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THE HIGHER CULTURE.

One of the most interesting educational developments of the last generation has been the growth of the University system of Australia and New Zealand, concerning which instructive articles appear in the latest issues to hand of the "Empire Review" and "United Empire," the organ of the Royal Colonial Institute. Naturally, in new countries where practical rather than academic tendencies are predominant, the early history of university development has been in all the States one of struggle, and in some it was years before the Government could be induced to lend much help. The oldest university is, of course, that of Sydney. The Act for its incorporation was passed in 1850, but the building was still only partially completed in 1857, when lectures were first delivered. As Mr. Gordon Inglis, who writes on the Commonwealth universities, points out, "an annual endowment of £5,000 did not permit of any lavish expenditure," but if the pioneer professors were few they were fit, for they included such eminent authorities in their own spheres as Dr. Woolley (classics), Mr. M. B. Pell, senior wrangler of his year (mathematics), Dr. John Smith (chemistry and physics), and last, but not least, Dr. Charles Budham, who succeeded to the chair of classics when Dr. Woolley was drowned in the wreck of the London. Well was it for New South Wales and for Australia that they had such men to supervise their educational course in their infant years, for the standard of culture set by the senior university has been copied and consistently maintained by its analogues in other States.

When the university of Western Australia comes into existence under the Act already passed by the Legislature, there will be no State without its own centre of learning. It is not a little curious and significant that while the earlier universities took their names from the capital city where they were situated, the last three, those of Tasmania, Queensland, and Western Australia have a wider designation, their names being taken from the States themselves. These are or will be identified by their title with he entire community whose interests they serve, and whose social life they perceptibly influence. One and all they take in a great degree the color of their surroundings. Like the dyer's hand they are subdued more or less to what they work in, catering for local necessities, and preserving, as Mr. Inglis maintains, an "even mean" between utilitarianism and general culture. In one or two cases they have boldly taken as their model the Universities of Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Bristol, &c., where proficiency in the practical arts of life is the chief goal aimed at. Western Australia has for the present solved the much-vexed problem of the proper place of the classics in a university training by leaving them out of the first quartet of subjects for which professors will be appointed, and giving the preference to modern literature and history, mathematics and physics, chemistry, and engineering and mining. This does not mean that classics will not be taught, but only that the teaching will be done by lecturers. Mr. Inglis plainly shares Professor David's view that care is needed lest the universities should suffer in prestige through the "older courses" being shut out of sight, and through the institutions becoming "glorified technical schools." After all, a university is a place where the development of the mind should be regarded as an end as well as a means. The teaching of the utilitarian arts and sciences ought not to be neglected, and assuredly it is a reproach to the older universities of the United Kingdom that Lord Sherbrooke, one of the most famous classical scholars of his day, was left in his old age lamenting that he knew less of the sciences than a fourth-form schoolboy. On the other hand, it is the distinguishing mark of a university that it brings students who are engaged in specialist studies into the atmosphere of a wider culture, and is not content to send out men and women who know all about some scientific process without giving them a larger and more generous imagination.

And in the field of utilitarianism there are obvious limits to what may be accomplished by the best of universities. Although in New Zealand diplomas are granted in journalism, one may doubt whether it is possible to do very much in educating students for this profession. As stated by James Payn, the novelist, one qualification for a successful journalist is a "superficial omniscience," and that is precisely the point to which ordinary education is tending without any reference to journalism. A university may carry this education further than is done by the ordinary schools, but it will not do more than store the memory with multitudinous facts easily accessible to those who have at their command a fair reference library. The truth is that the literary faculty is something that may be trained, but cannot be manufactured, and the proper training ground for journalism is not a University, but journalism itself. There is nothing more certain than that there is a literary faculty, not necessarily or generally a high faculty, but one without which literary production is impossible. How many men are there in medicine, at the bar, in commerce, in private life, men of the highest intellect and the widest acquirements, who have every qualification that a "general education" can afford, yet could not, at an hour or two's notice, produce a readable column on a given topic? A University can no more endow a student with the faculty of writing a leading article than it can instruct him in the art of composing a sonnet, or of moving an audience to laughter or tears. It can provide the specialised training needed for a good many professions, but there are careers where success depends not so much on the memorising of facts as on some inherent capacity which only needs exercise for its due development. On the other hand, no mind ever existed which would not be broadened by the discipline which University training at its best is calculated to confer. It is a training for the whole of life—for the emotions as well as the intellect. For most men the practical side of existence measured by their anticipations is a failure. Against the tedium vitæ, which is the malaise of the age, and against which mere pecuniary success is no preservative, such a training is a prophylactic. We need a safeguard against the vulgarity which is enslaving us all, and, it may be added, against that atrophy of the æsthetic faculties which caused Herbert Spencer to nod in sheer boredom over a volume of Homer.

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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LECTURES.

Professor Henderson, giving evidence before the University Commission on Friday, was asked to give some information about the extension lecture scheme, of the board of which he was President. He said the movement was flourishing, and a great many people in Adelaide were interested in the lectures. At present he was giving some that were rather dull, yet he found he could fill a house a second time with them. He had been to the south-east during the last two years, and there found the interest in the movement growing. The audiences at Narracoorte, Mount Gambier, and Millicent were now—in the third year—larger than ever before. Requests from country districts for lectures were now so numerous that the staff was not able to comply with them all. It was very exhausting work, and it was impossible for a man to keep at it indefinitely when he had also his ordinary duties to perform. The professors did what they could, and had various groups, which they took in the holidays, as well as the lectures in the city. He thought the extension lectures in the country did much good. There were a lot of teachers in the rural districts, for instance, going on with routine work, and it was a considerable stimulus when such came in contact with persons perhaps a little on the ideal side. The Chairman (Mr. Ryan, M.P.), asked Professor Henderson whether he would approve a Government grant to enable free extension lectures to be provided. The witness replied that that was a debatable question. The Price Government had extended fr[ee] railway passes for the lecturers. He doubted whether more should be done, and that education be taken to people's doors and given to them without effort on their own part. If it were made free some in the country centres would regard the lectures as a sort of entertainment, and would not take the trouble to benefit by them that they would if they had to pay a small fee. He would approve a small sum being voted to the local governing bodies to help on the extension lectures, but the conditions should not be made easier than they ought to be in connection with the imparting of the instruction.

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A HISTORY OF AUSTRALIA.

Professor Henderson told the Education Commission on Friday that at Oxford and Cambridge there were schools of history which taught English and European history. Students were able to undertake historical research by means of the original State documents in mediæval Latin or the old Norman-French, and to write these. At the Adelaide University they had not got so far in honors as to enable the students to read documents in Old French. There ought to be research work here. They had in Adelaide original material, which would be the basis of a research into the history of the Commonwealth. The best of it was at Government House, and consisted of dispatches from the Governor to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, and from the Secretary of State to the Governor. These were now available to himself, but not to his picked students. He wanted to get those documents transferred to the Public Library, or some such institution, and there kept under close supervision in such a way that people recommended as bona-fide students should have access to them, due regard being paid to the necessity for preserving inviolate political matters, which should not be disclosed. Mr. Peake—"You want research with a view to the possible publication of a history of Australia?" Yes, but first for education. Research work was the best work the University did, for it developed faculties which were not developed to the same extent by other kinds of work. The students had to find and arrange their material, and then come to their own conclusions. For that reason he was anxious to get the school of history founded if possible.