

# The Register.

ADELAIDE: THURSDAY, DEC. 22, 1887.

## THE UNIVERSITY COMMEMORATION.

The Chancellor of the University certainly erred on the side of mercy when he omitted the customary official address yesterday. Dr. Stirling had been selected to give the annual address, and he acquitted himself well. No less than this was looked for, but we believe few expected to hear such a masterly exposition of the aims and methods of the biological sciences. In dealing with the subject Dr. Stirling touched upon controversial points, but he did so in—such a way as to disarm opposition. The truth is that the continuance of the controversy as to the relative merits of a literary and scientific training is largely due to the circumstance that the advocates of the one or the other approach the subject from different standpoints. Very much also depends upon the methods of study pursued and the special qualifications of the teacher. And we venture to think not a little depends upon the temperament and capacity of the student. There are many who are much more at home with abstract studies than they are with those which bring them constantly into contact with the phenomena of nature; while there are others for whom every branch of science has a special fascination. Fortunately our University as now constituted provides for both classes, and Dr. Stirling's eloquent plea for scientific study was a most timely addition to the many masterly dissertations on different branches of educational work which have been delivered within the walls of the University. Even where Dr. Stirling trod upon what many still think to be forbidden ground he did so in the spirit of an earnest enquirer—of a sceptic in the true and noble meaning of the word—whose mind is on the alert to discover truths that have been hidden from those who are content to accept conclusions upon the mere dicta of authority. It would be impossible for us in the compass of this article to make even the briefest reference to the many noble and stimulating thoughts in Dr. Stirling's address. Life and will are mysteries, and no true scientist will pretend that he has solved those mysteries. The men who have thought most upon these subjects will not misunderstand Dr. Stirling when he says—"But this is by no means the same thing as saying let us not try to know, and great and difficult as are these questions they are to the physiologist merely problems, insoluble if you like for the present, but which rather differ in degree than in kind from other problems of the human body, and which it is quite possible may not be beyond the hope of eventual solution."

If we may venture to make such a suggestion it seems almost a pity that such an address as Dr. Stirling's should be given at the close of the University year, and on an occasion when the minds of many present are distracted by the distribution of honours. It appears to us that it would be far more fitting at the beginning of the University year. It would then strike the keynote for the year, and would be more in harmony with the spirit of expectation and hope that marks the commence-



ment of an undertaking. This is a matter, however, upon which there may be a difference of opinion, and even in young Universities it is difficult to change a custom that has once been established. Fortunately Dr. Stirling's address is not likely to be known only to the comparatively small number who listened to it. It will be read, we believe, by many, and we have little doubt that its general tone and aim will be as warmly approved by those who can boast of but scanty scientific attainments as by those who are fellow-labourers with the doctor in the fields in which he has so successfully toiled. We are not surprised that the Chancellor thought it better to omit the customary official address. Coming after Dr. Stirling there was a great danger of his remarks partaking of the nature of an anti-climax. Yet we must confess to a feeling of regret that His Honor in mercy to his audience adopted this course. The University is a public institution mainly supported by public money. The public seldom has an opportunity of hearing much about its inner life. Parents whose sons are undergraduates may get to hear a good deal about the progress made, but Commemoration Day affords to the general public almost the only opportunity for learning what the University is doing and how far it is succeeding in the objects for which it is established. If, however, these topics are to be enlarged upon on Commemoration Day it is certain that some other occasion will have to be selected for the annual address from the Professor appointed to give it.

Some changes have been made in the regulations this year that tell unfavourably against the undergraduates, and that appear to us to have been made upon a mistaken conception of the objects for which the University exists. Thus the fees have been considerably raised. For the Arts course they are now fifteen guineas a



year, as against about ten or eleven guineas formerly. One would desire to know how this change has worked. Most of the undergraduates and many who would like to have a University training and would do credit to it have only slender means, and every addition to the fees is a serious matter to them. Then, again, it seems to us to be very unjust to require the students to make a deposit of £1 before they can use the library. Such a condition is not imposed at the Public Library, which is accessible to all classes, and we cannot see why it should be imposed at the University. As that library is only open to a few there should be little difficulty in discovering those who have been guilty of misconduct in maltreating or removing any of the books. We understand also that there have been great complaints as to the accommodation for students, who are thrust into an underground room in order that ampler space may be provided for the Council. Surely it is forgotten that the University exists for the students, and it is a serious mistake to place obstacles in their way, and thus to restrict the usefulness of the institution. As to the examinations conducted by the University some of the remarks made by Mr. Chapple in his report of the work done at Prince Alfred College are deserving of earnest attention. In one sense the other things to which we have referred are small matters, but they are indications of the tendency of the Council to forget the purpose for which the University was established. The history of most of the higher class schools shows that as a rule the boys most successful in their studies are boys whose parents have only limited means, and to such every addition, however trifling, to the cost of a University career may be tantamount to absolute prohibition.

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