

THE SCHOOL OF MINES.

A very important matter came up for consideration at yesterday's meeting of the Council of the School of Mines. Mr. Scherk and Mr. Rogers thought that the fees charged for the evening classes were too high. They represented very fairly that these classes are mainly intended for the use of mechanics and artisans who, employed in gaining their livelihood in the day time, would like to devote their evenings to the pursuit of knowledge. But, they added, the classes might as well not exist so far as these artisans and mechanics are concerned if the fees charged are beyond their means. Whether work be scarce or plentiful, living is dear and families have to be supported; and the average workman in receipt of average pay would have to consider ways and means very carefully before he undertakes to spend £6 6s. a year for the four years over which the course extends. And it may be added that the £25 4s. which he must spend in fees before he can go up for his final examination for the diploma of Associate of the School of Mines does not represent the total cost. If he lives out of town he will have to pay his railway fare, on a reduced scale, it is true, if he happens to be under twenty, but it may still prove a heavy item, and, in any case, he will have to lay out much money in books and appliances. This is a very strong case, especially in respect of an institution which is endowed with public money for the express purpose of placing scientific knowledge within popular reach.

The other side of the question is also strong. The Council fixed the fees at £6 6s. to make the loss less, not to create a surplus of income over expenditure. It appears from the Chairman's statement that each student at the evening classes will cost the Council £8 15s., of which sum £7 10s. will go to the University as payment for the work of the professors, and £1 5s. to the School of Design. Under the present arrangement then, with the fees at £6 6s., the Council would lose £2 9s. per head per annum. There is also the cost of providing facilities for what the Chairman calls "the most expensive branch of education," so that on the whole the Council stands to lose very heavily on the evening classes. If this be so—and we do not think that there need be much of a loss at all—it would not be an insuperable objection to the reduction of the fees. Nobody expects of the school that it shall pay its way all at once, and, whilst we should be the last to incite to extravagance, we hold that the school would be better worth the money expended on it, or to be expended on it, if it attracted large classes at low fees than if it had only small classes at high fees. But is a loss necessary at all? What stands in the way now is the University, which charges at a high rate for the services of its professors. There is a fee of £1 10s. each for mathematics, physics, and chemistry, and a practical chemistry fee of £1 for each of the three terms. In other words the University charges as much for its instruction to the evening classes as it charges nongraduating students *pro. tem.* in the first year of the Science School. Surely this is extravagantly high; and we are convinced that an application for a reduction would be as favourably received

by the University as a similar application has been received with regard to the chemistry of the day students. It is indeed true that lecturing to the evening classes is not the same as lecturing to an ordinary University class, and the professors may fairly expect to be well paid. But, as Professor Rennie pointed out, "it does not matter how many there are to lecture to;" the lecturer has to attend for the sake of two, and he might just as well have twenty students. If then the University consented to lower its fees by one-half—which it might easily do, considering the nature of the work to be done—the Council could follow suit. Even then £3 3s. per annum, with necessary addenda, is a sufficient tax on a light pocket.

This matter is to be considered again at next meeting, Mr. Rogers securing support for a motion which would seem to be antagonistic to the scheme drawn up by the Council. It emphasizes the manual education to be given in evening classes, but it evidently does not contemplate the working of these classes in connection with the diploma of Associate of the School. If this is so we should regret that the chance of gaining such a degree should be taken from mechanics and artisans, who should rather be given every opportunity of advancing themselves. For the rest the school bids fair to open well. There will be eighteen "regular" students—eight working for the diploma during the day and ten in the evening classes—and ten "occasional" students, taking up special subjects. With regard to railway fares, the Council has secured a concession from the Commissioners which errs rather on the side of stinginess, and compares unfavourably with the Victorian arrangement. There the scale is for second-class return tickets for students—12 miles, 6d.; 25 miles, 1s.; 45 miles, 1s. 6d.; 60 miles, 2s. Here the scale promised is—25 miles, 1s.; 50 miles, 2s.; 75 miles, 3s.; 100 miles, 4s.; 125 miles, 5s.; and 150 miles, 6s. In Victoria there is no limitation of age; here the reductions only apply to students who are not yet twenty years old. The excuse advanced by the Commissioners that the difference of population necessitates the difference of concession may be reasonable enough; but they surely should not make a distinction between boys and men. This difficulty will probably be soon arranged. The school is to be opened to-morrow, when it will, we trust, enter upon a course of usefulness which will benefit the colony and amply repay the trouble which the Council has lavished upon it.

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BUST OF SIR THOMAS ELDER.

Sir Arthur Blyth, C.B., K.C.M.G., Agent-General for South Australia, is collecting funds to defray the cost of a bust of Sir Thomas Elder, G.C.M.G., which it is proposed to have executed by a leading sculptor and placed in the Adelaide University.
