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THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—It seems ungrateful and discourteous to find fault with what is done with an apparent intention to please, and it is a task as unwelcome as it seems audacious to undertake to point out errors in the finished result of the deliberations of the most dignified body which exists in our colony—the Council of the Adelaide University. The University has existed now for fully eleven years, and in that time changes of all sorts have been incessant. Action has been equalled by authorized reaction, as may be illustrated by the mention of the fact that when the first degree was conferred no one was allowed to be present who was not a member of the University or of the governing body, not even the father of the graduate; but since then the ceremony of admission to degrees has been made quite a public affair, and even the certificates of little boys and girls are given at the same time in the presence of their delighted kinsfolk and friends. Both extremes are injudicious.

During all those ten or eleven but twenty-eight or twenty-nine degrees in Arts have been conferred and one in Science, and of those thirty students not less than twenty-four have been recipients of salaries called scholarships of £50 a year, leaving a very small remainder of half a dozen or so of paying free students. Hence by way of reaction again the University was opened for evening classes in which the elements of arithmetic from notation, the Latin declensions, the French articles, the Greek alphabet, and the definitions of "Mr. Euclid" might be taught. No efficient steps were taken at any time to induce the youth of the country to enter the institution and pursue the studies which are proper to the place. On the contrary, the University regulations have had the effect, whether intentional or unintentional I cannot now discuss, of rendering entrance upon a full student's course most difficult, and not seldom impossible. It is true that this year is signalized beyond all other years of the University's history by the fact that some nine students are pursuing the first year Arts course; but are they satisfied with the Procrustean system they have to conform to? I believe not. There was at first an arrangement by which Art students might take after the first year a set of subjects congenial in their tastes; or, that "side" which would most contribute to their greater efficiency in the business or profession which they intended to follow, but now the students who wish for more mathematics and less classics, or those desiring more classics with philosophy and less of mathematics are helpless in the hands of our South Australian Procrustes, the Council and Professorial Board of the Adelaide University. Why was that change made? There seems no guiding principle in the minds of those excellent and most learned, or it may be wealthy men, hence the swinging to and fro of their educational pendulum. Changes are made without reason, and then abandoned without other cause than a mere whim of somebody, and



good measures lighted upon by chance are not given time to operate in what one of their number has called "a leader community." The abolition of the term "Matriculation examination" will serve no good purpose; no one is deceived by it, for it is well known that actual matriculation or entrance at the University is a different affair. The changes of names and the proposed alterations in minor details do not affect the root of the mischief which has operated so long adversely to the interests of the higher education of this land. Herein is the evil — the University gives its highest places at the examinations of the pupils of the schools to those who have not been educated in those subjects which the University has formally decided to be the best. What else can be meant by the curriculums laid down for Arts and Science courses than this, that these prescribed studies are the most efficient as educational instruments for the discipline and formation of the human mind and for fitting men for the real tasks of life? Yet we find boys and girls given the first and even the highest places from year to year who have passed through their allotted years of school life and have not studied the subjects which might enable them to enter the University. By this proceeding the Council and Professors stultify themselves. Take for illustration this year's Calendar. Under the heading "Matriculation Examination, December, 1885," what do we find? There are eleven boys from one school given the first places. From these we may reject the first three, who passed in former years; there are then eight, not one of whom has been fitted for entering the University, either for Arts or Science course. This is strange, but true, if the Calendar is to be relied upon as indicating the subjects which have been taught, and the radical objection to the proposed new regulations is that they make no provision for withholding places in the first class from those pupils who have not chosen the subjects which would leave them free at the end of their school career to enter the University if they so desired. Here lies the true power of the University for good or for evil over the schools of the entire country. The youth of this land are as eager to excel as



those of other lands, and to obtain a first position in the class-lists they will choose the best subjects and reject the easier if they find that the latter will leave them only at best in the third or "passed" class.

I must not trespass on your readers' patience or upon your space too much at present. Time is too short to attempt to show the evil results of the mark system as compared with the system which awards the palm to the best subjects. The latter will be found to act magically, I believe, in the schools and upon the number of students in the University. At present young people do not enter, because having left school they have not there studied the necessary subjects. They find out their mistake too late. History is not given the place it deserves. Our dearth of politicians and the spread of freethinking principles arise possibly from the little study of history and classics. It is a selfish and money-grubbing age. Will the torpid Senate pass the proposed regulations? Will the members of the Council, fifteen in number, outvote the members of the Senate who are alive to the evils of the proposed rash changes and dare to oppose them? If so, is there no appeal to any higher authority?

I am, Sir, &c.,

WILLIAM HOPKINS.

September 23.

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THE new regulations for public examinations in connection with the University of Adelaide, upon which we recently offered some comments when they were sealed by the council, were yesterday fully discussed by the senate, and finally adopted by that body. No doubt the advocates of the new order of things and those of the old order were equally sincere in their contention, though they held such very contradictory views as to the effect likely to be brought about by the new regulations. All we can hope is that experience may prove that all the advantages and none of the disadvantages that have been predicted may be realised. It will be remembered that the junior and senior examinations now provided for are entirely independent of, though they may be preliminary to, matriculation at the University. Such an arrangement has so much to commend it that the regulations have, we believe, met with no serious opposition on that ground. How



far the preliminary examinations may be made use of for matriculation for the different faculties remains to be decided hereafter. The point in dispute yesterday at the meeting of the senate was whether or not it was desirable that in

public University examinations equal credit should be given for proficiency in modern languages and classics and mathematics. Professor Boulger objected to the new regulations on the ground that for the senior and junior examinations classics were not imposed at all. That is true in the sense that the classics are not compulsory subjects ; but, as Professor Kelly pointed out, "In the senior examination Latin, Greek, and mathematics, if taken up, would entitle those who passed to a standing which no other subjects would give." It can scarcely be said while this is so that the study of these subjects is not encouraged. On the other hand, to the contention that these subjects should be made compulsory in order to attain matriculation or even a pass in public school University examinations, the general trend of modern opinion on education is decidedly opposed. Very properly the well thrashed-out controversy as to the comparative value of modern and ancient languages as a mere means of mental training was pretty much left out of the question. But there certainly is a growing perception of the value of modern languages—or rather, perhaps, we should say, that owing to present conditions of life and facilities of travel and intercourse, the value of the acquirement of modern languages has greatly increased. Under