

UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS AND ENGLISH.

To the Editor.

Sir.—In company with other ordinary mortals I had long entertained a sort of superstitious reverence for the supposed infallibility of university professors in the realms of literature and learning, but this sentiment has received several rude shocks. I find various evidence which compels me to reconstruct long-cherished ideas. I have before me the examiners' reports on the results of the public examinations held last year, and I am astonished at the slipshod composition and the faulty punctuation therein exhibited. Seeing that these reports are carefully perused by hundreds of teachers and intending candidates, it is passing strange that the professor who signed them on behalf of the Board of Examiners did not edit and present them in an irrefragable form. To descend from the general to the particular, let me point out a few expressions to which exception can reasonably be taken on account of their inaccuracy or their want of elegance in structure. On p. 98 appears the very loose phraseology—"The examiner would have liked to have seen." In the sentence (p. 97) "Much nonsense was written by many about opening and shutting of the pores of the skin," the word "the" is omitted before "opening." A similar error is found on the same page in "More care also should be taken with spelling of geographical names." On p. 93 is a sentence in which the verb is apparently not on speaking terms with its subject:—"There have been a surprising number of mistakes with prepositions." In two or three places the word "only" is misplaced; e.g. (p. 94), "one candidate and one only knew the imperative." "And one only" should read "and only one;" otherwise the phrase should be marked off by commas. On p. 95 I notice a singular comparison—"The knowledge of accident . . . compared with former years." On p. 96 are two instances of the "split infinitive"—"disability to accurately describe . . . and to correctly give." The split infinitive may at times be more euphonious, but surely not here. Moreover, "disability" is perhaps questionable. On p. 99 there appears "inability to apply." There is certainly a distinction between "disability" and "inability," but in the above examples they appear as synonyms. Then, take the following sentence on p. 96:—"More than half the candidates said the spinal canal passed through the centre of the body." The professor has followed the common rule relating to the proper sequence of tenses, but that rule does not apply here, for the candidates presented (though erroneously) the statement as an ever-existing and present fact—a fact untouched by the circumstance of time. The present tense is appropriate for what is invariably true. Thus, "He said that the earth turns on its axis" is preferable to "He said that the earth turned on its axis." Other objectionable portions are:—(p. 92) "In acquiring a knowledge of spelling" (proficiency in spelling?); (p. 92) "indifferent spellers;" (p. 92) "a considerable number;" (p. 92) "the number examined was 137, of which 95 passed;" (p. 93) "the amateur etymologist rather affects this delusion;" (p. 93) "might be reasonably expected" instead of "might reasonably be expected;" (p. 94) "The translation from English into Greek was better than that of Greek into English;" (p. 94) "In the portion of the paper, however, set for credit" ("however" should follow "credit"); (p. 95) "Hardly any one did the little problem in the second question. Probably the children did not grasp the problem," &c. (how euphonious!); (p. 95) "Many minds to whom;" (p. 96) "There are no special errors peculiar to any large number of candidates;" (p. 96) "definitions which strongly suggests a doubt;" (p. 98) "There were over 20 different and wrong meanings given as the equivalent of 'instar,' 'præco,' &c. (Equivalents?); (p. 100). "Candidates must be required not merely to display powers of receptivity, but to have been trained to keep," &c. (This is a sort of grammatical shandy-gaff); (p. 100) "A hopeless duffer;" (p. 102) "Question ii. was that which was least well answered" (Penny-a-line circumlocution); (p. 102) "Question vi. was well done, and the diagrams good." Some of the above "professional idiosyncrasies" are not altogether indefensible from the strictly grammatical point of view; but, for all that, they are not to be imitated as models of a cultured and finished style. Surely University professors, of all men, should treat that noble heritage, our mother-tongue, tenderly and reverently?

I am, Sir, &c., E. A.

supremely gratifying fact, the announcement of which will cause much joy to be diffused in many poor family circles throughout the colony, we need not enquire minutely concerning the means of the settlement, or the character of it. When feeling among both classes of disputants over the Hospital question is still so sensitive, the less said about the matter the better. No good could be done by reviving controversy, and much harm might be provoked by such a proceeding. By all means let bygones be bygones, since the resurrection of them might even now imperil the understanding so happily effected.

Quite apart from indulgence in retrospection, more than sufficient difficulty has to be encountered before the patients in the Hospital can enjoy the full benefit of the improved arrangements which will shortly be introduced with the accession to the strength of the medical staff. Give and take will have to be observed; care must be exercised lest too obtrusive corns should be trodden upon; and forbearance and diplomacy will be required in the rounding of awkward corners. In certain cases mutual embarrassments cannot be avoided, for human nature is human nature; but all will be well if those most concerned in this aspect of the matter will only remember that considerations of humanity ought to be paramount in the minds of all gentlemen, and that the gratitude and blessings of the sick poor are cheaply earned at the cost of sacrificing a little personal pride. We believe that patience and tact, which have already achieved so much—the greater be the honour to those who have undauntedly persevered in the often seemingly hopeless efforts to arrange the settlement now recorded—will be sufficient to compass the finalizing adjustments which yet remain to be completed. With this confident hope "The Register," which has struggled so hard and so sincerely to improve the conditions of the sick poor at the Hospital, warmly congratulates the Chief Secretary (who has pleasantly distinguished his term of office by this diplomatic victory), the Chairman of the the Hospital Board (Mr. Tucker, M.P.,

who, with other of his fellow-members, has lately been a most persistent peace-maker), and all others who have striven so zealously and so successfully to promote the praiseworthy object which has been accomplished.

THE ADELAIDE HOSPITAL.

It is a matter for sincere and general congratulation that the hospital trouble is apparently at an end. Drs. Verco and Hayward will immediately resume attendance at the institution, and complete arrangements will be made for the members of the University staff to enter upon their duties during the week. This satisfactory settlement of a long-standing difficulty has been reached as the result of a meeting of the Hospital Board on Friday, the recommendations of which were approved by the Executive Council on the following day, and the announcement of the fact will be received with a feeling of thankfulness everywhere. The acute stages of the trouble that has seemed so intractable belong to what is fast becoming ancient history, and are sinking into the oblivion where it is best that they should remain, but like many maladies, they left conditions behind them that opposed a lingering resistance to all remedies by whomsoever applied. Those conditions, it may be presumed, have at length been effectually grappled with, and have yielded to treatment that promises a thorough and permanent cure. The tact and discretion that have been exercised by the chairman and members of the Hospital Board in rendering possible what will be so cordially welcomed, merit and will doubtless receive

frank recognition, and they have no doubt been aided by a willingness on all sides to establish a better state of feeling. It would perhaps be invidious, as it is certainly unnecessary, to single out individuals for complimentary reference when it is known that there has been a strong disposition all round to terminate a condition of affairs that was both disadvantageous to the community and unpleasant to most of the persons who were directly concerned. Those who have wrought quietly and unobtrusively towards this end, undiscouraged by failure, and animated principally if not exclusively by a single desire for the public good, will have their reward in the knowledge that what they have hoped for has been accomplished at last.

Although by no means the most important aspect of the case, it is not at all an insignificant matter, that by the arrangements now happily completed, the efficiency of the medical school, which is so influential a department of the University work, will be restored. It should be our ambition to train our own professional men, and it has been a cause of sincere regret that South Australian medical students should have gone elsewhere for any part of their education. The removal of any disability, fancied or real, under which they labored in Adelaide being now arranged for, we may hope that the fact of its former existence will soon be forgotten. In a community so limited as ours, and especially at the present period of our history, it is particularly desirable that the various institutions which are in contact with each other that are, so to speak, geared together in our complex social machinery, should have their several adjustments as complete and harmonious as possible, for friction involves a loss of power and engenders heat, besides having a tendency to destroy the machinery. Given the right relations and the University may greatly facilitate the work of the hospital, while on the other hand the hospital can materially promote the efficiency of the University. On both sides, therefore, there are strong reasons and motives for carrying into the most complete effect the proposals made for re-establishing those cordial relations in which mutual advantage will be found and with which it is to be hoped nothing untoward will interfere. Not only are the professors and students concerned in this matter, but behind them is the general public, which is profoundly interested in everything that affects the management of our greatest State charity and the prosperity of our principal seat of learning. Whatever touches either of these institutions for good or ill affects the entire community, and is promptly welcomed or regretted as the case may be. This has been shown again and again by the swift development of excited feeling when things seemed to be going wrong, and will be further demonstrated by appreciation of the later and better turn of events.

It is, in fact, the peculiar position of the Adelaide Hospital in its relation to public interests and sentiments that invests the recent transactions with so much special significance. Were it a private establishment the management of its internal affairs would produce no such sensation, but it has been erected and is sustained almost entirely by moneys drawn from the public exchequer, or at least derives the greater part of its external support from that source, and consequently every taxpayer feels he has a kind of vested right in it as a shareholder. It has had a long and extended career of usefulness, for though other institutions of a similar character have been established in various parts of the country, none of them can compete with the scale and range of its benefits. Its record has been in the highest degree creditable, taking its history as a whole, to the professional and other ladies and gentlemen who have either aided in enabling it to fulfil its purpose or borne the responsibility of its management. By successive chairmen and members of boards, their appointments, though honorary, have been highly prized, and

PEACE AT THE HOSPITAL.

In connection with reported settlement of the long-protracted trouble at the Adelaide Hospital hope frequently deferred has indeed made sick the hearts of South Australians who had no personal purposes to serve by the prolongation of the dispute, but wished to see the sick poor in the community provided in their hour of extremity with the most skilled professional attention. Now, however, at long last we believe that the object so ardently desired has been definitely attained, and that peaceful relations between the medical profession, so far at least as the resumption of work in the hospital is concerned, have been re-established on a permanent basis. In view of this