

# THE VARSITY

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## Editorial Comments.

### "UNIVERSITY EXTENSION."



HIS is the name given to a scheme which proposes to impart something of what is known as higher education to people who have not been able to attend a university. Any plan which would really arouse and improve the thinking capacity of this large class must be hailed with delight by every Canadian. All are agreed as

to the value of higher education and of the wisdom of spreading it as widely as possible. Work purporting to accomplish this has been done in England. This fact seems to be a reason for calling the movement among us by the English name. It would seem unwise in us, however, to slavishly follow their methods of work and organization. The name has, indeed, been adopted in the United States, but there is as yet no experience in that country worth consulting as to the permanent value of the plan. Any work in the United States under this name is still confined to the neighborhood of Philadelphia, and has only a year's history. Of course work more or less closely corresponding to what is proposed by the University Extension movement has been done in both Canada and the United States under other names. An association has now been formed in Canada, under this English name, for the purpose of organizing, directing and controlling this work throughout the Dominion.

We, especially in Ontario, have formed the weak and vicious habit of hurrying into our country an imitation of every new bit of legislation and every new institution that national calamity, mistake or circumstance has rendered necessary in England or the United States. We should more fully consider our own circumstances before we so eagerly adopt mere tentative movements. Perhaps in no other phase of the life of the two countries is there a wider divergence than between the conditions which now exist in Canada and those which have given this movement its present shape in England. An almost impassable gulf separates the ordinary English citizen from the advantages of a university training. In England university students are drawn almost entirely from the wealthier classes. The ambitious young man without money is practically debarred from the university, whatever his ability may be. Not only are the opportunities for such a young man to earn and save within a reasonable time enough to defray his university expenses very few, but the expense itself is much greater in England than in Canada.

There, it is extremely difficult to give the university anything of a national character. The rich do not wish the university to be made common, while the poor, not realizing their own interests, are willing to "let those who enjoy the advantages pay for them." Indeed, in the whole

matter of education the English are individualistic. Even the public school has not yet fully established itself in the minds of the people. The private school where each pays his own tuition appears more just to the mind of the average Englishman, and it does seem to give more opportunity for a parent to choose the company into which his child shall be thrown. The majority of those who obtain a university education look upon it as one of the accomplishments of a gentleman rather than as an asset ensuring greater efficiency, and therefore greater income, in professional life. The ordinary English graduate has not "invested" in a university training with a view to securing an income from teaching or from other professional pursuits. His education is a luxury for himself and his social class, unless perchance he enter the political arena.

From these various circumstances it comes about that, first, only a very small part of the training obtained in universities reacts to any considerable extent upon the mass of the English people. The majority of the graduates do not go forth to employ their talents and training in the education of the people in any direct way; second, there is a large number of people practically debarred from the universities who are desirous of obtaining higher education, and who have the mental endowments requisite for obtaining it; third, there is a large number of university teachers and graduates available for carrying on courses of lectures outside the university. Further, English universities are wealthy. They have a sufficient number of teachers, are fully equipped with libraries, apparatus and endowments to enable competent men to pursue original research and thereby keep English thought abreast of the age. With plenty of teachers and endowed Fellows there is always a certain number who have inclination and leisure to do some University Extension work.

Nor must it be forgotten that the government funds now supporting the University Extension scheme in England have been obtained by mere accident. Mr. Goschen set apart in the estimates a large sum of money to compensate liquor dealers for losses from withdrawal of licenses. The temperance people objected so strongly to this proposal that as a result the money was handed over to the county councils for the purpose of supporting technical education, and through the political influence of the advocates of University Extension the money has been obtained by them.

Now turning to our circumstances in Canada. In every important particular they are different. We have no rich universities. Our libraries are too small; our teachers too few; our endowments as yet afford no encouragement or assistance in doing original work. Our best men are yearly obliged to go elsewhere for more advanced training. Indeed, as yet our lack of means has prevented us attempting ideal university work. While our centre of