

* Special Papers. *

A PLEA FOR HIGHER EDUCATION.

WE do not think we can do better for our readers in this department than to give them the latter half of Sir Daniel Wilson's eloquent address at the annual Convocation of Toronto University. Having given an interesting and encouraging history of the benefactions which the University has received during the year from liberal and sympathetic institutions, firms and individuals in almost all parts of the world, and having glanced at the still existing needs of the university, the eloquent President refers to the Educational requirements of our young Dominion, "only now entering on the occupation of the vast territory out of which is to be fashioned a greater Britain, worthy of the Motherland through whom its title is derived" and proceeds:

How much yet remains for us to do in the very initial stage of development is shown by the conclusion arrived at by Dr. George Dawson, after years of exploration, that there is still an area of fully five hundred thousand square miles east of the Mackenzie river, lying within the line of the great fertile belt, of which as yet we know less than of the interior of Africa. The teeming populations of the Old World look with longing eyes to this land of promise, with its millions of acres needing only willing hands to make them yield golden harvests. The student of history turns with eager expectancy from ransacking the buried records of decayed monarchies to survey a virgin continent on which the British colonist has already sketched out prospective States—the Saskatchewan, the Alberta, the Keewatin, the Assiniboia and the Athabaska—of the twentieth century. It is on those who are now in training in our universities, and being equipped and armed by high culture and wise discipline for the work that lies before them, that, in no small degree, it will depend whether or not the sanguine dream of the philosophic idealist shall be realized, and—

There shall be sung another golden age,
The rise of Empire and of Arts:
Inspiring history's illumined page
By wisest heads and noblest hearts.

The opening up of this vast wilderness as a new centre of civilization gives a practical significance to the widening of the intellectual horizon and the expansion of knowledge in so many unlooked for aspects. In whatever light we view it, the practical importance of higher education, as a grand factor in material progress, becomes ever more apparent, and the economic value of applied science is already so universally appreciated that scarcely any limit can be set to the demands for ampler services. And while we are looking with sanguine eagerness on this birth-time of our own Western domain, the old East is waking up to a new life, and testifies its sympathy in the trials of our own university. Europe and America are paying back their debt to the birth lands of letters and civilization. Schools and colleges are being planted in British India, and letters and science receive a hearty encouragement in Japan, at the very time

when the recovered tablets and inscriptions of Babylonia and Egypt disclose evidences of an Eastern civilization dating fifteen centuries before the Christian era, and startle us by their novel elucidations of sacred and profane history.

But while the East is brightening with a new dawn, and the Old World seems everywhere awakening to a sense of the practical value of intellectual culture, even in its most recondite aspects, it is with a sense of amused wonder that our attention is challenged by a sudden outbreak of disparagement of higher education from sundry very dissimilar quarters. Man has once more plucked of the Tree of Knowledge, and it proves, as of old, to bear both good and evil fruit. Knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers, and instead of fostering it till it attains its later fruitage, not only crafty statesmen and selfish speculators, eager in the pursuit of gain, denounce the popularization of education; but some, whose own example is the best evidence of its worth, are found preaching a gospel of ignorance as the panacea for the age. The Czar of Russia is credited with the assertion that education lies at the root of Nihilism and all its attendant troubles. Bismarck, we are assured, traces the industrial discontent and the world-wide social revolts of which Germany has its full share, to the same source; and high ecclesiastical authorities greet with like monitory warnings the ever-widening diffusion of knowledge. That an outcry against the mischievous diffusion of knowledge should reach us from Russia, and find a sympathetic echo in the breast of Germany's astute and imperious ex-Chancellor, need not surprise us. But it is impossible to see without regret a tendency among our own intelligent working classes to regard with jealousy and disfavor anything beyond the Public school work, as though High schools and colleges were designed solely for a privileged caste, and not for the people. Even in our Legislative Assembly the sentiment has found its advocates, while traders and speculators join in a common wail over the diversion of the rising generation from industrial pursuits. Our forests are in danger of being neglected by the lumbermen, the plow of rusting in the weedy furrow, and the counting-house and store of being deserted, while our young men overstock the professions, and waste a profitless life in genteel penury. If such is really the case it may be safely left to work its own cure. Poverty has no special charms, even though it claim a doctor's title or hide its threadbare garments under a barrister's gown. But is it really so? When the Act in 1853 established the university on its present basis the population of Toronto amounted to about 40,000; now it is reckoned at upwards of 150,000 souls. It is surely a natural result of this, with its accompanying increase of wealth and extension of professional openings, that students should come in greater numbers to our halls.

We have, I trust, as Canadians, some higher aim than to be the mere lumberers, wheat-growers and pork-packers for the world. But are the forests meantime abandoned to unproductive waste, or our fields left untilled? It is true that students, counted by dozens within my earlier

experience, are now reckoned by hundreds, but the same period has witnessed the growth of towns along the shores of Lake Superior, and in the great wilderness beyond, where in the same earlier years I have camped out among wild Ojibways, and more frequently seen the bear and the muskrat than even the red Indian. Still more, on the prairies of the North-West, where herds of buffalo then roamed at will, and only the Hudson Bay trapper interfered with the Cree and Blackfoot savage, the Province of Manitoba, with its fertile farms and industrious settlers has already one million fourteen thousand acres under cultivation, with a yield of wheat for the present season estimated at 20,000,000 bushels. The wilderness thus reclaimed to the service of civilization has been, in a large degree, the work of our own farmers' sons, who have deserted the older farm lands of Ontario, not to plough the classic field, not in search of easy professional gains, but solely from the greater attractions of the virgin soil of the prairies.

No delusion can be greater than the assumption that the highest intellectual culture is inimical to trade and commercial enterprise. The Florence of the middle ages, the city of Dante and Giotto, of Boccaccio, Michael Angelo and Galileo, was the centre of trading industry and wealth when Sheffield and Birmingham were rustic hamlets, and Lincolnshire and Yorkshire were mere grazing farm lands. Edward III. owed to the bankers of Florence the means of equipping the yeomen who conquered at Cressy and Poitiers; and when Italian art and letters degenerated with her loss of freedom, trade followed them to other centres beyond the Alps. Antwerp, the later hive of European industry, whence the raw wools of England were returned to her from the loom, and where the great annual fairs attracted merchants from all lands, was also the home of Gruter and Ortelius, of Rubens, Vandyke and Teniers, and Quentin Massys, the blacksmith of Antwerp, ranks among the most prized artists of the Low Countries. These are but examples of the general law. He must have read history to little purpose who has yet to learn that commerce and manufactures have in all ages found their common centres with arts and letters. The cartoons of Raphael are the products of his genius enlisted in the service of the loom, and England's famous Wedgewood ware owed its worth to the same artistic skill that gave the charm to Flaxman's Homer.

It would be a wasteful employment of exceptional energy to systematically divert men of such capacity into the ordinary work of trade. But it is the dilettante and the poetaster, not the man of true genius, to whom such work is impossible. Chaucer was entrusted with the negotiation of a commercial treaty with Genoa, and subsequently appointed Comptroller of the Customs in the port of London. Milton was the Latin Secretary of the Commonwealth and the defender of its policy against all assailants. Newton filled the office of Master of the Mint. Among England's successful bankers are the poet Rogers, author of "The Pleasures of Memory"; Grote, the eminent scholar and historian;