

Register December 27<sup>th</sup> 1884

## THE UNIVERSITY AND THE SCHOOLS

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—His Lordship the Bishop of Adelaide, speaking at St. Peter's College last Friday, is reported to have said—"Those who have been colonists longer than myself tell me that previously when boys went direct from this and other similar schools to the Universities in England [they distinguished themselves by the success they achieved.

. . . But now it has been more than once remarked that there are boys who, after having distinguished themselves in the University here, go home to continue their studies and are not afterwards heard of. I am sorry this change is said to have taken place, and I will ask you, what has been the cause of it?" His Lordship then goes on to suggest, if I understand rightly the drift of his speech, that students at the University may have taken advantage of the greater freedom enjoyed there to relax the habits of industry and application which they had acquired at school. I would maintain, with great respect, that the remarks quoted by the Bishop and the suggested inference are alike unjust to the students, mostly South Australian scholars, who have gone from the University here to pursue their studies in England. The Ven. Archdeacon Farr has kindly furnished me with a list of distinctions won at home by old St. Peter's boys. This list includes a fifth wrangler, a thirty-sixth wrangler, a sixth senior optime, a second class classic, two second classes in law, and two in natural science, all at Cambridge. There are also some medical distinctions at London and elsewhere on which the information is less precise. Some of the above distinctions were of course preceded by minor ones, which it is unnecessary to recount. The whole may be taken to include the past. Altogether, the list is one in which the friends of St. Peter's may well take pride, more especially as several of those whose names figure in it are now rendering valuable service to the colony in various walks of life. I do not propose to institute a comparison with the performances of the South Australian scholars and others to whom I have referred. My point is rather that all the elements of a comparison are wanting. In the first place, I think I shall not be far wrong in assuming that the above list is the result of something like twenty years. On the other hand, only five awards have as yet been made of the South Australian Scholarship, and it is only in the case of the first two of these that the successful scholar has had time to complete his University career in England. It is therefore somewhat premature to generalize about the performances of the South Australian scholars as a class. The first scholar graduated B.Sc. at London with honours in physics, the second took a second class in classics at Cambridge. Since a comparison has been attempted it may be noticed that this latter distinction, such as it is, cannot be said to be inferior to any but

the first in Dr. Farr's list. If the reality of the phenomenon described (at second hand) by the Bishop be doubtful, it may be thought unnecessary for me to say anything about the inference based upon it. But I may perhaps be allowed to bear personal testimony (in which I am sure my colleagues will concur) to the fact that the students whom we have from time to time recommended for the South Australian Scholarship have invariably, whilst under our hands, been distinguished for industry and perfect propriety of demeanour. I add this last item on account of the somewhat misleading remarks which have been made about "laxity of discipline," and so on, at the University. What I have said of the University scholars applies, with very little qualification, to all the students with whom I have been brought into contact.

If in the future it should be found that the South Australian scholars achieve, on the whole, less of academical distinction at home than might be expected, the explanation will, I think, have to be sought for in quite a different direction. It is probable that, as in the past, many of the holders of the scholarship will be poor men, who will feel compelled to use it, not as an avenue to further academical distinction, but rather as a sort of "prize fellowship," *i.e.*, as a means of establishing themselves in some profession. Of the five who have so far been successful candidates one has taken to engineering, two to medicine. Of the latter, one at least is pursuing his studies with something more than credit, but his chances of distinction are seriously diminished by the high pressure at which he is compelled, for the reasons I have indicated, to get through his course.

I am, Sir, &c.,

HORACE LAMB.

The University, December 24, 1884.

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## THE ADVANCED SCHOOL FOR GIRLS.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—Owing to pressing occupation I did not see for several days the speech which was reported in the *Register* as delivered at the distribution of prizes of the so-called Advanced School for Girls by the Hon. Mr. Baker, and I now seize the first opportunity of replying to his remarks made on that occasion. He points to the Government school for girls as an instance of unparalleled success in this colony to be imitated by other girls' schools, and he hopes that its success may "stimulate them to extra exertions." In fact, it is apparent that a great part of the speech is of the nature of a panegyric upon the Government school, and of a boastful challenge to the private girls' schools of this country. Accordingly, as the teacher of two girls of the seven only which passed from all the private schools, I trust it will be conceded that I have some right to attempt a reply both to his strictures and his challenge. I accept the latter, and I shall be most happy if he will have the goodness to cause to be published by his high authority the average age, and also the actual number and percentage of the total of the pupils who passed the primary (or junior) and matriculation examinations during the first three years, or even three and a half years, of the Advanced School for Girls' existence, and I in turn shall give, reduced to the same standard of computation, a similar statement of the results of a girls' school which just at the present time has existed for precisely three years, and with which I am familiar, for the purpose of comparison with his vaunted school. "In both cases"—I quote the hon. gentleman's words with a slight change—"we shall be able to test the progress made . . . through the medium of an impartial and somewhat critical tribunal—the University of Adelaide." But I shall require of him to reject from the statement of average age and passes all duplicate passes—i.e., all those who had previously passed the same examination, but who may have gone up repeatedly in successive years to the same examination, for the credit (?) of the school. In fairness to the private schools, I think, and as a man of honour he cannot decline to accept this simple and easy test of the value of the comparisons instituted by him between the private girls' schools and the Government school. I do so in all sincerity and with due respect, and I shall expect his reply at an early date. There are but about half a dozen names, and I think I know of a school which perhaps has three times as high a percentage.

The public of South Australia have been treated for some years past to high-flown language respecting the so-called Advanced School for Girls; but when I heard that a gentleman of distinguished scholastic attainments, a member of that learned profession in which the faculty which weighs evidence is supposed to be specially cultivated and to be eminently sound, had become Minister of Justice and Education, I thought we should

hear no more of such thoughtless and superficial and wantonly unfeeling assertions; but such language as is reported in the *Register* of the 20th inst., coming from such a man, cannot be allowed to pass unnoticed or unchallenged. No one in the colony is so well circumstanced as he is for forming a correct opinion on the questions now brought by his address once more into debate, for all educational statistics are at his command, and yet I doubt, judging from his remarks, if he took any pains whatever to arrive at the truth in forming his estimate of the work of the private girls' schools in comparison with the Government school for girls. He has within his reach the virtually sworn returns of the private schools, but he cannot have looked at them or he would have seen that one school at least was aiming at and doing higher work than his so-called Advanced School. That one was giving an education such as he knows must be given to those who would go through a full University course. Nothing, it is commonly said, is more deceptive than conclusions drawn from mere numbers, and Mr. Baker has looked at the naked figures and at nothing more. Allow me to endeavour to show the utter fallaciousness of some of his recent statements. The so-called Advanced School for Girls was opened some five and a half years since, and it is, I believe, a fact that into it were gathered the most forward and clever girls of all the City [State] schools, many by official influence, and many from the country also by a very reprehensible proceeding. These were drawn together without the younger and less (immediately) promising children, who would have materially lowered the apparent results, but such younger children it is obvious cannot be excluded from other schools, and ought not to be excluded from any school in this country lower than the University. Into the new school also pressed the children of persons of a far higher order, who hoped doubtless that as Government was giving about £2,000 for the purpose of establishing a special sort of school, the result must be correspondingly superior, and yet further I believe the "bursary" girls were compelled to attend. Now, Sir, here we have at once originated a deranging element of the most serious and far-reaching nature in a small community like this.