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UNIVERSITY IDEALS.

I. IDEALS OF STUDY.

TO form a right ideal is practically to look away from things as they are and to conceive of things as they might be, to turn from ourselves to our larger environment, to seek for principles while we are evolving theories. University men in particular need this larger work and reference. The process of education is so long and complex and indirect, and, in Canada especially, some of its methods and requirements are so mechanical and traditional and so little spontaneous, that a student is apt to forget in his college life the very ends for which he lives. He needs to be brought now and again face to face with his fundamental relations and ultimate obligations.

No man can define his own ideals. Least of all can young natures do so; for what they seek to apprehend can be only formed within them as a "heart of wisdom," the harvest of the numbered years (Ps. xc. 12), "the years that bring the philosophic mind." For this achievement insight is needed more than foresight. Therewith, I must co-operate an ever-widening outlook along with a perpetual habit of retrospect. The backward look is to most of us the surest key to our future—the future that may be—as it is, alas, the surest revealer of a past or a present that might have been! But the young have no past to guide or warn them, and the garner of experience, their own proper wisdom, one day to be so full, has but a grain here and there fallen from a few unthreshed sheaves.

How then shall our students find their true work and strike the right course to their true and proper goal? Here, we may say aright, is where institutions and teachers play their best part. Yet all that the college with its instructors can do for a young fellow is far less than what he can and must do for himself. An institution is not *institutio*, as those understood the word who made it classical. The most that even the oldest and most weather-beaten professional guides of youth can do for them is to give suggestions, indicate good view-points, and show the obstacles and hindrances by which they themselves have been balked or impeded. If, in complying with the request of the editor of THE VARSITY for some practical hints on University ideals, I venture to take this general line, I shall not go very far wrong in my starting-point at least. I would accordingly propose that in the broadest way, we regard a student's education from the standpoint of his inner needs and his outer obligations, his work at college and his life-purpose. Now, every University man aims, or should aim, to be a *man of culture*, a *good member of society*, and a *patriot*; and it will be possible to find something worth thinking about as bearing upon these three cardinal and vital functions of an ideal life.

What should our students aim to be as men of culture? The most important thing is that they should aim to fulfil themselves. They will be sure to make the best and most of themselves if they work along the line of their likings and adaptations. It was a wise old man who said: "Train a youth according to his own bent, and when he is old he will not depart from it." And three-fourths of the task of education would be accomplished, if, at the end of his course, the undergraduate could be put upon this sure way of realizing himself, so that at

any advanced stage of his life he could look back upon the path traversed and feel satisfied to follow on to the end. I do not mean that one must necessarily choose the exact form and mode of his life-work before or during his college residence. But, ordinarily, it is best to have a clear and strong persuasion of what one is really called to do in the world. And this is becoming all the time more imperative, because our University is inevitably specializing more and more as the years go on, as the High Schools do more of College work and do it better, and as the training for professional work is being more aptly and efficiently provided within our class-rooms and laboratories. It is, therefore, usually well for the man who is not yet aware of his natural bent or his true powers to take the so-called General Course. And are there not many, who have already decided upon their future vocations, who might well make the same choice? It would surely seem so. Indeed, it is a question whether the General Course should not be made the best possible for the future lawyer, clergyman, or business man of any special occupation.

But what about the future physician, or chemist, or electrician, or scientific man generally? The mention of science in connection with University Ideals brings up an issue which reaches further and strikes deeper than any prescribed system of study, general or eclectic. We have just defined our student to be, *in posse*, at least, a man of culture. Can a student be this and at the same time a mere devotee of routine and prescription? Surely not. But there is another question less obvious, but just as important and urgent: Can a student give his time almost exclusively to special work in any line whatever and yet be a man of culture? The answer must come just as decidedly: He surely can. Everything here depends upon the spirit of the man, his antecedents, habits and disposition, his outlook upon life, his sense of the true relations of his work. If he has these aright and in due measure, he is becoming a cultured man, whether he is a general or a special student. Being a general student is not sure to give him culture, nor will his being a specialist withhold it from him or rob him of it. But he cannot get it if he is either a trifler or a "plug."

Against which of these false extremes does the average student need most warning? Against the tendency to trifle, for it is easier to fall into and is more seductive than the other. All trifiers are not idlers. Nothing is more common and natural than for a more or less clever student to imagine that, after all, he is his own best guide in the details of study. In this he may make the mistake of his life. It is one thing for him to follow his natural bent in the choice of a calling or in the general selection of his studies. It is quite another thing for him to fancy that he can safely be his own tutor and academic mentor. The delusion often takes the form of supposing that an extended course of general reading will make him a scholar and a man of culture. Nor are examples wanting of those who have seemed to grow strong and robust by literary browsing. It is pointed out that college men of high honors have