

by chance. It is not easy to find in our principal schools subjects of education which are taught merely for the sake of education. If Latin or Greek is taught, it is the particular book which is down on the curriculum for matriculation. If Shakspeare is read, it is the play which the University has chosen. There is not sufficient breadth about education in our schools. The boys are prepared for examination, but their minds are not as a rule sufficiently cultivated. For instance, the acquaintance with English literature made by schoolboys is of the most meagre condition. Before an examination they will perhaps know the dates of Shakspeare's birth and death, but so far as real knowledge of his works goes they are mostly ignorant. To them Shakspeare, as well as Virgil and Cæsar, was the writer of books which the Adelaide University has chosen for examination. The schools too often look upon boys as machines for getting them distinction, just as the boys look upon their schools as machines for getting them through their examinations. Virgil and Shakspeare are to boys abstractions which must be parsed, and construed, and analyzed; they are to the schools cathedrals in which they may stall horses. This, then, is largely the tendency of the University examinations upon schools, and it is needless to say that the system resembles cramming far more than it resembles education.

If it were once fully acknowledged that the true object of a University is to teach, and that matriculation is merely an entrance upon higher learning, the evils now complained of would speedily be removed. Strictly speaking, a University is a Society of men employed, some in teaching, others in learning. The ideal University is devoted to the pursuit of learning and to the attainment of higher culture. All are students, but some, who are more advanced, lead the others. It would be a mistake to allow men who had not mastered the rudiments of learning to join in advanced studies, and therefore

the candidate for admission to the Society is required to prove his acquaintance with the rudiments. When he has satisfactorily passed this ordeal he is instructed in higher things, and when his course of education is finished he is given a badge by which people may know that he has passed through the course. Now, the Adelaide University makes a mistake at starting. We shall not now discuss the question whether the matriculation examination here is or is not harder than it is elsewhere. It is certainly out of all proportion both to the general standard of education and to the University standard. We mean that it is much harder for a boy to matriculate than it is for a man to take his degree in Arts. "Theoretikos" alludes to the easy curriculum, and singularly enough does not see the evil done by making the entrance hard and the course easy. The arrangement should be exactly the other way. The matriculation examination should be as simple as possible. This would abolish cramming in the schools. It would be no particular honour to be able to point to a long list of boys who had matriculated any more than it would be for an English school to be able to publish a long list of men who had got pass degrees. And there-

fore the schools, seeing that the matriculation-list would be of little value as an advertisement, would cease to make the matriculation the object of their endeavours. They would begin to teach really; to widen their boys' sympathies with books and nature; to give them a thorough education which would be serviceable to them wherever they were and whatever they did. They would give them a taste for learning for its own sake, and so doing they would confer a far greater benefit on them than if they had enabled them to pass first of the first in the matriculation examination. And this lowering of the standard for entrance will widen the gates of the University. People talk about the deterioration of degrees, and make sarcastic remarks about graduates serving in drapers' shops. And what harm if they do? There is no reason why an assistant in a shop should not graduate. But deterioration of degrees is not a logical sequence of making matriculation easier. Graduates of English Universities will not say, because the Colleges to which they belonged favoured a merely nominal entrance examination, that therefore their degrees are worthless. Make the course as hard as it fairly and judiciously can be made. The pupils come well grounded in general knowledge, they pass the preliminary examination, and it remains for the University to build on the foundations already laid. By means of a good system students may be led from small beginnings to concise knowledge, and their course is not a series of examinations, but a steady pursuit of knowledge. There are many advantages to be derived from a lowering of the matriculation standard, but these are the chief. It would abolish cramming in schools and encourage education in the true sense of the word; it would offer rewards for general culture; and it would largely extend the benefits of University education. More, doubtless, remains to be done, but the making the matriculation examination easier is the first thing to be done for the reform of the Adelaide University.

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UNIVERSITY REFORM.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—While articles appear in your paper signed "J. Lindsay Leary, M.A.," the public may be safely trusted to form their own opinion as to the value of estimates of the work of our schools contained in them, based upon the necessarily limited experience of one who has only recently come to our colony, especially as you protect yourself from all responsibility for the views maintained in them by printing the name of their author. But this morning in your leading columns you make some remarks in the same direction, which I venture to call unfounded, but which I must feel of sufficient importance to ask to be allowed to reply to. To one who knows the working of the higher schools here well, and has strenuously endeavoured for the last ten years to work with other teachers, principal and assistant, in improving it, it appears a little disappointing to be told by a leader of thought in the community that the time is still in the future when those schools "will begin to teach really." I maintain unhesitatingly, and with full knowledge of the facts, that they have begun long since, and I appeal to those educated in the schools in earlier days, now in prominent places amongst us, as witnesses; to the Collegiate Schools' Association as evidence of the energetic wish of the teachers to confer, and to learn how to do better by conference; and to the examination-papers and class-lists of the Adelaide University for proof most manifest that within the last few years, in thoroughness and efficiency, most satisfactory progress has been made.