

The Register.

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THE ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY.

The formal opening of the University Buildings, which took place yesterday on the occasion of the annual Commencement, must be a subject of genuine satisfaction to every well-wisher to the cause of education in the colony. It is, of course, true, as pointed out by His Excellency, that stone and mortar cannot make a University, that the really essential elements of such an institution are the Professors, lecturers, and students, and that the really important factors in its success are the interest which the public take in its proceedings and the respect which it gains from all classes of the community; but, nevertheless, it is a great point gained that the institution has at last a home which it can call its own. In regard to the essential matters referred to, everyone who witnessed the gathering which took place in the University Library must recognise at once the importance which the University is acquiring in public estimation. The fact that five students were admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Arts is also one which may fairly give ground for the hope that the University's day of small things, though certainly not yet over, is rapidly passing away. Last Commencement the number was only one, at the previous one it was four, and the time before that, one. The next number will probably show no increase on that of the present year, owing to the fewness of the third-year students; but on the whole there cannot be a doubt that the University is surely though slowly recommending itself to the people as a means of acquiring the higher education. It cannot offer for those who take its degrees the lustre of a name dating from mediæval times, as can the classic halls of Oxford, Cambridge, Dublin, or Edinburgh; but it can at least offer the distinction of being associated with all that there is of collegiate distinction within the colony in the persons of some seventy or eighty gentlemen who, as His Honor the Chief Justice remarked, have banded themselves together with the patriotic intention of advancing in their adopted land the culture which they have received in the Universities of Europe.

The building being opened, the Professors and lecturers appointed, and the curriculum prescribed, the problem must now with much greater force present itself as to how the class-rooms are to be filled with

students. A liberal policy may greatly facilitate the process; the reverse may have the effect of indefinitely retarding it. The work will require a good deal of careful thought and practical zeal, and above all the real magnitude of the task must be kept steadily in view. The Council will scarcely be doing this if, like the Vice-Chancellor, they succeed in finding so many causes for congratulation with regard to what has been already accomplished, and devise ingeniously constructed comparisons for the purpose of showing that South Australia has already a greater number of students in proportion to the population than such a country as England, and nearly as great a nation as Ireland. In the first place, it ought not to be forgotten that as the proportion of people who can afford to give their children the advantages of the higher education is much greater here than in either of the countries mentioned, and vastly in excess of the latter especially, South Australia should undoubtedly have more students in proportion to the population than they have. In the second place, it is obviously fallacious to include, as the Chief Justice did, all non-matriculated students as swelling the proportion in the case of South Australia. It is true that by this method of calculation the University could boast of seventy-four students last year, which number is now increased to eighty-seven. But the great majority of these only spend two hours, or at most three or four hours, per week in the University, and cannot be considered as receiving their education in its lecture-rooms. When it is stated that Scotland has a proportion of students amounting to one in every 1,000, this means that the Scotch Universities are so well appreciated that they induce one out of every 1,000 persons to devote three or four years of life to the acquisition of knowledge of a more advanced character. Moreover, the Chief Justice has not taken for comparison the most recent University statistics of the United Kingdom, but apparently those of the census of 1871. As the number of students in Ireland, for instance, has recently been doubling itself about every fifteen years, it is obvious that such a comparison must be fallacious.

In modern times it has been well pointed out that Universities are successful in attracting students exactly in proportion as they have the faculty of advancing with the times. Several of the time-

honoured institutions of England have until a quite recent period been sadly wanting in this respect, and accordingly we have the strange spectacle of a poor and less cultivated country like Ireland outstrip-