

Advertiser
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A YEAR'S UNIVERSITY WORK.

The calendar of the University of Adelaide, published annually, grows more bulky each year, and the present issue contains a vast mass of really interesting and useful information. It includes everything that might be required for reference, from the Act of Incorporation of 1874 onwards, but by far the greater part of the volume is relevant to the transactions of the twelvemonth particularly dealt with. This, of necessity, adds immensely to the immediate value of the publication, and that the public has a good opinion of it is shown by the considerable sum always realised by its sale. A study of it reveals many features of interest. Very radical changes are pointed out as having been made in the regulations for degrees in Arts and Science, and it certainly appeared that the former at any rate stood in need of a popularising process. In a community so highly practical as this one, any study is likely to be at a discount unless it seems calculated to offer to the student some definite advantage towards material progress or the making of a living. Very strong, however, was the feeling in the Senate in favor of retaining Greek in the Arts course, when the battle on that subject raged furiously last December, and, in spite of an earnest and influential minority's efforts, this branch of what used to be called the "humanities" holds its place in the new regulations. The usual detailed balance-sheet shows the income of the University for 1899 to have been over £19,000, and the expenditure (including more than £3,000 that went towards the new Conservatorium building) somewhat higher. The Government subsidy on endowments was £6,500, and the fees received came to a total slightly larger, by far the most being paid by students of music, whose curriculum involves an expenditure correspondingly higher. Interest and rents bring in another £5,000, though the general difficulty in getting the latter in is evidently felt by the University as by other landlords. The usual statement as to capital shows £123,700 invested in interest-bearing securities, mostly the stock or bonds of this province. The sum of £14,800 has been spent upon the Conservatorium building.

Much innocent fun is to be derived from a perusal of the reports of examiners; these grave and reverend gentlemen, being after all only human, have a keen eye for the humorous points of a really bad answer. So many slips of the pen that are obviously not genuine see the light from time to time, that an enhanced value attaches to such as are undeniably authentic. In the senior examination the famous "gellidus canis" passage was set, and the traditional "cold dog on the mountain" was promptly rendered by several candidates. Others made Virgil indulge in such agricultural aberrations as the grafting of vetches on a cypress! In physical geography it seems to have been the ladies who mostly went very wide of the mark, even defining magnetic variation as "the amount of the rainfall during the year," and "the temperature of the air." Among the juniors the chief defects were observable in English, parsing and spelling being apparently as great a stumbling block as ever. "Inaccuracy is perhaps the worst sin in education," says the report; "a habit of bad spelling grows like any other, and the inaccuracy must spread to other disciplines." In the preliminary there was the usual slaughter. Just half the candidates in the previous year were successful, but last September only 313 passed out of 671 who entered! In composition 188 failed, and in dictation 133. As the examiner sentimentally remarks, "if the mysteries of spelling are not revealed in due time to the juvenile mind, they are not likely ever to be known at all." It seems certain that orthography tends to become a specially weak point with Australian youth. Another remarkable feature is the very general tendency to verbosity among all but the youngest students. Teachers in general often encounter it, and the examiners, especially in the elementary science papers, constantly complain of having to read essays where brief statements only are required; one of them even recommends the appending to each question of a maximum length for its answer.

The detailed report of the Council dwells with regret upon the loss sustained by the death of the veteran Dr. Whittell, and with satisfaction upon the honor done indirectly to the University by the conferring of a well-deserved baronetcy on its Chancellor, Mr. Chapple, though liable to the

ordeal of annual election, remains an apparently perpetual warden of the Senate. The extension of the Arts course has resulted in an important step being taken, in the appointment of a Professor of History and English Language and Literature. Professor Mitchell, thus shorn of the more popular half of his department, will supplement the Philosophy left to him by taking up Economics. The growth of the Conservatorium (from which £3,000 was received in fees last year) has rendered necessary the engagement in London of another teacher of piano-forte playing. The whole number of undergraduates now connected with the University is just over a hundred, while there are twice as many more non-graduating students; of the latter by far the greater number come from the School of Mines, though the Pharmaceutical Society and the Education Department are also fairly well represented. Add to these 170 unclassified attendants of evening lectures, and the 1,800 candidates who presented themselves at the various public examinations, and it will be seen that the influence of the University for good is powerful and far-reaching. The examinations are by no means confined to Adelaide, being held at Mount Gambier and Port Pirie, with various centres between; latterly a daring development has taken them far afield into another colony that has no university of its own, so that Perth, Albany, and even Kalgoorlie reap the benefit of them. In fact, the appointment of an assistant secretary for Western Australia has been found necessary. This Extension system has as its pleasant corollary the giving of lectures on congenial topics by various experts, and these have ranged during the year from "Hamlet" to French literature, from "the problem of physiology" to wireless telegraphy. The library has been largely added to on the strength of a third donation of £1,000 from Mr. Barr Smith, and provision has been made for persons other than members to enjoy its privileges. This is but one instance of the open-minded way in which the University of Adelaide deals with the community. Democratic from its inception, it is as far as possible removed from the selfishly aloof position taken up by some seats of learning in the old world. Yet another example may be found in the new scheme now elaborated for the higher education of State school teachers. This is to be carried out entirely free of cost to the State or to the teachers, and the Government has naturally accepted it, giving the satisfactory pledge that those who are to come under its benefits shall first be made worthy of them by achieving the level of the Senior public examination. A joint control has been established by the University and the Education Department, and the good results should be far-reaching. The imperfectly educated teacher is a real menace to advancement. As one of the best known of recent English schoolmasters declares—"He who thinks that he knows enough about what he teaches, ceases from that moment to be in any sense a teacher at all. The stimulating teachers are those who have a mastery of the subject they teach, far beyond the immediate requirements of their pupils, and are themselves filled with a love of knowledge." The days of the pedagogue who can barely keep ahead of the brightest members of his class are numbered, and to the democratic development of universities this good result is largely due.

THE UNIVERSITY AND ITS CALENDAR FOR 1900.

The people who are interested in the issue of the Adelaide University Calendar are much more numerous now than they were a few years ago. As the institution itself grows in importance and in usefulness so does the annual volume describing its doings and setting forth its rules and regulations increase in bulk. The work of the year has begun already at the University, because entries for the March examinations have been received. Moreover, under the new scheme for enabling the Professors to take over much of the training of the State school teachers a Board of Education, representing the department and the University, has been appointed, and has sent Mr. Andrew Scott to North-terrace in order that he may with greater facility instruct the trainees in work leading up to the University lectures. The first term of the year begins before the middle of next month, and there will then be an opportunity of judging in some measure how the reforms recently instituted are likely to approve themselves. The courses for the arts and science degrees, as our readers are doubtless aware, have been entirely remodelled with the object of permitting students to take up the various subjects in any sequence that may suit their individual requirements. Thus, for example, a young man of studious inclinations, who is obliged to work all day in order to earn his daily bread, may arrange his course so as to pass in only one or two subjects at the end of each year. In this way it will take him longer to acquire his degree, but probably his knowledge will in the end be better assimilated than if he had been under the old system. In former years it was necessary for every student to study a group of subjects in each of three years, non-success in an examination generally meaning that no credit would be given for those subjects in which passes had been scored, and the whole year's work would need to be done all over again. This scheme of filling the whole time of the student for three years and turning him back in his work if he should happen to fail in one or two subjects formed part of the eighteenth-century academic policy, which practically regarded a University education as the almost exclusive privilege of rich men's sons. Occasionally, indeed, poorer scholars were admitted as "sizars," whose duty it was to wait upon the "gentlemen commoners" at table. But the University was supposed to exist primarily, and almost entirely, for the use of sons of men, with ample means, who could afford to pay handsomely for high education, usually accompanied by a good deal of high living at one or other of the great academical centres. All this is now changed. The University does not even assume that an undergraduate must necessarily have his whole time at his disposal for purposes of study during a period of three years. If he shows that he knows his work he is admitted to a degree, which means simply a certificate of scholarship.

The annual report for last year shows that at the Public Examinations no fewer than 1,791 candidates presented themselves. There is an ever-widening circle of those to whom the special reports and hints of the examiners are of peculiar interest, and it would be well if these could be made available for perusal by teachers and candidates within a few weeks of the examinations, as is done in Melbourne. One complaint which is made with reference both to the preliminary and to the junior public examination is that the standard of English composition is by no means high, and the spelling not at all above reproach. The junior candidates last year had to study Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," and on being asked to write a short description of the poem a score or two of them simply reproduced by rote the text of Pater's essay on the favourite "rime." To tell the truth, we rather sympathize with these puzzled youngsters. A reader of the "Ancient Mariner" may have a genuine appreciation of its beauty without formulating definitely any ideas as to what is its inner meaning. Coleridge, like Browning, frankly confessed that there were some of his enigmatic writings which he himself could not explain. While the public examination lists are swelling from year to year, so also are some of the classes for undergraduates and non-graduating students, the total of the former having been 103 and of the latter 208. The evening classes were attended by 170 students. Among those who were not studying for a degree the largest number went up from the School of Mines, while 80 were