

DISTINGUISHED YOUNG ENGINEER.

Broadened in physique and vision, with robustness of intellect, and a store of valuable knowledge, Mr. Harold Smith, B.Sc., M.E., winner of the Angas Engineering Scholarship in 1907, is a young South Australian, who should quickly win professional distinction. He has just returned from a five-years' sojourn in America, and has already secured an important appointment in a large Sydney firm. Mr. Smith has a fairly wide horizon of interests, and while he was bustling through universities and engineering shops in the land of the dollar, he had eyes and ears for other things besides machinery. He made observations of American habits and tendencies. These are some of them. The cosmopolitanism of America, owing to the ever-flowing stream of immigration, bringing Frenchmen,



MR. HAROLD SMITH.

Germans, Norwegians, Swedes, Italians, Hungarians, Slavs, Greeks, Poles, and Turks, is strongly in evidence. For instance, Milwaukee is largely a German and Polish city, the State of Minnesota is largely settled by Scandinavians. All the track work on the railroads is done by Italians. A number of businesses carried on by the State in Australia are still left for private enterprise. The movement seems to be rather in the direction of private enterprise, with State control. In nearly all the progressive States there are State Railroad Commissions, consisting generally of three members, whose duty it is to regulate railroads and public utility corporations. Their approval is necessary before a new company can get a franchise, or before an old company can increase its capitalization. If complaints of excessive rates or poor service are made, the Commission investigates, and may order improvements. This system is a protection to the company and the public, and appears to be giving satisfaction. Although in many trades high wages are paid, the cost of living is so high that the average working man is no better off; and, taking into consideration the many ways in which he is helped by the State in Australia, he is better off here. The working week in the United States is very often one of from 54 to 60 hours. Saturday is far from being a universal half-holiday. Factory conditions differ widely. In many instances they are fine, well-lighted hygienic buildings, and the employes are well cared for. Some have swimming pools, or hospital with nurse and doctor in attendance, free medical attention; and often the employes assemble in the evenings for social enjoyment. Education is generally valued and eagerly sought. The system starts with kindergarten, advances to the grammar school, and through the high school to the university. Nearly all education is co-educational. There are even fewer men teaching in the States than in Australia. The remuneration does not appeal to many men. A great number of the universities are State supported. The fees are very small to residents. A large proportion of students work their way through the university, and do any kind of work to support themselves. They are thought just as much of, as those who can afford a university training. Life is very strenuous in America. Every one endeavours to work at the highest tension. There is a regrettable tendency for all professional and business men to become absorbed in their particular duties, and to take no part or interest in political affairs. It is this condition which has led to so much corruption in American municipal and political life. Fortunately, however, things are changing. Civic clubs are being formed to study the needs and requirements of the city, and to see that the taxpayers' money is wisely spent. Many cities are getting new charters, and are adopting the commission form of Government. Affairs are administered by a commission of three men, generally leaders in business circles, highly paid, and beyond reproach, instead of having perhaps a couple of hundred of corrupt and dishonest Aldermen and Councillors.

THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT.

The Government was bound to act promptly in providing for the continuance of the administrative work which the late Director of Education relinquished with such tragic suddenness; and the appointment of Mr. Maughan (Chief Inspector), to be Acting Director, was an obvious as well as a satisfactory temporary recourse. Mr. Maughan has performed the work well before, and he will doubtless perform it well again. But the Government is probably doing better still by keeping the Directorship in commission pending the adoption of a definite new or revised policy in connection with State education, particularly on the administrative side. The present system undoubtedly takes heavy toll in human energy and human life. It is sadly significant that the body of the worry-killed inspector who was yesterday laid to rest reposes close to the remains of a predecessor prematurely worn and aged by the endless friction of his office (although he was actually slain by accident), and of two other prominent heads of the Education Department—with all of whom the sun went down while it was yet day. Equally significant, too, is the other fact that the present Acting Director, who relieved the now deceased officer because that gentleman was ill, had himself to be relieved because he also was seriously indisposed. Why and wherefore this melancholy association of sickness and death with the administration of the Education Department—not only among the chief figures in it, but also among the rank and file, and particularly the members of the gentler sex. Is it an indispensable feature of the department that those who are directing it must gravely imperil their own physical health in devising means to supply and maintain a fine standard of mental health for the children of South Australia? It certainly cannot be. Yet there is no reasonable doubting the fact that under existing conditions the permanent head of the State Education Department is forced to occupy an almost intolerable position—even more so than those of officers of generally similar rank in the other States of Australia, gentlemen who also are groaning under their burdens. Everybody who knows anything of the matter is fully aware of the simple but ominous truth that not work in itself, but worry, killed the late Director. Most observers, too, would need little argument to convince them of the fact that political influence caused most of that worry. Here, as in Tasmania and nearly—if not quite—every other State, political influence is not only the bugbear, but more than the bugbear and almost the curse of the department with its numerous offices and its far-reaching ramifications. Such influence was rampant to his great hindrance and heartbreak, even in the time of the masterful Mr. Hartley; it affected the triumvirate which followed what had been termed his dictatorship, and also the succeeding two Directorships; and, in the same general circumstances, history would assuredly repeat itself. This fundamental principle should be kept always prominently before the minds of

earnest and sincere educational reformers. By all means let ill-growing branches of the State education tree be pruned and lopped, but the trouble is the root defect indicated. Until the chief administrative man or men shall have a free hand in administration in the sense in which that essential is enjoyed by the Railways Commissioner and the Audit Department, the roll of administrative martyrs will be extended indefinitely and tragically. The Parliament, led by the Government, should provide the broad policy, and select good and able men to give effect to that policy; but then should leave the rest to them.

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All schools in South Australia that had received news of the death of the Director of Education (Mr. Alfred Williams) were closed by order of the Acting Minister of Education (Hon. J. G. Bice) on Thursday, the day of the funeral, as a mark of respect to the memory of the deceased. A long cortege left the Henley Beach road, Torrensville, at 3 p.m., for the North Road Cemetery, and among those who marched in front of the hearse from points along the route were a large number of members of the South Australian Public School Teachers' Union and of the Head Masters' Association. Many teachers from the country were present. At the late Director's residence a short religious service was conducted by the Rev. W. Jeffries, and at the cemetery the Rev. W. G. Marsh officiated. The grave is close to that of the late Inspector-General of Schools (Mr. J. A. Hartley), and in the same part of the burial ground where the late Messrs. Joseph Sunter and Andrew Scott, well-known educationists, were interred some years ago. The pallbearers were four sons of the deceased—Messrs. Alfred, Reginald, Ralph, and Eric Williams—and two brothers, Messrs. T. and S. Williams. Among the mourners at the graveside were:—The Acting Premier (Hon. R. Butler), the Acting Minister of Education (Hon. J. G. Bice), the Chancellor of the University (Sir Samuel Way), the President of the Public Library Board (Mr. W. J. Sowden), the President of the School of Mines Council (Sir Langdon Bonython), the Chairman of the Education Commission (Mr. Thomas Ryan), the Mayor of Adelaide (Mr. Lavington Bonython), the Principal of the Victorian Training College for Teachers (Dr. Smyth), an ex-Minister of Education (Mr. Coneybeer, M.P.), the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Mr. Vaughan, M.P.), the Acting Director of Education (Mr. M. M. Maughan, B.A.), the President of the South Australian Public School Teachers' Union (Mr. V. J. Pavia), the Rev. G. H. Jose (representing the Church of England Diocesan Board of Education), many legislators, civil servants, inspectors, and other representatives of the Education Office, representatives of educational institutions, members of school Boards of Advice, and personal friends of the deceased. The Education Commission, at a meeting on Wednesday carried a motion of condolence with the widow and family. Following upon the death of her husband, the health of Mrs. Williams occasioned some anxiety to her friends, but she is now bearing up bravely. She has received many messages of condolence, from the following among others—His Excellency the Governor and Lady Bosanquet, Mr. Carmichael (Minister of Education in New South Wales), Mr. Story (Under-Secretary for Education, Queensland), Mr. McCoy (Director of Education, Tasmania), Mr. Billeon (Minister of Education, Victoria), the Hon. J. and Mrs. Verran, and these public officers in Melbourne—Messrs. Fussell, Bothroyd, Gates, Smythe, and Hanson. The death of Mr. Williams was referred to at a meeting of the Thebarton Council on Thursday evening by the Mayor (Mr. A. A. Collins). He said that as a council they regretted to hear the sad news of Mr. Williams's demise, which was a great blow to the State. He desired to express his heartfelt sympathy with the widow and family. The members stood in silence for a few moments as a mark of respect. On the motion of Ald. Stacey it was decided to forward a letter of condolence to the family. The Mayor of St. Peters (Mr. W. H. Langford), at Thursday's meeting of his council, said the State had suffered a severe loss by the death of the Director of Education. Mr. Williams had resided in their town for about nine years, and by his energy and talent had got to the top of the tree. His work had been well and truly done. A letter of condolence was forwarded to the bereaved family.