

Register April 12th 1886

THE UNIVERSITY.—We publish elsewhere the reports of the proceedings at the University Council meetings for March 26 and April 9. It must strike readers as absurd that an account of what has been done in the management of a public institution is not published until more than a fortnight has elapsed. Just as often as not the proceedings are of no special interest, but the principle is the same whether the Council talks trivialities or passes sensible resolutions. If the Press were allowed to send representatives to the meetings reports would be forthcoming in due time, but under the present slipshod arrangement important matters may have been settled before the public knows that they have been even discussed. It is, we suppose, the Registrar who has to supply reports to the Press, and if this official is so overworked that he cannot send in a short report on the day following the meeting assistance should be given him. Of late two reports have been lumped together, and items of interest in the first meeting have been kept from the public until the proceedings of the next meeting have been prepared. Thus, the appointment to the Lecturership in Materia Medica was made on March 26. This is a matter of interest to a good many people, and the University has no right to keep it stored up in its possession for over a fortnight. A public body, ruling a public institution, which is supported by public funds, should have made the information public property long ago. The University officials are too nonchalant in their discharge of their public duties, and the sooner they understand that the public will insist on hearing at an early date of what they have done the better for the institution. We notice that Professor Boulger has resigned his honorary chair of Political Economy, and that the Council has given notice that his subject will be omitted from the curriculum this year. This seems to be a particularly commercial way of doing business. A man gives lectures on a subject for a certain time; when he declines any longer to lecture for nothing the subject is calmly omitted from the course. We are not in a position to state the reasons for Professor Boulger's withdrawal—possibly the duties of his English Professorship render it impossible for him to devote to political economy the time which so difficult a subject demands. But there is

no reason in this for supposing that a lecturer cannot be found or that the subject is no longer necessary and useful. South Australia, which has already succumbed to the specious seductions of protection, stands very much in need of wholesome lessons in political economy, and our rising generation should certainly be instructed in the art of statesmanship. Besides, in suppressing these lectures the University stultifies itself. If they are not necessary now they assuredly were not necessary before, and if they were not necessary before the University stands convicted of having imposed a needless labour upon students. Of course it would be much cheaper if the lecturer worked for the pleasure of the thing. Such men, however, as will work well for nothing are generally very useless and are always very scarce, and the Council will inevitably be obliged to found a salaried lectureship. The objection of expense is met by the consideration of the fact that the Council saves £200 per annum out of the salary of the Professor of Mathematics, and for this sum a competent lecturer in political economy might easily be found in Adelaide. Perhaps it is not too late for the Council to take better measures in this respect. To satisfy the reasonable scruples of certain objectors, who feared that individuals and schools were unduly favoured, it has been arranged that candidates for the Matriculation and Junior Examinations shall be known to the examiners by means of numbers. This provision will probably not increase the fairness of the examinations, for we are sure that the examiners have always been influenced by the highest and most honourable feelings, but it will perhaps remove a cause of much grumbling and vexation of spirit.

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May 5th 1886 ✓

THE University evening classes are now being regularly held, but we fear that they are not an unqualified success. A considerable amount of pressure was brought to bear upon the council by the Young Men's Societies of Adelaide to get these classes established, and a good deal of public attention was called to the alleged unpracticalness and exclusiveness of the educational system adopted at the University. Young men in business, we were told, would gladly flock to evening classes if such classes were made to bear upon their every day life. Those who left school were debarred the opportunity of continuing [their education, and were forced by circumstances to graduate on the cricket field or the football ground. Last year the classes made a fair beginning, and we were hopeful that the second year would be better than the first. On making enquiries we find, however, that the total number of those who have paid their fees for these classes is not much more than 50. If the council and the lecturers adhere to the minimum number that was announced in the preliminary advertisement some of these classes will have to be discontinued. It is to be hoped that this will not be done unless the number enrolled is so small as not to make it worth while for the lecturers to continue their work. It was with much surprise that we learned that the two classes which are in the greatest danger of extinction are precisely those which are commonly deemed the most "practical." Only four students have been enrolled for the class in geology, and only two for that in mineralogy. No more technically useful subject could be imagined than mineralogy. In this colony with its untested mineral wealth, with gold and silver hidden away in our hills, it does seem strange that the intelligent young people of the community should be so blind to their interests as not to flock for instruction to such classes. It cannot be alleged that the teacher is not equal to his work, for Professor Tate is one of the leading authorities on mineralogical science in the world, and is moreover singularly skilful in imparting to others his own rich stores of information. We are given to understand that these classes are not yet disbanded, and that therefore the gateway is still open for those who may wish to join them. For the honor of our colony, and of our young men in particular, it is to be

hoped that a goodly number will be induced forthwith to join one or more of these evening classes. The subjects treated are mathematics, Latin, Greek, French, German, English, geology, and mineralogy. French and mathematics have attracted the larger number of students, but there is no reason why even these classes should not be twice as large as they are. These evening classes are an expense to the council of the University which is not met by the fees and the interest on Sir Thomas Elder's gift of £1,000. When the movement commenced there was a good deal of talk about raising an endowment fund so that the classes might be placed beyond the risk of failure. The council has, however, as yet received no results from any of these promises. Were there any subscriptions paid as well as promised, or were all these promises merely conditional upon the raising of a further sum of £2,500? We should like to have an answer to these questions, and should like better still to hear that the young men of Adelaide had transmitted to the treasurer a cheque for the sum originally aimed at.
