

OCCUPATIONS FOR GRADUATES.

The annually increasing number of students who come up to the University for examination is, beyond question, a just cause of gratification to all of us. But, at the same time, it is a fact involving some serious problems, whose solution should not be allowed to pass by unapproached. Canada has yet barely passed the boundary which distinguishes a primitive country from an old and settled one. Her population may be said to be chiefly composed of pioneers; their work is one of construction rather than ornamentation; and therefore the classes whom we most require are those who are ready to put their hand to the hammer or the plough; who can till a field, build a house, or keep a shop.

Now, will this growing native taste for higher education have the effect of developing the learned classes in Canada to an abnormal extent? Will it create a sort of learned "snobocracy," which despises manual labor or mercantile pursuits? Will it tend to swell the so-called learned professions, and to crowd the centres of population? Will it render the supply of educated men so abundant as to reduce the compensation which their services ought to command, and thus bring the advantages of higher education into disrepute? Whatever the answer to these questions may be, they will have to be answered in one way or another before long as some of the evils to which they point are already beginning to appear.

All who know anything of the students attending this college must have perceived among them the almost universal idea that the only doors open to them, on their leaving college, are those of the three so-called "learned" professions: law, medicine, or the church. Some, it is true, after graduating, follow teaching, but usually only in the hope of making it a stepping-stone. It is now the rule but, like every rule it has its exceptions that young men who have chosen the medical profession enter a medical school, and proceed at once with their technical education, without taking of course in arts. We consequently find that of those attending University College, and aspiring to a degree in arts, while a considerable number are preparing for the ministry, the majority are destined for that *refugium peccatorum*—the law. There is a third and pretty large class of students, who start out with no definite purpose, but ultimately drop, somewhat willy-nilly, into the law as their last and only resort.

The result of this influx into one channel is already, to a considerable extent, apparent. The legal profession is overcrowded. Many a lawyer in the city of Toronto makes more money than an ordinarily well-paid clerk. As a result, it is at once a saddening and an amusing sight to see the armies of ambitious youths who every spring and fall swarm the corridors of Osgoode Hall to pass the examinations of the Law Society. What becomes of them all it is impossible to conceive. One thing is certain, that though Canadians—to their discredit be it said—are about as litigious as other people, these youths do not all find bread-and-butter-supplying work in law. The money-making opportunities in the profession are confined to a comparatively few firms in each locality. The rest of the fraternity are driven either to seek other avocations altogether, or to combine with their legal business that of speculating in stocks or real

estate, acting as financial or insurance agents, or something of the kind. I shudder to contemplate the condition of things which must ensue if this tendency law ward continue for many years longer.

Now, how is this craze after the learned professions, especially after law, to be removed? Of course, as the evil grows—and it must grow—it will become more manifest, and thus, to a certain extent, cure itself. Still, much can be done by attempting to remove the causes of the evil. These I apprehend to be chiefly two.

In the first place, there is a notion among students that education should entirely subserve utility—in other words, that a university education should possess a money value in the markets of the world. Though undoubtedly, judged by the simple standard of dollars and cents, a man with a degree is worth more than one without it, yet anyone who expects its full value to be recognized in the hurly-burly of business life is doomed to disappointment. The world values a man simply according to his ability to fulfil the functions of his particular sphere or calling. Let it not be imagined, however, that I am underrating an arts course; I am only trying to show that it is not considered necessary to the making of a good lawyer or a good doctor. But, after all, are there not nobler uses for education than that of making money? Should we not expect that the worshippers at the shrine of learning to be imbued with a loftier aim than that of selling their acquirements to the highest bidder? Learning, like goodness, must be courted for its own sake; and the man who so courts it will not fail to discover and appreciate its true utility, in rendering him more capable, other things being equal, to fill any station in life than the uneducated man; in expanding and ennobling his own nature; in causing him to hold a humbler estimate of himself, and to regard in a more generous and sympathetic spirit the faults and failings of others; in inspiring him with such a breadth of interest that he can say with the ancient poet, "I am a man, and nothing that concerns humanity do I deem a matter of indifference to me"; in providing him, in short, with a spring of genuine happiness, whose depth is infinite and whose duration is eternal.

The second cause of the evil to which I have referred, is the false value that is commonly attached to the learned professions. Certainly no occupations that I am acquainted with offer more opportunities for the exercise of practical benevolence than those of the pulpit and medicine, especially the latter. But this is a consideration which, I am sorry to say, does not often enter the minds of those who have chosen the learned professions, unless in the case of the ministry. It is generally thought that they are more "respectable," that they indicate a higher standard of intellect, and that they open more doors for ambition, than other occupations. But not one of these notions is strictly true.

Nearly every occupation in active life, to a great extent, is mechanical; but, on the other hand, there is none in which intelligence and education do not confer an advantage. We want in Canada many more educated merchants, mechanics, bankers, and farmers, and there is no reason why a university graduate should not enter any one of these pursuits—not to be a menial, but to acquire such a station of distinction as his superior abilities entitle him to. In any one of these spheres there are ample rewards for legitimate ambition. I shall not stop to point to the many eminent merchants, agriculturists, and mechanics whom the world's history has enshrined. They can easily be recalled; we have them in our own Canada, occupying high positions in the state or in society.

Of course every young man should ask himself for what occupation his natural and acquired abilities most fit him, and to which his inclination most disposes him, and by all means follow that. But by no means let him so restrict his choice as to confine himself to two or three, for none of which, perhaps, has he any aptitude whatever.

THE CONVERSAZIONE OF 1880.

All the students will agree with me in saying that the failure of the conversazione last year was a great blank in our college life. There is no doubt many advantages centre round such a social gathering, which gives the members of the society and the students—not to mention the professors and others—an opportunity of entertaining their friends so agreeably with an evening's amusement. It has ever been admitted, by those not connected directly with, as well as by those having a direct interest in, the college and her students, that the conversazione of the Literary and Scientific Society of University College is the most enjoyable entertainment of the season—second to none, but rather first of all. Yet this very excellence tended in a certain way to be an injury. The reunion became so popular that all who could gain admission did not fail to be present, and so the crowd became greater than the accommodation. On looking back it will be seen that the attendance was too large for the accommodation, and that the College Council was justified in taking some steps to restrain the numbers present within due bounds. One thing is certain, this body had no intention of abolishing the most prominent entertainment of the Society, but rather to keep it within the limits of comfort. Now that the College has become so far-famed as a seat of learning, and so many are attracted to her halls, it would be quite impossible to give each student five tickets as heretofore. The day once was when there were but few students, and it was quite in keeping that each should have the right of admitting five. This is no longer possible and I feel confident that, to further a good cause, none will object to taking a less number of tickets. With this, as with all gatherings, the number of those to be invited must be limited, and the best criterion for this limit is the size of the hall set apart for their reception, and not the number of friends of those who extend the invitations; for were such the case no public building in the city would suffice. If I may be permitted to make a few suggestions as to how this object can be attained, I would remark (1) that only three tickets be given each student, being himself admitted by cap and gown, and there are upwards of three hundred in regular attendance, and out of this number probably not more than two hundred would secure tickets, making between eight hundred and one thousand who would be present through students; and (2) to issue no complimentary tickets except to such as the Society may think entitled thereto from their close connection with the college; so that the number thus admitted would not exceed two hundred. By following this course there would not be over twelve hundred present, a number quite in keeping with the hall and the wishes of the College Council, whose pleasure in this matter ought to be considered.

This annual conversazione is of unquestionable social advantage to the students, as it brings them all together for once on a common platform where their feelings and interests are one. But this is not all. Oftimes have I heard the public express a far more lively interest in the students and the college they prize so highly, after one of these entertainments, which open up, it may be for the first time, the bright side of college life to many who have friends here seeking our much valued degrees. I cannot but regret to think that the conversazione is a thing of the past, and hope that active measures shall soon be taken to stir it to full life and vigor, and that it may bear better and brighter results for having lain dormant a year. How much should not every student prize the privilege of treating at least three of his best friends to an entertainment he can call all his own, and thus make some return for the many acts of kindness conferred upon himself.

Should this set others thinking about the matter, the writer's object will be attained, for it requires but little thought to start our conversazione once more into active life.