

Register 27 November 1889.

THE UNIVERSITY.

The Senate of the University meets to-day to fill six vacancies in the Council. Five Councillors retire every year in accordance with the provisions of the Act. Each of these is eligible for re-election, and all but one offer themselves accordingly. This is a repetition of the proceedings last year. Then as now the medical man of the five refrained from seeking re-election, and at that time the other four were successful in their candidature, the fifth place being filled by a medical man. The sixth vacancy now is caused by the lamented death of the late Mr. William Everard. The Senate cannot complain of the fewness of candidates. Four of the old Councillors present themselves, and six other gentlemen also ask for the suffrages of Senators. The number was at first eleven, but one of the medical candidates, who can afford to wait, has withdrawn his name. A rough analysis of the list shows that there is on it three ministers of religion, two doctors of medicine, two members of the teaching staff of the University, a Bachelor of Laws who does not practise law, an honorary Master of Arts, and a member of Parliament.

Only two, at the outside, of the ministers of religion can be elected, the Act providing that there shall never be more than four such ministers on the Council at the same time. Bishop Kennion and Mr. Fletcher are now members, so that at least one of the three candidates must be rejected. If the desire of which we hear so much—the desire that some sort of change should be made in the government of the University—is possessed by a majority in the Senate there is now an opportunity of carrying it out by the infusion of new blood. That such a change is likely to be beneficial can hardly be doubted. The University ought to hold a higher position than it does, and the merits of its alumni warrant the belief that with better management it would assert its rightful position as at least the equal of other Australian Universities. Instead of this we find that a Bachelor of Laws of Adelaide cannot obtain an *ad eundem* degree in Melbourne. And yet it is to laws and medicine that the University devotes its main attention. If its degrees in laws are not recognised, and there are as yet no graduates in medicine, what is the value of its work in other branches of learning? If these things are done in the green tree, what is done in the dry? By wisely directing matters so as to increase as much as possible the love of learning for itself and to restrain somewhat the natural desire to earn a paying degree, the Council would do much to raise the standard of education. There is no reason to believe that Melbourne is less practical than Adelaide; yet in Melbourne a man must be a graduate in arts before he graduates in laws, whilst here he need only be a matriculated student. We are not in such a hurry to get lawyers that we cannot afford to wait three years longer for each Bachelor of Laws. Of the remaining seven candidates five have never yet served on the Council. Two of them are medical men, one is the Professor of Chemistry, and another the Lecturer on Laws.

There is always some hesitation felt about placing members of the professorial staff on the Council. If they are strong men, like Professor Lamb, they dominate the Council; if not, the relation is more or less strained, both as regards the Council and as regards the Professorial Board. Two other candidates have had large experience on the Council, and the last has the qualifications for the position which a general interest in educational matters and a membership of Parliament afford. Much depends upon the election, and we can only hope that every member of the Senate who possibly can will exercise his vote.

Whilst on the subject of the University we may refer to the correspondence in our columns on the subject of questions put to candidates for the senior examination. It appears from our correspondent's remarks that the examiner has gone out of the textbooks set, and has asked questions, the answers to which could only be obtained from books inaccessible to or not generally read by schoolboys and schoolgirls. Without having heard the opposite side we cannot, of course, pretend to give a decided opinion on the subject. The explanation, if it is forthcoming at all, will probably be something to this effect—that the questions of which complaint is made were intended to elucidate any real and not any crammed knowledge which the pupils happened to possess. The candidate who takes an interest in his work, or the teacher who possesses special knowledge will have so filled in the gaps of the textbooks set as to arrange for himself or his pupil a thorough picture of the whole subject. The examiner may have thought it wise to ascertain whether there was such a complete acquaintance with the matter. In this he would have the approval of the Professorial Board, which, we understand, has to pass all papers. At the same time it is obvious that such a system, admirable as it may be in itself, is hardly applicable in the case of young students. These have to present themselves in many subjects, and it would be impossible for them to devote more time to any one than is necessary for the complete understanding, not of the subjects, but of the textbooks set. A time may come when textbooks will be abolished, and when the big-headed child of the future will have to range through all the fields of knowledge without a recognised guide. But until that time does come examiners should in common fairness stick to the textbooks; they should not ask unhappy youths and maidens to describe such parts of the aforesaid fields as have not been visited by the guides appointed by the University. We have not had an opportunity of reading the particular paper of which complaint is made. It must, however, have been very hard indeed if, as one of our correspondents says, "our legislators, with access to libraries, and their judgment of mature years, would have enough to do to tackle it."
