

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE.

By a Graduate.

Those whose privilege it is to have taken part in the proceedings at the inauguration of the University in 1876, and have witnessed its continuous development and growth must feel that the acorn planted has indeed grown into a mighty tree. At each commemoration the same story of uninterrupted advance is told and inspires a confidence that still greater achievements await us in the future. It may not be without interest, the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the University, and the extended holiday, if we in divide the word "university." According to a high authority, it means a place of teaching universal knowledge; its ancient designation "studium generale," school of universal learning, to be subsequently shortened into "studium." The term signified originally a gathering together of students from all parts, for, of course, the word "universal" implies a complete school of studies, and, also, a general diffusion of knowledge. The main work—indeed, rightly considered the proper work—of a university is the distribution of knowledge, and in enlarging the bounds of its operations. At a matter of practice a large amount of research in the domains of natural science and philosophy is done in many universities.

In olden times university education provided teaching in two great branches of study, there was the Trivium which included grammar, logic, and rhetoric, and the Quadrivium, the subjects of which were arithmetic, music, geometry, and astronomy. It would seem that ideally the chief object of a university is to teach men "to know," not merely or primarily to know this or to know that, but to know, and, if the pupils shall become convinced of the small measure of their knowledge, they have laid a good foundation for future edification, and if it be true, as we think it is that "the proper study of mankind is man" then a strong claim is put in for the literae humaniores, or speaking generally what is known as the arts course, the object of which is to impart a knowledge of all that is best and wisest in all countries and times of which we have knowledge. It is a matter of sincere regret to the writer that so small a portion of the students devote themselves to this course, which should indeed be the staple of university studies. It is indeed the pre-eminent subject of thought and knowledge. It seemed a good omen that the first professorship founded by Sir Thomas Elder's liberality had this object; the diminishing proportion of students who "take" it up is lamentable.

Merchantable Knowledge.

The popular classes are those which provide merchantable knowledge, that which will pay and give quick return for the money expended. This, in a new country where we have to make our own traditions and in which the exigencies of life afford little opportunity for refining and grand studies, is perhaps to be expected, but it is eminently desirable that the arts course should not be lost sight of altogether. If only for example's sake it is a thing to be wished for that development and cultivation of the mind should be sought after without the thought of how much can be made out of such pursuit.

Perhaps, the mercenary view has not been more sternly condemned than by Cardinal Newman in his "Idea of a University," where he says, "Now, this is what some great men are very slow to allow; they must that education should be confined to some particular and narrow end, and should issue in some definite work, which can be verified and measured. They argue as if everything, as well as every person, had its price; and where there has been a great one, they have a right to expect a return in kind. This they call making education and instruction a trade, and utility becomes their watchword. With a fundamental principle of this nature they very naturally go on to ask what there is to show for the expense of a university? What is the real worth and market value of the article called a liberal education?"

Wide Culture.

If we may judge by the selection of the subjects made by the actual founders of the university, Sir T. Elder and Sir W. W. Hughes, for the professorships which they endowed, it would seem that they thought more of the studies which would train the mind than of those which would pay the pocket. Their wish evidently was for a wide and general culture, and this should find in every university an honoured place and home. A graduate in any of the faculties on a university should certainly have knowledge of some things that lie outside of the subjects and technicalities of his own chosen profession.

Times change and we change with them. Most of the great universities in Europe were founded in olden times, and have a long lineage, some of them nearly reaching to a thousand years. The founders of these were, in many cases, kings, nobles or their tone and character were largely influenced by this fact, as the history of England and the records at Oxford and Cambridge reveal. Though poor students were to some small extent provided for by scholarships, the main body of the students was largely selective and of a high class. In those early times education of any kind was not considered a luxury for the masses.

A Child of the State.

In Australia the university is the child of the State, and as the State has taken over the tremendous responsibility of educating all classes, of quickening their intellects, enlarging their horizon, and extending the field of their ambition, so it would appear to be the duty of the State that these rudimentary impulses should be guided, controlled, and corrected by the higher ideals which a university is able to inspire. And to effect this the pathway to it should be made much easier and broader than it is. Much has been done, but not enough in the way of providing scholarships and such like aids, but these can only be secured by those who have natural endowments, that is to say, the best and brightest of our youth. Thus only, in a small way, does the "humanizing" effect of university culture appeal to the general public. Should not the State.

go a step further. It would, of course, be ridiculous to advocate a University education for all persons, but might not much more be attempted and achieved than is possible at the present time. The very remarkable success of the University calls for it. We read of millions being devoted to develop material progress—the ruling thought of Australia to-day. How vastly more important are intellectual development and mental culture, and by such development to put the higher qualities possessed by so many young Australians to the best possible service. The work of the University is, as has been shown, the dissemination of knowledge, but as long as its resources are confined to narrow bounds it is impossible for any advance in this direction to be made.

Appeal to Private Liberality.

Much might be done by private liberality, but, in spite of what has been done by public-spirited colonists in the past, such work does not appeal to a very large proportion of those who leave heaps of money behind them. It would seem, therefore, that the State, if it is to perform its duty as the father of its nursing, must enlarge, and enlarge considerably, the money necessary for its support, that is if the University is to grapple, in anything like an adequate manner, with the task set before it. Here let it be said that the present writer has been solely engaged in setting down some important considerations, which have occurred to him. He has conferred with no one, and has no connection with the University beyond that of an ordinary graduate. He wishes that the University, while fitting itself to the conditions of Australian life, may still retain in a foremost place the older studies, which have made the ancient seats of learning glorious and renowned. In "a proposition for the advancement of experimental philosophy," Abraham Cowley (born 1618) sets four ends which such institutions, as the college which he desired to see founded, should keep in view, and they may not unfitly close this present article; they are:—"First, to weigh, examine, and prove all things of Nature delivered to us by former ages; to detect, explode, and strike a censure through all false moneys with which the world has been paid, and cheated so long; and, as I may say, to set the mark of the college upon all true coins, that they may pass hereafter without any farther trial; secondly, to recover the lost inventions, and, as it were, drowned lands of the ancients; thirdly, to improve all arts that we now have; and lastly, to discover others which we yet have not." This will cover a great deal of ground, and may be profitably considered by those who, while regretting the decay of interest in the arts school, wish to see a larger proportion of the students of the University devoting themselves to "the proper study of mankind."

say anything about any possible work at Koonamore itself. If such a reserve be established, it will be a further instance of the enlightened and progressive way in which the owners (Hamilton, Wilcox, Limited) treat their property. As to the need of research work on the salt-bush vegetation, I could say a great deal, for I feel strongly upon the subject. We, in South Australia live in an arid State, for five-sixths of our area has an average annual rainfall of 10 inches or less. It is not unpatriotic to recollect this. Rather should those, who have the true welfare of the community at heart, pay serious attention to the manner in which the arid district can most profitably be exploited, at the same time paying due attention to methods that are economically sound.

Varied Collection of Plants.

Over a great part of our arid country, continues the professor, there grows naturally a varied collection of plants that are of surprising interest, not only botanically, but also economically, for many of them yield fodder of unusual richness. But, by the exploitation of these plants through his grazing animals, man has introduced a new danger into their already precarious existence. Naturally, the trees, shrubs, saltbushes, and so on, had established a wonderfully perfect harmony with their surroundings. They could compete successfully against drought in all its forms, but, before the advent of the white man, they never felt the deleterious effect of close-grazing animals. Most of them can withstand even this in varying degrees, but, in excess, they succumb. The effect of their disappearance is more far-reaching than most people imagine. It means more than the loss of the particular plant; their removal has ultimately an effect on the soil itself. In time—often a quite short time—the native plants wholly disappear. They are replaced to some extent by various weeds or other introductions. These are always less useful than the original perennial plant. It is true that after sufficient and suitable rains there may be an amazing growth of grasses, but these provide only a temporary vegetation. When it is gone there is often little or nothing to hold the soil but tobacco bush. Moreover, since the region is arid, the unfavourable season for plant life must be more frequent than the favourable. The result is that the overgrazed area becomes much less productive, finally little better than desert. I know that "desert" is taboo to many of our people. For my part, except for around Lake Eyre, I have seen little natural desert in South Australia, but I have seen far too much artificial desert, due to the misuse of our native plants.

"Miraculous" Production.

It is useless expecting the miraculous production of a plant with the fodder value of lucerne that will flourish unassisted in a seven-inch rainfall area. It will not be discovered in Australia, nor yet overseas. There are other great arid areas in the world all needing such a plant. Probably none of them is so naturally favoured as Australia with its perennial salt bushes. For instance, one cannot compare the value of sagebush in arid America or karrubush in South Africa with them. Yet over large parts of South Australia saltbushes are giving way to inferior perennials or grasses that appear spasmodically after flitting and infrequent rains. Not, of course, on all stations. There are many large-minded owners who realize that the extra few thousand head that can be carried at the expense of eating out the salt-bush are dearly purchased, even at the present price of wool. But there are others who, for one reason or another, are allowing this to happen. More often than not, I believe, that this is due to a failure to recognise the very great permanent value of the native flora. It must be admitted that, at present, the importance of conserving the salt and blue bushes on runs is largely a matter of opinion in pastoral practice. There is gradually accumulating, however, a body of scientific, botanical observations on the subject. The deduction from these observations is that it is suicidal to destroy the natural flora, and hope that adventitious grasses will replace it with a covering of equal permanent value. At present, however, no experiments have been made on the rate of regeneration of native plants, the order in which they reappear, the effect that grazing in varying degrees of intensity has on the seedlings, and so on. For these a reserve is needed. Such experiments are very necessary. Indeed, it is to the national interest that they should be made. The farsighted pastoralist, who will render such work possible, will merit not merely the thanks of his contemporaries, but, even more, those of a generation to come.

Mail 14/1/25

IN THE PUBLIC EYE



MR. G. L. WOOLNOUGH, of Malvern, who has been awarded the General Pau Scholarship at the Adelaide University. He is 17 years of age.

Adv. 20/1/25

JOHN CRESWELL SCHOLARSHIPS.

Applications will be received till noon on Saturday, February 7, from the sons of members of the Cricket Association and Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society for the "John Creswell" scholarship for the diploma of commerce course at the Adelaide University. Candidates must have passed the intermediate commercial, leaving commercial, or leaving examination of the University, and be under the age of 19 years on March 1. The scholarships are tenable for five years.

ROYAL AGRICULTURAL AND HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY OF S.A. (INCORP.)

"JOHN CRESWELL" SCHOLARSHIP.

FOR DIPLOMA IN COMMERCE COURSE, ADELAIDE UNIVERSITY. APPLICATIONS will be received by the undersigned up to noon on SATURDAY, 7th February, 1925, from the sons of members eligible for the above Scholarship. Candidates must have passed the Intermediate Commercial, Leaving Commercial, or Leaving Examination of the University, and be under the age of 19 years on the first day of March of the year in which the award is made. Full particulars of Scholarship obtainable on application. J. A. RILEY, Secretary. 23, Waymouth-street, Adelaide.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN CRICKET ASSOCIATION (INCORPORATED).

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SATURDAY JANUARY 1

MAN ON

THE LAND.

KOONAMORE VEGETATION RESERVE.

Professor Osborn's Comments.

Professor T. G. B. Osborn, M.A., of the Adelaide University, who is spending a holiday at Healesville, Victoria, with Professor Ewart, writes:—"Thank you for sending me the interesting paragraph from The Register of January 7, about a reserve for botanical investigation at Koonamore. At present I have no other information on the subject, so that I can