

AD ELAIDE, TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17, 1895.

# UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOL.

## ABOLITION OF GOVERNMENT GRANT.

### DEPUTATION FROM THE COUNCIL.

On Monday morning a deputation representing the council of the University of Adelaide interviewed the Minister of Education on the subject of the Government grant to the Medical School, which has been struck off the Estimates.

The deputation, which was introduced by his Honor the Chief Justice, consisted of Sir Samuel Davenport, Dr. Stirling, C.M.G., Mr. W. R. Boothby, C.M.G., the Revs. Dr. Jefferis and Dr. Paton, Drs. Lendon and Verco, Dr. Barlow, Messrs. J. Henderson and G. J. R. Murray, Professor Rennie, and Mr. C. R. Hodge (registrar of the University).

The CHIEF JUSTICE said the deputation represented the University Council and they had not adopted the usual custom of asking the assistance of any member of Parliament or anyone engaged in the strife of politics to introduce them; they preferred to rely on the inherent strength of their case. On a previous occasion when he was a member of a deputation the Minister had replied that the case was irresistible; they were then asking a favor, whereas now the request was for the performance of a promise. It was 20 years since he had been engaged in active political life; but he watched carefully the careers of public men, and no incident in the Minister's life had impressed him so much as when he availed himself of the opportunity some eight or nine years ago of enabling the council to complete the curriculum of the Medical School without adding one penny to the burdens of the taxpayers. Up to 1886 he could remember there was in South Australia a scholarship which was the apex of education, and which cost the people of the country £800 per annum. Owing to the generosity of Sir Thomas Elder, Mr. J. H. Angas, and other contributors the University Council were able to start the Medical School, but in consequence of the endowments being insufficient they were only able to carry out two years of the course. Dr. Cockburn had then written and said that circumstances had altered, and it was no longer necessary that Adelaide University graduates should be sent to the other side of the world. This letter led to the suggestion, which if it did not emanate from the Minister commended itself to his approval, that the £800 which had previously been spent in the scholarship should be devoted to the completion of the Medical School. That £800 enabled the council to complete a curriculum of five years and to devote to the student a course so complete that it was recognised in England,

and to devote to the student a course so complete that it was recognised in England, and those who had passed through the Adelaide school could practice there. At the time the council gave the Government notice that it was on the reliance of the £800 that they undertook this great work, and salaries were paid amounting to £900 per annum. It was unnecessary for him to recall to the Minister the benefits of the Adelaide school, as nobody understood them better. It was no longer necessary for the young men of South Australia to go to the other side of the world to complete their medical and surgical curriculum, which could now be obtained in the capital city of their native colony, and could be obtained also without putting the people of the colony to the additional expense of sending their sons away. It had to be remembered that medical students in Adelaide spent about £6,000 per year in taking their medical course, and if they had to go to Europe this money, or a great portion of it, would be taken out of the colony. The University had 47 students at the present time and their fees averaged £30 each per annum, while books, clothing, and board amounted to an additional £100 per year. Encouraged by the amount given by the Government private munificence had increased, as £65,000 had been contributed to its endowments by citizens. In the Medical School £11,000 had been subscribed, and if the Angas Scholarship for the Chair of Chemistry were included this amount would be increased to between £16,000 and £17,000. They would be exceedingly glad if they could invite students to undertake a course of instruction free, but that was beyond their means, and they did not ask the Government in effect to undertake anything of that kind. The question of diminishing the expenditure had not escaped the attention of the council, and during the last two years, understanding the financial stress with which the Government had had to cope, the University had cheerfully co-operated with them when their attention was called to the necessity of reducing the grant of £800 by £200. The council did not even write urging the performance of the contract which had been entered into with the council. They simply addressed themselves to economy in every direction, and during the last two years the University had anticipated in its Medical School the economies which had been forced upon the Public Library, Art Gallery, and Museum. For two years the Medical School had practically expended no money whatever in necessary additions to the library or apparatus. There were 15 lectureships for the completion of the last three years of the medical and surgical course, and as they were provided at a cost of £900 the Minister would bear him out that the leaders of the medical profession had shown a noble spirit of self-sacrifice and generosity for the benefit of the students. The fees attached to the lectureships varied from £20 to £200 a year, and they were small in comparison and no measure whatever of the value of the time the lecturers had devoted to their duties and the benefit the performance of their duties afforded to the students. The council had invited the students to enter the University with the promise that they should obtain a complete course of instruction there and qualifications at the end of it that would be recognised all the world over. Now the council found themselves face to face with the difficulty of not having the means to carry on. The result of the last year was that they had expended every penny of the revenue except £75. They could not help feeling that the actual state of affairs did not occur to the Government at the time the

intimation was given to the council, and they hoped the Government would enable them to carry out that contract which the council had entered into with the students, indeed the contract which the Government had entered into with them. They asked for the continuation of the grant which was promised eight years ago, and without which it would be impossible to carry on the work of the medical curriculum. The situation had become so serious that at a meeting of the council last Friday it was resolved that unless a favorable reply were obtained from the Government it would be their painful duty to inform the various lecturers that they were unable to provide the means of paying their fees for the ensuing year. He hoped the undertaking given eight years ago would be confirmed by the answer to their request.

Dr. J. C. VERCO said very little could be added to what the Chief Justice had brought forward. During the last two years they had economised in reference to the Medical School almost as much as they seemed able to do, as the apparatus and literature had not been increased at all. In his own department not a single diagram had been prepared or a book ordered for the library. All the books required had been bought out of his own pocket, but those books should be in the University Library for reference. It seemed almost impossible to carry on the Medical School as far as apparatus and literature were concerned with the reduction of the grant. The Minister of Education would understand in a Medical School the necessity there was for continual replacement of its apparatus and books, as they speedily became obsolete because of the advances in medical science. It might be suggested that they might reduce the number of lecturers, but the rule of the General Medical Council was that there should be a certain number of lecturers and no lecturer should be allowed to take up more than one subject, so that unless they put their students under disabilities so far as the General Medical Council was concerned they could not reduce the number of lecturers. As to reducing the salaries of the lecturers—if the salaries were now generous it might be done, but the highest only received £200 and the lowest £7. Out of the £900 for salaries they would have to deduct £600, which would bring the salaries down to a ridiculous degree, and it would be scarcely to the advantage of South Australia to have a University where the highest paid lecturer in the Medical School only received £75. If the fees were increased they would become absolutely prohibitive and the students would go to the adjacent colonies or some other country. They were not asking for an extension of the grant, but simply for its continuance, so that they should not have to put up the shutters of the Medical School and so publish their impecuniosity. The Minister of Education, with his professional and university experience, would doubtless see the desirability of continuing the grant.

Dr. STIRLING said when it was found possible to extend the period of the medical course to five years by means of the South Australian scholarships, which the Government handed over to them as they fell in, there was a period elapsing between then and the time that the money was receivable, and to enable them to tide over that period and complete the Medical School Sir Thomas Elder supplied them for two years with £500 a year until the whole sum of the South Australian scholarships fell in; but that sum, which was made on his own representations, would not have been given if

it had been thought that the Medical School was to be a thing of a day only. It was not only to the students that the Medical School had been a benefit, but every medical man of any standing in Adelaide would agree that the establishment of the Medical School at the University and Hospital had been of the greatest assistance in improving the general character of the medical work of the profession.

The MINISTER of EDUCATION said it was with the deepest possible regret and pain that the Government decided to cut off the vote. The council knew precisely the position. The Chancellor had alluded to the stress of the finances which led to the generous and spontaneous offer of the council that the grant which previously stood at £800 should be reduced to £600, and the stress which compelled that action was even greater now. Were there any certainty that the Government would emerge from the financial year £500 to the good he could at once give an assurance that it would be devoted to the Medical School; but there was no such certainty, and the position was very difficult. Not only the University but many other institutions which had the highest possible claim on the public as ministering in the highest degree to the welfare of the people, educational institutions of the highest importance, had had to suffer curtailment, which had almost paralysed their power of maintaining their sphere of operations. He had only to call to witness that most excellent institution of educational, industrial, and other forms of art, the Public Library, Art Gallery, and Museum, which had had to submit to a reduction out of all proportion to that to which the University had been subjected. Then the School of Mines, technical schools, and the general education vote had been so greatly reduced that as Minister of Education he had to conduct about 50 more schools with about the same amount of money as two years ago. It was very painful to him that the vote to the University had to be interfered with, and he had only to say the deputation could look to him to do his utmost to assist in maintaining the efficiency of the Medical School. More than that he could not say. The University stood on a different level to other educational institutions, as the amount devoted to it was not on the Estimates, and had it not been for that fact the vote would never have been touched. The sum granted to the University was fixed by Act of Parliament, and to bring in an amending Act reducing the 5 per cent. on endowments, which were given in the first instance, would be worse than the present proposal, bad as that was. (The Chief Justice—"I can't imagine any Legislature taking such action as that short of the national bankruptcy.") He would use all his influence in the way he had in the past for the University, but the council could have made it easier for him if an interview had taken place earlier. The deputation had simply followed on a letter received by him two or three weeks ago from the University, and it would have been easier for him if he could have brought the matter before Cabinet prior to the publication of that letter. He had not had an opportunity of consulting his colleagues on the subject, but would the deputation be prepared to say whether they could conduct the school in its present state of efficiency, with the present excellent professional staff, with a grant of something under £600?

The CHIEF JUSTICE thanked the Minister of Education for his sympathetic reply, as they felt all along that he desired to assist them if possible. Perhaps there was some little delay in bringing the matter before the Minister, but it was necessary that a careful and formal statement of the case should be prepared, and there was nothing in the letter but a bare statement of facts and the legitimate conclusions to be deducted from them. The reduction of £200 in the grant was not a spontaneous offer by the council. The smaller amount was placed on the Estimates, and the council recognised the position the Government were placed in and cheerfully acquiesced in the reduction. He would press on the Minister of Education that their co-operation with the Government during the past times of stress ought not to be used to their disadvantage in the present instance. For two years they had submitted to £400 less, to the great disadvantage of the University, and during that time there had been hearty co-operation on the part of the lecturers, who, as Dr. Verco stated, had been purchasing their own literature. It was not a question of generosity or dealing with a Government department, for they had a right to carry on as they pleased, but the case of the University was founded on contract. He believed if they obtained £500 for the present year they would have such co-operation from the Medical School that they would be able to carry it on with the same efficiency as in past years. He had taken the responsibility of saying that without formally consulting the University, but they would have such assistance from the lecturers and others that if the Minister of Education could give them £500, without them relinquishing their right to £300 in more prosperous years, the Medical School could be carried on without any diminution in its efficiency. If the Minister could give him that promise he would be glad, so that the notices which the council intended giving could be suspended.

The MINISTER of EDUCATION said he could not make any such promise, but he would consult his colleagues and communicate a reply as soon as possible.

Register

19<sup>th</sup> Dec 1895

THE UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE.—The commemoration of the University of Adelaide was held on Wednesday afternoon. Judged by the attendance and the character of the formal proceedings, the function was, as usual, a brilliant success. Large as it is, the library, in which the commemoration is celebrated, is unfortunately too small for the crowd of citizens who, together with the members of the University and the undergraduates, assemble there annually. The Chancellor, Dr. Way, presided, and conferred degrees upon nine candidate bachelors of the University, and admitted *ad eundem gradum* a similar number of graduates of other Universities. Among the latter were five graduates in arts of the University of Cambridge, including His Excellency Sir T. Fowell Buxton, Dr. Harmer, Bishop of Adelaide, and Professors E. von B. Bensly and W. Mitchell, the latest additions to the professorial staff of the University in this city. The Rev. J. Jefferis, LL.D., of the University of Sydney, was also admitted *ad eundem gradum*, and the degree of Doctor of Music was conferred *in absentia* upon Sir Herbert Oakeley, who has acted as examiner of music for that degree in connection with our University. Professor Mitchell delivered the annual address, which dealt mainly with the state of education here in the subjects of his chair—English and philosophy.

# The Register.

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ADELAIDE: THURSDAY, DEC. 19, 1895.

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## THE UNIVERSITY COMMEMORATION.

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The annual apology which the Chancellor finds it necessary to tender to the ladies who have suffered the inconvenience of being crowded together in the heated atmosphere of the library of the University seemed peculiarly necessary and appropriate at the commemoration on Wednesday. Some of those who were in possession of special invitations could not even get near their seats, whilst a large proportion of the parents and relatives of students who were to receive degrees and other honours were perforce obliged to give up the attempt to obtain entrance at all. Surely it would be far better to hold this annual terminal function in the Town Hall than to provide the guests with so little elbow room and breathing space as they had on Wednesday. In default of that, the authorities would probably be able to give far more satisfaction if they were to use a large marquee. Of course, from one point of view, it is satisfactory that the public interest in the University should have been so thoroughly aroused as to call together so large and representative an assemblage, but there is ample reason for