

From The Advertiser Dec^r 1852

JUNIOR AND MATRICULATION EXAMINATION.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—Will you permit me, as one deeply interested in educational matters (though not personally connected with the above examinations) to make a few remarks upon a matter which at present is causing a good deal of vexation and disappointment? I allude to the "arithmetic" paper which was placed in the hands of the students last Tuesday. I believe it has caused an almost universal feeling of dissatisfaction among the pupils, together with their friends and teachers. In the first place, it seems unfair to place the candidates for the "primary" examination on the same footing as the matriculation students (which, judging from the heading of the papers, seems to be the case); more especially as several of the sums given to the matriculation class last year were much easier and clearer than those of this year's junior examination. Then the first sum on the list proved such a terrible poser that it occupied an undue amount of the allotted time, and so bewildered and disheartened the unfortunate pupils that it confused and unnerved them for the remaining seven, which had to be hurried over in too short a time. Indeed this sum has baffled the attempts of several of my acquaintance. I am told also that the head master of a certain college—a noted arithmetician—to whom the paper was submitted, took three hours to do the sums, and even he failed in No. 1. How the *Register* could have been started on the 4th of July, 1837, and its number on November 28, 1852, only reach 11,245, is to every one a puzzle. You are to "assume" it to be published every week day, but after working that out the idea occurs to you, "Oh, but there are all the leap years to be taken into consideration;" and after ascertaining their number—or imagining you do—you have to guess how many of these 29ths of February were Sundays. Then are such high holidays as Christmas day, New Year's day, and the Queen's birthday to be deducted or not? Are these to be considered ordinary working "week days?" I really think the editor of the *Register* ought to prove himself a modern *Œdipus*, and give us the solution. (By-the-by I wonder if the professor himself took the trouble to work it out and see if it "came right.") Sum No. 2 is also rather puzzling from the looseness of the construction in its wording. For instance, in "Find the cost of asphaltting a tennis court, length 78 feet, breadth 36 feet, with a border of 5 feet all round, at the rate of 3s. a yard," what is the pupil to estimate? Is it the court alone, deducting the border of 5 feet, or is it the border alone, or is it the court and border combined? Indeed most of the other sums were more suited to practical experienced men, who at a rapid glance could approximate pretty nearly to what the answer should be, than to young, inexperienced, immature minds, most of them boys and girls from 12 to 16 years of age, hitherto quite unpractised in this style of arithmetical questioning, and timid and nervous at the ordeal altogether, so that it is no wonder if many of them failed, as at least they fear is the case. I know from personal observation that two of the girls, who both believe they have failed, are thoroughly well versed in all the rules of arithmetic—one of them being gifted with a rare aptitude for calculation—and feel sure that had they been tried, as they and the others were led to believe, in the "Elements of arithmetic, including vulgar and decimal fractions," they would have acquitted themselves with credit. Now, do you not think that under these circumstances Professor Lamb might be induced, if respectfully requested, to reconsider this matter, and grant the pupils another opportunity of proving what arithmetical knowledge they really possess. I always took it for granted that that was the grand object of such examinations, and not merely to puzzle and bewilder the poor already overworked brains. It will be very hard if a competitor who has filled in all the papers on the other

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"compulsory" subjects should be thrown "out of the running" and debarred from attempting the "optional" subjects next week on account of this unlucky paper. Hoping that those who share my opinion and approve of what I suggest will use their influence in endeavoring to bring it about, and that you will also take the matter into consideration and contribute your support, thereby assisting these young aspirants thus earnestly and anxiously striving to distinguish themselves in such an honorable path, I am, &c.,

JUSTITIA.

North Adelaide, December 2, 1882.

From the Advertiser
December 6th 1882

PRIMARY AND MATRICULATION EXAMINATIONS.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—As the subject of the late examination in arithmetic has been so ably brought forward, it may be well to call attention to another cause of dissatisfaction. On comparing details of compulsory subjects of examinations for matriculation in calendars 1880-81, page 61, I find "map-drawing from memory" included under the head of "geography." In calendar 1882, page 41, "compulsory subjects same as in the junior examination," page 35, where no "map-drawing from memory" is required. This omission was believed to be in accordance with an agreement made at a meeting held at the University in midwinter holidays of 1881, that blank maps should be provided; and yet out of six questions at the recent examinations three memory-maps were required. A candidate may have a very good knowledge of general geography, but none of drawing, therefore the map is a failure and the towns misplaced. Again, only the comparatively insignificant details of population and area of the colonies were asked for—whereas the synopsis says, "outlines of geography, and in particular the geography of Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand." I feel a special interest in girls offering themselves as candidates at the University examinations, inasmuch as it was partly at my suggestion that the institute examinations (of which these are an offspring) were first placed on such a footing as would induce girls to offer themselves; but we teachers cannot work for them unless we have some confidence that the details of subjects as set forth in the calendar will be adhered to, and that no "catch" questions will be given—to solve which is no test of general intelligence, but only of acuteness.—I am, &c.,

A TEACHER.

December 4, 1882.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—May I ask you to insert a few remarks *re* the arithmetic paper set last week at the Adelaide University junior examination? The regulations stated that No. 4 of the compulsory subjects would be "Elements of arithmetic, including vulgar and decimal fractions." The first sum of the paper set was scarcely an elementary one; all the remaining sums were problems in vulgar and decimal fractions. Undoubtedly the examiners are quite justified in fixing their own standard, but such standard should be clearly stated in the regulations. If it is to be solely problems in fractions, does it not appear misleading to insert the words, "elements of arithmetic?"—I am, &c.,

QUERY.

December 4, 1882.