition of knowledge. Thus a wrangler should have the faculty of solving problems, and a classical honour man should have the faculty of transferring the thought and idiom of the ancient world into that of the modern. A man who has taken honours in science should have a taste and aptitude for research and original work. Different schools have different traditions, and in the older universities these traditions are the growth of centuries, and have left a deep impress on the whole trend of thought. Thus the impress of the mathematical school at Cambridge is seen in the classical school. A Cambridge classic is generally more accurate in pure scholarship, while an Oxford classic excels in the thought rather than the language of the great writers of Greece and Rome. Scientific accuracy is the keynote of a Cambridge education, and deep thinking is the characteristic of the man trained at Oxford. So it has come about that Cambridge has produced great men, while Oxford has produced great movements. It would be quite easy to reform the system of education at both these universities. They could be modernised. We could have chairs of typewriting, shorthand, or even cookery and woodwork. In a word the degree might have a far higher commercial value than it has at present. But the question is, would the universities, if reformed, still preserve their present strongly-marked characteristics. We doubt it. All reform is not necessarily for the better. It takes centuries to build up a tradition, but only a moment to destroy it. That is why both at Oxford and Cambridge the authorities are loth to make any change that might impair the present university tradition.

New Zealand University.

How does this affect our own University? The reformers seem to centre their agitation for reform round the much-vexed question of outside examiners for degrees. The value of the present degree largly depends upon the fact that the examiners are men of special eminence in their own particular subjects, and have wide experience in the art of examining. For the real examiner does not merely set questions and correct answers. He is able to judge of the mental capacity of the student. In the first place have we sufficient men in the Dominion, outside the professorial staff, capable of examining for honour degrees? If not, are the teachers themselves to be the examiners? If so we can foresee great difficulties in the way. A teacher would be exposed to two great temptations. He might either favour a pupil or else from fear of favouritism he might be unduly severe. The provincial jealousies which are so marked a feature of life in New Zealand might also enter into the question of examinations conducted by professors from the different centres. We do not say that it would, but it might. What is the advantage that it is proposed to gain by altering our present system? First, it is said that the expense will be less. Then it is urged that there would be less delay in ascertaining results. We cannot see that there is much force in either of these contentions. We want the best, and no question of money or saving of time ought to enter into the matter. Of course, if we have in the Dominion a body of men with the requisite knowledge and training to conduct the final examinations with the same degree of skill and accuracy as the English examiner, by all means let us have the examinations conducted locally. But this body of men ought to be entirely dissociated from the teaching staff. It is idle to suppose that any permanent good could result from local examinations conducted by the teachers themselves. We doubt very much whether outside the professorial staff it would be possible to find a body of examiners skilled to examine with special knowledge in the many and varied subjects required for our various schools.

Where Reform Is Needed.

But there are aspects of our university education in which reform is urgently needed. The main value of an education at Oxford or Cambridge does not consist so much in the degree itself as in the corporate life of the University. That is why men talk of their college rather than their university. A Cambridge man says that he was at Trinity or King's, just as an Oxford man says that he was at Merton or Balliol or New. This is because it is the college life that is valuable rather than the degree. We have practically no corporate life. It may be inevitable, but nevertheless it is so. The energy that has been spent in agitating against the present system of examination might have been employed to much better purpose in devising some means for fostering a spirit of camaraderie amongst the students. We are too apt to think of the commercial advantages of the degree rather than the university life. It is the corporate life of a university that gives a knowledge of men—a knowledge far more useful than any acquired from text books or lectures. Again we want to have real professors and not merely tutors. At present the major part of the professor's time is taken up with purely coaching work. This ought not to be. It is no part of a professor's duty to cram students for a degree, whether pass or honours. Further, our professors have to cover too wide a field. We expect one and the same man to teach botany, zoology, and entomology. The professor of classics is largely occupied in correcting elementary Latin prose. We should have an efficient teaching staff, and leave our professors leisure for original work. It is quite a mistake to suppose that in higher education you can get good results by overworking the professorial staff. Every inducement should be given to our professors to regard their university duties as their life's work. At present our professors are underpaid, overworked, and have neither security of tenure, nor adequate provision for old age. In education as in other matters you get what you pay for. In New Zealand, thanks to the devotion of the University staff, we get a great deal more than we pay for. But this cannot go on for ever, and the sooner we recognise the fact the better it will be for us all.

The Value of Education.

In a democracy such as ours it is essential that the highest education should be free to all. The State which can pay so liberally for experimental public works grudges the few thousands necessary to place our university on a sound footing. We want to train our students in such a manner that their character may be developed as well as their intellectual faculties. We cannot show them the dignity of learning as long as we are content to house them in such ramshackle old sheds as those that are present dignified by the name of the Auckland University College. We cannot train their characters as long as we neglect altogther the corporate life of a university. Education means training and developing the intellectual faculties, not merely filling the head with facts. What are we doing for the children of our out back settlements? What, indeed, are we doing for the majority of our population? Practically nothing. We want a well organised system of university extension lectures. We want libraries in the country districts, and we want men capable of lecturing on the contents of these libraries, and rousing interest in different subjects. It is quite a mistake to suppose that our young people in the back blocks could not be interested in the matter of higher education. The man in the country has abundant leisure for reading: he wants to know more about science, literature and history. At present he has to pick up for himself such education as he may desire without receiving any help from duly qualified lectures. Not only in the matter of roads and bridges and railways are our settlers neglected, but also in most matters of education. The best schoolmasters are located in our towns, the best lecturers and exponents of the arts and sciences seldom leave our large cities. Is it any wonder that parents look for a city life for their children, and the country life is chiefly praised by those who write of it, as Pope wrote his description of landscape, with their backs to the window of a comfortable suburban residence.

Sharks and Bathing.

At this time of the year when such a large number of people take advantage of the splendid natural bathing facilities afforded them in this country the appearance of a large shark in Auckland Harbour last week is very disconcerting. We are thankful to note that we are not often menaced from this source. At the same time it behoves our bathers to be very careful where they bathe, and not to venture too far out. The unwelcome visitor was first noticed by two launch masters. It was swimming about off the Man-o'war steps in chase of smaller fish. The two men immediately made preparations to catch him, and after some difficulty, the capture was effected. The shark, a rather large specimen, nearly ten feet in length, and weighing half a ton, attracted considerable attention, being the object of curiosity to many people. Perhaps the largest shark known to have been seen in Auckland Harbour was one which a few years ago followed the Northcote ferry boat, and was said to have measured twenty-two feet in length. Fortunately it is very rarely that a shark will attack bathers in the harbour, and we can only recollect one occasion in which a bather suffered this awful experience. At Punsonby a few years ago, a man was attacked whilst bathing, and bitten rather badly. He recovered from his injuries, but still bears the mark. At the majority of the beaches about Auckland the water is rather shallow for bathers, and consequently sharks are not likely to venture in. The Takapuna and Milford beaches are considered quite safe for bathing, and the people of Auckland, judging from the crowds that have bathed from these beaches since Christ-

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