

Register October 16th 1886

OUR UNIVERSITY.

TO THE EDITOR.

Sir—In view of the approaching jubilee, and having at heart the honour and reputation of South Australia, I beg to publicly draw the attention of the University magnates to the desirability of at once putting a respectable and suitable fence round their beautiful buildings, which are at present almost hidden behind a most disreputable galvanized-iron hoarding. Surely they can provide something a little more in accordance with the merits of the institution, even if not an elaborate wall and railings, and thereby enable our, expected, numerous and distinguished visitors to obtain at least a glimpse of the handsome portico and the lower portions of a building which certainly may be calculated, if seen, to reflect credit on the colony and on the generous founders of our Alma Mater.

I am, Sir, &c., CITIZEN.

October 15.

The Medical School
The new Regulations

The Advertiser

MONDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1886.

It cannot be denied that an incomplete medical school is an anomaly. Those branches of the medical school in connection with the Adelaide University which are most important looked at from the point of cost, as well as scientific prominence, are already established, and surely if the major portion of the medical curriculum has a *raison d'être* for its existence the minor must also. We cannot now go back and discuss the question whether the position and circumstances of South Australia warrant the formation of such a school; we only assert that it is now a desirable thing to make the existing medical school complete. On a former occasion the methods proposed by the University Council to compass this object have been discussed in these columns, and we congratulate the council

on the fair prospect of an early realisation of their plans. The curriculum for the degree of bachelor of medicine has been drawn out with evident care, exhibiting an intimate acquaintance on the part of those who framed it with the views of the most advanced medical authorities of the day. It is very complete, and cannot possibly take a second place, but will rank alongside the curriculum laid down by any other medical school. A mere glance at the course mapped out gives the assurance that no student need leave the Adelaide University unprepared for the responsibilities of a medical career if his studies have been pursued with ordinary diligence. Every unbiassed critic must admit that the programme is very comprehensive in its character. This is a fact which will certainly tell in favor of the medical school, as few intelligent men would hesitate to send their sons to a university where the ultimate status to be gained will necessarily be high. It deserves notice, however, that lads are to be permitted to begin the curriculum at the age of 16, and we fear that this age has been fixed more with the view of enabling students to secure their degree by the time they are 21 years old than with reference to any fitness in the age itself. The first year's medical study seems too exhaustive for a lad of 16, and it places obstacles in the way of progress in the ordinary branches of his education which it would be hardly desirable for him to throw entirely aside. Older

students make more solid progress, and waste less of the educational efforts of the professors. However, as the age of 21 is the classical age for a man to receive his degree, and as no one is prevented from beginning his course at any age he chooses after 16, it is perhaps not necessary to lay much stress upon this point.

The curriculum has been wisely made to include as compulsory subjects botany and natural philosophy. We say this because, as a matter of fact, in many medical schools while these studies are commended, students are not compelled as part of their course to undergo any examination in them. It must, however, be admitted that a medical man should possess a fair acquaintance with the natural history and structure of plants, as well as a knowledge of the elementary principles of heat, electricity, magnetism, light and acoustics. The one examining body, so far as we are aware, that does full justice to this part of a student's attainments is the University of London, which requires natural philosophy at the matriculation and experimental physics at the preliminary scientific examination. Many—in fact the vast majority—of the examining boards are far behind this standard, and permit a deficiency of knowledge among the rank and file of the medical profession in this respect which is conducive neither to liberality of mind nor to breadth of practice. It is gratifying to find that the Adelaide University will not be among the examining boards of the latter class, but in medical scholarship will take its place with the leading universities of the day. The course of study is undoubtedly extensive as compared with the requirements of many medical schools in the old country; and the period of study fixed is correspondingly long, five years being required for the degree of M.B. It is doubtful whether it is wise in a new country, and so democratic a country too as South Australia, to outdo the old country in conservatism, and accordingly it is perfectly fair to regard a provision that will under all circumstances make the course of study extend to five years

and amongst these some of the most successful practitioners, begin the study of medicine later in life than even 20 years of age, and it is reasonable to say that they should be permitted with their maturer brains to overtake the subjects in a shorter period, say four years, if they choose to do so. It is surely not a mere question of how long but of how much; and as it is a well-known fact that a man at 25 will acquire as much knowledge in one year as a lad at 16 in two, some means should be provided to meet this objection. The suggestion we make is not without a precedent to support it, as in some Scotch schools at least two summer sessions are allowed to count as one winter session. We are confident students will be lost to the medical school if this provision of five years' study is made absolute. We observe, by the way, that a very rational deviation is made from the course followed in many schools in England and Scotland. Examinations are to take place at the end of every year's study, instead of the custom being followed of students going up after two or three years' work for what is called their "first half," and after another year or two for their "final." The burden of retaining the details of two or three years' study of much that is of a purely technical character is grievous. We certainly think