Reg. 29th Dec 1903.

Mrs. W. Roby Fletcher, of Henley Beach, has received a cable message stating that her brother-in-law, Mr. John Walter Tyas, died at his residence, Hampstead, London, on December 18. Mr. Tyas will be remembered by many as a prominent figure in connection with the Adelaide University, of which he was registrar for many years. He resigned this position in January, 1892, on account of ill-health, and Mr. C. R. Hodge was appointed in his stead. The deceased gentleman was the second son of Mr. John Tyas, for many years a member of the literary staff of The London Times, and received his prenomen out of compliment to Mr. John Walter, M.P., the late honoured proprietor of that influential paper. He was born at Brixton, London, on November 26, 1833, educated in France, and afterwards at London University School and King's College School. In 1854 he was appointed tutor to Mr. Walter's boys, and seven years later was admitted to the Bar at the Inner Temple. He subsequently served on the staff of The Times for four years. In February, 1868, he arrived in Adelaide, and joined the partnership of Carter, Tyas, and Co., Manchester warehousemen. In 1872 Mr. Tyas visited the Arroo Islands, New Guinea, and the Northern Territory on a pearlshelling expedition; returned to England in 1873, for a time resided in Germany, and came back to Australia in 1878. In 1882 he was appointed registrar of the Adelaide University on the retirement of Dr. Barlow. After holding the position for 10 years his health broke down. He then settled again near London, and had resided in England ever since. The Chancellor of the University (Right Hon. Sir Samuel Way) expressed regret at hearing of the decease of Mr. Tyas, and remarked that the late gentleman was an admirable classical scholar and an ardent bibliophile. He was also keenly interested in art and curious bric-a-brac, and possessed valuable collections in all those branches of which he made his hobbies. Mr. Tyas, said Sir Samuel, was brought into close and valued association with Matthew Arnold through his uncle, Mr. Leaf, a great silk manufacturer, of St. Paul's Churchyard, whose palatial residence adjoined Arnold's. This friendship was much prized by Mr. Tyas, who also gained much from his cousin, Mr. Walter Leaf, who was a noted Grecian scholar and the editor of a fine Greek edition of Homer.

Reg. 6th Jan. 1904.

THE UNIVERSITY.

Examination for the Diploma in Electrical Engineering (Old Regulations), November, 1903.

Pass List.—Ernest Chapple—Electrical engineering (third class honors), railway engineering (pass).

Reg. 8th Jan. 1904.

OUTSIDE GOYDER'S LINE.

LAND OF STRANGE SURPRISES.

On Friday afternoon a representative of The Register had a conversation with Mr. F. H. Button, who is well acquainted with the character of the country in the far north beyond Goyder's line of rainfall, in respect to the failure of the crops this season. Mr. Button's experience with this region dates from 1884, when he went to Cradock. Subsequently he lived at Hawker till 1890. He has just returned from a trip, during which he passed through the Hundreds of Uroonda, Wirrianda, Yednalue, Arkaba, Wonoka, and Barndioota. On the outward journey he left the train at Carrieton, and drove to Hawker, and thence to Hookina and Warcowie. "This country," said Mr. Button, "is one of strange surprises. The year just passed—though in a commercial sense a failure—has been one of the most remarkable, and for eight years the far north farmer has never entered upon a new year with better courage than that with which he looks forward to 1904. While merchants and creditors are grumbling over another disappointment, he, who has battled in silent, dogged heroism in stint and hardship for nearly a decade, is preparing in strong confidence for this year's seeding operations. Too late in his district the drought broke up for him to secure a payable return; but it has surely broken up, and, excepting the wheatfields, the areas named above are one great expanse of living verdure, and the saltbush and bluebush are showing up well again."

"Why, then, has the wheat plant failed?"—"That is the question; and it might well repay the state to study the problem on the spot while the stubble is still standing; for the plant never ripened. To the surprise and dismay of every one, within a month of harvest, and when it appeared to be safe, most of the wheat died off. The vicissitudes of the growing period were startling and numerous. Patchy summer storms, though their effects were quickly effaced by repeated duststorms, nursed the faith in a nearing cycle of wet years, but there was a racking anxiety through the entire absence of fodder or herbage, seed or money, and the helplessness was intensified by the prices current—wheat 5/8 per bushel and hay £6 per ton. Hope revived when the seed wheat movement took shape, and home comforts were denied that any available cash might be devoted to buying horse feed for the sowing of the 24-bag maximum of seed contributed by a sympathising public and distributed by a wise Government. Much seed had, perforce, to miss the chance of a good chance of an early start after the April rains; the rains of June were cold, though useful; July and August were pretty dry, and after that the expectations of success were faint. Wet weather in September and October brought new hope, and the plant began to grow like magic. But in the middle of the latter month the wheat was killed. Some say one frosty night did it; but it is scarcely credible that an exactly similar effect would be thus produced over so wide an area and upon such varied stages of growth. Moreover, frost-blighted plants usually ripen in the usual way, but are barren or shrivelled. In these hundreds, however, it died as it stood, and did not ripen, except in the pinched grains such as are found in extra-ripe-cut hay."

"Is any other theory advanced as a probable cause?"—"One thoughtful farmer suggests that the land itself, by reason of the drought, had been starved of needed liquid nourishment, and just as animals cannot breed or be fruitful when under stress of thirst or hunger, so the drought-parched ground, when the weather came in very hot, as it did late in October, absorbed the moisture for its own sustenance down to a level below the reach of the wheat roots, and the latter starved. Whether this theory be right or wrong, I cannot say; but from thousands of acres that promised 2 bags, the reaper is gathering 2 to 3 bushels of pinched, unsaleable grain varying from 55 to 60 lb. per bushel, and a disaster so unique seems to call for expert investigation."

"What of the future? Has the farmer or his creditor any assurance that the coming year will be different?"—"The drought has ended, and the seed wheat fund of last year was not mistaken generosity. I have confidence in the following facts:—1. The climatic conditions have been steadily changing, the summer rains are soaking the subsoil, and less rain next winter than last should suffice for a good harvest. The climatic reaction in the sixties lasted into the seventies, and the recent dry cycle has been more severe and protracted. It is reasonable to look for a corresponding run of wet seasons. 2. The Seed Wheat Fund was a good national investment. It averted the congestion of the labour market through the blank ruin of thousands of our worthiest countrymen. The grant of seed gave the far north people courage, and the small crop taken off will give them seed and flour, and enough over to provide for bare necessaries this year. Whereas many last year were not able to properly till the land sown, the same farmers have today 200 to 300 acres of well-ploughed fallow ready for sowing, and a larger acreage of wheat will be put in, because what has been reaped is almost unsaleable. This state of things, with the plenitude of straw, hay, and herbage, has removed the hopeless tone of 12 months ago, and the new year has wakened on faces showing disappointment certainly, but strong in hope and firm in determination to leave no means untried to make the best of this year and start the next free of debt."

Reg. 23rd Jan. 1904

At the meeting of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in Dunedin on January 12, it was resolved, on the motion of Professor Bragg, of Adelaide University—"That it be a recommendation from section A that a request be sent to the Government of Victoria to continue the annual grant made to Mr. Baracchi for the reduction and discussion of magnetic curves accumulated at the Melbourne Observatory, and that the attention of the New Zealand Government be drawn to the desirability of promptly reducing the magnetic curves at Christchurch, and that they be asked to provide the necessary unskilled assistance at an approximate cost of £80 per annum for two years." It was also decided, on the motion of Professor Bragg, seconded by Professor Spencer, of Melbourne—"That it be a recommendation to the examining bodies of Australia and New Zealand that they base the regulations for their public examinations (in mathematics) on the syllabus adopted by the University of Cambridge."

Advertiser 5th Jan. 1904.

A SCIENCE CONGRESS

To-morrow there will be opened in Dunedin, New Zealand, the biennial congress of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, and from all parts of the Commonwealth learned men have journeyed thither to take part in the discussions. South Australia is represented by about a score of members, including among them Professor Bragg, of the Adelaide University, Professor Towar, of Roseworthy Agricultural College, and the Very Rev. Dean Marryat. The congress will last for a week, and the learned labors of the scientists will be brightened and rendered lighter by various excursions to the chief beauty spots of New Zealand. Nearly a thousand men and women who take an interest in the spread of exact knowledge on scientific subjects will be in attendance, and the proceedings will be similar to those which marked the meetings of the association in Adelaide five or six years ago. Papers will be read by experts, and general discussions will follow. The association was formed to give a stronger impulse and a more systematic direction to scientific enquiry, and to promote the intercourse of those who cultivate science in different Australasian States, and in other countries. It aims also at obtaining more general attention for the objects of science, and at the removal of any disadvantages of a public kind that may impede its progress. The association meets every two years, and the present will be the tenth occasion on which its members have been called together. Each State is selected in rotation for holding the meeting, and the New Zealand conference will complete the second round, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, and Hobart having already been visited twice. The New Zealand Government has given £500 towards the expenses of the congress, and is making a further concession by granting free railway passes to all over-sea visitors. The congress this year will be under the presidency of Professor David, of Sydney University. The congress will be divided into two sections, for each of which a president will be appointed. The programme embraces a great variety of scientific subjects upon which the delegates will deliberate. Besides the papers to be read in the different sections there will be presented reports of the special research committees appointed at the last meeting, which which was held in Hobart. There is that, for instance, from the seismological committee upon the progress of investigations in terrestrial magnetism in Australasia. The glacial committee has a sub-committee that was appointed to record structural features, such as important folds and faults in Australia, with a view to studying the evolution of the Australasian land surface. This committee also will submit a report upon its investigations, as will another appointed to recommend a uniform system for the nomenclature of the igneous rocks of Australasia. Another committee appointed at Hobart was to collect lists of names and recommendations as to the spelling of native names of places. A committee will also report on the education of mentally defective children. Two sections whose deliberations will be of special importance are those devoted to public health and education.