

Advertiser

DECEMBER 19, 1895.

UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE.

COMMEMORATION DAY.

DEMONSTRATION BY STUDENTS.

Commemoration day in connection with the University of Adelaide was celebrated on Wednesday afternoon in the University library. The Chancellor (his Honor the Chief Justice) presided over a large attendance. Also on the platform were the Vice-Chancellor (Mr. J. A. Hartley), the warden of the senate (Mr. F. Chapple), the Bishop of Adelaide, Dr. Jefferis, Professor Mitchell, and the registrar (Mr. C. R. Hodge). Prior to the entrance of the members of the senate and council a body of the under-graduates gathered at the eastern end of the library, where to the accompaniment of a piano they sang a number of airs, including the "Dead March," in which latter one lad brought in the drum passages by beating a form. From one bookcase hung a skull and crossbones. Throughout the afternoon the students were most demonstrative, and continually interrupted the proceedings. His Excellency the Governor, who was accompanied by Captain Henniker, Captain Guise, and Mr. W. J. Conybeare, was accommodated with a seat in front of the platform.

Degrees were conferred on the under-mentioned candidates:—

LL.B. Degree.—Julian Ayers, James Frederick Downer, and Carl Louis Spehr.

M.B. and Ch.B. Degrees.—James Atkinson Bonnin.

B.A. Degree.—John Benbow and Isaac Herbert Solomon.

B.Sc. Degree.—Edward Vincent Clark, Oliver Leitch, and Edward Joseph Stuckey.

Graduates of other universities were admitted *ad eundem gradum* as follows:—

The Rev. James Jefferis, LL.D., University of Sydney.

His Excellency Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, M.A., University of Cambridge.

The Right Rev. John Reginald Harmer, M.A., University of Cambridge.

Edward von Blomberg Bensly, M.A., University of Cambridge.

Arthur William Gosnell, M.A., University of Cambridge.

William Mitchell, M.A., University of Edinburgh.

William James Conybeare, B.A., University of Cambridge.

Sir Herbert Stanley Oakeley, Mus. Doc., University of Oxford, and Richard Ernest Shuter, M.B., University of Melbourne, were admitted *in absentia*.

The deans of the various faculties then presented to the Chancellor:—

The Stow prizemen—Frederick William Young and Philip Mesmer Newland.

The winners of Sir Thomas Elder's prizes for physiology—Arthur Geoffrey Owen and Bernhard Traugott Zwar, students in medicine of the first year; and Charles Bickerton Blackburn, student in medicine of the second year.

The John Howard Clark scholar—Lionel Joseph Robertson.

The Roby Fletcher scholar—James Beith Wilson.

The Everard scholar—James Atkinson Bonnin.

In investing Dr. Jefferis, the CHANCELLOR said:—Dr. Jefferis—I venture to say that I have never conferred a degree with greater pleasure than this which I have now conferred upon you. I am sure that that gratification is shared by every member of the University of Adelaide. We gratefully remember that you used your advice and influence for the transfer of the munificent gift of, £20,000, which the late Sir W. W. Hughes intended to appropriate for the endowment of Union College, to form a fund for the establishment of the University of Adelaide for the benefit of the whole colony. (Cheers.)

On Sir Fowell Buxton taking his degree, the CHANCELLOR said:—Your Excellency—On behalf of the University of Adelaide, I desire to express our sense of the honor you have done us by your presence this afternoon, and by your acceptance of a degree from this University. As Governor of South Australia you are a visitor to this University during your term of office; but as master of arts you will continue to be a member of this University after you leave the colony, and your connection with us will last as long as you live. I trust that your name may long continue to adorn the list of graduates of this University and that you may long be a living link between the University of Cambridge—with which you and your family have been so long and honorably connected—and the University of Adelaide. (Cheers.)

As the Bishop of Adelaide walked to the front of the table one of the undergraduates called out to his fellow-students—“The little Alabama coon.”

The CHANCELLOR—No, no, gentlemen. I ask you not to. We are very much obliged to you for your assistance. (Laughter and cheers.) But I am sure there is no undergraduate of the University of Adelaide who will be so discourteous as to interrupt me in the execution of my duty.

The Chancellor then conferred the degree upon the Bishop.

In admitting Sir Herbert Oakeley and Dr. Shuter *in absentia* the Chancellor said—Sir Herbert Oakeley is not only a distinguished composer in England, but he has been of good service to the University of Adelaide by acting as examiner in music for that degree in the old country. As we understood that it would afford Sir Herbert much gratification to be associated more closely with the University of Adelaide than in the manner I have mentioned the council determined to confer on him the degree of doctor of music. Dr. Shuter intends to proceed to a higher degree in this University, and we have admitted him to the degree of bachelor of medicine in his absence, because he is at a great distance, and it would have occasioned him much inconvenience to leave his practice and travel 200 miles to Adelaide.

The CHANCELLOR congratulated the Stow prizemen, Messrs. Young and Newland, most heartily on the distinction of being bracketed together as worthy to be recorded as Stow prizemen. He trusted that this success was an augury of future success in the University, and that hereafter they might show that they were worthy successors, by the teaching obtained in the University, of the distinguished lawyer after whom the prize was named.

The CHANCELLOR congratulated the winners of the Sir T. Elder prizes, and expressed the hope that their future career would be successful.

When the dean of the faculty of arts presented Mr. Robertson the CHANCELLOR said—"I congratulate you on your success in winning the John Howard Clark scholarship, one of the most coveted distinctions in the gift of the University of Adelaide. Your success is all the more remarkable as you are bracketed as equal with the winner of the scholarship established in memory of our lamented friend, William Roby Fletcher, long a member of this University, and for several years its Vice-Chancellor. Yours is a very remarkable distinction indeed, and I wish you all further success in life.

On the Everard scholar being presented to him, the CHANCELLOR remarked—Mr. Bonnin, your undergraduate career has been marked not merely by your passing first class, but by your winning the Everard scholarship, which is the highest gift of the medical school, and I wish you success in your career.

The CHANCELLOR then said—Professor Mitchell has taken a great deal of pains in the preparation of the annual address which he is now about to deliver. I am sure we are all glad to be able to do anything in our power to help him; and the students will be able to give him great assistance by silent attention while he is speaking.

Professor MITCHELL then delivered the annual address, reviewing the state of literature and philosophy as he finds them in South Australia. He said:—It is because I am a fairly new arrival that I have been asked to address you to-day, and therefore I have no difficulty in choosing a topic for my discourse. For you will expect me to give an account of the state of education as I find here in the subjects of my own chair. And as I must be expected to commend them to you I shall naturally be led to speak of the function of the University in the education of the country, and to say something on the general question of a liberal and a professional education. Before leaving London I was told that Adelaide, in proportion to its population, might claim to be the most literary city in Australia. As I have not even an American's acquaintance with the other cities I can say nothing about the comparison; but it does appear to me that in Adelaide there is a widespread interest in literature. This has been shown by the large attendances at the public lectures—the so-called extension lectures—though in all four courses the subjects were entirely by way of instruction, and had nothing exciting or amusing about them. It is shown still better by the very large number of literary societies in the town, though I have no idea of the work that is done at the majority of them, and I am rather averse to the competitive aspect of it for the usual reason. But the most important means of securing a literary interest in any community is not the University nor those societies, but the schools. I have now examined several hundreds of their pupils in English literature, and the results were highly gratifying. It was obvious to me that much time and pains had been spent on the books prescribed for the examinations; and I want to emphasise the high quality of the work, so far as I have seen it, in order that I may say the more emphatically that this is no guarantee that the pupils have acquired any very great or abiding interest in literature. They may indeed have lost it, and have come to think that Shakespeare, Milton, and the other classical writers are only to be read for the things that are sufficiently outlandish in them to appear on an examination paper. Not long ago a literary man said that he put to himself the question why he and his like could

hope to make a living by writing books which had to enter the same market as the multitude of infinitely superior books of dead authors, and to compete with them at many times the cost. The literary man said that he was struck with amazement at his own temerity till he remembered that the great authors are studied in schools, annotated, examined upon, and made a racecourse for all sorts of competition. And thus, he says, the hope for the living author is that people will continue to be educated and examined into an effectual disgust with the best literature. Of course this is a whimsical way of dressing an old argument to make it look striking again—the argument I mean that the school does not improve the literary taste of boys and girls from the tenth-rate interest which comes without effort, to the first or second-rate interest which only education can give. And the reason is always the same; that literature is read for the sake of the notes, and they for the sake of the examination paper, which in turn has no concern with taste, but only with whatever can be made to present a difficulty. The examinations which we have just held really deal with understanding only, and understanding goes but a little way in creating an abiding interest in literature and an abiding distaste for what is not. Every one who has ever thought on the subject will have seen this, and I may, therefore, proceed to the moral. I need not say that there is one, for education is like politics in this that every one who thinks five minutes about it feels himself competent to say—here is something to reform, and this is what should happen. The naive reformer in education puts his faith in a magisterial system of syllabuses and examinations. I want to say that except to a slight extent, any measures of that sort can do very little for the part of education I am considering—I mean for culture or taste in literature. It is nearly as impossible and absurd to coerce people into that by a public examination as to coerce them into morality by the same means. But surely, it may be said, you could do something if you increased the amount of literature to be read, and if you prescribed a portion of literary history. It is not a teacher who would propose the increase at present. A little might be gained in taste and interest, but of course much would have to be lost in point of thoroughness and knowledge. As regards literary history I do not know a more useless study for a school, or one that is more chargeable with intellectual immorality. For apart from the knowledge of names, dates, and tittle-tattle, it merely enables the pupils to pass critical judgments on writers whom they have not read—either the judgments of good critics, with appropriate quotations, or the original appreciations that are formed more or less on the model of our wall literature—like one that I recently fell upon which described Lycidas as having “all the style and finish that one could desire” like a pair of boots. Even in its best form this is a bad kind of cramming, because it is dishonest and its aim is to deceive. And so I revert to what I said. It is the purpose of a general or liberal education to improve the understanding or intellectual character, the feeling, taste, or æsthetic character, and the will or moral character of young people. But of these three there is only one that can be fostered or coerced by public competition—I mean understanding. All the morals are in that, and it would only be tedious to draw them. I shall merely say that

the main aim of a literary education is an interest in our own literature, that for nine out of ten boys and girls who are learning Latin, Greek, French, and German these languages can be little more than means for the better appreciation of their own, and that our system is a misfortune for literary education if it requires so much time for certain of the means that little is left for the end they have in view. It does frequently appear that schools are so concerned with ploughing and harrowing that they don't trouble about the crop; and yet experience has shown nothing more clearly than this—that if the crop is not worth gathering before school days are over, there will be no harvest later on. That is why I say that the chief educational force for literature in this country is not its University, or the literary societies, but the schools—and I mean schools of every grade. In particular the study of English literature at the University depends entirely on what the students have previously done. The students I should wish to have are those who have read most, but especially who can quote most of the poetry and prove that it is of permanent interest. The analysis of literary works, the criticism and history of them, are entirely superficial without such a soil. What could be more useless, for example, than the recent course of public lectures on literary criticism to any in the audience who had not already formed their taste by reading and learning? I pass now to the other subject of my chair—I mean philosophy. But I need not enquire into the state of education in it, for any systematic study of it is almost absent. I am not surprised at that, because the state of things at the English universities and University colleges is not very different, and never has been. The neglect is owing to the fact that a knowledge of philosophy has no market value, because no profession has undertaken its patronage. No study flourishes which is not required of the candidates for a learned profession, and this one is not. I take this opportunity therefore of explaining what the study comprises, though I wish to say that I do not apologise for it, or make a case for its usefulness, or even urge you to study it whether it is useful or not.

The professor then stated some of the various topics which philosophy undertakes and continuing, he remarked:—These are studies which are comprised under philosophy. What can the University do to encourage the study of them? Our students are of two sorts, professional and non-professional. During last session the number of non-professional students has grown very much, and it is likely that the growth will proceed. For them there will again be special courses in both departments of science and arts. As regards English and philosophy there will be three special courses. In English literature, instead of formal lectures, there will be the study of certain specified poems; in psychology there will be a course of lectures on the growth of the mind, with an additional class for teachers on the principles of education. And, finally, in response to a request from the Literary Societies' Union, the council has agreed to make a course on economics; but it has to be quite understood that these public courses are nothing of the nature of an entertainment, and it is very questionable praise if they are said to be more attractive than the courses for professional students. For one thing is always to be remembered that except for conversational, political, and other histrionic purposes, nothing is worth studying

that is not studied systematically and laboriously. There is no cheap and easy way of coming by knowledge or an abiding interest. But a University must always depend on its professional students, and so, above all, must the scientific or "unpractical" studies which it teaches. The studies I have mentioned are quite unpractical in the sense that they do not increase one's market value or make one "get on." For that they are not worth an ounce of ambition or a grain of unscrupulousness. A man will grow none the richer for literary culture, for logic or metaphysics, and even as regards the studies which I have said are practical the same thing is true. For I cannot say that one who knows psychology must be a good teacher, and I don't think that the study of ethics will make one behave better, or that the studies of economics will get him a seat in the Cabinet. If I had to apologise for the subjects which I teach it would have to be on entirely different grounds; it would have to be on the grounds on which all finely scientific studies are defended. There is hardly a tenth of the science taught to medical students that will immediately affect their practice when they get it, not a tenth of the botany, the zoology, the physics, the chemistry, or even the anatomy, the physiology, and the histology they have to learn. And if I had the hardihood to say a word on a current dispute, and tried to argue that lawyers should study logic and economics, if not ethics, I should be ready to admit that not even a tenth of the knowledge they might retain would go to benefit their clients, their constituents, or the culprits who will one day come before them. The chief endowment of learning and of purely scientific knowledge is the patronage of the professions in requiring them of their candidates, and thus supplying an income and an adequate number of specialists. I do not say that a learned profession is obliged to be a patron of knowledge; I merely point to the fact and the obvious inference. But there is, and of course there must be, another reason for enforcing the scientific part of its learning on the candidates of a learned profession. And it is with this that I would close in order that I may speak more directly to the students who are now graduating and in whose honor we are met to-day. You have now finished a long course of education, in which you learned many things that you have now forgotten, though you remember the contour and the general principles, and can lay your hand on details. Doubtless during your course you have wondered why you had to study certain things just as you did at school when you began to learn English grammar, or suffered for the lack of other information. At any rate you will easily meet people who will say that a great deal of your study was useless and unnecessary. There is no study that is quite useless of course, but the people may be right if they say that certain other studies would have been more useful for you. For in education we are apt to be traditional, inevitably so in an old country with its numerous vested interests, and naturally so in a new country from its tendency to imitation. With your graduation to-day you became an authority in the University, and it will be your duty to urge any reforms in the curriculum of your profession which you find to be desirable. But I do not think you are likely to say that the time you have had to spend in study was too long and the labor too great for all that was worth knowing in the concerns of your profession. You will hardly acquiesce in the view that nothing is worth knowing

that is not of service in curing something or setting something to rights—as if it were absurd to study nine-tenths of the brain diseases because nine-tenths of them are quite incurable. The object of your long training has not been to make you perfect in your profession, but to make you perfectly competent and perfectly willing to carry out your own education by making the most of your experience. I say perfectly willing, as well as perfectly competent, because if you have not a scientific interest in your work you have missed the best aim of your education, whether the fault is yours or our own. But if you have that interest in your work, you have got the best that is to be had from any sort of education; and though it does not make you an authority, it makes you a competent judge of authorities. At present I make no doubt you have so many interests that you would not miss this one if it were lost. But I would remind you that before very long your life will lie mainly in your work, and if this becomes monotonous, trivial, mechanical, and merely money-making to you, because you have lost the only means of making it interesting, you will degenerate into quite the kind of thing that you are now so willing to despise. In the name of the University I wish you good-bye, and we look to you to do us honor. (Prolonged cheers.)

The CHANCELLOR said—My first duty on behalf of the University is to thank Professor Mitchell for the appropriate and brilliant address to which we have just listened. In the course of that address he fully vindicated the existence of the philosophical side of his chair. Everyone who has listened will agree—those who are not students—in envying the students of his class the pleasure of listening to a teacher who can make so difficult a subject so plain, so interesting, and so persuasive. My second is to express regret at the inconvenience to which so many were subject owing to our not having an examination hall. It is a source of deep regret that many ladies have been obliged to stand during the whole of the proceedings. I look forward to the time when we shall have a hall of our own in which to hold such commemorations as these. I desire lastly to thank the students, if they will permit me—(a voice—“Now don't be ironical”)—to do so for their assistance this afternoon, for the tone they have given to our proceedings, and for relieving them of anything like solemnity. (Laughter and cheers.) I am in the habit of telling my friends that I am proud of the students of the University of Adelaide, and I tell them they are all ladies and gentlemen. I invited here to-day a number of my friends, graduates of the Universities of England and other parts of Europe. Therefore I feel it to be a duty to the students of this University and of the whole of my friends whom I have invited, and the other ladies and gentlemen present, who do not know so much about the students of the University as I do, to say that I am quite sure the great body of the University students are ashamed of the interruptions occasioned by the alarm clocks, and that they do not think it is at all humorous or a gentlemanly thing to interrupt the proceedings in that manner. And now, apologising for the conduct which is exceptional and not at all representative, I will ask the students to assist us still further by singing “God Save the Queen” as his Excellency the Governor retires.

The CHANCELLOR declared the commemoration closed.