

THE UNDERGRADUATE IDEA.

MR. CHAIRMAN, Ladies and Gentlemen,—I have chosen as the subject of my address this evening "The Undergraduate Idea," and I propose to treat it with special reference to existing conditions in our own University. The limited time at my disposal precludes any possibility of an exhaustive treatment of the subject, but I hope to introduce, and partially develop, two principles which I consider to be fundamental and of primary importance.

On matriculating we were led by instinct or the influences of environment to pursue a certain course of study here. We conceived the idea that a university was an institution, the primary idea in the existence of which was the dissemination of knowledge. We hoped to find in it all the facilities, the atmosphere and the inspiration necessary to the increase of our intellectual attainments.

We decided that our relation to the university would be that of students, who, by careful and persevering application to our work, would drink in abundance from this fountain-head of knowledge. We entertained fond hopes of standing high up in the class lists, and, it may be, the more ambitious of us dreamt of securing scholarships.

When we entered the University we immediately encountered conditions which we had not anticipated meeting. We soon discovered that our fellow-undergraduates were not wholly bent upon the preparation for lectures and the study of textbooks. The Hustle, the Undergraduate Union, the Gymnasium, the Literary Society, the Y.M.C.A. and the Class societies loomed up like new stars upon the horizon in most alarming proportions.

We would gladly enter into some or all of these organizations, but duty to our chosen course forbids. Then we are immediately met with the objection that work is not the chief end of our presence here; that the mere student, commonly known as the "plug," is a distorted and unnatural individual, generally looked upon with contempt. We are told that it is our business to engage in the various student activities and mix freely with our fellows as our first duty.

The question is an important one. In the past, our conduct, our work and its execution have been under the careful supervision of our teachers or instructors. Here we find none of that personal restraint. We are at liberty to choose our course and the earnestness with which we pursue it. In future, we are to be guided only by our aims and ideals.

Again here, as elsewhere, it is not so much a question of where we stand as the direction in which we are moving. We are in the plastic formative period of our lives. The habits of industry, attention to details, system, or those of idleness, careless and irregularity, formed during our undergraduate days will likely characterize our whole future career. What we are as undergraduates we are likely to be as graduates. We do not become new men at graduation. We cannot get away from ourselves. We stamp our own value upon ourselves, and we cannot hope to pass for more. The only success we may hope for in life is that which we are capable of making.

This is the first difficulty which we, as undergraduates, have to face. There are two diametrically opposite conceptions of the purpose of our presence here. The problem must be settled, and upon its settlement may depend our future success or failure. Are we to be students or are we to be men among men? I submit the true undergraduate idea incorporates both. We must be students. We must be men. We must be student-men.

We must be students. That is the end for which we are here. That is the reason of the very being of the university. It is to supply knowledge and increase our ability to secure further knowledge. Other purposes are incidental. The university may produce good athletes or good speakers, she must

produce good students. According to her ability to produce the latter her usefulness will be estimated. As J. S. Mill says, we do not measure a nation's progress by her increase in population, railway mileage, imports and exports, but by the stamp of men she produces. So the university will be judged, at least finally, not by her endowment, her increased enrollment or faculty, but by the stamp of students which she graduates. And we are not irresponsible, isolated, individual units. We are constituent parts of the whole. The University of Toronto will of necessity be weak or strong according to the average weakness or strength of her students.

It is also in the direction of being students that our special privileges lie. It is estimated that only three per cent. of the pupils of the public schools in this province ever attend the High schools. Of these probably not more than one in fifteen graduates from our universities. I am, then, well within the mark when I say that only about one in five hundred shares the sacred privilege which we, as undergraduates enjoy and often times, I fear, hold only too lightly. Or to put it in another way. If, during the year 1902-03, as is estimated, the fees amount to \$50,000, and the returns from investments amount to an equal sum, we should still need \$50,000 from the Government to give us a clear balance sheet. Thus, on this very materialistic basis, we pay only one-third of the cost of our education. As students we are a peculiarly privileged class. Others may have a wider sphere of social intercourse, a broader field of athletics or greater opportunities for the study of practical politics, but as students we have advantages over all others.

The country needs students for her development. Canada is on the wave of industrial prosperity so universal to-day. From Atlantic to Pacific there is a general need of men. The mines of British Columbia, New Ontario, Nova Scotia, the timber limits of British Columbia, New Ontario, New Brunswick, the vast agricultural resources of the great Northwest, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, the fisheries of British Columbia and the Maritime Provinces, the manufactures of Ontario, Quebec and Nova Scotia, are all calling for men. We need more railways, we need our water-ways deepened, our mines developed, our foreign trade extended. There is a splendid field for scientists, political economists, engineers, railway builders. Every church in the Dominion is under-manned. There never has been before such a call for men of energy, thought, initiation, resourcefulness, hopefulness in Canada as there is to-day. The call comes to us especially as students. We are asked to lead in this great work of nation-building. We too often speak of ourselves as boys of to-day who will be the men of to-morrow. We ought rather to consider ourselves as boys of yesterday, men of to-day, and as destined, if we but will, to be the leaders of to-morrow. The college man never commanded as high a premium as he does to-day. We must live up to the expectations of those who place confidence in us.

Moreover, the country needs students as such. When the early settlers came to this country they cleared a portion of the forest, built a house and cultivated sufficient land to satisfy their immediate needs. Then they turned their attention to their less material interests. They thought of a school and of a church. It is thus with a nation. She first concerns herself with material development, and then with the less sordid matters. Canada has, so far, been occupied with home-steading, lumbering, transportation, railway construction, confederation. I think she has now reached the stage when a number of her men can well afford to be students, to spend their lives in the furtherance of the higher branches of science, art, literature. We are only too prone to-day to think in terms of wireless telegraphy, the telephone, fast trains and stocks. We are in urgent need of students who will direct our thoughts into the higher and nobler channels of development, and save us from a sordid commercialism.

Here is a field practically untouched to-day. In geology and history practically no research has been made by Cana-