

Register 18<sup>th</sup> July 1896

## POLITICAL ECONOMY AT THE UNIVERSITY.

In connection with the University Extension movement Professor Mitchell began last night a course of lectures on "Political Economy," and the event merits special notice. It was a happy idea on the part of the Literary Societies' Union to propose that such a subject should be included among those in which instruction is to be popularly imparted in the University, and the Council who sit in our chief seat of learning acted commendably in giving effect to the suggestion. It now remains for the Union to exert its influence with the object of securing good audiences for the Professor — a duty which, judging by the attendance last night, does not appear to have been as yet thoroughly realized. There are few themes on which the general public have so little exact knowledge as that which they possess in relation to political economy, and even the acquaintance of legislators with the topic is extremely limited. Probably not one in a score of them would be able to pass an examination in the rudiments of the subject, and yet in a country ideally governed some knowledge of it would be considered a qualification indispensable to a member of Parliament. The study is intimately related to the practical policy of good government—infinitely more so than theology is to religion—and its consideration need not necessarily be a tedious task. Economical theories are not essentially dry-as-dust or dismal, though too many of the presentments of them cannot be fairly included in the category of mental diversions. The fault of many pundits who have discussed politico-economical principles is that they have dealt with them as metaphysicians and in the abstract, and even while differing hopelessly regarding definitions have presumed to give the study a place among the exact sciences.

Professor Mitchell happily avoids both these mistakes, and is evidently desirous of pointing his precepts by means of practical applications. He also apparently realizes that while the foundation principles of political economy are immutable—while in this sense there cannot be a new political economy any more than there can be a new gospel of moral regeneration—yet the study in the true sense is not the cast-iron pulseless thing which it is often

represented to be. It takes account of the heart as well as of the muscles of the community. It does not insist upon the commercial pocket being the nerve-centre of the people. It does not ignore human nature—the diverse human nature which underlies and regulates all theories of government. Thus is suggested the main error of the exponents of the science—an error consisting in a failure to recognise that in their application to entirely new countries economical theories based on old-world data sometimes require modification, just as they do when applied to different peoples. Thus modern conditions have greatly qualified the force of Adam Smith's definition of "the natural wage," and similarly other propositions which were once accepted as postulates have had to be reviewed and revised. Professor Mitchell is reputedly in sympathy with the broader school of political economists, and we repeat that his discourses upon the subject, and his practical illustrations of the effect of his principles, should be generally appreciated. If his addresses only set people thinking upon a much-neglected department of study they will accomplish a good result. By encouraging discussion at the close of the lectures the Professor shows that he has no wish to dogmatize, but desires rather to secure an interchange of opinions—to be a listener and a learner as well as a speaker and a teacher. The lecturer has also displayed some courage in choosing bimetallism as the subject of his next address, because the public man who discusses that topic on a common-sense basis is apt to stir up a nest of controversial hornets. But, from the public point of view, if the Professor should deal in sequence with all the varying phases of political economy, from the severe Spartan code of Lycurgus even to the seductively sentimental phantasies of Bellamy, so much the better will he promote the success of the University extension movement.

# ADELAIDE HOSPITAL BOARD.

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THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL AND  
THE BOARD.

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## ADDITIONAL PROBATIONERS.

The ordinary general meeting of the Adelaide Hospital Board was held at the institution on Friday afternoon. There were present:—Mr. W. H. Wadey (in the chair) the Hon. A. A. Kirkpatrick, M.L.C., Messrs. C. Lyons and W. G. Coombs, Drs. Rogers, and Curtis, and Mesdames N. Parkin, Edwards, and C. U.