UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LECTURES.

Popular lectures are not invariably an unmixed public blessing. A generation ago the world was overrun by gentlemen who were ready to deliver themselves at short notice upon any and every subject in addresses of the type which caused the genial Autolycus Ward to remark, "There's more information to be got out of a well-conducted newspaper—price three cents—than there is out of ten popular lectures." Even at the present day it would not be difficult to name several popular lecturers who, even in recent years, have come to Australia with high-sounding reputations for eloquence and erudition, whose deliverances have conveyed scarcely the ghost of a reasonable idea in return for the time and ready cash expended by patient and long-suffering audiences. It may, therefore, be accounted somewhat risky for the Council of the University, in announcing the inauguration of a series of University extension lectures, to describe them as "popular." From the advertisements which have appeared in our columns it will have been noted that already two courses have been arranged for, and it is understood that two others are in contemplation. There can be no doubt that this new movement, if wisely conducted, may be made productive of much benefit to studiously inclined persons among the general public; but it is essential that the mistake of attempting to render the lectures attractive and nothing else should be most carefully avoided.

In past years the experiment of enlisting the willing services of the University professors and lecturers for the delivery of "popular" addresses upon special subjects has been tried with comparatively indifferent success. It does not altogether follow, however, that the scheme agreed upon by the University Council at its last meeting is doomed to failure. To the contrary, we believe, as we stated a couple of years ago when we first suggested the initiation of the University extension movement in South Australia, that there is ample scope for usefulness before this new educational agency.

The fatal error committed by many of the pioneers of the movement in the old country has been that of attempting to accomplish far too much with the limited time at their disposal. Enthusiastic young students have gone forth from Oxford, Cambridge, and other great scholastic centres as missionaries of learning and of culture to the villages and hamlets of the Midlands and the Black Country. Most of the problems which have offered no difficulty to the lecturers themselves, inured as they have been to habits of close-thinking, have been set before the unwarmed multitudes of Birmingham and Manchester, and with a confidence begotten of inexperience vast areas in the realms of knowledge have been hasty traversed without producing much practical or permanent result. The consequence has been that opportunities have been forfeited for the sakes of such as Mr. Charles Whibley, who...