

Retrospectus.

By J. BRACKEN.



FROM the broad acres of Western Canada's prairie land and the problems that face a population whose one and staple industry is wheat-growing, I am asked to transport my thoughts for a short time back into the past, to the happiest time of a student's life, his college days, and as one who belongs to that ever-increasing number of ex-students to send forth a message to those who are now passing through this "setting" period of character formation. In the "light of the after glow" we gain a perspective view of college life that perhaps the actual participant, being engaged in the activities thereof, fails to comprehend to the fullest extent. It is with a view to further the appreciation of college life by college men that these few thoughts are written.

A calm review of the lives of college men is but a confirmation of the opinion that the foundation of character, while probably shaped in the mould of earlier environment, is, during the two or three or four years of college life, either strengthened for a superstructure of future usefulness or weakened so that the tower of later possible achievement rests but insecurely on an unsound base. If these are facts, then we are justified in looking deeper and analyzing the complex influences that result in such extremes of life characteristics.

Generally speaking, the influences that affect the life of a college man are four in number. 1st. The influence of early training. 2nd. The influence of college friends. 3rd. The influence of college discipline. 4th. The influence of student organizations. With all of these the student is continually in contact, and according as their standard is elevated or lowered, so is the character of the man affected, since "heredity and environment alone are responsible for the sum total of a man's character."

"As the twig is bent the tree inclines," and the early environment and training of the young man is never of so much consequence as during the first few weeks of his college course. It is then his future friends are chosen; then the training of early youth tested; then the fortification of principles bombarded; and it is then also that the paths leading to truest and most honorable success—hitherto broad, open, free—converge only to subsequently divide and subdivide, each way leading to a destination, the character of which can best be judged as in inverse ratio to the ease which it offers the traveller. How important that start; how important that early training which alone assists the young man in this important decision.

But having entered college, the surroundings of previous influences are cast off, the man stands on his own resources of sound judgment, stripped