

**UNIVERSITY EXTENSION: AN
ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE
WISCONSIN TEACHERS'
ASSOCIATION, AT MADISON,
DESEMBER 29, 1890**

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Madison, Desember 29, 1890 by T. C. Chamberlin

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T. C. CHAMBERLIN

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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

WISCONSIN TEACHERS' ASSOCIATION,

AT

MADISON, DECEMBER 29, 1890.

Thomas Chamberlin
BY
T. C. CHAMBERLIN,

PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN.

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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION.

INTRODUCTION.

The part universities have played in the intellectual development of the people has not been constant throughout their history, and the place they now occupy is not altogether that which they are destined to fill. In the later mediæval ages, when the means of learning were limited, the universities of Europe were great intellectual centers to which there flocked thousands of students, embracing not merely youth but men of all ages and conditions. It is estimated that there gathered at Bologna, in the climax of its prosperity, as many as 10,000 students. They came from all parts of Europe; were possessed of all grades of attainments; remained at the University for various periods, and returned bearing exceedingly varying degrees of learning. Those were the days in which the universities were broadly open and were beneficent to adults to the fullest extent of the limited possibilities of the period. But there came a time of sifting, a time of putting up of bars, followed by a period of exclusiveness, and ultimately of monasticism. The universities began to close their doors to all except those who possessed certain qualifications. It was not enough that there be a desire for learning; there must be the requisite preparation to receive it in the way and form provided. The English universities became segregated into colleges with rigid curricula and sharp limitations. They grew into exclusive communities in other than the intellectual sense. They walled themselves in, literally and figuratively, and separated themselves from the

masses of the people. Then followed the long era of exclusiveness, which has been, in too large a measure, imported to our shores and become a characteristic of American institutions. From this stage we have not yet altogether emerged. We shall doubtless never return to the former condition, for there was a nucleus of good in the exclusiveness. The distinct classification of students into groups that could work well together was wholesome and needful. The requirement of adequate preparation was a necessary step to the development of the antecedent grades of schools of which our common school is the crowning outcome. It is infinitely better that common schools should be established among all the people than that all the people should go to a university for education. And so the modern system, which lends its greatest efforts to the upbuilding of common education in every community, is immeasurably superior to the mediæval system. But this modern system, great as are its superiorities, does not adequately provide for the higher education of the adult masses of the people. The most radical and effective remedy will be found, in ample provision for the development of increase of knowledge for the people and in more generous and effective means of conveying it directly to them and awakening in them an interest in it. It is this latter phase that claims our present attention. This is, in some sense, the special work of the University proper; but it is also, in some large part, the work of that greater university which our entire educational system constitutes. It is our common work, as members, in common, of this greater university.

The English University Extension System.—Eighteen years ago there began in England an important movement in popular education which has since come to be known as "University Extension." Its purpose was to carry forth to the people some measure of higher education by means of lectures and auxiliary studies. The movement started, as so many other important educational movements have, from an association of ladies; but at the outset it cast aside

all distinction of classes, and based itself upon a broad endeavor to extend to all who would accept it some of the benefits of university education. There had existed in several of the larger towns Ladies' Educational Associations, formed originally for organizing courses of lectures for ladies only, but which subsequently arranged evening courses for the working classes and young men engaged in business during the day. These were so successful as to soon develop a difficulty in procuring competent lecturers, and in remunerating them. The way being thus prepared, a formal appeal was made to the University of Cambridge for a supply of lecturers and a definite scheme for higher popular education. After some hesitation and preliminary inquiry, the University decided to try the experiment. In the fall of 1873, three courses of lectures were given by three of the Fellows of Trinity College in the cities of Nottingham, Derby and Leicester, one being on English literature, one on physical science and one on political economy. Courses were soon after established in other cities, and other subjects added to the list. Success attended the work, the number of courses gradually increased to 100 and beyond, and the attendance came to be reckoned by thousands. The University of London soon joined in the movement, and later, Oxford. Last year, the three universities enrolled upwards of forty thousand University-Extension students.

The work consists essentially of lectures, class work, private reading, the preparation of papers on assigned topics, and examinations. The lectures usually last one hour and are followed by an hour of class work. The lectures are designed to set forth the salient features and chosen phases of the subjects and to bring in from various sources not accessible to the student the best thoughts upon them, while the class work gives opportunity for the colloquial discussion of these and of the matter passed over in the assigned private reading. It also gives place for such questions and suggestions as arise from the individual thinking

of the members of the class. Themes are assigned upon which papers are prepared, and these are submitted for review, revision, discussion, etc. The courses maintained by Cambridge and London consist of ten or twelve lectures each on a single subject. Those maintained by Oxford consist of six. Experience indicates that the Cambridge and London system is productive of the better results, though shorter courses may be valuable as easy stepping-stones to the more prolonged and thorough work. At the close of the courses, examinations are held, which are optional, and certificates are given to successful candidates. A gradation of certificates is being developed. In the Cambridge system, six certificates for single courses entitles the holder to a vice-chancellor certificate. In the Oxford system, certificates are given for a single course, for one year's study, and for the completion of a prescribed systematic course.

In the carrying out of the courses, various auxiliary means are made use of to give effectiveness and interest. A syllabus, containing an analysis of each lecture, a list of reference and text-books on the subject, quotations, statistics, subjects for short essays, or papers by the students, is a common, indeed a nearly universal, expedient. In some instances, a traveling library is made use of, consisting of a small selection of books, especially applicable to the subject of the course, which is kept in a strong chest that serves at once as a bookcase and a shipping box. These books are either loaned in rotation, or deposited in some accessible room for reference. To avoid carrying about cumbersome diagrams and specimens, a projecting lantern is much used as a means of illustration. Local museums, private collections and local school apparatus are made serviceable, as far as practicable.

The success of the English lecture course appears to have been dependent, in some large measure, upon the accompanying private reading and study, and upon the preparation of the written answers and papers. Indeed, these weekly and fortnightly papers are spoken of as being the

corner-stone of the course. It appears beyond question, too, that the examinations and certificates dependent upon them have exercised a powerful stimulating and sustaining force. It is insisted by those who have most carefully studied the system that the *continuity* of the courses is an essential element in their success. Similar experiments had been tried previously with short courses of lectures on diverse subjects, but, while these undoubtedly accomplished some good, they developed no permanent sustaining power, and sooner or later fell into decadence. The Oxford course of six lectures has apparently been successful, but it is urged that this should give place to courses of at least ten or twelve lectures in order to secure the higher and better success.

The range of subjects embraced in the lectures gradually widened as the system developed. At the stage when Cambridge introduced the vice-chancellor certificates, two groups of subjects were arranged in which instruction was given. The first group comprised chemistry, physics, animal and vegetable physiology, comparative anatomy with selected portions of zoology, vegetable anatomy and physiology with systematic botany, geology and physiography, and mineralogy. The second group comprised English constitutional history, political economy, logic, ancient, modern or ecclesiastical history, English language and literature, law, moral and mental philosophy. These do not, however, comprehend the entire range of the Cambridge subjects. The distribution of Oxford's lectures may be indicated by the fact that between 1885 and 1887 no less than 198 lectures were delivered on history; 191 on literature; 112 on political economy; 48 on physical geography; 27 on industrial history, and 28 on art; these being given at 54 different localities. In the season of 1888-89, no less than 465 lectures were delivered on history; 111 on literature; 80 on political economy; 42 on art, and 144 on various branches of natural science.

The Extension lectures are chiefly given by Fellows of