

The Register.

ADELAIDE : MONDAY, DEC. 3, 1888.

OUR SCHOOL OF MINES AND INDUSTRIES.

The Board on Technical Education, which sent in its final report five months ago, ought to feel satisfied with the treatment which it has experienced at the hands of the Government. Some provision has already been made to meet the recommendation contained in the Board's first report that elementary drawing should rank as a compulsory subject in all the classes of our State schools, and that instruction in elementary science should be given to the children who are in the higher classes. True, the Inspector-General of Schools, who has a thorough, practical, knowledge of teaching, is plainly not inclined to think that this innovation will be attended with the satisfactory results expected. But this is only his opinion, and it may be falsified by his and his teachers' co-operation. Another recommendation of the Board—that a School of Mines and Industries should be established in Adelaide—has been adopted. Here another compliment has been paid to the Board. Out of the eight gentlemen who signed the final report five have been appointed to be members of the first Council governing the school, three having been appointed by the Government, one by the University, and one by the Chamber of Manufactures. Nor have we yet exhausted the compliments paid to the Board in return for its hard work. The number of members of the Council was fixed by them at twelve—twelve have been appointed. Of these one-half has been nominated by the Government in compliance with the Board's suggestion. Two members have been appointed by the University, and two by the Governors of the Public Library—still in accordance with the report. The only difference is that the remaining two are nominees of the Chamber of Manufactures and the Trades and Labour Council, instead of being appointed by the latter body alone. To crown all the Council itself has practically attached the seal of its approval to the Board's action, for it has selected Dr. Cockburn, the Chairman of that body, to act as its President. This is no mere empty compliment, for the chief burden of the work to be done will fall upon the President, and Dr. Cockburn in accepting the position has undertaken a heavy responsibility. He has capacity enough, enthusiasm enough, and knowledge enough, and, what is very important, leisure enough to justify his being selected for the office, and it is certain that he will conscientiously endeavour to perform the duties efficiently.

It is perhaps natural in the case of new undertakings that the relative positions of the cart and the horse should be reversed. We have got the Council right enough—the only thing we want now is the School. Presumably the Council is composed of gentlemen who are eminently qualified to fill the position. Five of them, as we have said, were members of the Board. A sixth, Professor Tate, has been for some time an honorary correspondent of the Ballarat School of Mines, and it may therefore be assumed that he knows well what has to be done. Alder-

This is a laudable aim to cherish, but there are other objects belonging to the higher mission of a University that should receive adequate attention. It is noteworthy that even in what may be regarded as its strongest point, namely, in the matter of examinations, the procedure of the authorities of the institution has been questioned. The latest instance of this is the complaints made about the last Preliminary Examination. One of the subjects of this examination was "the elements of arithmetic, including vulgar and decimal fractions." Last year some of the questions asked by the Examiner were difficult enough, while others were exceedingly simple. Difficult or simple, however, no serious objection was taken to them, and there was not a noticeably large number of failures. This year the Examiners presumably went on similar lines, but the result was a lamentable collapse of candidates. There were 207 failures, 176 of which were in arithmetic. Hereupon followed complaints and moanings innumerable. It was broadly suggested that the failures were the fault of the Examiners. The University Council deemed it proper to make enquiry into the matter, and it has come to an opposite conclusion. It sought information from the teachers who sent up pupils, and it claims that the result of their researches is not unfavourable to the Examiners. If this is so the conclusion is irresistible that the plucked ones more or less deserved plucking; and, further, that the teachers are not free from blame. The outcome of the investigations of the Council as reported by itself, in fact, entitles parents and the public at large to look to the teachers for an explanation.