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THE MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY.

FIVE YEARS OF ENQUIRY.

REPORT OF THE COMMISSION.

Melbourne, May 10.

After five years' labor the report of the Royal Commission on the Melbourne University was signed and circulated today. The members of the Commission, who were asked to deal with the Government administration, teaching work, and finances, were Messrs. Theodore Fink, M.L.A., Black, M.L.C., E. E. Smith, Boyd, M.L.A., and E. C. Wardle, M.L.A. During the five years visits were paid to the Sydney and Adelaide universities, and reports of the British Commission were examined.

Perhaps the most important recommendation is that a permanent annual endowment of £24,000 be made to the University, and that £33,000 (the amount of the deficiency due to the Dickson frauds) be refunded. Further sums of £27,725 and £5,140 are recommended to equip the laboratories and put the buildings in a state of repair. Mr. Beat has already stated that he intends to provide the £33,000 referred to.

The need for the registration of teachers both in private and public schools is emphasized, and the establishment of a chair of pedagogy and of a degree of education is advised.

Particular attention is devoted to the engineering school, the present course coming in for severe condemnation. Its complete rearrangement is urged.

The establishment of a senior examination to serve as a test of a thorough secondary education is also to the fore in the report.

A commercial course, and the granting of a diploma in commerce, are favorably commented upon. Matriculation as an entrance is not to be insisted upon.

On the subject of dental education, the report recommends—(1) Affiliation of the Dental College and the hospital to the University; (2) students to be required to matriculate before presenting themselves for examination in the first year; (3) full hospital facilities for all students; (4) the establishment of a permanent dental hospital, with modern appliances; (5) the establishment of a licentiate course in dentistry at the University; (6) the mutual recognition of licenses by the States, when it can be shown that the dental education is on a satisfactory basis.

With regard to examinations, the Commission favors oral examination, in addition to written, where possible, and the making of an allowance for each subject passed in. The report, as a whole, recommends a considerable increase of free scholarships, but the majority of members came to the conclusion that the time was not ripe for the establishment of a chair of agriculture.

REFORMING THE MELBOURNE UNIVERSITY.

Who shall guard the guardians? If the fount of learning and wisdom fall the people, to whom may they look for guidance? As a sacred repository of knowledge, ancient and modern, a University commands veneration; but as a business or teaching institution it must be judged by the practical sagacity or otherwise of its directors. It is necessary, since all management is fallible, to expose even University authorities to conditions of frank and sharp criticism whenever the occasion demands it. Experience has repeatedly demonstrated that fine scholarship and worldly prudence are distinct qualities, which frequently fail to keep company. Of this fact the deplorable plight of the Melbourne University supplies the latest illustration. The Dickson frauds a year or two ago disclosed such shamefully lax management of the seat of learning that the Victorian Government appointed a royal commission to conduct a searching examination concerning every branch of the University's operations. The result of the enquiry must be most humiliating to the managers. In brief, the commission recommends a complete revolution of the government of the University, with a view to raise its teaching standard to a reasonable and respectable level. The Victorian Parliament is able to insist upon a radical change being made in the constitution, because the University cannot be continued without substantial gifts of the taxpayers' money. In addition to being asked to make good £33,000, the amount of the Dickson frauds and the drift, the Legislature is to be requested to provide £27,725 to furnish the laboratories in the science classes with suitable equipment, and £5,140 for urgent repairs to the University buildings. Even the capital outlay of over £65,000 thus indicated is not all that is desired. Parliament is further expected to make the annual endowment a fixed sum of £24,000, a large increase upon past votes of this kind. The commission advises that the University should, as an offset, undertake free of cost the training of state teachers on the lines of the scheme in existence in Adelaide and Sydney. Still, the taxpayers will rightly require guarantees for future proper management.

The commission proposes to reconstruct the University Council, and arm it with the sole legislative powers. The functions of the Senate will be restricted to offering suggestions, and making reports, and to the election of 20 out of 36 members of the Council, of whom the Director of Education and the professors are to be ex-officio members. This managing body is to be subdivided into three committees, one to control business, the second administration, and the third research work. The action of the Melbourne University in excluding its teaching staff from the governing body is characterized as being almost unique. After much consideration the commission recommends a life-tenure of professorships, with powers of removal and discipline for inefficiency or misconduct, and with a further right to retire the occupant of a chair at the age of 60 years without having to show cause; and also with the authority to remove him at any time should the interests of the University call for the extreme step. The commission believes that, funds permitting, a retiring allowance should be payable to every professor, as in the absence of this provision the Council will be slow to dispense with an unsuitable man. Regarding examinations the report proposes that the scope should be widened, that oral tests should be included wherever possible, and that persons who fail in some subjects but pass in others need not sit again for the latter. In classics and other subjects the standard of matriculation is not sufficiently high to qualify the student to take advantage of the University teaching, and at present a further preparation of one or two years is necessary. Simply as the result of low requirements in mathematics, Great Britain withholds recognition of the civil engineering degrees granted by the Melbourne University.

Concerning secondary education the commission endorses the proposal for a voluntary system of inspection of secondary schools to guarantee methods of teaching, discipline, and range of subjects taught. In order to provide for the circulation of ideas in the educational world conferences of head masters of leading secondary schools,

the Director of Education, the principal of the Training College, and the professorial board are advised. Further, it is suggested that a senior or leading examination should be held by the University authorities to test those who do not desire to continue their studies at the University. It is also intended that drawing shall be made a compulsory subject at secondary schools. The teaching of modern languages in these institutions is keenly criticised, and hints are given of means to remedy the defects. Not without reason the commission devotes much attention to the proper preparation of teachers, and, so as to raise the status of the pedagogic profession, advocates a system of registration to include those in the employ of the state, and also those in

secondary schools. The establishment of a Chair of Pedagogy is strongly recommended, with the issue of a degree in addition to the diploma now granted. In general the commission desires that the facilities offered for the preparation of state teachers should be extended to other instructors also. The commissioners urge that the arts course should be liberalized, English should be made a compulsory subject, and that "our system, which tends to turn out men who are amateurs in several subjects," should be altered on German lines, which require that a student shall be an expert in certain branches. In discussing the chaotic condition of the engineering school the commission censures the University Council for persecuting two of the lecturers because in their compulsory testimony they had indicated reforms. It appears, too, that the Dean of the Faculty wrote to one of them, Mr. Smith, requesting him to recall much of his evidence and tone down and qualify the remainder, "for the effect of it as it stands must be disastrous either to the school or yourself." Practically the commission demands that the Council shall reinstate Mr. Smith, whose office they abolished, and thus fulfilled the threat of the Dean! The Medical School is said to be generally effective, but the details and arrangement of the course are condemned. The law course is pronounced technical to a ridiculous extent, and it is urged that the University examination for the LL.B. degree is a sufficiently high standard for admission to the legal profession. Among minor matters the commission does not consider the time ripe to create a degree of agriculture, but it recommends the granting of a diploma in commerce. In dental education approval is given to affiliation with the Dental College. The greatest importance is attached to compulsory attendance by students at all lectures, and the commission is satisfied that the University work generally should be done by day, as when evening classes are resorted to "the work is almost invariably on a lower plane." The investigators pay a high compliment to the professors, past and present, and the members of the teaching staff for their original studies, and suggest that research should be encouraged by increased assistance. This necessarily brief outline of the scope of the recent enquiry, and the nature of the conclusions drawn by the commissioners, indicates that their report is calculated to exercise a profound influence upon higher education throughout the Commonwealth; and it is happily impossible for one state to make a genuine step in advance of the others without exciting a profitable spirit of emulation.

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AMUSEMENTS.

ELDER CONSERVATORIUM.

The first concert for the year by the students of the Elder Conservatorium was given on Monday evening before a large and most appreciative audience. A good programme, mainly orchestral in character, and devoted to the older classics, was presented in a satisfactory manner—if due allowance be made for the instrumental limitations yet existing in Adelaide—under the baton of Mr. H. Heinicke, and the young people, who were assisted by a number of well-known local performers—chiefly in the wind sections—gave a good account of themselves. The two principal numbers were Beethoven's "Symphony No. 1 in C," written before the great Bonn master had to any extent thrown off the traditions of Mozart and Haydn, and asserted his own individuality, and Mendelssohn's melodious tone-picture the "Hebrides" overture. In the former, which is scored for a small orchestra, the general effect was pleasing, and the string sections of the band gave evidences of careful training, despite the occasional slips inseparable from the performances of students. The "Hebrides overture," which concluded the concert, was in the main well given, and many excellent effects were secured. Many of the difficult passages scored for the strings were overcome in excellent style, and played with all the dash and spirit in the "animato" that the music calls for. Though rather attenuated in numbers, the wind players did excellent work, and the whole result was one which reflected great credit upon Mr. Heinicke, who conducted with judgment and skill. The solo part of Mozart's pianoforte "Concerto in D minor" was divided between Miss Kate Reinecke, who played the opening "allegro" with such neatness and excellent taste that she won a recall, and Miss Carlien Jurs, who was similarly honoured for her artistic and spirited rendering of the "romanzo" and "rondo," which the young performer interpreted in a style that gives rich promise of future excellence. The orchestral accompaniment to this number was of a most satisfactory character. Mr. Maurice Chenoweth sang the aria "Why does the God of Israel sleep?" and its accompanying recitative from Handel's "Samson" with considerable vigour and a generally clear management of the florid passages which are quite a feature of the aria. The best vocal item, however, was the recitative and duet "What have I to do with thee?" from Mendelssohn's "Elijah," sung by Miss Martha Bruggemann, who was in splendid voice, and excelled herself in the declamatory passages, and Mr. John Morish, who acquitted himself well in the baritone part. Miss Elizabeth Delprat made her first appearance as a soloist on the Conservatorium platform, and played d'Ambronio's "Romance in D" for violin solo with a full tone and appropriate passion that secured a recall. Mrs. A. E. Hawkins submitted as her solo a bracket of Carl Bohm's two songs "A night in spring" and "The demon of the wood," and scored a moderate success. The pianoforte solos were shared by Miss Gull Haek, A.R.C.M., and Messrs. Heinicke and A. H. Otto.