

Special Papers.

UNIVERSITY EXTENSION AS THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE.

RICHARD G. MOULTON, A.M., of Cambridge University, England.

I DEFINE the root idea of "University Extension" in the following simple formula: University Education for the Whole Nation organized on a basis of Itinerant Teachers. The term "University" Extension has, no doubt, grown up from the circumstance that the movement in England was started and directed by the universities. This is not an essential feature of the movement. The London branch presents an example of a flourishing organization directed by a committee, though this acts in concert with three universities. I can conceive the new type apart from any university, only I should look upon this as a far more serious evil for the universities than for the popular movement.

But I use the term "university education" as distinguished from school education, being moulded to meet the wants of adults. It is distinguished from the technical training necessary for the higher handicrafts or for the learned professions. It is no doubt to the busy classes that the movement addresses itself. The foundation for University Extension is a change, subtle but clear, that may be seen to be coming over the attitude of the public mind to higher education, varying in intensity in different localities, but capable of being encouraged where it is least perceptible,—a change by which education is ceasing to be regarded as a thing proper to particular classes of society, or particular periods of life, and is coming to be recognized as one of the permanent interests of life, side by side with such universal interests as religion and politics. University Extension is the university of the busy.

My definition puts the hope of extending university education in this sense to the whole nation without exception. I am aware that, to some minds, such indiscriminate extension will seem like an educational communism, but in this, as in every other public benefit, that which each person draws from it must depend upon that which he brings to it.

The wide-reaching purpose of University Extension will seem visionary or practicable according to the conception formed of education, as to what in education is essential, and what accidental. If I am asked whether I think of shop-assistants, porters, factory-hands, miners, dock or agricultural laborers, women with families and constant home duties, as classes of people who can be turned into economists, physicists, literary critics, art connoisseurs,—I admit that I have no such idea. But I do believe, or rather, from my experience in England I know that all such classes can be *interested* in economic, scientific, literary and artistic questions. In education, the interest is the life. If a system of instruction gives discipline, method, and even originating power, without rousing a lasting love for the subject studied, the whole process is but a mental galvanism, generating a delusive activity

that ceases when the connection between instructor and pupil is broken off. If then it be conceded that the essence of education is to interest, does it not seem a soberly, practical purpose, that we should open up to the whole nation, without exception, an interest in intellectual pursuits?

I take my stand on the broad, moral ground, that every human being, from the highest to the lowest, has two sides to his life—his work and his leisure. To be without work in life is selfishness and sloth. To be without leisure is slavery. Once get society to recognize the duty of leisure, and there is immediately a scope for such institutions as University Extension that exist for the purpose of giving intellectual interests for such leisure time. No one has any difficulty in understanding that, in religious intercourse and experience, all classes stand upon an equality; and I have spoken of the foundation for the University Extension movement as being the growing recognition of education as a permanent, human interest, akin to religion. The experience of a few years has sufficiently demonstrated the possibility of arousing such interest: to make it universal is no more than a practical question of time, money and methods.

But, no doubt, when we come to *modus operandi*, the main difficulty of the movement is the diversity of the classes it seeks to approach. Opposite policies have been urged. Some have said: Whatever you do, you must never lower the standard. On the other hand, it has been urged: You must go first where you are most needed; be content with a makeshift education until the people are ready for something better. The movement has accepted neither of these policies, but has made a distinction between two elements of university training—method and curriculum. So far as method is concerned, we have considered that we are bound to be not less thorough, but more thorough, if possible, than the universities themselves, in proportion as our clients work under peculiar difficulties. But, in the matter of curriculum, we have felt it our first duty to be elastic, and to offer little or much as may in each case be desired. Accordingly, we have elaborated an educational unit—the three months' course of instruction in a single subject.

The key to the whole system is thus the unit course of three months' instruction in a single subject. The method of such a course is conveyed by the technical terms—lecture, syllabus, exercises, class. The lectures are addressed to audiences as miscellaneous as the congregation of a church, or the people in a street car; and it is the duty of the teacher to attract such miscellaneous audiences, as well as to hold and instruct them. Those who do nothing more than simply attend the lectures, will, at least, have gained the education of continuous interest; it is something to have one's attention kept upon the same subject for three months together. But it may be assumed that in every such audience there will be a nucleus of students, by which term we simply mean persons willing to do some work between one lecture and another. The lectures are delivered no oftener than once a week; for the idea is not that the lectures convey the actual instruction—

great part of which is better obtained from books, but the office of the lecture is to throw into prominence the salient points of the study, and rouse the hearers to read for themselves. The course of instruction is laid down in the syllabus—a document of perhaps thirty or forty pages, sold for a trifling sum; by referring for details to the pages of books, this pamphlet can be made to serve as a text-book for the whole course, making the teacher independent in his order of exposition of any other text-book. The syllabus assists the general audience in following the lectures without the distraction of taking notes, and guides the reading and thinking of the students during the week. The syllabus contains a set of "exercises" on each lecture. These exercises, unlike examination questions or "quizzes," are not tests of memory, but are intended to train the student to work for himself; they are thus to be done under the freest conditions—at home, with full leisure, and all possible access to books, notes, or help from other persons. The written answers are sent to the lecturer for marginal comment, and returned by him at the "class." This class is a second meeting for students and others, at which no formal lecture is given, but there is free talk on points suggested to the teacher by the exercises he has received: the usual experience is that it is more interesting than the lecture. This weekly routine of lecture, syllabus-reading, exercise and class goes on for a period of twelve weeks. There is then an "examination" in the work of the course held for students who desire to take it. Certificates are given by the University but it is an important arrangement that these certificates are awarded *jointly* on the result of the weekly exercises and the final examination.

The subjects treated have been determined by the demand. Literature stands at the head in popularity, history with economy is but little behind. All the physical sciences have been freely asked for. Art constitutes a department of work; but it is art-appreciation, not art-production; the movement has no function to train artists, but to make audiences and visitors to art-galleries more intelligent. It will be observed that the great study known as "Classics" is not mentioned in this list. But a considerable number of the courses in literature have been on subjects of Greek and Latin literature treated in English.

This University Extension method claims to be an advance on existing systems partly because under no circumstances does it ever give lectures unaccompanied by a regular plan of reading and exercises for students. These exercises moreover, are designed, not for mental drill, but for stimulus to original work. The association of students with a general audience is a gain to both parties. Many persons follow regularly the instruction of the class who have not participated in the exercises. Moreover, the students, by their connection with the popular audience, are saved from the academic bias which is the besetting sin of teachers: more human interest is drawn into the study. Study participated in by such diverse classes cannot but have an allroundness which is to teachers and students one of the main attractions of the movement.