

Register February 10 1888

PROFESSOR BOULGER.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—As one taking interest in educational matters, I regret that the recent action of the Adelaide University Council will probably have the effect of depriving the students of the very valuable services of Professor Boulger. Changes of Professors, especially in a new University, frequently act as a drag-chain on the smooth course of educational progress. Can no inducement be held out by the Council to influence the Professor to change his determination? Has he declined irrevocably the offer of the Council? Is the present occupant of the Chair of English Language and Literature, Mental and Moral Philosophy upon the expiration of the time of his appointment still eligible for re-election for a further period of five years? If so, why not offer re-election for such period at least without the formality of advertising? In any case I hope that South Australia will not be deprived of the advantages of a teacher of such great attainments as well as of the very highest academical distinctions, who also has the rare gift of winning the sympathy of his students as well as of having much practical educational experience both in England and on the Continent.

I am, Sir, &c.,

THOS. P. KELLY, B.Sc.

The Presbytery, Gawler, February 9.

The Lantern February 11/1888.

A few days ago the *Register* published an article on the Adelaide University, which pretty conclusively proved that Professor Boulger had been very badly treated. After five years service he was offered a yearly billet, although he was told that in the event of a new man being appointed, the appointment would last for five years. If language has any definite meaning this can only mean that in the opinion of the University authorities, it would be better to risk a new man being a failure,

for five years, than trust Professor Boulger for a like period, after having once tried him for a similar time. But the fact that the *Register* thought the Professor ill treated was quite sufficient to make the *'Tiser'* take an opposite view, and so it produced an article, which simply amounted to a statement that it is a bad thing to have a man in one's employ for a long while, and more especially so if you lead him to believe that this situation is likely to be permanent or of long duration. Most people who hold billets for a long period do so because they are specially adapted for the work and do it well, and can be trusted to carry out their duties as well. But the *'Tiser's'* article simply argues, that when a man has proved his fitness to be trusted, that is the time he can't be trusted at all. Is not this an absurd position for a leading paper to assume, and is it not wretched stuff to sell even for a penny? Verily, when the *'Tiser'* reduced its price from twopence it was an act of honesty; twopence was robbery—a penny is bad enough.

THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE may be a seat of learning, but it does not shape much like a seat of wisdom. Various faculties have been jumbled together within its precincts without giving much edification to the public, for whose benefit the institution was founded.

We have had the curious spectacle of a legal dignitary acting as Chancellor after the term for which he was elected had expired, and exercising his high functions in disposing of an important professorship in the worst conceivable manner.

Amongst the candidates the least suitable person was selected, and then upon terms which varied widely from the conditions under which applications were invited for the post.

Something very like favoritism of a pronounced type was exercised, and apparently the interests of the University—and with them those of the students of law—were sacrificed on the altar of "friendship." Thus the proverb that kissing goes by favor has received a fresh application.

Professor Boulger is a gentleman who deserved something like consideration at the hands of the authorities whom he had served well. He was engaged as a Professor for five years, with the expectation that at the end of that period his engagement would be renewed for a like term, and so on from time to time, as long as he did his duty fairly and well.

Nothing of the sort. When Boulger's time had expired he found that no renewal would be made unless he consented to terms which practically reduced his tenure of office to a period of six months after notice given. The Professor might thus be cast out into the wilderness if the exigencies of friendship demanded a sacrifice, and in these days who can tell when such a thing may not happen?

---

But besides the shortening of the tenure of office, the Professor was required to undertake additional duties—duties not in the original bond. Not a word was said about an increase of pay to compensate for uncertainty of tenure, and not a syllable about remuneration for extra and arduous labor.

---

Way, Chief Justice and Chancellor, who knows nothing of University life, is equally ignorant of University management, discipline, and requirements, appears to be master of the situation and to act as if learned professors were as easily gathered as gooseberries, or as lawyer's clerks were picked up many years ago.

---

Cliques have existed in Universities from time immemorial, and they might spring up like mushrooms in the warm temperature of Adelaide. Fixity of tenure to Professors was originally determined on to do honor to the learned who were deemed fit to fill such onerous and dignified positions, as well as to render them independent of those pleasant little coteries which do so much at times on the quiet.

It is not dignified, nor is it just, to treat gentlemen as Professor Boulger has been treated. It is not nice to hire a University Don in the same way as one would engage a footman or a boots.

---

University senates were not established for little freaks of this kind, nor to degrade high offices in such a way as to prevent distinguished scholars from aspiring to them. But we do queer things in Australia, and we like to grovel at times.

---

To do this successfully we must be shown how to do it by persons in high places. Certainly we do not lack examples amongst our "haristocracy." In Adelaide we are accustomed to this sort of thing. What we are disgusted at is the impression it makes in England and the other colonies.

---

---