

FRIDAY, 15TH SEPTEMBER, 1911.

*The Chairman:* The question of the proportion of the people living in the various Australian cities compared with the total population in the several States was raised yesterday, in connection with those cities where the Medical Schools are situate. I note by the Commonwealth Year-book that the population of Adelaide is 184,393. The proportion of those living in the three principal cities where the Medical Schools are situated compared with the total population of the three States is—Sydney, 37·36 per cent.; Melbourne, 43·14 per cent.; Adelaide, 44·32 per cent.; whereas in Dunedin, the city of New Zealand which has the Medical School, there is not more than 6 per cent. of the population of the Dominion.

Professor H. B. KIRK examined. (No. 12.)

1. *The Chairman.*] What is your subject?—Biology. Before speaking on the subject of libraries, I should like to say that some of us think there have been left on the minds of members of this Committee an impression that the professors of Victoria College are opposed to night-work. That is certainly not the case. I take it that what we do realize very clearly is that the student who is engaged during the whole of the day and comes to his class during the evening hours when he is more or less worn out, compared with the student who gives the whole day and his best work to his subject, makes less actual progress.

2. It was thought that, while not opposed to night-work, the professors held that there should be both day and night work in both classes. Thus, classics should be taught both in the day and at night, but an additional professor would be required for the additional class?—I take it that would be the arrangement. I am not justified in giving assent on behalf of my brethren on the professoriate, because it is a point we have not discussed. It seems to me the night staff might be less expensive than the day staff.

3. Professor Laby expressed himself that additional teachers would be wanted, but he did not say that they should be less qualified?—In the science subject I do not see why, if there is a sufficient staff of demonstrators, they should not be responsible for the evening work. The science professors would probably often choose to be there in the evening as well as in the day, as they are now, and would give any needed guidance. Before I speak with regard to libraries, I wish to say that I am in absolute sympathy with the movement for university reform in New Zealand, and am in accord with the broad statements as to the need for reform that are made in the pamphlets submitted to the Committee by the members of the Reform Association. I should like to be allowed to speak especially of the needs of the colleges in the matter of books. It is to be admitted that in this matter, if once the need for improvement were recognized, improvement might be effected without reform of the university. But that need is not recognized except by the actual worker—at all events it is not recognized in any practical way. Such a changed attitude as would result in judicious and efficient reform would of necessity result in improved libraries, for the present state of things is unthinkable in connection with a vigorous university constituted and administered on modern lines. It may fairly be said that provision of books and use of books constitute a measure of intellectual activity. It is of the Victoria College library that I am best qualified to speak, and of the science department of that library; but that library is not poorer than other college libraries in New Zealand, and the needs felt by the Science Professors are, possibly to a less extent, felt by the professors in other faculties. If work is to be worth doing it cannot be confined to the laboratory (including the field) and the lecture-room. Laboratory practice, or the equivalent in other than science subjects of laboratory practice, is absolutely essential, but it must be stimulated and largely guided by reading. In the direction of what are usually called "text-books" the college library is only moderately equipped. Still, there is what may possibly be regarded as the minimum in that direction so far as the pass student is concerned. But if the real aim is not the achievement of a pass, but the doing of work in science, then there is a well-nigh fatal lack of material. A disability that the New Zealand worker can by no means obviate is imposed by his geographical position; his complete physical isolation from the workers in other lands means that he must lose the stimulus and guidance that come of contact with the world's leaders in research. His geographical position involves, moreover, that he must at best be months behind Europe and America in even knowing at second-hand what has been done there. But in reality he is not months but years behind. To the necessary physical isolation is added an intellectual isolation that ought to be unnecessary—an isolation due to actual poverty. This would be to a very large extent remedied if access could be had to current periodicals in which original papers recording results are published. These periodicals should be not only those of the current year, but the back numbers for several years should be available. Then the student of a subject could not only learn what had already been done by other workers, but would have at the same time the benefit of the original account, with its essential and stimulating details. These advantages are not to be gained from text-books. Text-books are at best statements of results: in a progressive subject a text-book is on some points out of date before it is issued, and many books make no very serious attempt to be up-to-date. It is, moreover, very undesirable that reliance should be placed on the statements of a text-book writer, who cannot be a specialist in all branches of his subject, and on his interpretation of a specialist's work. What I have said with regard to text-books does not so fully apply to great serial publications, such as the *Pflanzenreich*, of which there are several, seeing that these are mainly the work of a number of specialists. But these expensive works cannot be obtained here, and if they could they would not keep one up-to-date, and would in other respects not take the place of periodicals. Still, it is an extraordinary thing that these great works, with their enormous usefulness, are not accessible to university students. In using the word "student" I, of course, include professors and lecturers. If these cease to be students in the fullest sense they lose their qualifications to be teachers. It would be little to be wondered at if, in a country where they