

Here doomed to starve on water gruel,
never shall I see the University of Gottingen,
University of Gottingen.

The Chancellor and Council know very well that nobody ever became a great classic or a ripe scholar on so sickly a beverage as water-gruel. They may not go the extreme length that misguided Burns did when he wrote:—

Leeze me on drink! it gi'es us mair
Than either school or college;
It kindles wit, it waukens lair,
It pangs us full of knowledge.

But that idea, in a milder form and with less extravagant idolatory, may have had something to do with suggesting the small token to Guilielmo; and I do think, in spite of "Sigma's" shallowish criticisms, that the presentation was made with much modesty. Could there have been an occasion more appropriate? It was Commencement—a gathering of fair women and learned men, graduates and undergraduates for purposes of ceremonial. All eyes of the educated and to-be-educated were bent on the proceedings. What fitter time, therefore, to enunciate in the delicate if somewhat symbolical manner adopted one of the cardinal doctrines of University faith? Then, too, was not the utensil itself of "elegant classical form." Why should "Sigma" sneer at the inscription? The wonder is it was not more "vague"—Latin does not seem to have been copious enough for what it had to do. The difficulties of the author of that inscription must have been considerable. One word at least he seems to have borrowed from our own vernacular. I was not educated at the University of Adelaide, so I may be mistaken; but I am not aware of any classical authority for "Registaris." That, however, is a small matter, and is nothing to what might have happened if the Chancellor had made the presentation in a neat Latin speech instead of sternly confining himself to the unadorned plainness of English. But the Chancellor forbore, although there is a speech extant in very choice Latin which might have been readily adapted, and which, if we are to believe the orator (Lord Dufferin) himself, was delivered under circumstances which made his words highly appropriate to any festive occasion—rather perhaps to the flowing than the empty bowl. Entertained at dinner by the Governor of Iceland with more than Highland hospitality and a deluge of drink, His Lordship relates how the Bishop—who had evidently kept the claret-jug of that evening near him—in a magnificent Latin oration "a second time" proposed his health, and how thereupon, at his wits' end, His Lordship "had the audacity to reply in the same language." Thus he spoke:—

"Viri illustres, insolibus ut sum ad publicum loquendum, ego propero respondere ad complimentum quod recte reverendus prelatius mihi fecit, in proponendo meam salutem! et supplico vos credere quod multum gratificatus et flattifatus sum honore tam distincto.

"Bibere, viri illustres, res est, quæ in omnibus terris, domum venit ad hominum negotia et pectora, requirit haustum longum, haustum fortem, et haustum omnes simul: ut cani poeta, 'unum factum Naturæ totum orbem facit consanguineum et hominis natura est—bibere.'"

I might, had your space permitted, have referred to many authorities, sacred and profane, in vindication of the course taken by the Chancellor and Council; but probably what I have said may satisfy "Sigma" of his erroneous views, and that there is no such playful parallel as he suggests between a claret jug and a silver cradle to carry two, or the well-known emu-egg. Like myself, he wishes well, I am sure, to the University, and now that Guilielmo Barlow has got the jug, will be ready to join with the members of the Senate—"in their individual capacity," of course—in sending him something to fill it.

I am, Sir, &c.,

MIRROR.

*From the Advertiser
April 12th 1883*

COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—I believe there can exist no doubt that the Parliament of South Australia and others who have given rewards to be competed for by the students of our various public and private educational institutions, intended that they should be conducted in a manner calculated to elicit the proficiency attained in the various branches of education by the candidates, and also to test the mental grasp they have of the subjects on which they are examined, so that the examiner may determine how much of the work submitted to him is the result of rule and routine, and how much to an intelligent apprehension of the principles involved. To this end it is imperatively necessary that candidates should be subject to a rigorous examination, and have difficult problems to solve. Whilst these problems are calculated to elicit the information required, and do not exceed the limits (if any) prescribed for an examination, and are not impossible of solution within the terms of the problem, there is no fair ground of objection. If, however, questions are propounded which are childishly easy, or impossible of solution within the terms specified, then the almost unavoidable result will be, in the first case that the proficient scholar will be reduced to an equality with the indifferent one; and in the latter case the candidate who most fully apprehends the value of the terms specified and realises how irreconcilable they are, would be the last one to suppose that a problem would be propounded that could not be solved within the terms specified, and the first to believe that there must be some interpretation to be put upon it other than that which he has arrived at, which if he could only get hold of would enable him to solve the problem without violating the conditions stated therein. With this conviction on his mind he wastes precious time in the vain endeavor to discover a solution of the problem which will comply with the terms specified, until, perplexed and annoyed with himself for a result which he attributes to his own stupidity, unwilling that it shall be thought he has shirked the question, he ventures a solution, not that he believes to be a correct one, but one that to a certain extent appears less flagrantly to violate the conditions, and not so directly to confront him with an absurdity or impossibility; and with the irritating sense of failure and loss of time to make up, it is no wonder if in his after work mistakes are made which otherwise would not have been made, or that some problems remain unanswered for want of time. Whilst this is almost the inevitable result of such questions upon a candidate who fully apprehends the import of the terms of the question, and conscientiously endeavors to find a solution consonant with the data given, the candidate who either does not fully realise them, or wilfully or heedlessly ignores them, can arrive at a solution (?) with the same facility (and as literally) as Alexander untied the Gordian knot, and with the calmness of insensibility or of indifference can pursue the even tenor of his way undisturbed by disquieting thoughts. I believe most reasonable people will agree with me that this statement of the effect of problems of this description is not overdrawn, and that a persistence in their use is greatly to be deprecated as calculated in the highest degree to frustrate the object sought to be obtained by competitive examinations—it will in short give an advantage to the candidate who performs his work more like an automaton than a reasoning being.

It is therefore with regret that I see questions such as are before described in the papers furnished by the examiners at the late competition for the University scholarships. As an example of the style of questions first alluded to I may quote the following:—"A tradesman puts on a profit of 25 per cent. on his goods. He sells them and allows 12 per cent. off the bill. What profit does he make?" Now I confidently submit that such a question put as a test of the pro-