

EXCERPTS

From the Calcutta University Commission's Report.

[Five stout volumes of the long-expected Report of the Calcutta University Commission have been published and eight more volumes are still to be published. The first three volumes deal 'with present conditions' and the last two embody the 'recommendations' of the commission. Let wiser heads ponder over the rich mass of well-digested information and important principles embodied in the published volumes and discuss the weighty issues involved in them. It will be our humbler task to amuse our readers with brief excerpts throwing a lurid light on the present conditions of High Education in Bengal. They are all taken from Chapters XII & XIII of Vol. I.—L. K. B.]

(1)

A College has applied for honours affiliation in Philosophy. Inspectors were duly deputed by the University to enquire into the fitness of the College for this higher work. One of them bore one of the most respected names in the University. The Principal of the College suggested to this gentleman that he should inspect the philosophical library of the College, which happens to be unusually good and well selected. The reply was a refusal. "The fewer the books, the better the students will read," said this guide of youth. "They can not understand the books and they only confuse them." Much better it would appear, that they should be supplied with dictated dogmatic notes, and learn them by heart. (pp. 394-95)

(2)

In one College the Principal received us in the library. We sat on the only eight chairs the room contained; the books, in a few dilapidated *almirahs*, surrounded us. While the principal discoursed upon the iniquity of prescribing *Romeo and Juliet* to the 'pure and innocent boys' whom he taught, one of our number caught sight of the title of a book on one of the shelves. It was *More Gal's Gossip*, by Pitcher of *The Sporting Times*. It stood between a stray volume of Hodge's *Systematic Theology* and a novel by Mr. W. Le Queux. (P. 425)

(3)

A student, let us say, is a candidate for honours in history. He has to cover an immense range of ground—a range enormously wider, be it noted in passing, than that covered by the honours courses of British Universities, in spite of the fact that the British student commonly devotes his whole time to the subject, while the Calcutta student has to take other subjects concurrently. The result of this is that he must study everything at second-hand, never at any point coming to intimate grips with the methods of criticism appropriate to his subject. (pp. 398-99).

(4)

This desolating dominance of examinations as Mr. K. Zachariah puts it, "poisons the very fountains of learning. 'Arithmetic' says Plato, 'is an excellent preliminary to philosophic study, if pursued from the love of knowledge, and not in the spirit of a shop-keeper.'.....In Calcutta, not only Arithmetic, but even divine Philosophy itself, is too often pursued in the mercantile spirit." (pp. 382-83)

(5)

"Teaching is a game at which both the teacher and the taught must play," says Mr. Dhirendranath Chowdhuri in a sound and pointed aphorism; but the mass of students, whose school training has nearly always been mere examination-coaching, do not realise how much they miss in refusing to play their part in this glorious game, and think themselves defrauded unless the teacher does nearly all the work. (P. 383)

(6)

Mr. K. Zachariah observes "The College teacher is heavily over-worked,.....he is left with neither time nor energy for special studies of his own. He is like a gramophone that replays the old records." (P. 360)

(7)

We share the enthusiasm of Dr. Brajendranath Seal for the really good lecture with "its generous enthusiasms and exaltations, its sense of wide spaces and vistas, its sympathetic resonances and imaginative responses, its interfused and illumined 'mass-conscious-

ness ;" though we must confess to having heard few lectures in Bengal, or anywhere else, to which it would not seem a little excessive to apply Dr. Seal's glowing phrases. (Page 386)

(8)

Mr. Jatindra Chandra Guha of the Rajshahi College expresses his indignation in lively and humorous terms :—

".....it is the effort of speaking only that prevents the teacher from sinking into drowsiness, while it is the loudness of his shouting that keeps the student from falling into a somnolent state..." (P. 389).

(9)

It may be worth while to transcribe a verbatim note of a short passage from one such lecture, delivered to Second Year Students, which was taken down by one of our number : it was read, be it remembered, very slowly from manuscript, with frequent repetitions. "Question No. 2. What are the good effects or blessings of good nature—full stop. In answer to that—small a in brackets—good nature enlightens our conversation—semicolon ; small b in brackets—without good nature society cannot be enjoyed—comma—that means society is not enjoyable—semicolon ; small c in brackets—politeness or good breeding is regarded as a substitute or remedy for want of good nature." Some students with whom we were trying to talk in a hostel subsequently showed us transcripts of this stuff in their note-books ; one of them when asked if he understood it, replied that he had not yet had time to learn it. Many words in the note-books were misspelt ; although the lecturer had paused, for example, to note that two c's are required in the word 'account.' (P. 340)

(10)

In one large Calcutta College one of our number was impressed by the fact that not a single student, of over 100 who were present at a lecture which he attended, had taken a single note during the first half of the lecture. He asked some of the students why this was so, and got the reply that they followed the lecture perfectly and would write out their notes when they got home. Being anxious to discover whether such surprising feats of memory

could really be practised, he asked all the students present, with the permission of the lecturer, to write out a summary of what they had just heard. Only one of the whole number was able to reproduce correctly even a portion of the lecture; others could not put down even three lines; and in conversation they explained that they trusted to learning their text-books including problems and their solutions. (P. 401)

(11)

The fact that the average mark in Mathematics obtained by the whole mass of candidates, successful or unsuccessful, in the Matriculation Examination 1917 was no less than 62 per cent is not to be attributed wholly to the mathematical ability of the Bengali people, marked though that ability is. The methods of the examination contributed to produce this remarkable result. (P. 332)

THE ECONOMICS ASSOCIATION.

The College Economics Association held its 4th Sitting on Saturday the 9th August, 1919. Professor P. Mukherjee of Presidency College was expected to preside over the meeting. But unfortunately, he could not come owing to some unforeseen circumstance.

Professor D. N. Mukherjee was then proposed to the chair by Sj. Nepal Chandra Chatterjee, and the Secretary of the Association seconded the proposal. The proceedings of the last meeting were read out by the Secretary and were duly confirmed. The President then called upon Sj. Abani Kumar Mitra to read his English paper on "*What the Co-operative movement can do in India.*" The Essayist, by way of introduction, said that the Co-operative movement first began in Germany in order to ameliorate the distressed condition of the peasant class. He then tried to show very clearly how the movement was nowhere to be more warmly welcomed than in India, where the peasantry were almost on the verge of starvation and where more than 70 P. C. of the population lived directly or indirectly upon agriculture. The writer then gave a short sketch of the introduction of the movement in India; and dwelt upon the salutary effects of the Co-operative movement in all the aspects of life, educational, moral, social and economical. He quoted the opinions of such personages as Sir Theodore Morrison and Sir P. C. Roy to corroborate his views regarding the rather insignificant welfare that the Co-operative movement had brought into the country and the immense good that was expected to come in the future. The Essayist did not also lose sight of the fact that since the