

momentary excitement was caused by the publication of a letter in one of the leading New York dailies. The writer of this letter gave a copy of the correspondence between his little boy of twelve years old, who wrote at his dictation, and a number of the different universities. The boy wrote saying that he had received very little education; he knew how to read and write, had read a little history and could work simple lessons in arithmetic; he wanted to know if he could pass his matriculation examination, and desired to be informed as to what chances he had of obtaining a degree. All the answers were encouraging, one especially, which, quoting from memory, read as follows: "Come right along. No one has ever come to us and failed to take a degree."

Perhaps things have changed since then, but from an educated American we learn that, roughly speaking, the main characteristics of American education are the attention given to a showy curriculum rather than to the training of the mind, cramming and a lamentable want of thoroughness. This is, perhaps, the natural peculiarity of a new and essentially democratic country where money has been made easily in the past. The general haste to become rich and make a display begets an impatience of early arduous training and a haste to appear learned as a stepping-stone to wealth.

Both in Canada and the United States there are signs that in educational matters we are gradually approaching a crisis. In both countries education is used as a direct means of making a living. Cheap education has overstocked the market. In both countries the people freely express the opinion that the educational system is top-heavy. There are but few positions in either country offering a career and an immediate livelihood, such as are to be obtained in England, in the army and different branches of the civil service, for which the selection depends upon a competitive examination. Cramming in that case is, perhaps, under the circumstances, excusable, but in this country the time has now come when the market value of education depends, like the value of a writing, or a speech, upon what remains—in other words, upon the training and development of the mind in its three great functions, absorption, reflection and retention. Degrees are at a discount.

Turning our attention to our own public educational system, it will be admitted that the keystone of the whole of the higher education of the country is the entrance examination of the University. This sets the tone to the studies of the High School, and upon the thoroughness of the knowledge and the mental habits acquired in the High School, inasmuch as the training obtained there must compose the foundation for the higher structure, must depend, to a great extent, the value, from an educational point of view, of the whole teaching of the University.

Of the searching and thorough character of the examination we cannot speak from experience, but the feeling is prevalent that, with the object of feeding the University, which already turns out more graduates than the country can absorb, the matriculation examination, the great sifting process, which decides the course of young men's lives, is lower in its requirements, less thorough and less searching than it ought to be. If this is true it is a serious matter, for the University is supported by public money, and the people are taxed not for the benefit of the University or the educational system, but for the public good.

Without going further into detail, let us turn to the curriculum of Toronto University. Here a striking feature in the entrance examination strikes the eye, viz., set books. This is thought by many to be a strong incentive to the great evil of cramming. In acquiring a temporary knowledge of the book the pupil remains ignorant of the subject, the knowledge of which the study of the book is supposed to impart. Upon enquiry we find that cramming is very prevalent in our High Schools, and that this evil is further fostered by the fact that not only the salary and standing of the teachers, but also the Government grant to the school is made to depend upon the successful examinations of leaving pupils rather than the average training of the school. Harvard University, some few years ago, was a notorious sinner in respect to its matriculation examination. Not only did they have set books, but the extent of the matter prescribed was greater than was required to obtain a degree at Oxford. The examination was a farce. Now, we are glad to see the evil of set books and a showy appearance is, to a great extent, eliminated from their curriculum. The absence of set books

naturally presupposes time for previous study and good teaching. This characteristic of the University matriculation examination may be due to the fact that the studies of the High Schools, as intimated by the Minister of Education, are conducted chiefly in the interests of embryo Public School teachers, for whom the study of Latin and Greek are not as yet required.

Democracy and pot-house politics appear to be inseparable. That politics should sway municipal elections is a pity, but it is one of those evils which we have to put up with. That the appointment of the teachers of our children should depend upon anything but merit is an outrage which ought to be stopped and upon which the taxpayer should firmly plant his foot. The selection of a teacher, above all things, should be kept inviolate from every consideration save that of character and ability. In this every parent is interested.

Under the Ontario educational system the teachers of our Public Schools and High Schools are appointed by the School Trustees. The School Trustees are elected, in the same manner as the Municipal Councillors, by the taxpayers. A candidate for either office must curry favour not only with local party politicians, but societies and churches, for of late years some churches have developed largely as mutual benefit societies. It is only natural that the trustees, who look for re-election, when called upon to make an appointment, should be faithful to the party, society, or church, to whom they owe their election, and merit sometimes goes to the wall.

To the writer's knowledge improper appointments have been made in this way and good men have been passed over. The parents grumble in private, but, in public, hold their tongues. There is no redress, and what's the good of making enemies? Well! granted that all this is true, where is the remedy? Teachers must be appointed by somebody. To place the duty of selection upon the shoulders of the Minister of Education would be to cover him with embarrassment. For is he not a politician? and besides he has not the same opportunity nor indeed the time to investigate the merits of every applicant for a teacher's position in the Province. It is evident that the selection and nomination of teachers most conveniently lies with the trustees. What is wanted is some restraining influence to prevent an abuse of the trust reposed in them. This, we submit, could effectively be provided by having the final appointment made by the Minister. Such an arrangement would afford an opportunity for the taxpayer and parent to enter a protest in the event of an improper appointment being made. Upon receipt of such protest, it would be the duty of the Minister of Education to investigate the merits of each applicant, taking into special consideration the personnel of the Board of Trustees and the testimonials of other applicants.

Perhaps no better example of the spirit of young democracy can be cited than the astonishing rebellion of the students of Toronto University, when they attempted to dictate in the matter of the selection of professors, and boycotted the class-rooms to enforce their wishes. The Dean of Westminster was sharply criticized by the London papers, when, as Master of University College, Oxford, he sent the whole college down on account of a flagrant breach of discipline. But even this extreme measure in the interests of order and discipline is to be preferred to the spectacle of the presentation of a petition to the Government by the students for an investigation of their claims, which was only refused, because they failed to serve particulars of their ground of complaint, and finally a public examination ordered by the Government, at the request of the President of the University, as the only means of clearing the public mind, with the University authorities and students represented by opposing counsel. Professor Goldwin Smith, who was called in in consultation after the investigation, well pointed out the evil of making the University Council subject to appeal and subservient to the Provincial Government. If a strong hand is necessary occasionally to enforce discipline in a University, where all undergraduates who are not scholars are received upon sufferance, much more is a Faculty or President invested with full authority, required in a University, supported by and answerable to a Government which, again, is supported by the votes and contributions of the parents of students drawn from every class of society.

On the absence of religion, which Mr. S. H. Blake so happily terms the fourth R., much has been said and written