

# Through a Monocle

## Universities Should be Free

**V**ARSITY wants more money, I notice. It should get it. When McGill was pushing its campaign for funds, a few years ago, I was of the same opinion. There are mighty few ways in which a community can invest money with a surer hope of dividends than in education—and this applies to higher as well as to the commoner branches of education. Everybody will agree with this theory as applied to the common school; but there are some who boggle over it when applied to the university. That is because of a mistaken belief that the university is a luxury of the well-to-do. It is nothing of the sort. It is a door of opportunity for the ambitious and the determined and the plucky and the industrious. It is of far greater value, indeed, to the poor than to the rich. Without it, the sons of the poor might never get an opportunity; while the sons of the rich would have their flying-start in life in any case. Moreover, the sons of the poor almost always make far better use of it. Many a rich boy finds his ruin in the university. That is not the fault of the college, but usually of the parent who loves the ostentation of giving his son more money than is good for him.

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**M**ANY of the men whom I knew when in college were working their own way through. Rich? They hadn't a penny that they didn't earn in vacation-time. It was not wealth that brought them to college, but courage and determination. What they would have done, if there had been no college to go to, I can only conjecture. Undoubtedly, young men with such good stuff in them would have emerged somewhere. I am not a prig who holds that a college education is a necessity to a good man. But every good man I have ever talked with asserts that it is a great help. The open-door of the university offers to many a young fellow the only way of escape from an otherwise sordid life of drudgery,

so that he has the driving-power to get himself through college, but he lacks the genius to make his way in life without a college training.

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**O**NE of the alternatives suggested in lieu of getting more funds for 'Varsity, is to raise the fees. That would be a crime. What should be done, indeed, is to abolish all fees. There is no reason in the world why a provincial university like 'Varsity should not be absolutely free to all-comers. The great University of the Sorbonne, in Paris, is free—not only to all Frenchmen—but to all foreigners. You, who are reading these lines, can go to Paris and enter your names for the free courses in the Sorbonne, where you will hear lectures by the first professors in France on all the subjects of a university course. Neither poverty nor race nor age is any bar. Some of the more popular academic lectures in this splendid university are crowded to the doors—a tribute alike to the generosity of the French nation and the appetite for knowledge of the French people.

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**T**HE continental universities are not much bothered by the "prankishness" of our college population this side of the water. They are far too serious. Life is too much of a struggle over there—competition is too severe—the rare opportunities of college training too highly esteemed. A Harvard professor, who "exchanged" with a professor of the Sorbonne, was amazed at the wonderful earnestness of the students he taught. After lecture, it was the customary thing for many of them to follow him to his quarters to ask him questions about his lecture and to eagerly discuss anything novel he had said. His experience in Harvard had never given him a parallel to this. We will get this spirit in our colleges when our economic conditions out here tighten up a bit; but one step toward it, which might be taken at once, would be to abolish fees and throw the doors open wide to the "climbers" among out

young people. It is the gilded student, who looks upon his college course as a sort of decently disguised holiday, who indulges in "pranks" and is willing to risk being "sent down."

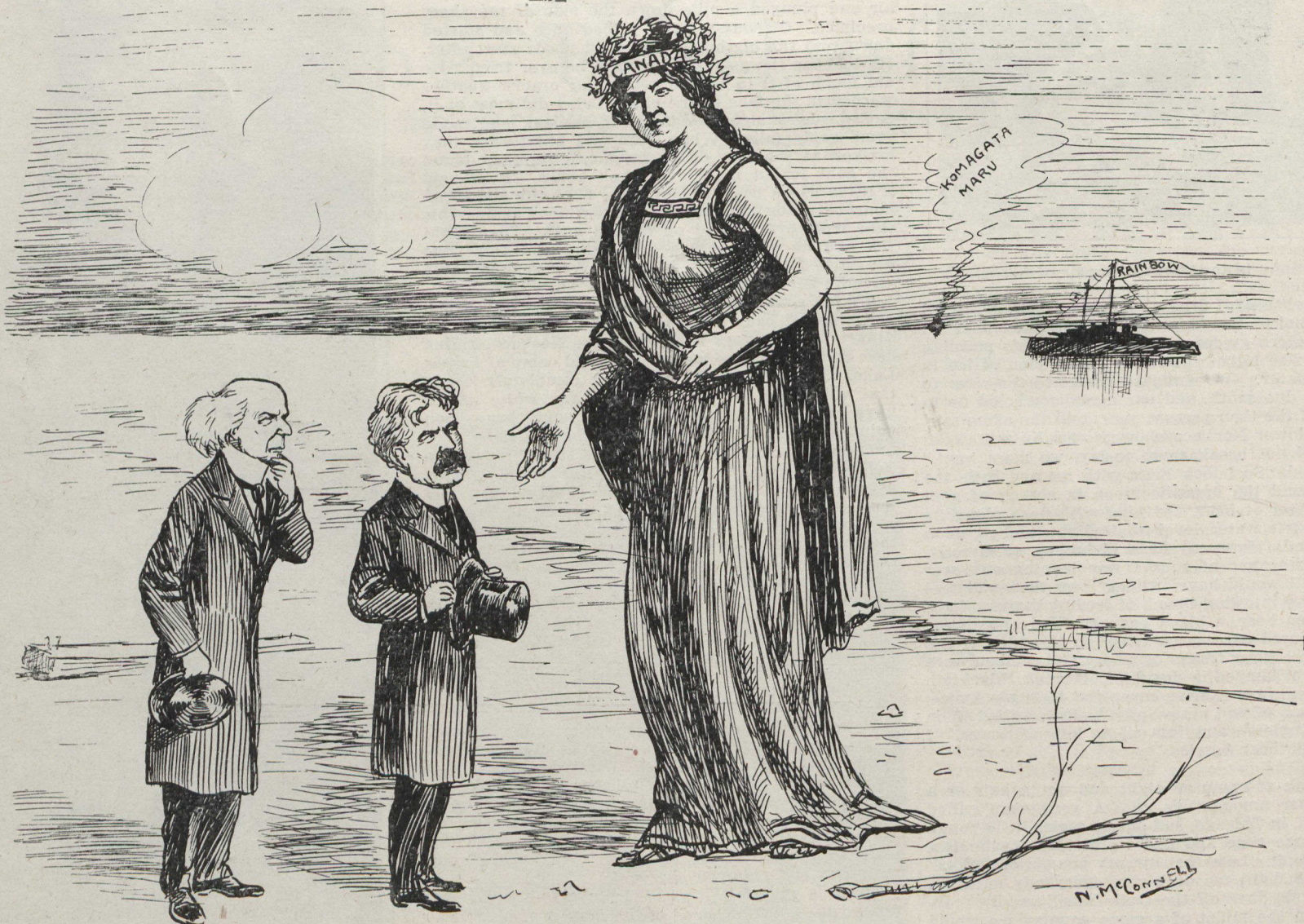
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**T**O abolish all fees and make the universities free would be to increase the proportion of serious students attending them—and to help create a public opinion within the student body which would frown successfully upon "prankishness." I would be in favour myself of a public fund to assist students from outside municipalities to pay their board and other expenses incidental to living in a university city and attending lectures. I dare say that communal common-sense will not go that far for some time; but we can at least make a beginning by throwing open the doors of our colleges to all-comers in the fine French fashion. To say that those who want a university education should pay for it, is to say that the poor boy usually must do without it; and that is neither democratic, patriotic nor decently just. It is not the poor boy's fault that his parents are poor. He did not choose them. He might have elected to be born in the Rockefeller household if he had been consulted. But he was pitch-forked into his "station in life"—exasperating and blasphemous words—without his consent.

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**M**OREOVER, the lack of qualities which has kept his parents poor is very likely to be bequeathed to him, as a sort of negative legacy. If there be anything in heredity, he ought to start life under a handicap. It is true that the assinine policy of most rich men toward their sons tends to overcome this handicap—or, rather, to neutralize it with a far deadlier handicap on the "poor rich boy." But the fact remains that, so far as nature goes, the poor boy is likely to be in more real need of the artificial help of a college course than the rich boy; and consequently, if there be anything in the brotherhood of man, he ought to get it. In the family, we do not starve the lean child and stuff the fat one. Why should we do it deliberately, as a matter of settled policy, in the human family? Let us keep before us, as a desirable goal, a free university and a public scholarship fund for all poor lads who need it.

THE MONOCLE MAN.



## A POLICE CRUISER

MISS CANADA (AS THE RAINBOW ESCORTS THE SIKHS BEYOND THE 3-MILE LIMIT):—"WHILE OUR NAVAL PROGRAMME IS PENDING, WOULDN'T IT BE ADVISABLE TO KEEP THE POLICEMAN STEADY ON THE JOB?"