A very important matter came up for consideration at yesterday's meeting of the Council of the School of Mines. Mr. Scherk and Mr. Rogers thought that the fees charged for the evening classes were too high. They represented very fairly that these classes are mainly intended for the working classes who, if they were excluded from gaining their livelihood in the day time, would like to devote their evenings to the pursuit of knowledge. But, they added, the classes might as well not exist so far as these artisans and mechanics are concerned if the fees are beyond their means. Whether work be scarce or plentiful, living is dear and families have to be supported; and the average workman in receipt of average pay would have to consider ways and means very carefully before he undertakes to spend £36 a year, which is the cost of the course.

It may be added that the £26.4. is the maximum fee which he can expect to pay before he can go up for his final examination for the Diploma of Associate of the School of Mines does not represent the whole cost of the course. The town he will have to pay his railway fare, on a reduced scale, it is true, if he happens to be under twenty, but it may still prove a heavy item, and, in any case, he will have to lay out much money in books and appliances. This is a very strong case, especially in respect of an institution which is endowed with public money for the express purpose of placing scientific knowledge within popular reach.

The other side of the question is almost as strong. The fees at £6 6s. make the loss less, not to create a surplus of income over expenditure. It appears from the Chairman's statement that each student at the evening classes will cost the Council £28 10s., of which sum £10.8s. will go to the University as the pay for the world of the professors, and £1 5s. to the School of Design. Under the present arrangement then, with the fees at £6 6s., the Council would lose £2.9s. per head per annum. There is also the cost of the new building which the Chairman calls "the most expensive branch of education," so that on the whole the Council stands to lose very heavily on the evening classes. If this be so—and it is not the case that there need be much of a loss, as the fees of £6 6s. are not an inaudible objection to the reduction of the fees. Nobody expects of the school that it shall pay its way at all times, and whilst we should be the last to invite extravagance, it cannot be doubted that the school would be better worth the money expended on it, or to be expended on it, if it attracted large classes at low fees than if it had only small classes at high fees. But it is a loss necessary and it may be that in the way now is the University, which charges at a high rate for the services of its professors. There is a fee of £1 16s. each for mathematics, physics, and chemistry, and for the laboratory—£1 of £1 each for each of the three years. In the words the University charges as much for its instruction to the evening classes as it charges nongraduating students pro tem. In the first year of the Science School, this is extravagantly high; and we are bound to say that an application for a reduction would be as favourably received.
by the University as a similar application has been received with regard to the chemistry of the day students. It is indeed true that lecturing in the evening classes is not the same as lecturing to an ordinary University class, and the professors may fairly expect to be well paid. But, as Professor Ronnie pointed out, "it does not matter how many there are to lecture to;" the lecturer has to attend for the sake of two, and he might just as well have twenty students. If then the University consented to lower its fees by one-half—which it is not now ready to do—considering the nature of the work to be done—the Council could follow suit. Even then £3 3s. per annum, with necessary addenda, is a sufficient tax on a light pocket.

This matter is to be considered again at next meeting, Mr. Rogers securing support for a motion which would seem to be antagonistic to the scheme drawn up by the Council. It emphasizes the manual education to be given in evening classes, but it evidently does not contemplate the working of these classes in connection with the diploma system. If this is so we should regret that the chance of gaining such a degree should be taken from mechanics and artisans, who should rather be given every opportunity of advancing themselves. For the rest the school is fair to open well. There will be eighteen "regular" students—eight working for the diploma during the day and ten in the evening classes—and ten "occasional" students, taking up one or two subjects. With regard to railway fares, the Council has secured a concession from the Commissioners which carries rather on the side of stinginess, and compares unfavourably with the Victorian arrangement. There the scale is for second-class return tickets for students: 12 miles, 6s.; 25 miles, 1s.; 40 miles, 1s. 6d.; 60 miles, 2s.; 75 miles, 3s.; 100 miles, 4s.; 125 miles, 5s.; and 190 miles, 6s. In Victoria there is no limitation of age; here the reductions only apply to students who are not yet twenty years old. The excuse advanced by the Commissioners that the difference of population necessitates the difference of concession may be reasonable enough; but they surely should not make a distinction between boys and men. This difficulty will probably be soon arranged. The school is to be opened to-morrow, when it will, we trust, enter upon a course of usefulness which may well fit for the colony and amply repay the trouble which the Council has lavished upon it.

Reginald Mardle

BUST OF SIR THOMAS ELDER.

Sir Arthur Blyth, C.B., K.C.M.G.,
Agent-General for South Australia, is collecting funds to defray the cost of a bust of Sir Thomas Elder, G.C.M.G., which it is proposed to have executed by a leading sculptor and placed in the Adelaide University.