

Register June 1<sup>st</sup> 1885

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—In confirmation of the idea suggested by your correspondent in to-day's issue of the *Register* that the pupils of our more important schools are prematurely "pitchforked" into the textbooks for the University examinations, I can add to the boys of Prince Alfred's College, who were so unceremoniously introduced to a standard German author, certain girls of two of the principal schools of the city, who were last year forced into an acquaintance with C. Julius Cæsar, and who were without the slightest previous knowledge of the Latin language expected to make themselves conversant with the first book of his "De Bello Gallico." They were each duly supplied with a key. The force of absurdity could surely go no further than this. Can any sane person with any, however slight, acquaintance with education maintain that these girls obtained the faintest benefit from such a proceeding, or that their time was not absolutely wasted? And for what reason? Simply because in the list of subjects for the junior examination at the University we read—

LATIN.—CÆSAR. De Bello Gallico. Book I.

I wonder if the public of South Australia, who as a rule seem rather slow to interest themselves about any question concerning the general welfare of the community, have any idea of the number of students who avail themselves of the advantages of the University which the liberality of some of our wealthier fellow-colonists has already so largely endowed. This would seem to be a fair means of arriving at some definite conclusion as to whether the University course is of such a nature as to attract students, and so assist young South Australians to become something more than merely good classical scholars—to assist them, in fact, to become good scientists, good engineers, good lawyers, or whatever their own natural bent of mind inclined them to be.

In the University Calendar for the present year we find that there are nine Professors and lecturers, and that several other gentlemen are also employed as examiners. Turning to the results of the examinations in the Arts course, we read that in 1884 there were *three* first-year students, *three* second-year students (one in each class), and *three* third-class students who passed the ordinary examinations in the B.A. course. That is the outcome. So that we may, and this is very doubtful, if these students persevere and are not tired out by the multiplicity of subjects, many of them doubtless uncongenial, during the three years turn out *three* B.A.'s *per annum*.

I am, Sir, &c., TESTAMUR.  
Adelaide, May 30.

Sir—The reply to your correspondent "Onlooker" is that a school is an organization. Those who take all their training at one school advance regularly in all subjects taught in it. Those who are transferred from one to another may find themselves not to have been developed along the same lines as their new comrades. They must be classified where on the whole they will learn

best. He must refer to some such case as this, where a boy knew other things better than German. But this query has little to do with the matter under discussion. German is taught here, as several other subjects are, for "general culture." We did not intend to present the boys for examination in it. We are only allowed to go up in three subjects, and have chosen Latin, mathematics, and natural science. We should have followed the course he blames if there were no public examinations held in the colony.

I regret to have to write even this much that is personal. In my former letter there was no special reference to ourselves. I was only endeavouring to assert my conviction that the grammar schools and colleges generally had long sought to "educate," to "teach really," and could do quite as well, indeed better, while working side by side on a general plan sketched out by the Adelaide University; and I was affirming my belief, too, that they had high purposes and principles, and sought to give solid, honest training rather than to veneer and pretend. I shall be additionally obliged if you can allow this to appear.—I am, Sir, &c.,

FREDERIC CHAPPLE.

Prince Alfred College.

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## UNIVERSITY REFORM—REPLY.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—"Theoretikos," in comparing London and Adelaide matriculation subjects, says:—"It will be seen by those who follow this comparison carefully that the London student has a third language, a natural philosophy, in addition to all the Adelaide subjects." According to our opponent the London system scores two points of difficulty over Adelaide. Let us examine this matter. As the letter killeth, but the spirit maketh alive, as the real rises above the nominal, as the merits of a system are tested and measured in its actual working, so in this comparison of optional subjects we must look beyond the mere outside of this question. To those not blessed with a very good memory history and geography are the most trying, inasmuch as the reasoning faculty has very little exercise thereon. Here is just the weak point, where the highest intellect might fail, such as a Goethe, a Faraday, a Joule, or a Max Müller. Such distinguished men would have no difficulty on that head in Melbourne, where they would be allowed to substitute. Now, London deals very leniently and considerately with these break-neck subjects, and Adelaide extremely harshly. London throws out map-drawing, as difficult to the memory itself as geography proper. That is one point against Adelaide. London requires in a paper of twenty questions on history and geography (both on same paper) ten only to be attempted, thus considerably assisting the student in giving him the privilege of selection—a method unknown in Adelaide. That is the second point against Adelaide. In geography out of five questions the candidate is required to attempt two (a mere bagatelle), and he has now eight questions to answer to obtain even maximum marks. For this paper he has three hours. In Adelaide the candidate has eight questions to answer in history, the same in geography (each paper two hours), to obtain maximum marks. Such an extraordinary paper on geography as that given in Friday's issue it would be impossible to answer in two hours, owing to the amount of map-drawing it contained. In regard to time and hurry (especially where hurry is most disastrous to the student); that is another point against Adelaide. The most important aspect of this question still remains. Parents, philanthropists, and the public will look beyond this contest about dry figures. They will reasonably ask how the University system affects the pupils at school, and what is the amount of work they are actually driven through before they have passed matriculation. We will endeavour to throw some light on this question.

In addition to what may be called the five elementary subjects (common to Adelaide and London), the English boy has to work on five others to pass in London. Now, how many does the Adelaide boy work on at the collegiate schools, the pupils from which form about four-fifths of those who pass matriculation?

Referring to the printed class-lists I find in the junior examination the best have passed in five optional subjects, though they might

possibly have been drilled in six. In the matriculation examination I also find that the best pupils have passed in five optional subjects, making in all ten optional subjects, though the University requires only two in each examination. The boy in London may have the laugh against his Australian cousin with respect to this double number. We ask, what mean these extra six optional subjects, imposed unnecessarily upon the pupils attending the larger schools of Adelaide? It cannot mean anything else than that the collegiate schools (including also the Advanced School for Girls) are running scholastic races with each other, and the innocent pupils are the sufferers. The parents ought to protest against their sons and daughters being made the victims of this absurd rivalry between school and school.

The University authorities are more or less blameable for this state of affairs, and ought to try to prevent it. We do not, however, expect much in that quarter, for about a year ago one optional division was added on to the three already existing in the matriculation course, and some of these optional divisions contain two subjects. The public can now see how fine these Adelaide young colts are being trained for the grand Olympic games on North-terrace.

At all these intellectual races of Adelaide's brightest sons and daughters there stands in the Judge's box the Goddess of Death (capitals here, Mr. Printer, please), grim and ghastly in her sable robes, who laughs her laugh of malignant triumph, as the victors pass the goal, exclaiming at the same time—"Well done, my children; you have gained a glorious victory, if not for yourselves, still for me." Here we must enter a strong protest against the tactics adopted by our opponent ("Theoretikos") in assailing some unimportant point in his antagonist's argument and overlooking those of greater weight. Such a line of proceeding might be pardonable in national warfare, where a general adopts a ruse now and again to cover his important designs; or in a forensic contest, where an advocate, unable to meet the leading charges against his client, attacks some part of the evidence of trifling moment. But on the