

The Register.

July. 15<sup>th</sup> cont.



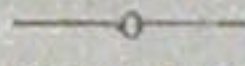
### —Palms of a Forgotten Age.—

It was a strange fact that an isolated reminder of that otherwise long dead period still flourished. It was an example of the flora of the diprotodon days. Away up in the Finke, in a still well-watered and fertile valley known as Gum Creek, there was a glen of palms. There they were—a unique relic of a flora extinct, a peculiar species found nowhere else in Australia. Then Giles had come upon those tall palmtrees, so different from the vegetation of the interior plains; the explorer was utterly dumbfounded. Only recently Mr. Gillen and Capt. White had photographed those trees, and the plates which he (the lecturer) now exhibited to the audience finely depicted the old-world growth. So long as the seeds fell within that valley the trees grew on through the ages, but if the winds or the floods carried them out into the plains they perished. And so some day would expire the last of those ancient imprisoned palms.

### —Make the Best of It.—

Now what were the causes of this blighting change? First, there had been a general gigantic lowering of the land, cutting off the rivers from their ocean outlets, so that the great plains swallowed and lost them. Then that great basin of inland drainage had become more and more a waste. Its surface receiving increasing deposits of salinity. There had developed a greater heat and dryness, which reacted on the meteorological conditions; and the winds, instead of condensing moisture, had absorbed it. All those unfavourable conditions had worked towards ultimate aridity. The rivers were dead. They could not be restored to life. The people of to-day could do no more than make the best of it. Let them philosophically take the fate meted out to their land. After all, it might have been worse. Nature had given to the present inhabitants of the country a mixture of the best and the worst. Let them strike the balance—and be thankful!

### SCHOLARSHIPS.



It is almost impossible definitely to trace the founder of the first scholarship in the world, but there is no indefinite as about his intention—to benefit, deserving but poor students, to whom otherwise the opportunity to rise to eminence would never have come. With the advent of free Universities the *raison d'être* of scholarships leading to the higher education will have disappeared. In the meantime there is a tendency to multiply them, the students of a decade or so ago having had far fewer opportunities than are now open for obtaining such assistance. At the same time the number of students has enormously increased, and the extension of educational opportunities to classes of society hitherto unaffected by the development of the educational idea has assisted in that increase. Even so, some educationists still maintain that scholarships are not so advantageous as was hoped to the people they were intended to benefit. There is a want of appreciation, alike among scholars and their parents, of the benefits attaching to scholarships, and often the only applicants are children of parents who can well afford to pay for higher education. There are, on the other hand, so many scholarships offered by schools and colleges to draw attention to a particular institution rather than as a reward for the deserving poor scholar, that very few educational establishments can afford to neglect this form of advertisement. This tends to confusion regarding the specific principles of scholarships. In a fascinating address to a Teachers' Congress some years ago Mr. A. J. Balfour said that one of



the most terrible tragedies of civilization was that which rendered a brain that was capable of high attainments and desirous of the highest knowledge ineffectual and empty because of the need of wealth or other opportunity for its development. This tragedy the foundation of scholarships was meant, as far as possible, to prevent. Competitive examinations have been, and apparently are likely to remain, the only means of establishing the merit of competitors; but the winner of a scholarship achieves honour and distinction as well as monetary value, and it was not long before others than those in need of pecuniary aid became competitors for scholarships. To these students the honour and distinction were the attractions; but their entrance into the field of competition created a complication which has not yet been cleared away.

Although twenty years ago a conference of head masters in England decided that, "while scholarships should be awarded on grounds of intellectual merit, without reference to the pecuniary circumstances of candidates, the emoluments, as distinct from the status, of the scholarships should not be enjoyed by the sons of wealthy parents," the problem still remains a serious one for educationists. Dealing with the subject from the practical point of view of a professor in close touch with the holders of various scholarships, a writer in *The Nineteenth Century and After* remarks:—"Really, to profit by his course, a student must mix on equal terms with his fellows." This is impossible to the poor students whose allowance is not supplemented by an endowment fund or from a private purse. The idea that every essential is provided for by a scholarship which pays the University fees, or even by one which includes the necessary books for a degree or diploma course, is erroneous. The most brilliant scholar will be at a disadvantage if forced to appear among his fellows badly dressed, or is alienated from the varied interests which bring his co-workers into association for social purposes because he cannot afford to pay for the indulgence. The parents of poor students, in their own sheltered and limited sphere, fail to realize the humiliations through which such a scholar has to pass in his University career. Many have gone through the experience with credit, but it is a fatal drawback to students that so many scholarships should be established with so little regard for the indirect responsibilities entailed upon their holders. The same objection will apply to the establishment of free Universities, with the additional drawback that the poorer classes will still be unable to supply many brilliant scholars to our Universities, even if they possess them, because the student days occur at a time of life when a poor family needs the monetary assistance of its members, who are thus compelled to relinquish their education early, so as to enter employment. There are already endowments to sup-



plement scholarships by paying for clothes, board, and subscriptions for poor students; but the problem of compensation to the poor family for the loss of monetary services while a brilliant son or daughter may be trained for the benefit of himself and his fellows remains yet to be solved.

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### EDUCATION AND CONSERVATISM.

The headmaster of St. Peter's College (Canon Girdlestone) is a conservative. At least, he told the members of the Old Scholars' Association so at their annual dinner on Wednesday evening, and from his biting criticism of the many things that were new they had every reason to accept his word. The most attractive thing about education, he said, was its conservatism. There was less change in the processes and ways of the schoolmaster than in any line he knew. There were times when everybody wanted something new. Apparently everything that was beautiful had been used up, for whenever they got anything new they almost invariably got something ugly. He might mention some of the latest productions of art as instancing that—(laughter)—or the latest developments in terpsichorean excrescences, or the latest styles of dress. With the changes there had come ugliness, but education had remained just the same, because the boy was the same. He believed Cain and Abel, before their unfortunate quarrel, were exactly the same as those present had been when attending St. Peter's College—(laughter)—and it was the greatest pleasure to him—for he was a conservative to the bottom of his heart and hated things that were new—to think that in handling boys he was dealing with something that was as old as nature. He was dealing with human nature, without the cramping veneer of artificiality. Boys were so perfectly natural, it was delightful to have anything to do with them. They had not yet been educated to believe that ugly things were beautiful. They just believed what they believed, and said it without hesitation, and their candor and naturalness were the most charming and refreshing things in the world. It was said by some people that education had undergone many changes in common with everything else, but that was not so. There were certainly faddists in education, who should never have been schoolmasters; but though education might have its ragtimes and its tangos they could not last. A boy was a boy no matter in what century he was born, and a man, to be a good schoolmaster, must be conservative to the backbone.