

The University President Turns

By K. M. H.

Apparently as the proverb observes it's a long University President who has no turning. Two of them do flops in current publications, Carleton Stanley of Dalhousie in the annual report of the Halifax institution and Robert Hutchins, president of Chicago University in the Yale Review.

President Stanley's observation is about dancing.

"I am convinced," he says, "that about one-third of our male students go to no dances whatever, and that the majority of them do not attend too many. It is the minority of our male students who can afford to go to dances, but unfortunately it is they who give the University its character in the minds of newspaper readers. It is almost the same with our women students. A certain difference arises from the lamentable fact that a few parents are possessed of the notion that Dalhousie University and Shirreff Hall exist in order that their daughters may acquire the social graces, and are actually pleased to hear that they have attended several dances a week. A few students of this kind are a demoralizing force. Imbued before they enter it, with the notion that college residence is a place of amusement, they are not easily amenable to other suggestions afterwards. Every experienced teacher knows that arduous mental discipline and frequent distractions of whatever kind are incompatible."

The President has a story about a brilliant young man who burned his candle at both ends—it made a lovely light, but oh my friends and oh my foes it did not last the night. Dr. Stanley doesn't put it that way. He says that "he suffered a physical crash in his final college year."

It may be different in Nova Scotia but our dark thought is that the moral of that tale for students we know is that he should have let up on his studies.

President Stanley sighs heavily for Chaucer's boy friend the one who

"was lever to have at his beddes heed,
Twenty bookes cladde with blacke or reed
Of Aristotle and his phylosophye
That robes ryche or fyddel or gay sautrye."

It seems that just nobody down at Dalhousie is setting about collecting twenty books, or any books, and the president and faculty feel keenly about it. Still it ought to be considered that in Chaucer's time there were no public and circulating libraries. If you didn't get in your own at your "Beddes heed" you were out of luck. At that the Dalhousie students may have acquired the odd book. Presidents and professors are sometimes the

last persons, even after parents, in knowing what the student treasures in the part of his mind that he preserves from examinations.

Dr. Hutchins' idea appears to be that it is about time the university quit worrying over the conduct of the students and concentrated on their mental development. "Universities," he depones, "have developed the idea in parents or parents have developed it in universities that the institution is in some way responsible for the moral, social, physical and intellectual welfare of the student. This is very nice for the parents; it is hard on the universities, for besides being expensive it deflects them from their main task, which is the advancement of knowledge.

Clearly a university ought to have a health service to protect it against epidemics. It ought to provide every facility for the student to participate in the advancement of knowledge, but sooner or later the university must take the position that the student should not be sent to the university unless he is independent and intelligent enough to go there. The university cannot undertake to give him character and intellectual interest. Parents whose children have neither should keep them at home or send them to another kind of institution. Whatever may be the responsibilities of a college, a university is not a custodial establishment or a church or a body building institute. If it were free to stop behaving as though it were it could effect substantial savings."

And it would effect substantial savings in the number of interviews in the dean's office. Also substantial savings in the printing of the lists of those who "passed" at least for the first year or so. But in the end it might be that the Dalhousian head and his brothers would find that a change had come over the outlook of the university. It may be that Dalhousie and other universities' minorities are as Dr. Stanley avers, getting too much

attention. At least it may be acknowledged that the dancing damsels and their escorts are getting considerably more thrill out of it if someone else, preferably the authorities, are doing the worrying, and even their complacent parents some way—again the responsibility of the authorities—expect that their children will secure a degree. Place the responsibility where it belongs and then perhaps the other two-thirds of the students will come into their own. The Dalhousian head and his brothers may then find that the reading of a book outside the curriculum requirements is not marked down as "odd" and that even intelligent discussion is possible. Human nature is like that, and whatever body of opinion may exist to the contrary students are human.

Yes.

The report declares the needs of the college library pressing also. "In some departments we seem to have added little or nothing at all in many years. We are not too strong anywhere but we are extremely weak in the classical authors of the various languages we teach, ancient and modern, in English literature, in history and philosophy."

"Many years ago it was said 'The true university is a collection of books.' Books indeed are the indispensable tools and the absence of a municipal library in Halifax makes our needs the more glaring," states the President's report.

The Public Health centre of the University is described in the Report as "a special burden."

"I have sometimes wondered," says Mr. Stanley, "whether it is sufficiently realized what an amount of good we are doing directly for the community in the Public Health Centre. No other university, so far as I know, attempts anything of the kind. The load we carry there is considerable and prevents our doing other things as well as we should."

"And so I venture here to call attention to the fact that the City of Kingston has recently given to Queen's University \$150,000. Kingston is about one-third the size of Halifax, or less. A proportional gift from Halifax to us would enable us to put the Public Health Centre on a good footing for all time to come, and would lighten our anxieties in many directions."

Does he know nothing of Toronto and of McGill?