

Compulsory Attendance at School, and School Age.

exempt a child over eight years of age "for the necessary operations of husbandry and the ingathering of crops" for a period not exceeding six weeks in a year.¹

- (3.) And somewhat similar excuses to those available in the Colony are allowed for other cases of non-attendance, but the terms relating to a certificate of exemption differ.²

Bearing of fees to compulsory education.

It is not universally admitted that the results of the British compulsory-attendance provisions are satisfactory;³ but the opinions of the Secretary and Mr. Arnold are that they do not see that compulsory payment of fees affects the question;⁴ and that, primary education should be compulsory,⁵ whether free or not, for the protection of society. The authorities forwarded herewith enable careful study to be bestowed upon this subject, and also as to what bearing pecuniary⁶ and sanitary circumstances may have as between Great Britain and the Colony in affecting the average attendance,⁷ especially in respect of children over the age of ten.⁸

Holidays.

The holidays for Board schools in England and Wales are—at Christmas, two weeks; at Easter, from Good Friday to the Saturday in the following week, both days inclusive; at Whitsuntide, one week; and in the summer three weeks, to commence on the first Monday in August. In Scotland, one week at Christmas, and six weeks at midsummer. The Saturday holiday prevails throughout Great Britain.⁹

School age.

There is no express definition in England, by statute, of school age;¹⁰ but as a rule the attendance of a child (a) under three years old at a day school is not recognized¹¹—that is, for *return* purposes—or (b) of any scholar who has passed in the three elementary subjects in the Seventh Standard,¹² unless the Inspector has previously permitted such scholar to be re-examined in that standard; (c) or "in an evening school, or (d) for any scholar under fourteen or over twenty-one; but children under fourteen who are by the Department deemed to be exempt from the legal obligation to attend school are recognized as scholars in an evening school."

The fixing the minimum compulsory age at five has become of trivial importance in view of the general institution of infant schools,¹³ which receive special grants;¹⁴ and a large proportion of the children in average attendance from the ages of three¹⁵ to seven—and sometimes older—attend there: whilst the significance of the age of thirteen¹⁶ is largely impaired by the proviso whereby a child may leave at ten.¹⁷

¹ E. Act, 1876, s. 9, ss. 3, and note N.Z. 1877 Act, s. 89, and 1885 Act, s. 6.

² See E. Act, 1870, s. 74, and 1876, ss. 5, 11, and 12, and first schedule and Standard IV., and compare with N.Z. 1877 Act, ss. 89, 90, and 1885 Act, ss. 6-8, and *espec.*, note the one-year time-limit.

In the Highlands in Scotland distances prove such a serious obstacle to attendance that special grants are made for schools ten or fifteen miles apart. Indeed, education there would not otherwise be practicable, seeing that rating in some places is 6s. 8d. in the pound, *besides* an education rate.

Note also G.R., 1885-86, p. xvii., and Scot., 1885-86, p. xxviii.

³ Note—

(a) Mr. Heller's paper, I.E.C., vol. xiii., pp. 154-168, and discussion thereon.

(b) "Times," 3-5 Jan., 1883.

(c) G.R., 1882-83, pp. 277, 278, and 296.

(d) G.R., 1883-84, pp. 432 and 392, and G.R., 1885-86, p. ix.; "The Inquisition in London."—"P. M. Budget," 30 Sept., p. 9, and 7 Oct., 1866, pp. 16 and 25; and "Punch," 9 Oct., p. 179.

(e) G.R., Scotland, 1883-84, *espec.* pp. xv. and xvi., and 1885-86, p. 12.

(f) "Nat. (Primary) Education in Ireland," by J. Ferguson, Pres. of Irish Nat. School Teachers' Assoc. Trans. Nat. Soc. Sc. As., Dublin, 1881, pp. 351, 352.

See also working of system in New South Wales and Victoria, "The Colonies and India," 11 Dec., 1885, p. 35; and "Aust. Times and Anglo-N.Z.," 1 Jan., 1886, p. 12.

⁴ But note Mr. Arnold's (May, 1886) report on Continental Schools, especially pp. 4 and 8.

⁵ Note also Mr. Mundella's remarks, "Times," 27 Aug., 1884, and sub-leader "Times," 8 Aug., 1884.

But *contra*, note—

(a) Remarks of Bishop of Lincoln, "Times," 8 Oct., 1883.

(b) Professor Huxley's opinion as above.

(c) Mr. Heller's paper as above, and discussion thereon.

(d) Mr. Buxton's remarks in "N.C." as above.

(e) Art. on "The Radical Programme," by F. Harrison, "Contemp. Review," Feb., 1886, p. 277.

⁶ Note—

(a) Authorities repayment of fees;

(b) G.R., 1883-84, p. xvii.;

(c) E. Act, 1876, s. 9, ss. 3.

⁷ Compare G.R., 1885-86, p. ix., and G.R., Scotland, 1885-86, p. xii., with N.Z. 1886 report, p. iv.

⁸ Compare G.R., 1883-1884, p. xvi., and N.Z. 1885 report, p. ii.

⁹ Taking London Board as representative, hours are—9 to noon, 2 to 4.30 p.m., making during week 27½ hours. But teachers, not finding this sufficient to meet requirements of Code, generally add an hour either before or after regulation time; making total of 32½ hours.

¹⁰ Except English Act, 1876, Act passed for special purpose, see s. 48. But see Revised Instructions to Inspectors, 1884, clause 46. See also G.R., 1882-83, pp. 439, 440; compare N.Z. 1877 Act, s. 83 and reg. 14, N.Z. Gazette, 92, 1878.

A Scotch professor of great experience expressed to me his opinion that no child should be taught under the age of seven.

Note especially Mr. Cumin's evidence before Royal Commission (1886) on school age, *supra*, n. 14, p. 7.

¹¹ G.R., 1885-86, p. xiii.

¹² See Code, Art. 13. Attendance over fourteen is apparently not contemplated. See Revised Instructions to Inspectors, 1884, clause 46, and 1886, clause 66.

¹³ G.R., 1883-84, p. 225. But note 1885-86, pp. ix. and xii.

¹⁴ See Code, Arts. 106-108.

¹⁵ G.R., 1885-86, pp. ix.-xii.

¹⁶ But note in Scotland school age 5-14; and school life as a rule does not begin before 6.—G.R., Scot., 1885-86, p. xii.

¹⁷ See (a) G.R., 1883-84, p. xvii., and 1885-86, p. xii.;

(b) Mr. Heller's paper, as above; and