

REGISTER, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 1881.

THE PROSPECTS OF THE UNIVERSITY.

The results of the recent ordinary examinations at the University for the degree of Bachelor of Arts may well occasion surprise and disappointment when it is considered how meagre is the amount of success which the institution has apparently attained in comparison with the magnitude of the efforts made for its establishment and endowment. The number of students who have passed the examination to complete the first year of their studies is only two; for the second year two also have passed; and for the third six. The last number is no doubt fairly large considering the difficulty of the third-year examinations; but the first two are decidedly discouraging. Six students, who in previous years passed their first and second examinations, have now qualified themselves for taking the degree. But apparently there are only two in each year coming on who are competent to fill their places, a fact which seems to lead to the unsatisfactory conclusion that our University is actually going downwards instead of upwards. When dealing with numbers which are so very small it is, of course, necessary to be cautious in attempting to deduce any general conclusion from them. Nevertheless it will not be astonishing if from the results just announced the public should receive the impression that the University is not making such progress as might reasonably have been expected. Such an impression indeed is in some measure warranted. In previous years larger numbers have passed for their first and second years than in the two examinations held in March and November of 1881. This renders it clear that in so far as regards the second and third years of the Arts course the work of the University for the next two years at least cannot be by any means on an extensive scale. It is possible that some students who have failed to pass on this occasion may be successful in the supplementary examinations to be held next March, so that the list is still open. But it is not likely that for the year 1882 the numbers of the students in their first and second years will be more than two or three. And it is certain that many of the classes will be so small as to render the work as disheartening to the Professors as the results are to the general public.

But while the latest issue of the examinations for degrees is not cheering, some consolation is to be found in the fact that the University is in other ways accomplishing good work. The classes in Natural Philosophy and Chemistry have been much more successful than during

last year, twenty-four having passed as compared with only sixteen in November 1880. Many of these were students at the State Training College for teachers, and the knowledge which they have acquired by attendance at the lectures will no doubt in time percolate into the minds of the rising generation through the future connection of the students with the schools of the colony. Another gratifying feature in connection with the work of the University is that the number of those who annually pass matriculation is increasing, and we understand that the list of candidates for the examination to be held in the early part of this month shows a very fair advance upon previous lists, so that if a moderate proportion passes there will be a large number qualified to enter upon their first year's work. But the difficulty at present experienced is that very few of them can be induced to go further than matriculation, the great majority being sent to business as soon as they have passed this preliminary examination. If this be due to any tendency on the part of the people of South Australia to undervalue the advantages of a superior education it is very much to be regretted. It has frequently been remarked by those who have examined the old class-lists of the Universities in the neighbouring colonies of Victoria and New South Wales how many of the prominent public men they include. Similarly it may be presumed that those who wish to rise to positions of importance here within the next twenty or thirty years cannot adopt a better plan than that of securing a superior education at our local University. That this is being more and more understood might be inferred from the fact that a certain number of students attend the University lectures simply for the sake of the information to be obtained from them, and without any ultimate view of passing an examination or completing any special academical course. Yet it is safe to say that in almost every case the work which is tested by examinations will be much more thorough than that to which no such standard is applied. It is to be regretted that no record of the number of students who in this manner take advantage of the lectures is published in the annual report. If each Professor were instructed to give to the public an account of his year's work we are satisfied that the results would not seem so meagre as they appear to be if judged solely by the pass lists. The University may not be at present a burning and shining light; but there is no reason why the light that it gives should be hidden under a bushel.

It is only fair to the Council that great