

From the "Age" July 16th 1886.

THE ways of the Council of the University of Melbourne are mysterious, and unless some improvement is made in our system of scholastic instruction the decrees of that august body will prove incomprehensible to ordinary mortals. Special instruction in diplomatic science must be given, or a chair must be established to determine accurately the amount of dust which a member of Council may be permitted to throw in the eyes of his fellow councillors. At the end of last year, after mature consideration, a scheme for placing the professors' salaries on a more satisfactory footing was discussed, and finally settled on the rational principle that length of service should bring to each and every professor certain increments. The Registrar was instructed to communicate this decision to each professor; and the staff, with the exception of Mr. Nanson and some others, gave the scheme an unqualified acceptance. This gentleman, however, expressed approval of the scheme with the exception of two resolutions, which he considered objectionable, and which were subsequently repealed. He then formally accepted the terms offered by the Council; but it will not surprise those who have carefully watched the proceedings of that body to learn that at the very meeting at which Mr. Nanson's acceptance was read the Council, under the guidance of its recently elected Chancellor, turned its back upon itself, and withdrew its own terms after they had been formally accepted, by passing the following resolution:—

“ Where any professor has before the
“ 16th December, 1885, received a salary
“ of £1000 a year such professor shall
“ continue to receive such salary without
“ increment until he has completed 22½
“ years of service from the date of his
“ original appointment, from and after
“ which time he shall receive in addition
“ to his salary an annual increment of
“ £200.”

We cannot imagine upon what grounds the Council passed the first clause of this resolution, which is directly pointed at one individual, and will in the course of two or three years leave him in the anomalous position of having a lower salary than a professorial colleague who is junior to him by five years. But it is not so much to this phase of the Council's devious ways that we wish to direct public attention, but to what appears to be an insidious attempt in the latter part of the resolution to better financially the position of two professorial members of the Council to the tune of £2000 apiece. The majority of the members of the Council cannot be aware that the effect of the resolution is to enable the Chancellor and the Professor of Natural Science to claim an increment of £200 a year for some ten years back. This trifling windfall would no doubt not be declined, though it must go to the heart of Dr. Hearn to know that one of the first important official duties of the new Chancellor has forced him to figure as a party to a resolution which, if we can read the law rightly, apportions to Mr. Chancellor the trifling sum of £2000. Fortunately for his modesty, the resolution is so preposterous that it is not likely to receive the sanction of the Council when once its attention is called to the facts. We cannot think, of course, that he drafted the resolution with his own hand, though we do not forget that his experience in this peculiar industry stood him in such excellent stead when he became Dean of the Faculty of Law, and so escaped the disability to sit in Parliament imposed by the statute dealing with professorial tenures. It at any rate will be well for the Council to be circumspect.
