

Special Papers.

CANADIAN NATIONAL EDUCATION.

EXTRACTS FROM PRESIDENT WILSON'S ADDRESS AT CONVOCATION.

It cannot be too strongly insisted on that the success of national education is the measure and standard of a people's healthful progress. The nations of the world take rank according to their fidelity to it; and their greatness, alike in ancient and modern times, has been in proportion to the zeal with which they have fostered intellectual culture and made truth their highest aim. Looking to this question of national education as it is affected by university federation, I entertain sanguine hopes of its results. It is only by united action in some form that denominational influence can exercise any legitimate effect on national education. If the co-operation of colleges under the control of various Christian Churches, with one maintained by the State in the interests of all, lends effectual aid in sustaining a high moral and religious tone among the undergraduates, one all-important aim will be accomplished. On the other hand, I look to the conflict of opinion, and diversities in teaching, resulting from healthful rivalry of colleges, acting in concert as affiliated members of one university, for protection from the stereotyped rigidity which has been charged as the danger of all national systems. This is indeed already guarded against in no inconsiderable degree by the departments of the University scheme, which not only encourage different lines of study, but give fair scope to the intellectual specialist, and leave to all students some choice in the determination of their undergraduate course. But there is another evil, the product to a large extent of modern appeal to examinations as the supreme test of all qualifications for office or appointment. It has been questioned if Walpole—one of England's greatest financial Ministers—could have satisfied a modern civil service examiner; as to Wellington, he would certainly have been plucked by the martinets of the Woolwich board. Examinations have their proper place in every collegiate system. I know of no better substitute as a test of actual work done in the lecture room and laboratory; especially when conducted by an experienced teacher. But the extremists have not only effected a divorce between examiner and teacher, but would fain substitute examination for the teacher's work. With such the ideal university of the future is a board of examiners and a file of text books. Under this influence rival programmes outvie each other in the multiplicity of prescribed bookwork; nor can I claim for our own curriculum an absolute exemption from the taint. Every system, whether for school or college, is objectionable, which relies mainly on the perfecting of educational machinery and fails to leave scope for the personal influence of the teacher. Some prescribed course of work is indispensable; but if the instructor is worthy of his trust, what he communicates *con amore*, as having a special interest for himself, will be the most likely to kindle enthusiasm in the student. Routine work is ever apt to lapse into drudgery, unless animated by the enkindling flash of impromptu illustration. Sir John Lubbock justly remarks:—"Our great mistake in education is, as it seems to me, the worship of book learning—the confusion of instruction and education. We strain the memory instead of cultivating the mind." The schoolboy is doubtless as clay in the hands of the potter, but that is no justification of the tendency to fashion a single departmental mould in which all shall be shaped according to the one regulation pattern. This evil is to be deprecated at every stage, but in the work of the university most of all. There is a growing tendency to overload every department with an amount of bookwork which must reduce the teacher to a mere monitorial drudge, and help to give countenance to the popular idea that any man whose name has figured in the honor lists is amply qualified for a professor's chair. At this critical stage in the history of the University, when not only important additions are about to be made to the Faculty of Arts, but the restored Faculties of Law and Medicine have to be recognized, its future for another generation depends on the choice of the men who are to constitute the new

professoriate. We must have teachers with higher claims than the tests of the examination hall supply, if we would escape the risk of stamping a whole generation with the same mediocrity. We want, if possible, for every university chair, men of original power and genius in their own special branches. No one is deserving of so responsible a trust, in which he is to mould and fashion the minds of the most gifted among those who are before long to take the place of our present leaders, who does not himself possess gifts such as no university pretends either to confer or to accredit by its honor lists. Whatever be the university requirements, no man is worthy of one of its chairs who has not much of his own to communicate beyond any prescribed curriculum. The most valuable influence of a teacher is to be looked for in the sympathetic enthusiasm which he enkindles in the minds of his students, broadening and elevating their aspirations, quickening the dry bones of academic routine, and vitalizing them with living fire.

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The University of Toronto is identified in its inception with historical events of memorable significance. The loyal pioneers of Upper Canada who here reared for themselves homes under the shelter of the British flag, had scarcely effected their first settlement on the northern shores of the great lakes when they gave evidence of their intellectual sympathies and wise foresight by efforts to secure some adequate provision for the education of their sons. No more creditable incident can be recalled in the early history of any country. It illustrates the character of the founders of Upper Canada as men of no ordinary type; differing indeed widely from the Puritan pilgrims of New England, but not unworthy to rank alongside of them as planters of another vigorous offshoot of the British oak. So long as their descendants worthily maintain the inheritance thus bequeathed to them, they will recall with pride the incident which presents its hardy pioneers, while literally hewing out their first clearings in the forest, and displacing the Indian wigwam with the log hut of the farmer, thus anticipating the wants of later generations, and dedicating 500,000 acres of the uncleared wilderness to provide for the educational requirements of the infant State. To them, and not to the Royal donor of its charter, this University owes the gratitude due its founders. Nor have they missed their reward. The roll of its distinguished graduates already includes the names of men who have borne an honorable part as statesmen in critical times, who have taken the highest rank on the Bench and at the Bar; and have creditably filled responsible posts in academic, civic, and commercial life. But we are even now in the gristle, and must be allowed to progress to a well-developed maturity. The acorn that some autumn gale of that elder century dropped in the solitude of the Canadian forest now spreads forth its branches to the winds, a vigorous young oak, and if left untouched by rude hands, may flourish a thousand years hence, a memorial of our historic dawn; like the Conqueror's oak in the Royal chase, associated with the deeds of William of Normandy, or Herne's Oak, the memorial of the later age of England's Maiden Queen and Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor." But neither oak nor seat of learning can flourish if subjected to constant transplanting or endless unrest. Time is needed ere the healthy sapling realize the motto: "Velut arbor ævo," that voices our University's symbolic crest of the maple tree. We have, indeed, seen in the history of the Cornell and Johns Hopkins universities what can be accomplished by such institutions when started on their career with an adequate endowment. Nor, with its narrower resources, has this University failed to make a name for itself, or to train more than one generation to do it honor. But much has yet to be accomplished before even Harvard or Yale can claim equality with the venerable centres of Europe's academic life, with their alumni, the world's true nobility, by whom the thoughts of generations have been widened and science mastered for the service of mankind. They were the strongholds of intellectual life in ages of darkness and ignorance. We recognize in them the source of Europe's re-awakening, and hail the promise of a still brighter renaissance for ourselves.

Let it not be our shame that "knowledge grows, but wisdom lingers." The sources of all true progress are at our disposal. It rests with those to whom the equipment of this University is entrusted to determine whether we shall bear our part in the seed-time of future centuries, or with niggard parsimony, leave our sons to reap where they have not sown.

THE RUSSIAN WAY OF DOING IT.

COUNT TOLSTOI, the Russian Minister of the Interior, has struck a characteristic blow against nihilism. He has decided to destroy it by putting an end to the higher education of the poorer classes. The tenor of the circular which he has issued may be judged from the following extracts: "The gymnasia, high schools, and universities will henceforth refuse to receive as pupils or students the children of domestic servants, peasants, tradesmen, petty shopkeepers, farmers, and others of like condition, whose progeny should not be raised from the circle to which they belong, and be thereby led, as long experience has shown, to despise their parents, to become discontented with their lot, and irritated against the inevitable inequalities of the existing social positions."

This document has of course created the most profound sensation. Since the accession of the "Reform Tsar," in 1856, it has been conceded even by the government that the chief need of Russia, social and industrial, was a higher level of popular education. The present circular of Count Tolstoi is a virtual confession that the present political régime is incompatible with popular education, and that the latter must therefore be sacrificed. The fact that both the universities and the commercial schools are supported by taxes the bulk of which are paid by the peasants and tradesmen does not deter the minister from issuing the order. He merely promises that by degrees technical and trade schools will be established to take the place of the schools which are disbanded. Technical education in Russia means, not the broadening of the curriculum, but the narrowing of it so that only the child's physical powers shall be trained. The new order may for a time check popular education, but it will assuredly set the masses to thinking, and breed the very spirit of nihilism which it seeks to destroy.—*Christian Union.*

ENGLISH SOIL

BY OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES.

The soil of England does not seem to be worn out, to judge by the wonderful verdure and the luxuriance of vegetation. It contains a great museum of geological specimens, and a series of historical strata which are among the most instructive of human records. I do not pretend to much knowledge of geology. The most interesting geological objects in our New England that I can think of are the great boulders and the scratched and smooth surface of the rocks; the fossil footprints in the valley of the Connecticut; the trilobites found at Quincy. But the readers of Hugh Miller remember what a variety of fossils he found in the stratified rocks of his little island, and the museums are full of just such objects. When it comes to underground historical relics, the poverty of New England as compared with the wealth of Old England is very striking. Stratum after stratum carries the explorer through the relics of successive invaders. After passing through the characteristic layers of different races, he comes upon a Roman pavement, and below this the weapons and ornaments of a tribe of ancient Britons. One cannot strike a spade into the earth, in Great Britain, without a fair chance of some surprise in the form of a Saxon coin, or a Celtic implement, or a Roman fibula. Nobody expects any such pleasing surprise in a New England field. One must be content with an Indian arrowhead or two, now and then a pestle and mortar, or a stone pipe. A top dressing of antiquity is all he can look for. The soil is not humanized enough to be interesting; whereas in England so much of it has been trodden by human feet, built on in the form of human habitations, nay, has been itself a part of preceding generations of human beings, that it is in a kind of dumb sympathy with those who tread its turf.—*October Atlantic.*