Continued

times fewer common bonds of sympathy between the inhabitants, except perhaps when a grant for a local public work is in question, than there is between the dwellers in larger cities.

That this is an undesirable state of things cannot be denied. One may ask whether we are doing all that we can to combat it. Our present educational system has worked wonders, as any one will testify who is able to compare the elementary schools of to-day with those which were in existence in the colony 50 years ago. The extension of scholarships and bursaries to be competed for by scholars in the country, and the adoption of a system of agricultural teaching of which many of the pupils will be able to take advantage, are evidences of a desire not to centralise the educational advantages in and near to the city. The establishment of branch schools of design in several local centres, and the facilities afforded to country residents for competing in the art examinations, have already had a marked effect in stimulating a love of decorative art, and thus affording a new source of pleasure and instruction.

The youthful and the least useful of our educational institutions—the School of Mines and Industries—has already branches in the country districts. We wish it could be said that a spirit of missionary activity characterised the richly-endowed University of Adelaide. The announcement recently made of a willingness to provide for examinations in music in country centres suggests that the authorities are beginning to wake up to their duty, and we can only hope that these signs of renewed activity may lead to greater things in the future. The professional courses at the University are well provided for, and our locally-trained doctors and lawyers will no doubt do credit to their Alma Mater. But is all being done that could be done in the general arts courses? If we deduct from the total number of graduations in arts and of those now studying for the arts degree those who have been enabled by means of scholarships to take advantage of the University curriculum we shall find that the balance is exceedingly small. Even the special advantages offered to teachers and others by enabling them to pass an examination in one or two subjects at a time do not seem to have had the desired effect.

Could not the University authorities copy beneficially the methods adopted by less pretentious institutions? Or if that is beneath their dignity could they not initiate the extension work of the older Universities of Oxford and Cambridge? Whether the Australasian Home Reading Union, which was formed at the beginning of the year under auspices of the literature section of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science will accomplish much remains to be seen. But we can see no reason why a similar organisation should not do well if taken up by the University. As the vacation occurs during the hot months of the year it would probably be wise to attempt special vacation courses of instruction in the country districts. But surely our country institutes might be utilised more than they are. If the duties of the University professors are too absorbing and too exacting to admit of their paying occasional visits to the country towns, could not the University authorities utilise the services of others who are fully competent for the work? A charity lecture by a competent authority on the books in a country institute and on other books it would be desirable to purchase would be exceedingly useful.

If, following the example of the Australasian Home Reading Union, the University would mark out courses of reading in science and literature, and would arrange for each town or district to be under a competent director, who would probably be willing to give his services, the intellectual life of residents in the country would be greatly stimulated. Examinations might also be held for those who care to undergo the ordeal, so that by such methods profound scholarship would not be imparted, yet a new source of intellectual instruction and pleasure would be opened up for many who in the existing state of things find it hard to procure.

The work would react upon the University, for the more the intellectual life of the home circle is cultivated the more likely is there to be an increasing desire on the part of parents for their children to have the advantage of the full University course. The University is a national institution, and would help much more than it does to mould the national mind if it would show a little more readiness to adapt itself to actual requirements in its methods for diffusing the advantages it has to offer.