

Now it can scarcely have failed to strike the student of these signs of the times to how small an extent our Canadian thinking has been affected. The great waves raised by these cross currents of thought on the other side of the Atlantic dwindle to the merest ripples before reaching our shores. Whether we take platform, or pulpit, or press, for our tests, the feebleness of the thrill with which the Canadian mind responds to the electric flashes of higher thought from older lands, would seem to indicate a comparatively low degree of intellectual vitality.

We turn for a moment to view the question in another aspect. Brain power is a thing of culture. The native mental energy must be developed and stimulated by vigorous and continued training before it can rise to the height of lofty arguments and far-reaching issues. And this higher mental culture must have breadth or extent of surface, no less than depth. In other words, the *number* of those enjoying it is a factor of no less importance in the intellectual product than the thoroughness of the culture itself. May not this truth be liable to be sometimes overlooked when we are disposed to point with complacent pride to the high *status* of our Provincial University, with its one College? No matter how able the Professors, how extended the curriculum, how rigid the examinations, so long as but a very small fraction of the population are able or disposed to avail themselves of the advantages offered, the intellectual standing of the people, as a whole, can never reach a very high grade. (Other things being equal, it is clear that the greater the number of those in any country who receive a broad culture the higher will be the average of its scholarship, the wider the diffusion of high intelligence, and the greater the probabilities of cases of individual pre-eminence.)

We had proposed to collect for this article statistics to show the number of Graduates in Arts from the various Universities of the Dominion, and especially of Ontario, during the last five or six years. But further reflection convinced us that such a table would afford no reliable basis for an estimate of the state of higher education amongst us. Its value for practical purposes would be rendered about *nil* by two facts, viz.: the broad and manifest difference on the one hand in the value of the degrees themselves,

according to the mode of bestowal and the amount of real mental training represented; and, on the other, the existence here and there throughout the land of colleges, neither possessing nor desiring the power of conferring degrees, whose work, nevertheless, falls in extent but little, and in thoroughness not at all, below that of the smaller denominational Universities. But we think most of those who have given attention to the subject will, on a survey of the whole ground, be ready to admit, without statistical verification, that the percentage of our young men at present receiving a really liberal and thorough mental culture is not such as to assure us of Canada's early admission into the first rank of nations, as classified on the basis of intellectual development. Especially will this appear when it is borne in mind how many of those who do pass, partially or wholly, through our University courses belong either to the class of those who are reading solely with a view to some chosen profession, or that of those who, without any genuine love of culture or of knowledge for its own sake, are merely "cramming" under the stimulus of some prospective prize. Both of which classes will, as a rule, stop short in the pursuit of liberal culture as soon as the special end has been attained. Of course we do not deny that both these classes of students are numerous in every country, but we fear that, in the hurry and bustle of this western world, the temptations to rush prematurely into active life are greatly strengthened. And this suggests a kindred fact which seems to us to go far towards justifying the fear that the foundations of our future intellectual life are not being laid sufficiently broad and deep. We view with alarm the facilities afforded for short cuts into what are termed the learned professions, and the numbers of our young men who are but too glad to avail themselves of those facilities. Take for instance the medical profession. Whether we regard the vast range of the field of study and the subtle and intricate nature of the phenomena it presents, or the weighty responsibilities resting upon the practitioner in view of all the solemn interests at stake, we should say that here at least is a temple of science whose doors must be forever barred against ignorance and superficiality. And yet which of us has not been time and again startled, on meeting some one whom we may have