

Queer Features of Australia's Public Schools

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SYDNEY, New South Wales, July 27.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—I find curious letters from our American boys in the departments of public instruction in Australia. Some of our school teachers interest their pupils in geography by having them correspond with school boys all over the world. The school boy writes a letter telling about his home and life in the United States, and in return asks the Australian boy to reply with a letter about his home and how things are going on on the other side of the world. One such letter, which I have before me, comes from Archie Ashmore, a 13-year-old boy of Matland, Neb. It has been answered by one of the Sydney school boys, and young Archie already knows how boys live in Australia. Here are a few sentences from his letter on how he lives at Matland:

I live in Matland, Neb., on the North-western railroad. Not many years ago there was scarcely anybody living here, but so long time ago people began to move here from foreign countries, some of them from Sweden, Norway, Germany, Denmark and Bohemia. This is a fine place, only dry and windy at times.

Next I will tell you what we grow here. We use plows to stir up the ground and harrows to level it off. We plant oats and corn with a machine called a cornplanter. We cultivate the corn with a cultivator three times. We cut the oats with a bind r shock it up and when it is dry it is hauled to the house and stacked. In the fall when the corn gets ripe we have to husk it and crib it up to keep it for our stock or sell it if we want to.

Our school begins at 9 o'clock in the morning and closes at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. Then we go home and do our chores and get ready for supper. After supper I help in my father's store.

Most of the girls help their mothers do housework. When they think they get old enough they get married if they can find somebody to suit them. Well, I guess I will close. Yours truly,
 ARCHIE ASHMORE.

Australia's Public Schools.

I find that the Australians have a good public school system. Every colony has its own books and its own methods. In Victoria the Board of Education publishes school papers, which come out once a month, to take the place of the reading books used in our schools. These papers are composed of extracts and such original matter as the teachers think will benefit the children. They contain frequent references to the news of the month and the articles published are on current topics and on matters Australian. There are now many articles about the Boers and the Chinese and the wars which have been going on among them. There are papers on how plants grow, stories of geography, poems and songs. The papers are illustrated and seem very attractive. Some of the poems are parodies, and one of the songs which was published a few weeks ago has the words and air of "Columbia," beginning:

Britannia, the pride of the ocean,
 The home of the brave and the free,
 The remainder of the song is about the same as our "Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean."

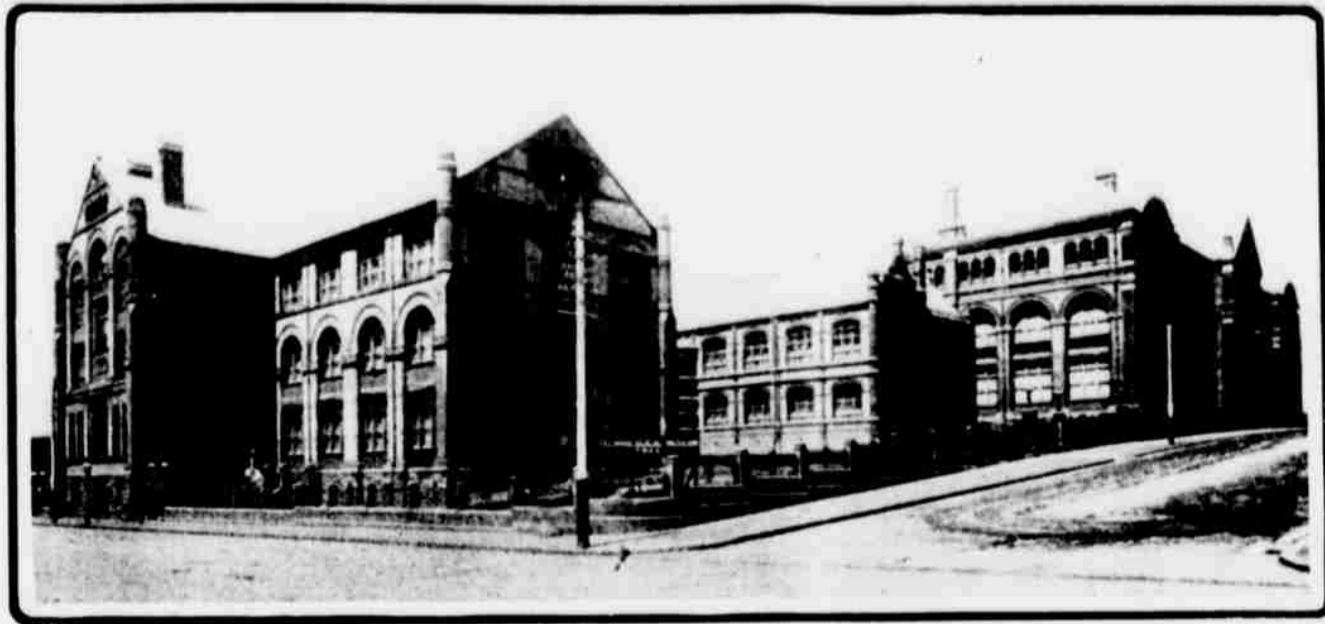
In nearly all the colonies education is compulsory, and that notwithstanding the children have to pay for attending school. The charge is never more than 6 cents a week per pupil and never more than a shilling, or 25 cents, per week per family. In New South Wales if children between 5 and 14 are kept out of school during the school season, or during any part of it, their parents are fined \$1.25 for the first offense and \$5 or seven days' imprisonment for each subsequent offense. There are school officers who go around and hunt up the pupils, and the truants are sure to be caught. There are compulsory school laws in Victoria, Queensland and also in New Zealand and Tasmania. The system is not as well developed in Western Australia, but even that colony has fairly good schools.

Railroad Passes for School Children.
 In some of the colonies school children are carried free on the railroads in going

to and from school. They are given passes to the school nearest them and every effort is made to give every one an education. In the country districts there are itinerant school teachers, men who travel from place to place and teach for a short time in a number of families, going back again to carry on the work they have laid out to be done in their absence.

At present there are about 8,000 public schools in Australia, with about 17,000 teachers and almost 1,000,000 scholars. Nearly everywhere the schooling is secular, although in New South Wales where the parents do not object a preacher is called in for an hour daily to teach religion. In South Australia religious instruction is given before school hours, if the parents so desire, but as a rule such teaching is left to the Sunday schools, which are about as numerous as in any country in the world. Every one of the states has thousands of Sunday schools, each church and denomination having its own, including the Salvation Army, which is teaching many thousands of poor boys and girls.

One of the queer features of education in this part of the world are the schools of art. Nearly every town has one, and connected with it a library. In Queensland the government will give dollar for dollar, or rather pound for pound, to any town which raises a sum for this purpose. For instance, if a village will raise \$1,000 to establish a library and school of art, the government will supply another thousand, and will continue its gifts as the people give more. These schools of art teach drawing and painting, music, botany, typewriting and stenography, and, in fact, about everything you will find taught in the Young Men's Christian association schools in our country. They also teach painting and the higher studies. They have reading rooms



TECHNOLOGICAL MUSEUM AND COLLEGE AT SYDNEY.

and an equipment worth about \$250,000, and which has at present in the neighborhood of 2,000 students. The chief classes are in the evening, when there are lectures and recitations upon scientific art, engineering, mining, commercial and other technical subjects, as well as on the leading trades.

The technical schools of Victoria are under the direction of the educational department. There are eighteen of them teaching almost every branch of science, trade and art. Among the trade subjects taught are photography, wood-turning and pattern-

making with those of the English schools. It is the same with the Melbourne university, an institution which has already conferred about 3,000 degrees. In addition there are universities in Queensland and South Australia, as well as numerous colleges supported by the various religious denominations.

Ship Reform School.

Here in Sydney the government has a nautical school which it uses as a reform school. Upon it some 450 boys are put through a regular course of education and training. They have the studies of the common schools and at the same time are drilled so that they are fit to be efficient sailors when they leave. The ship is called the "Sobron," and it is as well equipped as school training ships anywhere. The boys also have land quarters on one of the islands of the bay, and altogether they are well treated and as a rule are made into good men by their training. They have their cricket grounds, their swimming pools and all sorts of games. They are taught to swim and are put through a daily course of gymnastic exercises. They wash their own clothes, keep the ship in order, but do no contract work of an industrial character. After leaving they are apprenticed to farmers or business men in different parts of New South Wales, and the reports from these are that they do exceedingly well. So far as I can learn the school is a success, and has been so ever since it was organized, now about thirty-five years ago.

Dairy Schools.

I like the way these Australians organize

new schools when they have any specialty they wish to develop. Within the last few years instruction has been given in dairying and cheesemaking, and the governments have been doing all they can to build up this business. The result is that there are now a number of large butter and cheese factories in every state, and the exports of these articles are rapidly increasing. Victoria is now making something like 30,000,000 pounds of butter and 2,000,000 pounds of cheese annually. New South Wales made last year over 30,000,000 pounds of butter and 3,000,000 pounds of cheese. There are now more than 400,000 dairy cows in New South Wales, which yield annually something like 100,000,000 gallons of milk. The surplus of butter over the local requirements amounts to about 75 per cent, and the most of this goes to the English markets, although some is now being exported to the Philippines. The Australian butter brings a higher price in London than the Danish butter, and the people are experimenting in every way to better their product and the methods of shipping it.

Government and Butter Business.

The beginning of dairying in Victoria is interesting. One of the buttermakers talked to me about it during my stay in Melbourne. Said he:

"Five years ago we made no butter to speak of. Our total shipments along in the '90s did not amount to more than 50,000 pounds per annum. Then the government came in and helped the farmers. It arranged a scale of bounties for butter ex-

(Continued on Eighth Page.)



AUSTRALIAN MILK BOY.

and their libraries are well supplied and well patronized. The School of Arts in Sydney has a library of 60,000 volumes.

Technical Schools.

In addition every city of any size has its technical schools. There are seventy-three different classes taught in Sydney and its suburbs, and in them are 4,000 students. The city has a technological museum with \$2,000 exhibits, including 11,000 specimens of wool. The museum building alone cost \$100,000. There are in New South Wales 350 mechanics' institutes, many of them night schools, in order that the working men may attend them. In Melbourne there is a workman's college which has build-

making, metal working, plumbing and gas fitting, carpentry, coach building, wool sorting, painting and sign writing, tailor cutting, bootmaking, cooking, dressmaking and needle work. All sorts of manual training is taught and everything in the way of engineering.

The technical schools of New South Wales have quite as broad a curriculum, the branches of wool sorting and wool classing, architecture and agriculture being especially good.

Australian Newspapers.

The newspapers show that there is no lack of intelligence among the Australians. About a thousand are published on the continent and in New Zealand, including the magazines and trade journals. In Melbourne and suburbs alone 150 magazines and newspapers are published and fully as many, I should say, in Sydney. The Melbourne Age has about 100,000 circulation and the Argus is a good second. The Sydney Herald is taken in all parts of Australia and one sees the Sydney Mail everywhere. Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth have both morning and afternoon dailies and, in fact, there is scarcely a town on the continent which has not four or more papers. The leading society papers are the Sydney Bulletin and the Melbourne Punch, Table Talk, Critic and the Sun. The leading dailies have big Saturday editions of many pages, which sell at 12 cents a copy, going out by mail to all parts of the colonies.

There are all sorts of agricultural journals, sheep journals and financial journals. The Review of Reviews has an Australian edition and there are local editions of the Illustrated London News and Sketch.

The Australian dailies, as a rule, are less sensational than the American newspapers and are more lively than the English newspapers. Nearly all have good advertising patronage, the shipping advertisements alone supplying from three to five columns daily, and the auction sales in many cases covering a page.

I went out the other day to visit the Sydney university. It has about 1,000 students of both sexes. It gives degrees of art, science, law and medicine, and its studies embrace all branches except theology and divinity. Its graduates are received at Oxford and Cambridge on an equal

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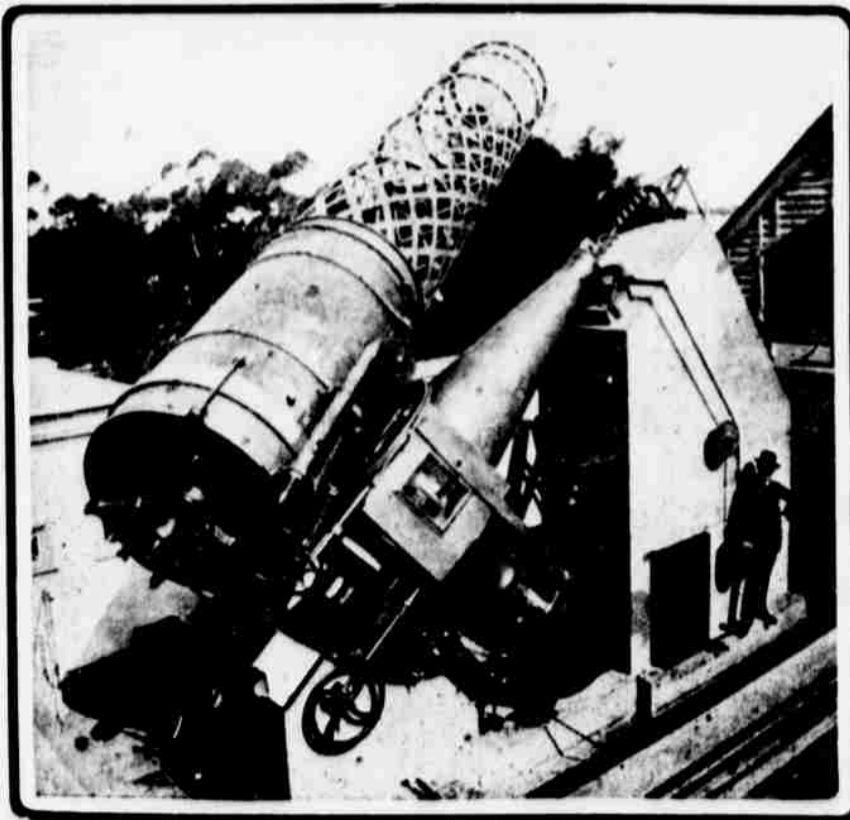
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