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THE UNIVERSITY PROFESSORSHIPS.

Some surprise will no doubt be occasioned by the intelligence conveyed by our report of the last meeting of the University Council that a recommendation from a committee was adopted to the effect that immediate steps should be taken to establish a Professorship of Law, and also that it is desirable to appoint a number of lecturers in the same branch of study. Considering how moderate has been the amount of success which has attended the work of the University in its present comparatively limited sphere, it will occur to many people that this proposed extension of its functions will not by any means lead to an increase of its usefulness, but will, notwithstanding, occasion much needless expense. It is, no doubt, impossible to deny that some arguments can be adduced in favour of a colony such as ours making an effort to train up its professional men in its own institutions. So long as a colony has no organization for this object the scope for the intellectual energies of its rising generation will necessarily be limited, and it will be forced to rely upon outside influences for the formation of its professional classes. But, while admitting this, it is only right that we should remember that the University in its present condition can only number about a dozen matriculated students to each professorship; and it is therefore reasonable to enquire whether the Council of the University in proposing to establish a Chair of Law are not to some extent aggravating a state of affairs which is even now the reverse of pleasant.

But granting that it is advisable at present to undertake the education of professional men in the Adelaide University, it is impossible to understand why the law should be chosen as the profession which is to be specially honoured by the appointment of a professor. Under existing arrangements the supply of lawyers appears to be quite equal to the demand for their services. In the neighbouring colony of Victoria, where great expense has been incurred in providing legal lectures at the University, there are, as our readers will have observed by a recent letter of our Melbourne correspondent, numbers of young barristers who find it so difficult to obtain work as pleaders that they are anxious to be admitted to practise as solicitors, and are advocating the adoption of several reforms which will assimilate the Victorian system of conducting legal business to that of South Australia. On the other hand, there is no such difficulty with regard

to the medical profession. Considering how greatly the services of medical men are in request throughout all parts of the colony, if it were found possible at a reasonable cost to complete within the colony the training of any class of professional men—the reasons in favour of the medical profession are much stronger than those in favour of the law. It will be noticed that the Council indicate their intention of establishing a lectureship in human physiology, with the ultimate view of founding a School of Medicine. But in the case of the School of Law they propose to provide, if possible, a complete teaching staff at once, and with this object they are prepared to apply to Sir W. W. Hughes, requesting him to sanction a readjustment of the subjects pertaining to those chairs which he founded.

One of the Hughes Professorships is that of Classics held by Professor Kelly, and the other that of English Literature, recently vacated by the death of the late Professor Davidson. It is to be presumed therefore that the intention with which the Council are about to take action is to abolish the latter professorship, adding the lectures on English literature to the duties of some one of the present staff, and to devote the money thus saved to founding a Chair of Law. It is unfortunately a fact that English literature as a branch of study in modern British Universities has been so much neglected that the subject is seldom thought sufficiently important to warrant the appointment of a separate professor. In the University of Sydney it does not appear to be the special province of any teacher. In Melbourne it is relegated to a lecturer at a comparatively small salary. It is not our present intention to enter into the merits of the question how far the leading men in modern and especially in colonial Universities are wise in thus neglecting the grand literature of their native country. What we desire to point out is that even if it should be considered advisable to abolish the Chair of English Literature, and in the event of Sir W. W. Hughes sanctioning the required alterations in the conditions of his donation, the establishment of a School of Law is not the most advantageous purpose to which the money might be applied. In the first place, the scheme is altogether too extensive for the funds at the disposal of the institution. The salary enjoyed by the late Professor Davidson would be absorbed in providing for the new professorship alone, and how the additional funds required for the necessary lectureships would be forthcoming it

is impossible to say. If the proposal were for the establishment of law lectureships alone it would seem much more reasonable, inasmuch as for that purpose the resources of the University would be quite sufficient. But should the

Council, in its premature endeavours to raise up a School of Law, establish a professorship without having the wherewithal to supplement it by lectureships, it may safely be predicted that the gentleman chosen to fill the post, no matter how capable and industrious he may be,

will be more ornamental than useful. The project of founding professional schools is one which, if not carried out thoroughly, will be worse than useless. In view of the present financial position of the University there is little prospect of its being able, within the next few years at least, to complete the design with anything approaching to thoroughness; and, that being the case, the proposal to establish a Chair of Law can only be regarded as an instance of mistaken zeal and too sanguine expectations.