

HIGHER COMMERCIAL EDUCATION.

A UNIVERSITY COURSE.

THE ADELAIDE EXPERIMENT.

TRAINING CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY.

With the assistance of the Chamber of Commerce, the Adelaide University has undertaken a most interesting and important experiment, none other than to attempt to train "captains of industry." It is not an entirely new idea, but the scheme possesses novel features in Australia. The origin of the movement is simple. In a sense it is evolutionary. Public attention having been directed, notably through the leading columns of the "Register," to the absence of any provision for higher commercial education such as was to be found in competing countries, the University and Chamber of Commerce in 1901 simultaneously and independently instituted inquiries into the matter. On behalf of the former authority Professor Lamb was asked to supply information from England, while Mr. R. K. Thomas, one of the proprietors of the journal just mentioned, and a member of the committee of the Chamber of Commerce, corresponded with the late Mr. Alexander Sutherland, M.A., of Melbourne. From that gentleman he learnt that Victoria had attempted to meet the wants in connection with the University extension lectures, but the venture had only been indifferently successful. Mr. Sutherland outlined alternative courses for two or three years, in which, beyond the essential mercantile studies, he introduced an optional subjects English History, French, German, chemistry, mathematics, geology, and physics. Apparently the only tendencies towards divergence in the separate conclusions arrived at by the University and the Chamber of Commerce in the matter affected, as might be supposed, the relative emphasis which should be given to the purely theoretical and the strictly practical parts of an ideal curriculum. The academical body laid down the principle that "some fair amount of general knowledge and culture is to be required from the commencement, and that the acquisition of further knowledge is to be encouraged in the future, though it is not to displace or retard the acquisition of knowledge directly helpful in a commercial career." In the application of that principle it was agreed in conferences which subsequently took place between both parties, that an initial commercial examination should be provided supplementary to the primary junior and senior public examinations, and that the advanced commercial course should include six compulsory subjects, as will be found specified later.

About two years ago Mr. S. J. Jacobs, who was then president of the Adelaide Chamber of Commerce, became much impressed with the report of a lecture in connection with the courses arranged for the teaching of the machinery of business delivered by Sir Albert K. Rollit, LL.D., D.C.L., M.P. (ex-president of the London Chamber of Commerce and chairman of its commercial education committee). The subject of Sir Albert Rollit's address, which was given in London on June 5, 1902, was "Chambers of Commerce and their Functions, including Commercial Education," and two passages in particular attracted the attention of Mr. Jacobs:—

"In my opinion the principle upon which commercial educationists should act would be to give the best secondary education as a groundwork and for mental discipline, and then to build upon that foundation with knowledge which is specially useful in trade and commerce. The Spartan once asked: 'What shall we teach our boys,' and received the reply, which I approve, 'Those things which will be useful to them as men.' Our system of commercial education should aim at producing mental alertness, ready adaptation, and quickness in seizing new ideas and methods. From a business point of view this might be called 'up-to-dateness.'"

"The underlying principle of commercial education should be to make an active, able, and ready thinker, in relation to business matters, and especially to produce captains of industry, heads of departments, well-informed agents, and travellers, and clerks."

While the Adelaide Chamber of Commerce, led by Mr. Jacobs, was considering the necessity of providing facilities for higher commercial education, the subject was coincidentally receiving the attention of the university council, who obtained from the United Kingdom the latest available information. The university council approached the Chamber of Commerce on the matter, and the vice-chancellor (Dr. Barlow) attended and addressed a meeting of the latter body. As a result of the deliberations the university council formulated a scheme of commercial education, and in order to impart to it a better effect the council placed the chairman and vice-chairman of the Chamber of Commerce on the board of commercial studies, which is composed as follows:—Mr. J. R. Fowler, M.A. (D. and J. Fowler, Limited), chairman; Mr. S. J. Jacobs (Chas. Jacobs and Sons), vice-chairman; the vice-chancellor, Professors Bragg (Mathematics and Physics), Mitchell (English Language, Literature, Mental and Moral Philosophy), and Salmond (Law), Messrs. B. D. Colvin, M.A., W. H. Phillips (merchant), J. Shields (Bank of Adelaide), J. Edwin Thomas and W. Neill (accountants).

THE UNIVERSITY SCHEME.

The Adelaide University scheme of commercial education consists of two parts—(1) Junior commercial examination, (2) advanced commercial certificates. The former, which was established in 1901, is merely a school examination; but the latter is a distinct university course, including university teaching.

JUNIOR COMMERCIAL EXAMINATION.

The regulations for the junior commercial examination require that every candidate must have passed the primary, junior, or senior public examinations, and must satisfy the examiners in the following subjects:—1, Commercial arithmetic; 2, commercial geography; 3, bookkeeping; 4, business correspondence. A candidate who does not pass in all four subjects fails in the whole examination. Three classes of certificates are awarded—first-class, those who have passed the senior public examination; second-class, those who have passed the junior; third-class, those who have passed the primary. A candidate who already holds a certificate may have it raised to a higher class by passing the public examination proper to that class. Provision is made for endorsing on the certificate the fact that the candidate has been successful in—1, Any subject relative to the Public Examinations Board; 2, shorthand; 3, typewriting; 4, model drawing. The examination begins about the first week in December, and the entrance fees are—For compulsory subjects, 10s; shorthand, 2s 6d; typewriting, 5s. Last year 35 candidates presented themselves, of whom 14 received certificates. The institution is gradually increasing in popularity, but hitherto the secondary schools have concentrated their efforts in preparing pupils for the primary, junior, and senior public examinations; but when they shall find a demand in business circles for the youths who have been through a commercial course they must adopt it. In this connection it is noteworthy that, compared with 35 candidates for the latest junior commercial examination, there were 557 for the junior public examination.

Meanwhile the commercial academies supply most of the candidates for the junior commercial examination, and to those establishments Mr. Jacobs bears this striking testimony: "We have two splendid commercial academies here. The members of the Chamber of Commerce appreciate their efforts so thoroughly that they have given them every encouragement, and one of them has made an offer of scholarships to the Chamber of Commerce, which has been availed of. These institutions prepare the boys for the University up to the senior public examination, and help them through the commercial subjects. I have presided two or three times over the annual gathering of these academies, and think very highly of them." As a matter of fact, most of the city offices are recruited from the institutions referred to.

ADVANCED COMMERCIAL CERTIFICATE.

To obtain the certificate, candidates must attend University lectures and pass examinations in the undermentioned subjects, but the subjects need not be all passed at the same time, and they may be taken in any order:—

1. Business Practice.
2. Accountancy.
3. Commercial Law.
4. Economics and commercial history.
5. Banking and exchange.
6. Commercial geography and technology.

The examinations are held in each November, and the lecture fees, payable in instalments for the entire course, which extends over four years, are as follows:—Business practice, £1 11s 6d; accountancy, £4 4s; commercial law, £2 2s; economics and commercial history, £1 11s 6d; banking and exchange, £1 1s; geography and technology, £1 11s 6d. Total, £12 1s 6d. In addition the examination fees are:—For each subject, 5s—£1 10s; and for certificate, £1 1s; thus making the aggregate cost of the complete course to the successful student £14 12s 6d. A candidate who has passed in any subject prescribed relative to the B.A., B.Sc., and LL.B. degrees will have the fact recorded on his certificate.

THE TEACHING STAFF.

Authorities are more than ever impressed with the importance of the personal equation in education, and much of the distinguished success claimed for the Adelaide University is attributed to the happy selections affecting the professorial and lecturing staffs, together with circumstance that the size of the classes is not inconsistent with individual

treatment, thus ensuring that the students are well grounded in their subjects. It is too early yet to pronounce definitely upon the experiment with commercial education, but the indications are extremely satisfactory. Business practice and accountancy are entrusted to Mr. B. D. Colvin, M.A., Professor Salmond, M.A. (N.Z.), LL.B. (London), barrister-at-law, and a writer on jurisprudence has charge of commercial law. Economics and commercial history fall to the lot of Professor Mitchell, M.A., D.Sc. (Edin.), professor of mental and moral philosophy. Mr. W. Neill, for many years a leading bank manager, is the lecturer on banking exchange; while Mr. R. J. M. Lucas, the University librarian and a former State teacher, has charge of commercial geography and technology.

In connection with the annual progress examinations, capable business men are appointed as additional examiners, men who are specialists in the departments in question. For instance, in accountancy, Mr. J. Edwin Thomas, one of the prominent accountants of the city, examines with Mr. Colvin. Similarly, Mr. Shields, general manager of the Bank of Adelaide, assists Mr. Neill in banking and exchange; and Mr. J. R. Fowler, of D. and J. Fowler, Ltd., co-operates relative to business practice.

COMMENTS ON THE EXPERIMENT.

In the latest annual report the university council states: "The public demand for commercial education has amply justified the steps taken by the council for providing for such education." It might be added that South Australian business men recognise that the need for modernising commercial education is specially important where the natural resources are comparatively limited; but the movement in Adelaide is only part of a general education revival, the latest development of which is in connection with agriculture, with a view to make the best use of national opportunities. In April of last year Mr. Joseph Fisher, a former proprietor of the "Register," gave £1000 to the university for the purpose of promoting the study of commerce in the university, and this donation has been treated as an endowment. Out of the income a "Joseph Fisher Medal of Commerce" will be awarded to the candidate for the Advanced Commercial Certificate, who on completing the course, shall be the most distinguished. It is also provided that every alternate year a "Joseph Fisher Lecture" shall be delivered at the university and published. Last April Mr. H. G. Turner, of Melbourne, gave the initial address under this scheme.

Both factors essential to a successful education scheme—adequate facilities for learning and apt students—are forthcoming. Apparently too big a g.p. exists between the junior commercial examination and the advanced commercial certificate, but the board is keenly watching the experiment prepared to modify methods in the light of experience. The "certificate" might just as well be called a diploma, as the course is analogous to that for the diploma of music in contrast to the degree in that branch. The time-table of commercial studies to date may be exhibited thus:—

1902.	1903.	1904.
Commercial Law, Accountancy.	Commercial Law, Accountancy, Economics, Business Practice.	Commercial Law, Accountancy, Business Practice, Banking and Exchange, Commercial Geography.

The present number of students are:—Banking and exchange, 59; business practice, 59; accountancy, 45; commercial geography and technology, 21; commercial law, 14. No one has yet obtained the certificate, because the course will not be completed before the end of next year, but a fair number are attending all the classes with a view of taking a full pass. It may be added that the lectures are open to all persons, whether desirous of being examined in any or all the subjects or not, and certificates for passing any single subject will be issued if required. Indeed, this latter provision has been availed of. Last year 43 students attended the lectures on accountancy; 31 presented themselves for examination, of whom 14 passed. The corresponding figures for economics were 29, 29, 14. Consideration was given by the University authorities to the question of adding foreign languages to the curriculum, but it was felt unnecessary to increase the number of compulsory subjects in this respect because English is becoming the medium of cosmopolitan commerce, while students desirous of acquiring linguistic accomplishments have facilities provided among the ordinary University classes.

The courteous Registrar of the Adelaide University states that the advanced commercial course is proving increasingly popular, and the students are applying themselves to the work with much enthusiasm. The council will establish free scholarships in connection with the course next year. Mr. Jacobs, a commercial member of the Board of Studies, to whom reference has been made, says:—"Our experiences at the University in connection with the classes are these:—The lectures are mostly attended by clerks engaged in offices who take up the particular subjects in which they are most interested, and are frequently led on to take all the subjects. The scheme has given a great impetus to commercial education, and it has the sympathy and support of the mercantile people, who are giving a preference to holders of certificates."

All the classes are held in the evening. Whether the scheme will develop into a proposal for parallel studies on an extended scale sufficient to justify a graduate course with degrees in commerce—an entirely professional course in commerce—time alone can tell. Many mercantile men are opposed to a purely academical training, and the present arrangement supplies a current want, and meets with favour because it offers opportunities to those engaged in the work of commerce to acquire the theory in their leisure time, and those eager for enlarged spheres of usefulness to attain to a general and reasoned view of the principles and practice relative to trade and finance. The success of the movement in question is, in the opinion of those competent to judge, assured in the fact that the University authorities have secured the earnest support and active co-operation of some of the ablest, keenest, and most influential business men in the State.