few candidates for the entrance examination, and that its classes are attended by
only about fifteen matriculated students. It may be premised that when the Ade-
elaide University was founded and munificent endowed by public-spirited men
in the interests of higher education it was meant to supply the deficiency of
proper test examinations for public and private schools. In addition to
this it was intended to open up resources to those students who had not the means
enabling them to secure the advantages of an outside University. Many of
our youths had been sent to England, Scotland, or Melbourne, and many others
had been deprived of a University training, either through want of money,
or because it was not always advisable to send them away from the advice
and protection of their friends. It
was among other things to meet
such cases that the University was
founded, and we can only judge how it
has fulfilled this purpose by the extent to
which its opportunities are made use of.
If we find that the number of its students
is stationary or retrogressive we are bound
to infer that the University does not ade-
quately meet the circumstances of those
who wish to avail themselves of its re-
sources. In no other way can we account
for the fact that only twenty-nine candidates
entered for the matriculation this De-
ember as compared with forty-three last
December. One of the chief reasons no
doubt is that the new regulations have in-
creased the difficulty of passing this ex-
amination. The intention of the Profes-
sorial Board to preserve as high a stan-
ard as possible is very laudable,
but it is obvious that the standard can be
raised only gradually, and not by impul-
sive steps. Another reason probably is
the improved status of the junior examina-
tions, which now are recognised as a
distinct step in the University course; but
neither of these considerations can coun-
teract the disappointment which must be
felt at the smallness of the number of students offering themselves for examina-
tion.
Moreover, in what is expected of the
candidates there is a limit, which should
not be overpassed, and it is a question
whether the University authorities have
not striven for and expected too much. They have apparently adopted
for the most part the curriculum of the
London University; but it should be re-
membered that here there are many rea-
sons why we should not follow the most difficult matriculation standard to be found among the home Universities.
on the other hand, to compare our matri-
culation examination with that of Mel-
bourne, which is the most successful in Australia, we find that it is far more difficult than theirs. In Melbourne the student has a wider choice, and his special proficiency in certain branches gives him decided advantages. In Adelaide, on the other hand, taking the subjects as they are in Melbourne, a candidate has to pass in eight compulsory subjects, as to which he has no choice whatever, and in two so-called "optional" subjects, which are dealt with from a comparatively high standard. To give an instance of what is expected from a candidate, we may mention that one of the compulsory subjects is Latin, in which, besides the grammar and translation, a book of Livy is to be construced; and another is geometry, in which the student must not only know thoroughly the first two books of Euclid, but must also be able to work out deductions from them. These subjects, again, are placed among the "optionals," and a greater knowledge is required of them than at matriculation in any other University that we are acquainted with. It is a doubtful policy to require so much from a student before he is allowed to enter the University. Matriculation is only a preliminary to the enrolment of students' names in the University books, and it is sufficient to require a sound elementary knowledge from the students so enrolled. Every school teacher knows that it is an exceptional thing to find a boy who can with equal readiness construe a chapter of Livy or work out a geometrical exercise, and that it does not by any means follow that a boy capable of this is endowed with the best ability. Every candidate in order to pass should be expected to be conversant with the knowledge which is required in every-day life with arithmetic, geography, history, and the various branches of English; and in addition to these he should be expected to show a proficiency in classics, or mathematics, or other special subjects—but scarcely in those combined. The desirability of studying the dead languages is a fruitful subject of discussion in England, and whatever force the arguments against it possess there is even more applicable in this colony. But, however that may be, it is clearly unreasonable to compel a candidate to have a knowledge of so many and such diverse subjects at the mere entrance-examination of the University; and the success of the Melbourne University, which acts upon a different basis, is a strong argument against the present system.