

✻ ASSOCIATE EDITORIALS. ✻

COLLEGE CURRICULA.

IN an age of such rapid material advancement and marked progress in the development of human thought in all its departments it becomes every one interested in the progress of our race to enquire whether the fountains of truth, the treasuries of knowledge, are sufficiently easy of access to the race as a whole. Universities, the repositories and exponents of human thought in its highest form, have a special function to perform in the development of national character. With them rest the privilege and duty of determining how variously and how deeply the educated of the people shall have drunk at the fountains of knowledge. A nation's intelligence cannot be estimated by the intelligence of a few individuals in it, but rather by the intelligence of the masses. Any measure, therefore, which encourages and tends to secure a more general diffusion of knowledge is in the interests of the race. It is a trite saying that the stream will not rise above its head. No more will the stream of intelligence rise above its source. The intelligence of the parents of any given generation will never rise above that of the children of the preceding generation. The mental development of children is in turn limited by that of their teachers, and that in turn by public educators, so that ultimately the limit is fixed by the degree-conferring bodies of the nation. This is a truth so evident that we should be all the more surprised at finding it not generally acknowledged, at least in action. Is it not a fact that, though wealth is far more generally diffused than formerly, though the means of education are now practically within the reach of every person, and every facility for acquiring a more complete and extended knowledge is supplied, yet the main result has been the shortening of the educating process rather than a more perfect development of it? At present the principle of the division of labor is so rigorously applied in all large educational establishments, and the demand for specialists is in consequence so urgent, that a man of diverse attainments in the realm of knowledge is almost a relic of the past. With specialists we have no fault to find; we will gladly welcome more of them. We hope for the time when every teacher, at least, will be a specialist. What we have to criticise is the fact that depth has been obtained at the expense of breadth. The curricula of our Universities are being more and more framed on special lines, while the common basis of knowledge is being correspondingly narrowed. Our increased educational facilities have not given us more fully developed minds, but minds more fully developed in one direction. While the fountains and facilities for drinking have been increasing men have been more and more tending to sip from a few in order that they may drink more deeply from one.

In the early history of our country college, curricula were framed largely to suit the exigencies of the times;

but we believe the time has come when our Universities, if they would continue to exercise their proper influence, must make a decided step in advance and demand from their graduates a higher form of culture. They must no longer sacrifice breadth of knowledge in order to gain depth, but must seek to utilize the improved educational facilities of the nation in securing greater breadth combined with depth. How is this object to be attained? There are two methods usually suggested: First, to raise the standard of matriculation; second, to add on a post-graduate course. We believe in a little of each in its own order. Let the standard of matriculation be raised, not so much by widening as by deepening the knowledge required. Let the days of superficial preparation for a collegiate course have an end. Impose upon intending matriculants a longer term in the High Schools and Collegiate Institutes. In this way will the Universities not only help themselves, but they will help these High Schools and Collegiate Institutes, whose teachers justly complain that they are forced to be cramming machines by the natural anxiety of their pupils to rush into the Universities with the minimum amount of preparation. All, we believe, would be benefited by such a measure, and none more than the pupils themselves. With University College, Toronto, as the head of Ontario's educational institutions, rest the privilege and duty of inaugurating such measures as will lead to this result. Should her rulers take the initiative step we feel assured of a hearty response from the sister Universities of the Province. Already, more than once, we believe, Queen's has approached the authorities of the Provincial University with a proposal to effect such a measure. We anxiously await developments on this line.

The second measure proposed is the best available in the absence of the first. In the past, however, it has served rather to aggravate than to remedy the defect, since post-graduate studies are usually undertaken on the line which has already received the largest share of attention. We do not undervalue this in itself; we wish, not for less of this but for more of that. Unless, therefore, post-graduate work is undertaken on new lines, it must fail to supply the deficiency complained of. Moreover the majority of those seeking degrees desire to obtain them by the shortest road possible, so that a post-graduate course, even when special inducements are offered, will, from a combination of these causes, be undertaken by the few and not by the many.

Viewed from every standpoint, therefore, we fail to see any effective remedy but that proposed. We believe the measure will commend itself to all who desire to see our Universities and other educational institutions attain to that standard of excellence which is commensurate with the greatness of our country. Let no failure in the discharge of our duty cripple the energies of our public educators nor entail mental and moral decrepitude upon our posterity.