

EXTENDING THE UNIVERSITY.

There was a time when many people in South Australia were sceptical regarding the possibility of establishing an effective University in Adelaide. Some of those folk cared little whether or not any attempts were made to establish such an institution, because they half-doubted the practical utility of "the higher education"—partly, probably, because the notion then was that such education would be purely academical. But the University was founded in due course, and now its value has become so widely recognised that the cry in nearly every direction is for "more University," and not for less, or none. The requirement behind the cry is threefold, independently of questions of curriculum—"More money, more buildings, and more room for them." The University has long passed the stage at which it should be merely a teaching institution, but it cannot be anything else while it is so cramped for space. This was clearly demonstrated a few weeks ago in the evidence given before the Education Commission, when another fact also was disclosed. A suggestion that the University should be housed in the Lunatic Asylum buildings, at Parkside, was almost unanimously and rightly condemned. The University occupies the best available site for its purpose in South Australia, and to shift it would be a mistake. The best is always good enough to leave alone, and this ought to be the rule on the present occasion. The site has in its favour more than any other which is available, excepting in size, and that defect can be remedied without much difficulty.

The Chancellor of the University, with others, showed a few weeks ago how the problem might be solved; and, as The Register pointed out at the same time, from end to end of "Education Square," on North terrace, space can be provided to supply all the reasonable needs during the next century of the University, the Public Library and its allied institutions, and the School of Mines and Industries. The Destitute Asylum inmates have repeatedly been promised better quarters, and they are soon to be taken away, quite independently of the University's plea for more space. The police barracks are not situated in the best possible place in view of the extension of metropolitan settlement; and something may be said for their transference to a site adjacent to the Adelaide Gaol—if that building itself could not be vacated and the prisoners in it transported to Yatala Stockade, in which there is plenty of room. The areas on North terrace now occupied by the show sheds, the Destitute Asylum pile, and the adjoining structures would, with economical building arrangements, suffice for all requisite extensions of the University (with its spacious recreation reserve at the rear) and the institutions under the Public Library Board. Adelaide would thus retain its proud distinction of being The City of Culture, which concentrates its seats of learning in such a sensible manner as to give to students special conveniences and other advantages. The University site could not be applied to any other purpose comparable in value with that for which it is now used. These, indeed, appear to be, speaking generally, the views held on the subject by the Premier, who is also Minister of Education:

and the chief obstacle, after all, has long seemed to be less the removal of old buildings than the securing of the large sums of money necessary practically to reorganize the University—for that, in effect, is what will have to be done.

The South Australian head-centre of learning originated in private bounty rather than through Government initiative; and, although the chief duty of extending its usefulness is probably a State matter, it is only reasonable to expect that here, as so notably in the United States of America, wealthy citizens will assist by special means in extending to all classes the benefits of advanced education. Not long ago a sort of challenge to this effect was given, and The Register to-day supplies one part of the answer to that challenge. A philanthropic citizen, who declines to permit his name to be published, has promised to contribute £10,000 to what may be most expressively called the University Expansion Fund, on the conditions, briefly, that the Government will supplement, £ for £, that, and all other subscriptions for the same purpose, and will promise to provide the University Council with sufficient land for its accommodation in "Education Square." This is a fine beginning—although only a beginning, for not much can be done with £10,000; but a Government subsidy would increase it to £20,000; and it would be a reflection upon South Australia and its rich men to say that the handsome donation now promised will be allowed long to remain lonely! One may fairly assume that the reasonable conditions named by the donor will be acceptable to the Government—of course, after due enquiry and consideration. The earlier, however, the mind of the Ministry concerning the matter may be disclosed, the greater will be the inducement to other liberal South Australians to follow the noble example set to-day; and, if they cannot give £10,000, they may easily manage to present that sum minus a nought or two! Even the hundreds help. The need for University expansion is urgent, and the way in which it can be supplied is now clearly manifest.

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A £10,000 Donation.

Anonymous Donor.

As The Register has recorded from time to time the council of the Adelaide University has been long considering the question of the extension of the usefulness of that institution and how best to secure the means to the attainment of that end. At first the problem presented by the restricted land space represented by "Education square" on North terrace, caused much consideration to be given to the possibility and practicability of removing the present University buildings to some site beyond the city bounds. In November last the transfer of the lunatics from Parkside to some other locality so that the grounds now used by the asylum might be employed for University purposes was discussed by the Education Commission, but the almost unanimous opinion expressed on that occasion and held generally by people best acquainted with the difficulties of the subject is that the present site for the principal seat of learning in the State should be retained, and that the necessary expansion should be provided for by the removal of the Destitute Asylum and the police barracks and portions of the Exhibition enclosures fronting the river. It is now being decided that the destitute inmates shall be removed to a site in the Magill district, and there should be no special difficulty in removing the police barracks. The ground thus cleared and some provision made for the probable extension of the Public Library and Museum buildings, the first expansion of the University would be in the erection of a common hall for dining and social purposes, where the professors and students might meet and strangers might be received; the beginning of a residential college for students so that the learners might be close to their work and what is known as a University atmosphere would be created. Other requirements are the furnishing of the University library, so far as it may be possible, with all things necessary for original research work, among them radium and the instruments associated with its use; and the establishment of a fund out of which monetary assistance might be given in exceptional cases to students engaged in original work.

—Conditions of the Gift.—

During the last few weeks the University Council has been paying special attention to these considerations, and at a meeting on Wednesday the Chancellor was able to announce that £10,000 had been promised by a citizen of Adelaide, who declines to permit his name to be published, as a basis for a large fund for the purposes indicated. The only conditions of the gift besides that of anonymity are that the land at the back of the University and the School of Mines, which the Hon. J. Verran, when Premier, is understood to have promised, shall be granted by the present Government, and that Ministers shall also give an undertaking, in behalf of the Cabinet, to supplement pound for pound the £10,000 now offered and any further amounts which may be added to the fund constituted by the original donation.

—Premier to be Approached.—

Arrangements are being made so that an influential and representative deputation shall interview the Premier before his departure for London on February 13. It is obvious that without the assistance of the Government in the way suggested by the donor the whole scheme must lapse, for without the site the expansion of the University is impossible, and without the money the erection of the buildings on the newly granted land cannot be started. Although no definite undertaking has been given, it is understood that further donations await the decision of the Government.

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