

An ideal of university excellence is not to be brought to the level of a larger range of competitors, but to be maintained as high as possible, so long as candidates can be stimulated to earnest exertions to reach it. A desire for an authoritative stamp of being distinguished for mental gifts above one's fellows is a powerful incentive to human industry, and it is wiser to take care that these coveted distinctions are reserved for champions in the realm of knowledge fit though few, than that a loosening of the tests should encourage a more general scramble in which they might sometimes be indiscriminately or injudiciously bestowed. A pleasing feature in the spectacle of yesterday was the presentation of a lady as a winner of Sir Thomas Elder's prize for physiology. It is not such a very long time ago since a famous French philosopher said that the modesty of her sex would shrink from science as instinctively as it would from contact with vice. Unfortunately that absurd opinion held sway in the counsels of female education a great deal too long; and many other propositions as grossly untrue have intruded their influence on the culture of women. The receptivity of the female mind has been asserted to be inferior to that of the other sex, and girls have, without much enquiry into the subject, been rashly assigned a lower position than boys in the chances of the educational conflict. It is urged that they have less power of abstraction, and are less able to grasp, remember, and apply, and that the result of their studies tends more to fill or adorn than to strengthen the mind. No generous man will withhold his congratulations when a woman steps forth to challenge the accuracy of so gratuitous an assumption, and signally refutes its logic. Without examining too closely the delicate arteries of the matrimonial market, or other phases of our social organisation which enter more largely into the determination of a woman's employment than of the other half of the human race, there are obvious grounds for concluding that the disproportion between the numbers of boys and girls at university examinations will always be great. But there is not equal reason to think that

in an even race which recognises no difference of sex the relative proportion of those who fail or succeed among boys will be able to be compared to the disadvantage of a similar calculation with respect to girls.

The most encouraging thought that is suggested by the events and speeches connected with this annual commemoration is that there is a ring of genuineness about the whole life and operations of the University. It bristles with the signs of active vigor, and creates a sense of confidence in the intelligence and discretion with which its influences are made to be felt and its administration is prosecuted. This is a satisfaction to those who narrowly watch the expenditure of grants from the public treasury, and must be a source of delight to the magnanimous donors whose liberality is being so well applied. Coupled with an unstinted measure of gratitude for bounty so substantial is the hope that our sources of University endowment are not yet exhausted. The learned chancellor drew attention to the restricted means which accounted for a few still empty chairs, or places where chairs ought to be, and to an abridgment of the services a university can render. The response made to an appeal so forcibly and feelingly expressed must govern to a great extent the success which attends the efforts to place the University on a more solid and useful foundation.

The Register.

ADELAIDE : SATURDAY, DEC. 20, 1884.

THE SCHOOLS AND THE UNIVERSITY.

Education in its relation first to the Churches, and secondly to the University, has been discussed at some length in connection with the school speech days this year. Bishop Kennion, as an enthusiastic advocate of the establishment of a State-school system of religious instruction, brings forward his ideas with all the confidence of one who sees no difficulties before him. Older colonists who know the struggles through which the colonies have passed on the subject of denominational education, and the inestimable value of an absolute separation between Church and State, will rather sympathize with him because of the disappointments in store for him than be offended with him for believing that he can settle offhand a difficulty which has puzzled Australians for two or three generations. He thinks that the colonies are in danger of imagining themselves to be in advance of England in this matter, whereas as a matter of fact they may be falling behind. On this point we think very differently. The separation of the Church from the State—that is, the exclusion of all elements which might involve denominational differences from every department under Government control—is a problem which Australians have worked out for themselves, and they are so thoroughly satisfied with its inherent reasonableness that they are guilty of what the Bishop might consider the unpardonable presumption of thinking that England will before very many years follow the example of Australia. Even Mr. Gladstone, in a letter which was published a few weeks ago, tacitly assumes that the disestablishment of the English Church is an event which is certain to come about before very long. For centuries the dominant Church was able to govern not only the Church life but also the school life of the people. Now that

the Dissenters are as a body quite as numerous as the members of the Church of England, the attempt to impose uniformity upon the adult population has been practically abandoned. But in another form it has been transferred to the schools. England contains about twenty-four millions of Protestants, and about one or two million of Roman Catholics and other denominations. Because religious uniformity in the schools is practicable in England it does not by any means follow that such should be the case where the population is largely composed of non-Protestants.

The Bishop contends that in supporting the present system of State education the Press does not represent the feelings of the majority of the people. And yet, with strange inconsistency, he declares that newspapers have been actuated by a desire to please the multitude. The fact is that by far the majority, both of the people and of the Press in Australia, are in favour of the public schools as now conducted, and the circumstance that they should be at variance with such an authority as the Bishop is explained by the fact that they have been longer in the colonies than he has been. To the assertion that the great majority of people in the colonies are desirous that some sort of religious instruction should be given to their children we readily