

Register March 26 1886

## THE LAW EXAMINATIONS.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—I have read attentively the series of letters which has appeared anent the recent law examinations at the University, and must confess that it affords much food for reflection on the present system of education for the law in our colony. That system, it is true, offers to students the highest opportunities for becoming sound and practical lawyers, but up to the present those for whose benefit it was introduced do not appear to have appreciated or reaped its full benefits. *Hinc illae lacrimae.* Both at the home University and at the Temple the practical experience of the office is necessarily absent. The separation of the professions in England naturally prevents the solicitor's clerk from studying the theoretical part of his profession. In South Australia there seems to me to be a happy combination of the advantages of both systems if properly used and keenly taken advantage of. Undoubtedly the founding of the Law School at our University has inaugurated a new era; it has put an end to the farce of the intermediate examination at the Supreme Court, and the contemptible spectacle of men who had served an apprenticeship of five years being "plucked" five or six times in consequence of failing to answer the elementary questions propounded at the final. The Law School gives the advantage of lectures second to none in the world, but at the same time it says—and very properly says—"We will not confer upon you our Law degree unless, in addition to the experience you have gained in drawing and, it may be, engrossing bills of sale and real property transfers, you show us that you have taken advantage of our teaching and become students of your profession as well as profitable clerks to your principals." The late Lord St. Leonards is said to have read fourteen hours a day for three consecutive years. The articed clerk of to-day steals a weary hour and a half when he is not kept at the office over hours and the cricket-field and football do not put forward their superior claims. I venture to say there were not out of the couple of hundred questions set at the last examination more than two or three to which the least exception could be taken. My own experience with law pupils in this colony, with whom I have not been altogether unsuccessful, leads me to the conclusion that there is no want of innate ability, but that the conception of real earnest study is utterly unknown to the majority of law students. The mischief arises from two causes—first, the dislike of principals to allow their articed clerks proper opportunities for study; and secondly, the fact that the students themselves only read what they think absolutely unavoidable, and have no desire for study for its own sake, forgetting that *melius est petere fontes quam sectari rivos.*

I am, Sir, &c.,

F. A. d'ARENBERG.

# The Advertiser

MONDAY, MARCH 29, 1886.

WITH some vivacity the ball has been kept going which was set rolling through our columns by a letter from "Student" on the subject of the recent law examinations at the University. Others than candidates—successful and non-successful—have entered the arena of controversy, and of course many things have been said and suggested which cannot seriously claim practical consideration; but full and free discussion of matters of public importance cannot be obtained without allowing very great latitude to those who take part in the discussion. It is to the credit of those who have been commenting on the Laws course that they have not generally complained of the severity of the examinations *per se*; the complaints being more particularly directed [against the present system of lecturing and some details in the examining methods. Mere grumbling about the difficulty of obtaining the degree will meet with little sympathy from any one having at heart the real interests of higher education in the colony, and the University authorities may count upon being backed by the intelligence of the community in their efforts to secure a respectable recognition throughout the world for the Adelaide diplomas. The only matter worth considering therefore in connection with what has lately been prominently brought under public notice is whether our University system is in every direction doing in the best way the work for which it was constituted.

A further consideration of the results achieved at the University, and a comparison of these with the official calendar for the current year, have only strengthened our conviction that the University ought to and might do more as the highest teaching body among us. In other words, the weakness of the existing state of things is found when the matter is looked at on its instructional side. It is to the Law School that we are specially referring, though in some other departments it would appear that more

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teaching might with advantage be provided. The fact as to the course in Laws, however, simply is that only one lecture is given in each week on each of the subjects of the several years ; and moreover, all the lectures for the whole three years' course are delivered by one lecturer. Now, if the lecturing is to be anything but a traditional formality it cannot be pretended that an hour once a week supplies a sufficient course of instruction in any branch of legal learning ; and when it is remembered, in addition, that one lecturer takes all the subjects, the unsatisfactory character of the present arrangements seems the more patent. It is quite true that undergraduates are not to expect the lectures to exhaust for them the attention to be given to the several subjects, and that patient private study must supplement the public work of the lecturer ; yet if any real assistance is to be given to students the lectures ought surely, in outline at least, to cover the major part of the subject in hand, and this is simply an impossibility in any branch with only a weekly lecture. Again, however capable a man may be, is it reasonable to expect him to treat a large number of subjects in an equally interesting and edifying way ? That the whole of one school of the University