

**TEN YEARS' REPORT OF THE
AMERICAN SOCIETY FOR THE
EXTENSION OF UNIVERSITY
TEACHING 1890-1900**

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Ten Years' Report of the American Society for the Extension of University Teaching 1890-1900
by Various

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**Report of the Directors to the Members of The
American Society for the Extension of University
Teaching on Ten Years' Work in the Period
from 1890 to 1900**

In 1878, Sidney Lanier, writing on the subject of lecturing said: "During my studies for the last six or eight months, a thought which was at first vague, has slowly crystallized into a purpose of quite decisive aim. The lectures which I was invited to deliver last winter before a private class, met with such an enthusiastic reception as to set me thinking very seriously of the evident delight with which grown people found themselves receiving systematic instruction in a definite study. The fault of the lecture system as at present conducted—a fault which must finally prove fatal to it—is that it is too fragmentary, and presents too fragmentary a mass of facts before the hearers. Now if a scheme of lectures should be arranged which would amount to the systematic presentation of a given subject, then the audience would receive substantial benefit, and would carry away some genuine possession at the end of the course. This stage of the investigation put me to thinking of schools for grown people. Men and women leave college nowadays just at the time when they are really prepared to study with effect."

The thought of Sidney Lanier had already found expression in England through the plans and activities of the Cambridge and London Societies for the Extension of University Teaching. They were founded respectively in 1873 and 1876. Similar work was begun by the University of Oxford in 1878, and made effective in 1885 through the impulse given by the hand of Mr. Michael E. Sadler.

In 1890 Professor Richard G. Moulton came to Philadelphia, informed as to all that had been done in England and inspired by a consciousness of the potential force contained in the new educational idea. The response to the appeal contained in his lectures was prompt and generous. The American Society was founded, with Dr. William Pepper as its first President. Many of those who to-day are firm supporters of the Society were among its first members; there are many who, from the beginning until now, have never failed in loyalty or in direct assistance when their aid was needed. Mr. Frederick B. Miles has served uninterruptedly

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1890-1891
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in the office of Treasurer. The aim of University Extension as then officially stated by the English Societies was this: "To attempt to solve the problem of how much of what the Universities do for their own students can be done for people unable to go to the Universities."

This idea is a noble one, and it awakened the enthusiasm that looks for great and immediate results as well as that which nerves to prolonged and steady effort. There came a time when zeal of the first sort flagged a little, but there was enough of the staying kind to sustain, until results that were necessarily slow of growth began at last to be apparent.

To instruct people who are not obliged to go to school, it is necessary to awaken a desire to learn. To do this was a large part of the Society's work in its early years. It had to send out its missionaries and interest before it taught. The mission work was well done: the idea of University Extension found lodgment in all parts of the country. In some places it has had a permanent and important influence; in others it has shown no real vitality. Nothing comes out of University Extension unless a great deal is put into it; the desire to give, of the best, should be always somewhat more intense than the wish to receive.

As aids, in bringing its purposes before people, the Society published a magazine called "University Extension," and a paper, "The Bulletin." They were widely distributed and at first they were doubtless read; but the time came when themes connected with University Extension had lost their freshness, or the initial interest in a new subject had waned. At all events these journals were no longer read. Then an attempt was made to have a paper of more general interest—one that would supplement the Society's teaching by lecturers. "The Citizen" was launched in 1895. It seemed to have the respect of persons whose good opinion was valuable, when they were brought to read it, but its prestige was not sufficient for its purpose; we lacked the resources to conduct the paper as a commercial enterprise, and it made no headway in competition with magazines that must be made to pay, and therefore made attractive to the casual reader. Since August, 1898, the Society has had no periodical publication.

There have been published, however, from the begin-

ning, the syllabi of the lecture courses. The syllabi are constantly improving in respect to fullness, and care in preparation. They now form a large collection of outlines for study and reading and cover a wide field.

In a review of the Society's work, mention should be made of the Summer Meetings. Five have been held—in the years 1893-1897. Their purpose was to afford special opportunities for close and continuous study on the part of University Extension students, and teachers; to bring together the people of the various Centres and to stimulate the desire for the best that University Extension had to offer.

In England, for many years, such meetings have been held with success at Oxford and Cambridge, under the auspices of those great Universities, and with the use of their grounds and buildings. The Summer School of Harvard University is an instance in this country of somewhat similar work well done. The University of Pennsylvania liberally put at the disposition of the Society accommodations for its meetings, and for five years these gatherings took place in July.

Here again the serious purposes of the Society interfered possibly with an apparent success. There was little or no provision for those who wanted entertainment rather than teaching; and we know that the thirst for learning must be strong to induce people to study hard in Philadelphia for four weeks in July.

There was an average of 175 students at these meetings. The average yearly cost was \$3,273.79; sixty-one per cent. being paid by the students. The yearly deficit to be met by the Society was between \$1,200 and \$1,300.

The amount of labor and the expense entailed by the Summer Meetings were quite out of proportion to the physical powers of the Society's staff and to the money at command. It was found that the meetings were not so much for our own students as for strangers from a distance who did not know Philadelphia in July. There have been no Summer Meetings since 1897. They were undertaken in sincerity and worked at with devotion until it seemed evident that the effort and money expended could be better applied to the distinctive work of the Society, leaving summer schools for cooler places. Nevertheless the

Summer Meetings brought to Philadelphia, as students and teachers, many influential persons who went away with a respect for University Extension that they had perhaps refused to it, as seen from farther off.

It will be remembered that the University Lecture Association, beginning in 1887, gave for a few years a large number of afternoon lectures. When the Association was dissolved, in 1895, your Society undertook to have each season two afternoon courses, carrying out the plan of the Association, although modified by making the number of courses fewer and of a character to command attention. This plan has worked well. These are the only lectures given directly by the General Society instead of through the action of its local Centres. The lectures of one of these courses, given in Philadelphia in the winter of 1898-99, have been published by Houghton, Mifflin and Co., in a volume entitled "Counsel Upon the Reading of Books."

No aspect of the life of your Society is more significant and gratifying than the relation to it of its Centres and the co-operation of those who manage the local bodies. Unpaid, often at the expense of their own pockets, upwards of five thousand people have joined in our efforts, working hard with their neighbors, to arrange for lecture courses; to find meeting places; to sell tickets; to pay deficits; and persevering, until the demand created gathered strength enough to make good Centres.

Sometimes the General Society has been able to help Centres over hard places by a special lecture or by aid in money. On the other hand Centres that have prospered, and sometimes those that have known trouble, have contributed liberally to the General Society.

In New Jersey the Centres have an association. Their representatives meet yearly for consultation and discussion. Occasionally there are meetings of a more general character including delegates from all the Centres within reach of Philadelphia.

As the Society has grown older we have come to know better its field and its purposes. Nothing haunts the laborer in our vineyard more persistently than the question: "Does University Extension reach the people it was intended for?" We should like to believe that our answer will be final, but we know better.

University Extension is meant for those for whom religion is intended; for those for whom life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is intended. It is meant to help the ignorant who desire knowledge—that they may learn wisely; to reveal to the half educated the insufficiency of their knowledge; to rouse intellectual sluggards; to stimulate those who are in the right way; to bring questioning to the hearts of the self-satisfied. There is no class for which University Extension is not intended nor to which it has not ministered. There have been courses, not a few but many, to audiences made up entirely of the very poor; of the poor; of the poor and of those who are not rich; of these and of the well-to-do; of the ignorant but eager; of the cultivated but not learned; of teachers; we might almost say—having in mind the Summer Meetings—of scholars: finally, of people of all conditions who have some leisure for study or reading and look to your lecturers for suggestions and leading.

If University Extension is intended for so many, the number of those who have profited by it should be great. We find this to be so. The average number of people each year who have attended our courses is a little more than 18,000. The total course attendance for ten years amounts to 180,755, which is equivalent to an aggregate attendance of 1,084,530. The attendance has been larger in the last two years than at any previous time. In these years there has been an average attendance of 243 people for each lecture. There were given in the two years 1,056 lectures. Last year the average attendance at the classes after the lectures was 149, or sixty-two per cent. of the audiences. These results were accomplished at an expense to the General Society in 1900 of a little more than \$6,000.

If it is assumed that the teaching was better than the average of University teaching—and this may be maintained—it can be said that your Society is a People's University, teaching where it is convenient for the people to get together, in hours not given to labor. The teaching is often intermittent and sometimes discursive. It is addressed to the many and it can not always meet special needs, but it is earnest, systematic, and painstaking. It must interest or it can not be given. What the sum of the influence is it is hard to say, but considering the maturity and the num-