

THE VARSITY

A Weekly Journal of Literature, University Thought and Events.

VOL. XXII.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, DECEMBER 10, 1902.

No. 9.

University Graduates in Railway Work.

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PREVIOUS articles have dealt with the careers of Graduates in different branches of professional life. All the writers have adopted the prevailing "strenuous" note, and in none of the careers described are efficiency and energy more requisite than in railway work in Canada at present.

Mr. Chamberlain has stated his belief that countries were made great by their educated men, and wished for the time when no man should have a great position "in our factories, our workshops or our counting houses" without having succeeded in a university education. We are still far from this ideal state of affairs. Nevertheless, recent experience in the United States has shown that it is possible for a university Graduate to become the successful president of a railway, but those who have attained to this have passed through every grade from the lowest to the highest place, from call boy, leveller, wiper or brakeman, to president. One of our railway presidents, while rising from the position of telegraph messenger boy, acquired many branches of a liberal education. While night despatcher at Springfield, Ill., he did not sleep much in the daytime, but made from the letter files stored in a disused station building a collection of those written by Abraham Lincoln while attorney for the Chicago & Alton R. W. Company. Both men trod the path of duty in railway life, one became the president of the United States, the other, after carrying to completion and successfully operating the Canadian Pacific, has turned his untiring energies to the upbuilding of Cuba.

While this may involve a fascinating story, we must not forget that in every case of success in life, and particularly in railway work, the details, the vital, actual and essential fundamentals, can only be mastered in the hard school of experience. There is no royal road to success.

Very few men graduating at twenty or twenty-one years of age can afford to begin or can have the inclination to commence in such a subordinate position as will enable them to acquire the essential details which a lad starting ten or eleven years earlier would be able to grasp almost as readily as the older man. On the other hand, given a starting point in any position, however subordinate, where, as a clerk or stenographer (and the two are now synonymous), one can come into touch with actual things and not theories, educated intelligence in the long run prevails; but there must be patience and not the inclination to commence life at the top found often among university Graduates.

The general manager of one of our railways told me that he had waited in vain twenty years for some one who could write a letter in "decent English" and had spent hours correcting faulty letters, which had to be re-written before they could be signed and then were posted too late for the night mails. Himself, a master of English, he had learned it in the university of the world.

The benefits of a liberal education are shown by the employment of an accurate style enabling us to think and write clearly. Stevenson earnestly admonishes us always to

use correct technical language. But education does not impart brains or bestow common sense, as Mr. Dooley says, "You may bring a man to the university, but you cannot make him think," and another American philosopher remarks that "Education may broaden a narrow mind, but there is no cure yet known for a swelled head."

Thus it appears that the speediest means of access to this field of wide-spreading activity is through legal training or secretarial work, and that in either case a knowledge of shorthand and the use of the typewriter is of the first importance.

The expansion of Canada seems to be upon us. We may learn from the experience of the United States in the making of the West; and as we have been warned by their mistakes in constitutional government we may profit by their errors in the building and management of railways. "Inspired carpenters," through ignorance in choosing suitable railway locations, have cost in later years many millions of dollars by obliging the management to rebuild long stretches of road-bed and tear up tracks at great expense. Competition has made railway managers study how to improve alignments, decrease grades, reduce curves, strengthen bridges and increase the loads of trains. The next decade may witness trains hauled by electricity instead of steam. These all represent the applications of science and science must be first learned in the laboratory, the lecture-room, the field and the workshop.

Canada, like Switzerland, in the past has educated men for the professions far in excess of her natural requirements. Many of them have found work in the neighboring Republic, in Europe and the East, but Canada, unlike Switzerland, now offers a promising field, to which her sons may gladly return.

If the three transcontinental lines, which are now projected, or even one of them, should be built, there will be immense activity in railway work in Canada. Although some Canadians have risen in other countries to the highest places in railway management, the chief executive positions in our two greatest railway systems are filled by men born and trained in the United States, and their lieutenants are drawn largely from the same school.

Important questions have arisen and occupy an increasing share of public attention regarding the control of railways by the State, more especially in the matter of the regulation of freight rates. To this end a railway commission, similar to the Railway and Canal Traffic Commission in England and the Interstate Commerce Commission in the United States, will probably be appointed before long.

The questions involved are perplexing and difficult, requiring an intelligent study of economic conditions and national and international questions. One of our younger Graduates, Professor S. J. McLean, has already made a report to the Government, which may form a partial basis for legislation.

No body of workers are more thoroughly organized in relation to their employers than railwaymen, and, so far as skilled labor is concerned, this is an advantage to both parties, so long as the men unite with the management in maintaining a high standard of efficiency. There are at least five railway unions in