

The Universities of Canada

PART II
H. L. STEWART

Wholeheartedly, of course, one must applaud every design to spread the light of knowledge, reaching a public far wider than that served by Universities of the past, and adjusting to its needs the educational machine. It does not, however, follow, that the right method of doing this is to annul the specific function of Universities of the past and to meet the difficulty of entrants unfit for the traditional studies by transforming those studies into that for which they are fit. Demand for this is widely and insistently urged as a democratic measure. It is a cry as popular as one in some countries for compulsory equalization of incomes, and the absurdity involved is indeed quite similar in the two cases. In each it is a cry for cancelling natural differences by legislation. They cannot thus be cancelled, but they can be disregarded, and the disastrous effect of disregarding them is now in evidence in not a few Canadian Universities.

Everyone who has taught during the last five years in a Canadian University knows that a great percentage of the students are there with no profit either to themselves or to anyone else—except for the collection of their fees which, at least in Courses which do not require expensive laboratory equipment, go to swell the annual budget "on the right side" which a President or Principal can report with glee to his Board of Governors. With such fees in mind, an Administration reckless of other values aims at admitting as many as possible and keeping them as long as possible, sometimes with sinister warning to examiners that as the number falls, the need for reducing the staff will become urgent. This does not mean that a great percentage now at College would have been better sent into shops or offices or settled on a farm without facility for education beyond what they had at a common school. It does mean, however, that some Institute other than the University should be entrusted with their further development.

At present, those on the lower level, being so much more numerous, establish a tone for all. They import the habits of thought and speech familiar outside, especially the habit of judging in all matters by material profit and loss. Instead of the respect shown a generation ago to the interests and activities of the scholar, a derisive strategy of getting the utmost in "credits" for the minimum of studies is formed on the model of "politics" outside. In at least one large University there circulates from hand to hand of freshmen a list of "Courses in which it is impossible to fail".

A hint as to what might be done with such students may be found in the Vocational Schools which aim at providing cultural as well as technical improvement beyond the common school age,

but improvement of the sort fitted to those whose future will be remote from practice of any of the so-called "learned" professions. The separation has been found to be of great value both to those who are freed from the study of "academic" subjects and to those who are thus enabled to advance much more rapidly in these same subjects when released from their slower companions. When one hears of a lecturer on philosophy shouting his analysis of the processes of thought at an audience of 600, one feels that, unlike mercy which blesses him that gives and him that takes, this procedure must demoralize both sides. Beyond any doubt there is need of Vocational Colleges to drain off a multitude whose presence in the University is injurious all around. Most likely to delay such reform is the official whose peculiar place in a University on this side of the Atlantic I shall endeavour next to describe.

The position and powers of the President (or Principal) of a Canadian University have been fixed after the American rather than the British pattern; that is to say, a despotism rather than a limited monarchy or a premiership. Among the worst faults of Canadian University life now are those due to the use of such autocratic power by men of whom not a few have never in any real sense partaken the cultural development they are installed to direct. Some of those reputed most "successful" were never members of any University until they were called to direct one! Others, whose academic record is that of "a pass B.A." twenty or twenty-five years before they were chosen for a Presidency, were occupied in the interval with running a business, working a farm or advertising insurance companies. They have a "Board of Governors", but it consists in general of men whose concern is limited to finance, who

know hardly anything of University Courses except their names, and whose one requirement in a President is that he shall combine adroitness in collecting more funds with austere economy in the use of what they have placed at his disposal. Is it any wonder that Faculty Common rooms should resound with quotations of a descriptive phrase by G. H. Lewes—"A man of restless energy and vast and comprehensive ignorance"?

Canadian Presidents and Principals are, of course, not all like this. Some of them are real scholars, true to scholarship, fighting the good fight against heavy odds, making a stand for intellectual culture against a Board that revels in "blueprint" of some fantastic new project or stone and lime, with contractors and house-furnishers applauding in chorus. There have been large scale quarrels of late between such academic leaders and the Boards or Provincial Governments with which they had to deal—quarrels which have ended in resignation or dismissal. The last twenty years have seen a new facility and frequency of academic divorce, often for "incompatibility of temperament"—between a President concerned above all for education and a Board whose concern was for anything but that. When it now happens, as it will by occasional accident, that a scolar is appointed President or Principal, one hears the forecast "He will not last: he is without the illiteracy prerequisite."

The generation of forty years ago would have been shocked to hear of the "University as Big Business" and "Selling the University as a President's job." But this is just one of a group of changes, and in an age of "selling" it is natural enough for academic sales-promoters to be very impatient of mere scholars. Devaluing degree diplomas is the favourite device for such promotion, and Board of Governors prefer as "College Executive" one who is unembarrassed for this task with any personal erudition. They choose one like the monk in Anatole France's satire, upon whom the vow of Evangelical Poverty was a light burden "in its intellectual reference." But however, we have grown accustomed to it, the old among us still lament the effect of such a figure upon the undergraduate mind, as easily demoralized by manifest imposture in the academic as in the ministerial profession. The externals, the machinery, the tone

(Continued on page four)

The Sea at Night

Myriads of gold lights twinkle
On the haunted dusky sea
And my heart is filled with its longing
And its sadness breathes to me.
Whispers to me of forgotten
Scenes many dreams ago
Of love and joy and sorrow
Waves lapping to and fro.
The west winds cease to murmur,
Glittering stars merge into dreams
As the wavelets softly ripple
Under misty snow moon-beams.
Time ends.
And only I and the dreaming sea
Live on in never endingness
In nostalgic reverie
And yet man comprehends not
The mist and the moon and the sea
And time for him is finite
In a world of infinity.
And I'll bear again the sobbing
Sighting, dreaming of the sea,
Ever watching, ever waiting
Ever never-endingly.
And I'll see again the vision
Of the stars, the moon and the sky
A vision of eternity
As life and death go by.

MOYRA SEEGAR

The Bulletin Board

Phych. Club—There will be a meeting of the Psychology Club Wednesday, Jan. 17 at Shirreff Hall. There will be a speaker.

Basketball—Dal first team will take the floor against King's in the first of the Inter-Collegiate home and home games Tuesday at 7.30 in the Dal gym.

In the City B league Dal second team versus King's Thursday at 7.30 in the Dal gym.

Hockey—Dal girls will take to

the ice against the Dal Grads Saturday afternoon, Jan. 20 in the rink.

Connolly Shield—All societies which plan to enter the Connolly Shield Competition are requested to submit their entries to the Glee Club office before the end of January. Information required includes name of play, author, director and cast. Competition will take place March 7 and 8 in the gymnasium.

There will be an important chorus practice Thursday evening at 7 p.m. in the lower gym. Costume measurements will be taken. All chorus members are requested to attend.

EUROPEAN STUDENT TOURS

Sailings May 23 and June 4

STUDENT TOUR No. 1: sail tourist class on S.S. Ascania from Montreal May 23. Scotland, English Lakes, Chester, Shakespeare Country, North and South Devon, London, Holland, Belgium, Germany (the Rhine and Black Forest), Switzerland, Italian Lakes, Venice, Rome, Hill Towns, Florence, Italian and French Rivas, Paris.

87 Days (of which 12 days—second visit—to be spent independently in England on completion of tour before sailing for home)
\$1152

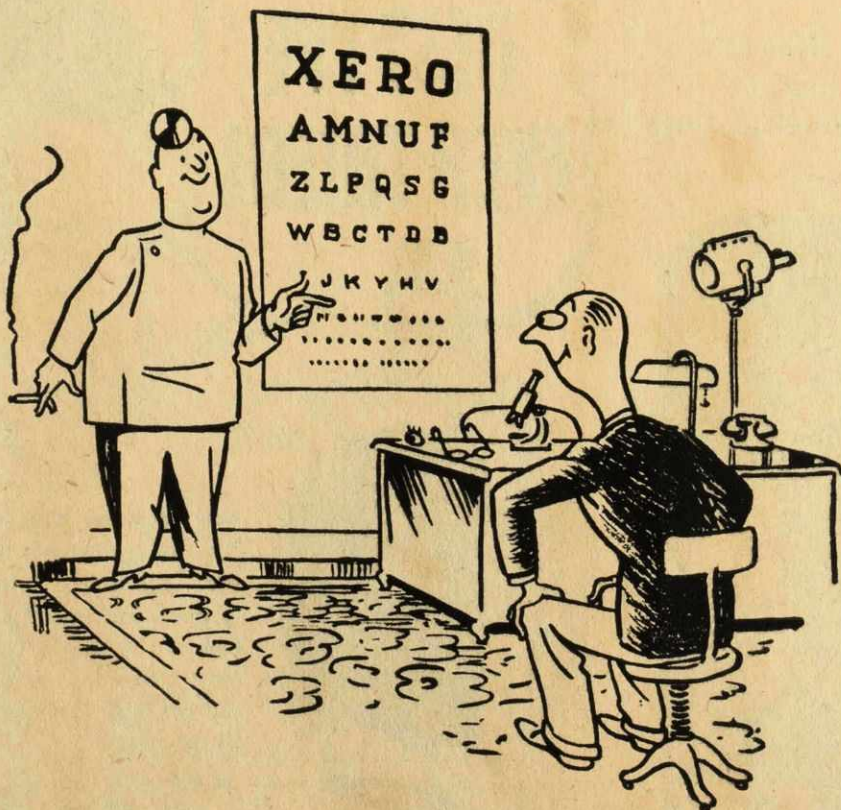
STUDENT TOUR No. 2: sail tourist class on S.S. Columbia from Montreal June 4. Same itinerary as above.

76 Days (sail directly for home on completion of tour)
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ask for detailed itinerary

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10 Teaching Fellowships of value \$450.00 and \$750.00 per annum are available in the Faculty of Graduate Studies.

WRITE TO THE REGISTRAR for full information as to fees, courses, residence facilities, and dates of registration.