

(editor's note: This paper was transcribed from a handwritten cursive copy with various difficulties. For a perfect rendition, the reader might wish to consult the original, itself a copy, in the volume entitled *Literary Club Papers*, May 30, 1891 to February 6, 1892)

## University Extension

One of the most interesting phases of educational activity in recent years is what is known as the University Extension movement. Mr. Geo. W<sup>m</sup> Curtis says that its development & extraordinary success are the most significant facts in the modern history of education.

This movement that had its origin in England nearly 20 years ago where it has awakened continually increasing interest and has met with phenomenal success. As early as 1850, in the discussions which then took place upon university reform, the idea was suggested of extending the advantages of higher instruction to those who were unable on account of want of means or for other reasons, to attend the regular courses at the University. A proposition came at this time from Exeter College, Oxford, that they should support lectures at Birmingham & Manchester, but the ancient and conservative English universities move slowly along in new lines and do not take kindly to innovations upon time-honored methods taken towards carrying out the suggestion that had been made. But the term "University extension" had begun to be used and the idea which that term is intended to convey had found lodgment in the somewhat sluggish British mind, and in due time it was destined to germinate and bring forth a goodly fruit.

In the years between 1860 & 1870 several isolated and desultory attempts were made by different professions to give instruction to classes in various places in the Kingdom by courses of lectures upon their special subjects, but there was great lack of method & entire absence of any organized place for continuing a systematic work. The feeling, however, was gaining strength at the universities themselves that these institutions were growing away from the needs of the people, that beyond a very narrow circle they were exerting no direct influence, while the large numbers who were thirsting for knowledge were cut off from all participation in the educational benefits enjoyed by the few.

The entire abolition of tests twenty years ago, & the admission of women to their lecture rooms and in examinations had given to all possessing leisure & means an open way to university education and privileges. But what of those possessing neither the leisure nor the means? Could nothing be done for the large & increasing number of men and women in the towns and rural districts, living obscure lives, eager for knowledge, using their spare moments in reading & following up with meager facilities, the study of some subject in which they were interested? Could not their class be supplied with some adequate & systematic curriculum of study including teaching of a high order, with the incitement of some university recognition or privilege to be obtained at the close? These and other like questions were forcing themselves upon the attention of the ancient seats of learning & were demanding answers. The necessity for heeding these inquiries appeared all the more imperative when they reflected that they had fallen upon a democratic era with the people as the real rulers even in England, & that any public institution which

failed to command popular sympathy & support, was likely sooner or later to find itself resting upon a very shaky foundation and as it came to pass that old, conservative Oxford and Cambridge began to feel that it might be well for them to devise some plan whereby they could show the masses of the English people that they had something valuable to offer even to them.

On the other hand appeals began to flow into the universities from all parts of the kingdom calling upon them to provide larger educational opportunities for the busy men & women who were shut out from the ordinary school privileges. These appeals came in the shape of memorials from a number of bodies, including Women's Educational Associations, the Educational Committees of Industrial Cooperative Societies, & Mechanics Institutes, while some of the cities presented their memorials through their Mayors & leading citizens. The Nottingham Memorial suggests that, "as the great bulk of the youth of the nation can not go to the universities, the universities should be solicited to send out teachers whom they had trained & equipped for this service to the nation."

They express the hope that thus the advantages of university education may be spread throughout the country to all ranks, and urge the making of arrangements with the various towns asking for aid, so as to divide them into such circuits as would engage the full time of a lecturer & afford him adequate remuneration.

The Leeds memorial declared that many youths would gladly avail themselves of facilities for helping up & extending the knowledge acquired at school, but none such existed. There was, no doubt some undirected & desultory reading, which few however, had the perseverance to continue or the ability to make profitable. Birmingham expressed the opinion "that the best teaching would fail to attract students in large numbers or to give stability to this movement in their behalf unless accompanied by (1) a programme of a course of study in various subjects with an examination at the end for those students who wished it, & that it should put the scheme into practice by appointing men to reside & teach in any place where the expenses were guaranteed."

The same general spirit pervades all of these appeals. They recognize the same need & are in substantial agreement as to the way in which that need should be met. They look to the universities to prepare proper courses of study & to furnish competent teachers to give instruction within easy reach of those wishing to join the classes. It is the old story of Mahomet and the mountain; the people can not go to the university; let the university come to the people.

Cambridge was the first to take up this work. Prof Stuart, now member of Parliament, was perhaps the most learned in the advocacy of the movement & the most efficient and working out & perfecting the plan of instruction that was afterwards adopted & has since been followed. The in 1871 he addressed a letter to Cambridge on this subject, in which he says, I believe that some such system (as he had set forth) which will carry the benefits of the University through the country is necessary in order to retain the University in that position with respect to the education of the country which it has hitherto held, & to continue in its hands that permeating influence which it is desirable that it should possess."

Cambridge, accordingly, made arrangements for beginning the work in 1873. The success that crowned her efforts within the first three years led to the formation of the London Society for extension of University-Teaching in 1876. This society originated with the meeting held at the Mansion House in June 1875 and presided over by the Lord Mayor. The proceedings were participated in by such well-known men as Mr. Gosehea, Lord Lyttleten & Dr. Carpenter. In 1878 Oxford entered the field, but accomplished little until 1885 when the work was revived & has since been carried on with vigor and success.

The first problem that confronted those interested in this movement related to the plan & method of instruction to be adopted. The ordinary method of the schools would not answer with the peculiar audiences met with in the University extension classes. Here were men and women the young & the middle-aged, the unschooled & untrained & the scholarly student, the day laborer & the young lady of leisure. The lecture system alone would scarcely meet the wants of this mixed & motley, but eager & earnest assembly of men & women who were seeking definite and thorough knowledge. The lecture might stimulate & inspire, but something more was needed to make the acquisition real & genuine, and to cultivate the habit of study & investigation, without which all that could be done would be of little worth after considerable experimenting & the teaching of various plans, the following was finally adopted as the one with which the best results could be accomplished for the class of students to be taught.

(1) Lectures consisting sometimes of six in number or course, sometimes of ten or twelve on the subject in which instruction is to be given. (2) A full syllabus containing a pretty complete outline of the whole course, with references to the principal authorities. A printed copy of this syllabus is placed in the hands of each student. (3) Questions at the close of each lecture upon the subject under consideration, the answers to which, are to be written out at home and sent to the lecturer before the next meeting of the class. (4) The class work proper which immediately follows each lecture & in which the students are given an opportunity to come into closer contact with the lecturer, in order that they may have a fuller discussion of the subject & have their difficulties removed. (5) A written examination at the close of the term or the entire course.

This is the University extension plan of work the lectures are usually given once a week in the evening, & books, or portions of book, bearing upon the subject of the lectures, are assigned to be read by the students. In case libraries are not accessible the lecturer carries with him a collection of the authorities to be consulted. This, as will be seen, is not merely a school of popular lectures, which often are little more than a kind of mildly literary dissipation, & which at their best are calculated to amuse & entertain rather than to instruct. The plan adopted contemplates genuine & thorough work.

Of course the success of such a scheme depends upon the ability & efficiency of those who are to carry it into execution, in the present case upon the lecturers.

It is all important that the lecturer should be a man of the right stamp. In order to be successful, he must have special qualifications for his post. Many a professor who may do very well behind his desk & before a class of regular university students, may fail

completely when he finds himself upon a platform before an audience of widely different character such as meets him in these extension classes. Not only must he be a thorough master of the subject, but he must also be a fluent speaker able to express himself before an audience of in clear & simple & forcible language. He must be one who can awaken interest in his subject & inspire a class with a desire for wider information. He must have his resources at ready command in order to meet objections & answer inquiries. His lectures must be suggestive rather than exhaustive inciting to further investigation & research rather than aiming to give a complete knowledge of the subject.

Accordingly, great care is exercised in selecting lecturers. They are nominated by a joint board of nine members, three from each of the universities of Oxford, Cambridge & London. The staff is composed in part of the professors themselves & in part of thoroughly trained & tested men who have obtained the approval of the University authorities.

Before a lecturer is accepted he must prove his qualifications for the work by preparing a course of lectures with a proper syllabus. Then he must deliver his lectures before a class and submit to be questioned by the members of the class & to be criticized by the University committee. If he pass this ordeal satisfactorily, he is sent out to observe & study the work of experienced lecturers, after which he is placed on the regular staff.

The universities have no funds at their command for carrying on this extension work & therefore the entire expense falls upon the local centers. This amounts to £60 or £75 for a course of twelve lectures, a pretty heavy tax on a community of laboring men. The fact that these courses have been carried on successfully all over England, among minors, & workingmen as well as among those in easier circumstances is very good evidence that they are appreciated & that they meet a need which is generally recognized.

Under a recent act of parliament the county authorities may appropriate public money for the support of these courses, & some of them have already done so, but the greater part of the funds, thus far, has been raised among those immediately interested. Wealthy men of public spirit & workingmen's associations have often made liberal contributions. On one occasion in Sheffield, the Scissors-Grinders Union purchased tickets to the lectures for all youths in their trade between 18 & 21. Trades Unions & industrial cooperative societies often furnish financial aid to the movement.

The University extension movement has introduced a distinctively new element into English public education, an element that no one can afford to ignore who wishes to form a just estimate of the means that are being employed for the intellectual advancement of the English people. Last year an army of over 40,000 men & women were pursuing their studies in these classes, in London, alone more than 10,000. Of the 52 counties of England and Wales, over 40 sustain University extension lectures. Nearly 400 courses of lectures were given last year at over 200 different centers.

The character of the audiences attending these lectures is an interesting subject of study. The lectures are designed especially to meet the wants of the laboring classes & of those without the means for pursuing their studies at the regular institutions. But they are open to all who pay the required fee, & the audiences are generally found to be thoroughly

mixed. We have an analysis of the occupation & social position of the members of some of these classes. For example, of 58 candidates who took an examination on a course in Political Economy at Nottingham, a large manufacturing town, 31 were men and 27 women, of the men four were students, five artisans, four warehouse men, nine clerks & shopkeepers, six large manufacturers, one a schoolmaster and two unknown. Of the women, seven were daughters of manufacturers, two of a minister, twelve of tradesmen, & six were milliners. Among these attending a course on "Greek Tragedy" for "English Audiences," we find one domestic servant, four artisans, ten employees in business houses, and 28 private governesses. In another examination on a course in Political Economy, given in one of the towns in the north of England, the highest place was taken by a coal miner & the second place by the daughter of the member of Parliament.

Some of the most successful work has been done among the coal miners of Northumberland. In 1880 there were 1300 working minors attending lectures at five different centers, & the work continued to grow there until it was interrupted by the strike in 1887. The enthusiasm exhibited & the self sacrifice undergone by these men in their efforts to improve themselves & to add to their stock of knowledge are worthy of all admiration.

The high order of intelligence displayed by some of them who have employed only the most limited opportunities for education & have passed the greater part of their lives working underground in the coal mines, seems almost beyond belief. They pursued with great ardor and success courses of study in such subjects as Political Economy, Geology, English History, Mining, Chemistry, English Literature, & kindred branches. Several of the 42 centers in London are attended largely by workingman. At one of these centers a course on Economics attracted a large audience that included working men engaged in ship building, boiler-making, coopers, sawyers, & dock-laborers. These facts show that this message of instruction is suited to the wants of all classes that have the desire to improve & the perseverance necessary to continuous study.

Another feature of this movement is the summer meetings at Cambridge & Oxford. From ten to twelve hundred of these University extension students met last summer at Oxford to pursue their studies under the very shadow of the university itself, & to confer about the general interests of the local centers.

At Cambridge a smaller number is found at the summer meeting but the work attempted there is more systematic & thorough than at Oxford. The plan at Cambridge is to offer to students who have obtained certificates of proficiency at the local centers, an opportunity to supplement their knowledge by practical work in the laboratories & museums. Classes receive instruction in the chemical & Physical Laboratories; courses are given in Paleontology & in Greek art and architecture, & other branches that can be illustrated with the collections in the museums. They also have free use of the libraries. Scholarships have been provided to aid those who otherwise would be unable to attend these summer meetings. The first of these scholarships came from Miss Gladstone, who presented on behalf of her father £10 to enable a student from the mining district to spend a month at Cambridge. We can readily conceive it to be a great event in the life of one of these minors from the North of England, to be able to spend a month in this old university town. The very atmosphere & surroundings of the place cannot be otherwise than elevating &

inspiring. Mr. John Morly, in an address to the London students in 1881, dwells upon the “indefinable charm that haunts the gray and venerable quadrangles of Oxford & Cambridge” upon the influence of those elevated memorials & sanctifying associations of scholars & poets, of saints & sages, that march in glorious procession through the ages & make Oxford & Cambridge a dream of music for the inward ear & of delight for the contemplative eye.” These summer meetings serve a good purpose if they do nothing more than hold the students for a month under the spell of these hallowed influences & associations.

In order to bring the local centers into closer relationship with the University, Cambridge, several years ago, devised the affiliation scheme. This was merely the extension of a privilege that had long been enjoyed by local colleges. Any center desiring to be affiliated must satisfy the University authorities that there is a body of students prepared to undertake a three year course of study & further that the needed financial support will be forthcoming. A student in order to secure the privileges of affiliation, must attend eight courses of lectures & pass satisfactory examinations. These courses are prescribed by the University. In addition an examination must be passed in elementary mathematics & in Latin & one other language. Certain certificates are accepted in place of this examination. Students who have successfully completed this work are entitled to style themselves, “Students affiliated to the University of Cambridge,” & if they enter the University, they are excused from what is called the “Little Go” examination.

If they wish to study for a degree a years residence is remitted, & they may take their degree in two years instead of three. It was not expected that many students would avail themselves of the last named privilege, because the most of them are without the means to pursue a university course, and many of them are too old to undertake it. The chief advantages of the scheme are that it places the stamp of approval upon the work of the local centers, & makes those pursuing these courses feel that the way is open for some vital connection with the University itself. Such is, in its main features, the University extension movement in England. It is evidently not the product of an ephemeral excitement. It is not a mere passing fashion that will soon grow old and die out. The work has been going on now for more than 18 years & it is growing more & more, year by year into a permanent, well-established system. Some changes will doubtless be made in the details of the plan, but in its substantial features it promises to remain & to become the recognized agency by which the opportunities for higher education may be carried to men and women busied with their daily labor.

The Scotch universities & colleges and universities of Ireland and Wales, and even of remote Australia, are following the example of England & are carrying out programs of study in the same line.

It is not a little singular that England which we are accustomed to think of as a country where conservatism is securely entrenched & where class privileges & class distinctions are looked upon as sacred inheritances, should have got so much the start of ourselves in this essentially democratic movement for promoting higher education among the masses of the people. It is true that reports of what was being done there, reached us from time to time through summer tourists & other sources, still only within a year or two has any systematic effort been made to adopt the University extension plan to our needs. That our

people were ripe for something of the kind has been sufficiently apparent for several years past to anyone who has observed the signs of the times.

The multiplication of summer schools with their increasing attendance & eagerness for self-improvement of the students that resort to them; the numerous clubs organized for different kinds of literary work; the large numbers that are receiving instruction by correspondence & other similar facts, furnish sufficient evidence that there is a demand on the part of many outside of schools & colleges for additional facilities for obtaining an education.

One of the first attempts at University extension work in this country was made by Prof. Herbert Adams & some of his co-laborers at Johns Hopkins, three or four years ago. They gave [ courses of ] lectures on economic & historical subjects to classes organized at several centers in & around Baltimore, in the Winter & Spring of 1887-8. But Prof Adams in speaking of these efforts says, very modestly, that he thinks the lecturers got more good out of them the audiences. As Prof Adams is one of the most successful & inspiring lecturers that I ever listen to, this self-deprecation so far as it relates to his part of the work, is probably unwarranted. At about the same time with this Baltimore experiment Prof Benis A student at Johns Hopkins, gave a series of lectures on University extension plan, under the auspices of the Buffalo Library, on the "Economic questions of the day."

The same gentleman gave a similar course the next year before the St. Louis Library. The Buffalo librarian informed me last summer that the course there was not as successful as they had hoped. Other similar efforts were made at different points, but there was no organization & no expectation of large results.

In the winter of 1889-90 a meeting was held in N. York City to consider the question of University & school extension. Pres. Elliott of Harvard, Pres. Patton of Princeton, and Commissioner W.T. Harris of Washington and other well-known men favored the movement by their presence & approval. But it was not until last year than any permanent organization was effected or any systematic work done. Philadelphia was the first to adopt & carry out the plan of work that had succeeded so well in England. The Philadelphia Society for the Extension of University Teaching was formally organized in the summer of 1890 & preparations were made for beginning the work in the fall. Some of the members of this society visited England in the summer of 1894 the purpose of studying the system there & of continuing the work of summer meetings at Oxford & Cambridge.

They returned full of enthusiasm over what they had seen and learned. The institutions for higher education in and around Philadelphia join in carrying out the objects of the society. The facilities of the University of Penna, of Haverford, Lafayette, Swarthmore, Bryn Mawr & others contributed to the success of the undertaking. The large number of colleges within easy reach of Philadelphia made that city a most favorable point at which to begin the work, & gave it a strong support from the outset. Again the committee was fortunate in securing the services of prof Moulton, of Cambridge, England, who had long & successful experience as a lecturer before University extension classes in his own

country. He threw himself into the work with zeal & energy & rendered valuable assistance in organizing & carrying forward.

Before the close of the season no less than 23 centers were formed and over 40 courses of lectures delivered to a total attendance of nearly 60,000. Courses were given in English Literature, American History, Chemistry, Zoology, Geology, Astronomy, Mathematics & other subjects. The greater part of these were very successful & some of the most successful were those in the most difficult subjects. Prof James, the president of the society, told me last summer that the best work was done in connection with a course in Trigonometry, given to a class of mechanics. The aim of the society was to cooperate with existing societies & associations in their efforts to promote the cause of popular education.

The audiences were made up from all classes in the community. The afternoon courses were attended mostly by ladies, but the evening lectures were arranged especially for working men and the attendance was largely from that class. The character of the work done seems to have been highly creditable. It is reported that Prof Young, of Princeton, after having read a series of papers prepared & handed in by the students of one of the Philadelphia centers, said that he should be agreeably surprised if the papers of the senior class at his college should prove of equal worth with those he had just examined. A large number of colleges and universities in different parts of the country have signified their willingness to cooperate with the society at Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Branch of the Armenian Society as it is now called, announced last summer its list of lectures & subjects from which local centers might make selections for the coming season. It embraces courses in History, Literature, Languages, Mathematics, Philosophy, Science, & Art, with a staff of more than 40 lecturers from Princeton. University of Penna, Bryn Mawr, & other institutions. Their field of labor the present year will doubtless be greatly extended. The experience of the Philadelphia Society shows that in our large cities & their environs, if not elsewhere, large numbers are to be found who will gladly avail themselves of fitting opportunities to carry on their education beyond their school days.

New York is the first state that had give[en] any state recognition to the University extension movement, ten thousand dollars was appropriated by its legislature at its last session, April 1891, for the promotion of this work. New York is exceptionally well-prepared for dealing with this subject. Her Board of the University Regents, with Geo. Wm. Curtis at their head forms an admirable center of control for the University extension movement of the state.

The sum granted by the legislature is placed in the hands of this body, and through it, is to be dispersed. A committee consisting of Pres. Adams of Cornell, Low of Columbia, Taylor of Vassar, Hill of Rochester, & Webster of Union was appointed by Chancellor Curtis to consider the whole subject & report.

They reported in favor of the establishment & supervision of a state system of University extension, & recommended the appointment of a University extension Council of five or more from the colleges & higher institutions of the state, to cooperate with the Regents. The there is every prospect that this scheme for popular education will soon be organized & in operation throughout the State of New York.

In many other places beginnings have been made & lectures on the University extension plan are being given to large classes. In our own State, the only experiment of this kind, so far as I am informed, is that now being made by our University of Cincinnati which is conducting classes on this plan on Saturdays. Classes are composed mostly of teachers & the subjects presented are History, Chemistry, & Latin. But we have, I believe, seen as yet only the beginning of this work in this country. There is, I think good ground for the conviction that it has a future, & that it will develop into a permanent & useful agency for carrying some fragments, at least, of higher education into the homes of our busy people. But an undertaking having so much that is at variance with long established custom, can hardly expect to escape opposition & unfavorable criticism. The academic Bourbon, who is sure there is but one way to do anything & that the only way has no sympathy with this new vulgar, untogaed candidate for popular favor. He has therefore opened upon it the arsenal of his wit & satire. The body of lectures, he styles the peripatetic priesthood of educational itineracy, & the whole movement he characterizes as the Salvation Army of Education, and yet if it has a real mission to fulfill it will easily survive these thrusts & continue to do its beneficial work in the world.

If wisely administered, it will serve with us, as it has in England, not only to raise the average of the intelligence & culture of the mass of the people, but also to beget in them a heartier sympathy with higher education & with higher institutions of learning.

E. W. Coy

Nov 7<sup>th</sup> 1891.