

GRATUITOUS, SECULAR, AND COMPULSORY PHASES.

The new laws have, as in other respects, effected great changes in respect of gratuitous education.¹ Instruction in all primary, including infant schools, is now gratuitous. School necessities also are provided without charge; and in Paris penny dinners are provided by the Municipality, which dinners, in the case of really poor children, are gratuitous.² There are no separate free schools as in England.

The secular feature has already been noticed: and of the compulsory phase it may be said that it is an innovation.

Compulsory attendance now applies to all children from the age of six complete to that of thirteen complete.³ If, however, they are receiving instruction at home,⁴ or at a private school, or obtain a "certificat d'études"⁵ (which it is possible to obtain at eleven, and is often obtained at twelve), they are exempt. In respect of this certificate, Mr. Matthew Arnold says: "The boy who gets a 'certificat d'études' has, I think, been better trained, and has more to show for his schooling than the boy who has gone through his Standards;" whilst the Royal Commissioners for Technical Instruction (whom I hereafter designate as "the Commissioners") state that the examination "will probably not be considered more difficult than that of the children in our English schools who pass the Fifth Standard, and have taken up one or more of the special subjects."⁶

The only other excuses allowed are—

- (a) One applicable to half-time scholars—viz., that a School Board may, subject to the consent of the Departmental Council, exempt children employed in trades or agriculture from one of the two daily attendances—so "that children can only be employed as half-timers in trades or agriculture, under the age of thirteen, by the joint consent of the communes and of the department, unless at or above the age of eleven they have obtained the certificat d'études;"⁷
- (b) "Illness of the child;"
- (c) "Death of a member of the family;" or
- (d) "Hindrances resulting from accidental difficulty of access to the school."

"And all other excuses will have to be judged by the Scholastic Commission, a body constituted for the purpose of enforcing regular school attendance."⁸ Owing probably, however, not only to the public desire for education in France, but to the strict supervision exercised by the authorities, and the punishments imposable in case of irregularity in attendance,⁹ the school attendance is excellent, especially in the cities; and it is computed that "10 per cent. is the maximum absence for any school in Paris, while in a very large number of schools the total average of attendance exceeds 95 per cent."¹⁰

Children are protected by law against premature employment, but the law does not seem to be, in some of the departments, efficiently carried out.¹¹ Proper books recording the attendance at both public and private schools have to be kept, and absences reported; and even private head-masters neglecting to do this are liable to be reprimanded or suspended.¹²

¹ See—

(a) Reg. d'org. péd.;

(b) L. and R.

(c) R.C., 1st rep., p. 26, and *seq.* L'idée démocratique, although the main, "is not the only principle behind free schools in France. The undenominational idea is equally operative. Clericalism is the enemy, and free schools form one of the weapons with which it is attacked."—See also Mr. M. Arnold's (May, 1886) report, pp. 9, 10.

² This has, in contrast to certain expenditure in England, suggested whether there may not "be a good many grains of truth after all in that exaggerated saying of Heine's, 'I am firmly persuaded that a blaspheming Frenchman is a more pleasing object in the sight of God than a praying Englishman.'"—See *Pall Mall Gazette*, 3 Aug., 1886, p. 2. For some interesting figures quoted to the Bourdeaux Congress, Sept., 1886, relative to the schools of Paris, see "Journal of Education," 1 Oct., 1886, p. 415.

Note very interesting article on "State Education and Socialism," *Journal des Débats*, 8 Sep., 1886. In the communal schools of Paris the most deserving school children are given treats annually by the District Municipal Councils. They consist of a tour amongst old towns or pictures and scenery of France in the month of August.

³ Law of Mar., 1882, Art. 4.

⁴ See also R.E.C., Mr. M. Arnold, 5166 and *seq.*

⁵ For condition see Appendix iii. R.C. 1st rep., and for proportion of passes see 1st rep., p. 23; and compare with N.Z. requirements for certificate of exemption—see N.Z. 1877 Act, s. 90, s.s. 4, and 1885 Act, secs. 6, 7, and 8—*Gazette* 92, 1878, s. 13.

⁶ R.E.C., Mr. M. Arnold, 5890 and *seq.*, and R.C., 1st rep., p. 23. Note also opinion of Hon. L. Stanley.—See "French Elementary Education," "N.C.," March, 1883 (hereafter termed the Hon. L. Stanley), p. 465.

⁷ See R.C. 1st rep., footnote, p. 28; and p. 27; and Mr. M. Arnold's (May 1866) rep., p. 23.

⁸ Compare with N.Z. 1877 Act, sec. 90; and 1885 Acts, secs. 6, 7, and 8; but note Mr. M. Arnold's remarks in his (May, 1886) rep., p. 23.

⁹ See R.C., 1st rep., p. 28; and compare with N.Z. Act 1877, secs. 92 and 93.

¹⁰ See Hon. L. Stanley and R.E.C., Mr. M. Arnold, espec. 5175 and 5372, 5373. But note his May, 1886, rep., p. 239. Compare with N.Z. 1885 rep., p. ii.

¹¹ For particulars see R.C. 1st rep., pp. 23, 24.

¹² For conditions *re* private tuition, see—

(a) R.C. 1st rep., pp. 27, 28; and

(b) Hon. L. Stanley.

But note "brevet de capacité" referred to by Mr. Stanley in case of private teachers is not enforced if the teacher, on 1st January, 1881, was of a certain age, and had had experience for a certain number of years.