

We are still in a state of uncertainty as to the question of European war or peace. The newspapers seem to be amusing themselves by the constant publication of sensational telegrams. The Montreal *Herald* outdid itself by giving out that the Dominion Government had received a telegram from the Imperial Parliament to the effect that war with Russia was inevitable. It was intended to convey the idea, of course, either that the Imperial Parliament was asking advice, or for troops; or at any rate was anxious to notify Canada of the doings of the Home Government. But as a matter of fact we have a more cheerful prospect of peace than ever before. Delay inspires hope, diplomacy never comes to the end of its resources, and if the Beaconsfield Cabinet will only be guided by the sentiment and reason of the great majority of the English people there will be no war at all.

THE LADIES' EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF MONTREAL.

On Monday of last week the Ladies' Educational Association of Montreal held its annual meeting, and an opportunity is thus offered for considering the nature and the prospects of the work which it has undertaken. It need scarcely be observed that, in that work, the Association has not aimed at superseding any of the means of education which have hitherto been open to ladies. On the contrary, the Association was the offspring of a conviction that there has been a very serious deficiency in the means of culture which women have enjoyed not only here, but throughout the world. That there is such a deficiency, cannot be ignored. To any one who reflects on it for the first time, or who reflects on it at any time with earnestness, it must surely excite some astonishment, that all the great public schools and colleges—all the institutes for an advanced intellectual culture—are, with a very few recent exceptions, constituted and managed on the obvious supposition, that their educational advantages shall be enjoyed by the male sex alone. Not that in all, or even in most cases, there is any statutory exclusion of the other sex; for within the last few years, in the face of much ungenerous opposition, some women have established their claim to sit in the class-rooms of several colleges. The fact is, that women are ignored rather than explicitly excluded. It is impossible to account for this circumstance otherwise than by supposing, that the founders and legislators of our educational establishments never contemplated the possibility of women requiring or seeking more than a merely elementary education. It is true, that even yet we occasionally come upon men, and women too, who open their eyes with wonder at the intellectual daring of a young woman who is discontented with a common-school education. But there will always be persons who become objects of curiosity to an advancing world, by making their minds museums for preserving the fossilised thought of an earlier civilisation: and it is comforting to know that the ladies of Montreal, by the very existence of their Educational Association, recognise the right of women to a higher culture; while it is further gratification to find that they have met with sufficient sympathy in the city to enable them to carry on their operations, even amid the financial discouragements of the past two or three years.

The fact, that the Association has existed amid all the disadvantages with which it has had to contend, is itself a fair evidence of a certain kind of success. The Association has thus revealed the existence of the educational want which it proposed to supply; it has also proved that it has been supplying that want adequately enough to deserve support from the ladies of Montreal. But it is now worthy of being considered whether this very success of the Association does not suggest the possibility of realising some more ambitious educational scheme,—does not even entail upon the ladies, who are engaged in this work, the duty of undertaking some more adequate provision for the want which they have temporarily endeavoured to supply.

To those who are not familiar with the work of the Association it may be necessary to state, that that work has consisted mainly in making arrangements for courses of lectures upon subjects which, as a rule, have little or no connection with one another, and that no definite attempt has yet been made to carry students through a prescribed curriculum of study extending from year to year. The ladies of the Association are not, indeed, to blame for this imperfection in their operations; it forms one of those inevitable disadvantages of their situation, to which I have referred as among the difficulties with which they have had to contend. The ladies have repeatedly, in their reports, expressed the desirability of providing an extended curriculum of study, and we may assume that it is their intention to realise this desirable object, as soon as they are in a position which will render its realisation possible. It is, therefore, in thorough harmony with the spirit of the Association itself to recognise the serious imperfection which necessarily attaches to its operations, as they are conducted at present. At the meeting of last week, Dr. Dawson became the mouthpiece of these higher aspirations of the Association, by suggesting the problem of founding a Ladies' College. The Association itself, therefore, may be said to have opened the inquiry into the best means of extending and improving the educational advantages which it has brought within the reach of young women in Montreal.

To solve the problem which is thus forced upon us, it is necessary to make a survey of the condition and prospects of superior education in Canada. At present there are over a dozen universities in the Dominion. On the origin of these institutions nothing need be said here beyond the remark that the whole history of superior education in Canada exhibits, if not an appalling incompetence on the part of our legislators, at least an indifference that is equally discreditable. But that indifference and incompetence are still at work, and their operation has been recently manifested in the creation of a new university by the Legislature of Ontario. This event is all the more significant, and all the more discouraging to those who have been aiming at the improvement of existing institutions, from the circumstances, that the university referred to was created by the most intelligent of our Provincial Legislatures, at the instance of an Anglican bishop, and in a Province which was already able to boast of seven institutions with university powers.

Now, we may waive, for the present, the question whether, even with the most perfect equipments, such a number of universities is not altogether in excess of the wants of the present population of Canada. I should be the very last to put any unnecessary obstacles in the way of multiplying, all through the Dominion, institutions for higher culture, provided these institutions are competently furnished for accomplishing the objects which they profess. But the fact is that, of all our numerous universities, there is not one whose provisions for higher intellectual work come near to the idea which is realised, not only in the famous universities of the Old World, but even in those recent foundations which form the most hopeful evidences of public sentiment in the United States. It would be tedious to enumerate all, or even the most prominent, deficiencies in the equipments of our universities; any one who is able and willing to supplement these deficiencies, can easily find scope for his liberality by a very limited course of investigation. One or two facts, however, may be worth mentioning here. For instance, there is not, in the whole Dominion, a single respectable university library; so that the literary student, who wishes to carry on independent research even in the most familiar fields, is obliged either to bear the chagrin of being stopped short at every step, or to find his materials in the libraries of another country. The scientist likewise is fettered in every line of investigation by the inadequate furnishing of museums and laboratories and scientific apparatus in general. But perhaps the most serious defect in most of our universities is to be found in the meagreness of their professorial staff; for while the efficiency of a teacher is necessarily impaired by his sympathies and energies being dissipated over too wide a range of subjects, a small professorial staff renders impossible that subdivision of intellectual labour, by which alone our professorships can be adorned with the names of distinguished specialists. In view of these and other wants of superior education in Canada, it is not an extravagant estimate that several millions of dollars would be required to put all our existing universities on a footing of equality with any of the well-endowed academical institutes in the Old or in the New World. Now, with such an enormous requirement in order to the efficiency of our present system of higher education, what is the course we should adopt when a new demand is made for the means of extending such education to young women?

In reply to this question it may surely be said at once, that, if we cannot diminish, we should at least avoid increasing, the evil which has been so detrimental to the interests of an advanced culture, both in the United States and in Canada. We have already universities which, in number, are sufficient to supply the wants of our people for many years, probably for many generations, and all the resources which we can expend in developing the facilities for superior learning, may be more profitably absorbed in the improvement of these institutions than in the foundation of separate colleges. It is exceedingly unlikely that any such separate colleges for women would be better furnished than the colleges which already exist; and the expenditure required even for the most meagre equipment of the new institutions would postpone to an indefinite future the indispensable improvements in our existing universities. To me, therefore, there is no hope of making satisfactory provision for the advanced education of women, except by throwing our universities open to them on the same conditions as to men. There would, of course, be a number of difficulties in details, especially in the arrangement of class-rooms and university buildings in general, which have obviously been constructed without reference to the attendance of ladies; but these details admit of such an easy solution, that it seems out of place to speak of them as difficulties at all.

There is one step towards this ultimate result which might be taken by our universities at once. University examinations might be thrown open to women. I know, and on the whole I accept, all that has been urged against making academical degrees mere certificates of having passed an examination, without implying that infinitely more valuable discipline of the intellectual nature which can be obtained only by a prolonged academical curriculum with all the manifold impulses which issue from the social intercourse of academical life; and I should be sorry if women had no prospect of any provision for intellectual culture beyond that of preparing for a university examination. But if we object to allow women the honour of passing our university examinations without a previous academical curriculum, they may surely meet us with the obvious rejoinder: "We are perfectly willing to attend your courses of academical lectures, if you will only allow us; but is it fair to deny us the right of attendance upon these lectures, and then to make that non-attendance the ground of refusing us the right of competing for academical honours?" Fortunately McGill University has already taken a step in the direction indicated; and during the present week young women are competing with young men at an examination, which is equivalent to the examination of matriculants in the university. The University of Toronto has gone further by opening its second year examination also to young women; and Queen's University at Kingston has gone further still, for it allows the students of the Young Ladies' College at Brantford to appear at any of its examinations for which they may be qualified. But all these concessions are but partial, and therefore unsatisfactory, acknowledgments of the right which women may claim to all the educational advantages that are enjoyed by men; and I can see no permanent, because no rational, solution of this problem until the stronger sex abandon the selfishness with which they have ungallantly persisted in jostling their sisters out of all the avenues which lead into the Temple of Knowledge.

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"THE BUSINESS SITUATION."

A writer in the *SPECTATOR*, signing himself "Alpha," says "that the incompetency of Parliament to deal with Trade difficulties is daily becoming more and more apparent." This may be a truthful assertion, probably even the most truthful he makes. Yet therein lies our hope. Because it feels itself incompetent, Parliament will leave trade matters alone. Even if the cause be folly or incompetence, the result will be the highest wisdom. While physicians puzzle themselves over symptoms and consult together, the patient is neglected, and Nature and her beneficent laws have a chance to act. The patient gets well, and the physician's wisdom is lauded and his fees paid. To Parliamentary Law Doctors now-a-days this is a highly important part of the programme.