

problems faced by all universities as they address themselves today to their increasingly heavy and difficult and vital task.

To those who, like myself, received their education a generation or so ago, the modern university seems to be alarmingly given to short cuts. There is, of course, the "college text", handsomely but sturdily bound, lavishly illustrated, scrupulously headed and sub-headed. It is too often, I am told, high in price, mediocre in style, poor and even inaccurate in matter. In addition to these works of dubious merit, the student may be offered anthologies and abstracts, the newest commentary on the philosopher, dramatist or poet. There seems to be a constant tendency to substitute the book review for the book, the critic for the author. I do not believe that this is a vice exclusive to North America, but I do know that our English friends have some rather penetrating things to say of us. This for instance:

"..... literary criticism is elevated above its subject matter. Critics themselves are being discussed and their works published in weighty American anthologies ..... The college boy in Indiana and Minnesota, satchel of these in hand, creeps more unwillingly to school than ever before. He is fed on 'Elegant Extracts'. They tell him how, not what, he must read to be saved. Their directions unhappily show a narrow but not a straight way. They lack a definite standpoint and a common ground, become murky in a torrent of various doctrines."

I am relieved to observe that it is Minnesota and Indiana, not Alberta and Manitoba that are in question, but I am forced to ask myself whether we in Canada are saved from these strictures by the purity of our education, or only by its relative obscurity. There can be no doubt at all of what comes of such practices. They can lead only to ignorance of fact and superficiality of understanding; to a scorn of precise scholarship and to the inability to exercise a truly critical faculty; to a love of vague abstractions and a complete inability to relate acquired knowledge to experience.

How, indeed, can anyone learn truly to love the great places in literature when, instead of being left to observe them for himself as he plods steadily along the quiet ways, he is rapidly whirled from this one to the next, and on and on until the end of the "course". It may save much time to give him the best of Aristotle or of Plato, of Moliere or of Shakespeare. He may have "covered" them completely enough; but he has been deprived of the pleasure, of the interest and of the discipline of gathering his own fruit.

It is worthy of notice that many of this generation, fed on text books, on anthologies and on abstracts, cannot read. Neither can they write. I have heard of a young man in the class-room of a great university - not in Canada - who was asked to write an essay as the basis of discussion at the next meeting of the class. He said, "I am sorry but I can't." "Why not?" asked the professor. Then came the reply, "I'm non-verbal". It is strange that in an age when we hear