

be marked at its inauguration by the impetus which its own progress aids it subsequently in attaining. The opening courses of lectures represented pioneer work, and they were subjected to the natural drawbacks incidental to such work. Their character and their purpose were only imperfectly understood, and even the fact of their having been provided found its way only gradually to the public consciousness. Now, however, these initial difficulties are being overcome, and the prospects of the two new courses which are to begin this week are much brighter than those of their predecessors. The addresses are to be given at varying times to meet the convenience of practically everybody in the community, and the admission fees have been fixed so low that the poorest seeker after knowledge need not be opposed in his search by any financial obstacle. The variety of the topics to be discussed is a special attraction in itself. Professor Bensly's descriptive and historical account of ancient Rome should prove to be a fascinating study, especially as the eye as well as the ear of the audience will be appealed to, one special feature of the series being illustrative displays by the help of the lantern which has lately been so wonderfully developed as a platform auxiliary.

Professor Rennie has chosen a theme the interest of which is as comprehensive as human-kind itself. Though "The Atmosphere" cannot be depicted in dissolving views, the Professor's verbal description of "its constituents, their functions, properties, and uses in nature," is likely to be intensely interesting and instructive. On few other subjects is there such general misapprehension and want of precise knowledge as there is regarding the composition of the air we breathe. It is only lately that even the savants discovered argon, the "new" constituent of the atmosphere, and an example of the up-to-date character of the lectures is supplied in the announcement that one complete address is to be devoted to an explanation of what argon is, what it does, and what incidental revelations were connected with its discovery. The work now being undertaken by Professors Bensly and Rennie is fairly typical of the purpose of the University extension movement. In the discourses connected with it instruction and entertainment are combined in carefully proportioned measure. The diversion does not consist in attraction by meretricious glitter, and the knowledge imparted is profitably suggestive without being wearisomely exhaustive. The lecturers seek to supply a stimulus encouraging research at the source of erudition whence they have drawn. The professorial staff of the University have infused so much spirit into the new department of instruction as to deserve public appreciation and substantial support, and we trust that both rewards may be granted to them in the fullest degree. The people of the metropolis have in these lectures an opportunity for mental culture which is denied to the country residents, and they should esteem their privilege at its proper value. We do not despair of seeing University Professors and other public teachers dispensing high-class popular education in the rural districts through the medium of the Institutes, which ought to be intellectual centres for the communities in which they are situated. Such buildings should be utilized as a means by which the dullness of the producers' life may be relieved, and the tendency in Parliament to belittle the importance of the country Institute is a disquieting sign of the times.

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UNIVERSITY EXTENSION LECTURES.

A CHAT WITH PROFESSOR BENSLY.

[By our Special Reporter.]

Goeth in his maxims and reflections says—"It is not language in itself which is correct or forcible or elegant, but the mind that is embodied in it; and so it is not for a man to determine whether he will give his calculations or speeches or poems the desired qualities; the question is whether Nature has given him the intellectual and moral qualities for his work—the intellectual power of observation and insight, the moral power of repelling the evil spirits that might hinder him from paying respect to the truth," and he adds—"The best sign of originality lies in taking up a subject and then developing it so fully as to make every one confess that he would hardly have found so much in it."

That "it struck" me might have been taken for the text of a conversation I had with Professor Bensly in the Adelaide University on Saturday morning on the subject of the University Extension Lectures, in which some interest is being felt, but the actual system of which, it may be said, is "not understood of the people." No pedantic pandering to old-fashioned theory and dry-as-dust usage is the Professor; he is an up-to-date savant, and believes with Hansson that "Lucidity is a due distribution of light and shade," also that there are many thoughts that come only from general culture, like buds from green branches. He is enthusiastic on the subject of University extension lectures, and as he walked up and down on the carpet in the sanctum in the true lecturer's style expressing his views with the rapidity of accustomed service I became enlightened after the very fashion which he sought to advocate, viz., by conversation rather than direct teaching.

"The general idea of the system, I take it," he said, "is to get the best information and the soundest ideas on departments of study which are of general interest. Popular information on scientific subjects is sounder than it used to be, but general knowledge of literature, archeology, and the like, especially historical knowledge, is in a certain sense behindhand. What I mean is that in exact science people appear up to date—the authorities are sounder—whereas in historical matters and kindred subjects the public seem not to be so well informed, the accounts are so much at variance. In science there are recognized authorities, as you can easily understand; the teaching is not so superficial and conflicting. You see what I mean, and you can also realize that there is a great opening for the extension of knowledge on such points as I have indicated—it is a wide field to cover."

"It is, indeed, and how do you propose to go about it?"

"By giving people not students an opportunity of getting up to date, not by hard dry lectures over the heads of the people, or by merely amusing intellectual treatise which have a very transitory effect, but by a system through which those who attend the courses will be induced to think over what they have heard and follow it up."

"Somebody has said that some books are written not to teach anything but to let us know that the author knows something."

"Just so, that is the fault of some literary works, and is one of the defects of the ordinary popular lecture. We propose to go further, and permanently interest the mind, induce a desire to learn more, and that cannot be done by mere learned lectures and addresses, but by judicious explanations."

"You think that hard training is not conducive to the continuance of intimacy between the student and his subject?"

"It is not only the student we want to reach, it is after the study that the system comes in. It gives people an opportunity of keeping abreast of knowledge—up-to-date, so to speak—in matters after one leaves the school, the College, or the University. Now, do you not think that would be a very great advantage?"

"Yes; so few men, comparatively, continue their studies, the struggle for existence is too severe and absorbing."

"Ay! but one need not give one's life wholly up to work and amusement, there is a relaxation in pleasant intellectual study, botany, geology, history, all these and others mean beneficial relaxation and culture. I do not like the word culture, it has almost become a slang term, but it explains what I mean. Why should one go about through the beautiful world knowing little and caring less for the countless wonders and beauties surrounding one; the beauties of nature, the wonders of the universe. Even a superficial knowledge would make life so much more interesting, and yet how many millions pass their lives in ignorance, when comparatively little effort would place the pleasure within their reach. Our desire is to give them the right information and put them on the true track. They would find a fascination in the knowledge they little dreamt of."