

THE authorities of the Adelaide University appear to be desirous of taking a new departure. The decease of Professor Davidson having left his chair vacant, they have taken into consideration whether the endowment of the chair cannot be employed in a way more directly bearing on public utility. Most persons thought at the time this chair was founded that the subjects to be taught in it were already sufficiently comprehensive. They included English literature and moral philosophy. Under the former head it was not unreasonable to expect that the professor should include instruction in the growth of the English language; a view of our national authorship in its several epochs, detailed criticism of particular books, and the bearings of our literature on national history in general, after the manner of Mr. Green in his history of the English people. In the department of moral philosophy it is usual to include, besides ethics proper, some instruction in political economy. In the older universities the ethics and politics of Aristotle have been among the best books in use. Now to give any full and satisfactory account of the various systems of morals, to exhibit their relation to psychology, and to deal with the science of political economy, is an arduous task for any professor. In the combination of this with the large and complicated department of English literature, any occupant of the chair might be expected to find himself quite sufficiently weighted. But to all this it is now proposed to add a department of law. It is intended to ask and endeavor to persuade Sir W. W. Hughes, the founder of the chair, to consent to such an alteration in the objects to which his endowment is to be devoted as may admit of the chair becoming practically a chair of law. They have even gone so far as to prepare a legal instrument for his signature authorising the change. This is an alteration which certainly calls for public discussion. It is so far advanced that there is now a proposition before the council for the appointment of a gentleman of known accomplishment to the professorship of English literature as a separate department at £500 a year; the balance of £300 a year is, we presume, to be applied to the purpose of a law lectureship. What has become of the department of moral philosophy does not appear.

At the first proposal of the change in the arrangements for one of the Hughes' chairs, it was impossible not to see that there were grave difficulties. It was not likely that in any one man could easily be found all the qualifications required for a professor of English literature, moral philosophy, and law. The separation of the several departments removes the difficulty. If a professor of English literature is wanted, it will not be so difficult to find a gentleman possessed of special qualifications. But on the other hand to break up the

endowment so that only £500 shall be attached to that professorship reduces the probability of finding a man of first-rate qualifications. It was certainly with the view of securing this that the income of the chair was fixed at £800 a year. Instead of throwing open the competition to the whole world the necessity arises of appointing the best man that can be got in South Australia itself. It is no disparagement to the able man whose name is to be proposed to say that Adelaide has a right to expect applications for the professorship from the most eminent men whom such an income as £800 a year with the other advantages of the position might tempt. If there are those amongst the leading men in our University Council who wish to see a department of law established in the University, it is not improper to point out to them that Sir W. W. Hughes has himself shown them the way of doing this. Let them raise the necessary funds for endowing a professorship or lectureship. The addition of such a subject to the studies of the University would have an obvious practical utility; but this is altogether apart from the question whether it is right to make such an addition at the expense of a chair already endowed.

In this case it happens that the original benefactor to whom not only this chair but the University itself owes its origin, is alive. He can refuse to consent if the proposals fail to commend themselves to his judgment. But such an early attempt to divert endowments from the object for which they were originally given may have the effect of discouraging future intending benefactors, and this is a consideration not without its importance. Sir W. W. Hughes may refuse, but it is an ungracious thing for a man to have to do, and to many persons it will seem questionable in point of taste as well as on grounds of gratitude to put him in this position. If he should consent it will doubtless not be without some sacrifice of personal feeling. When men endow chairs for the teaching of special subjects it is usually on the ground of some early predilection for some favorite line of study, and where these are such as have usually belonged to the curriculum of a university it is not politic to discourage such endowments. A university is not established merely with a view to temporary requirements, but for all time, and anything done to complete the circle of the sciences is a public benefit. We do not quite understand why it should be supposed that the founder of the chair should be easily persuaded to regard the science of morals as of such subordinate importance that he will allow it to be quietly shelved. The Council of the University may doubtless have much to say in defence of the measures they are taking. They are honorable men and have the best intentions. But they are, after all, a small body; and