

THE UNIVERSITY—THE BULWARK OF CIVILIZATION

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IN the heart of ancient Rome, by the side of the Via Sacra, stood the shrine of Vesta and the house of the Vestal Virgins. Here for centuries they kept the sacred fire perpetually burning day and night. They were treated with high public honors; for them a special place at the Colosseum was reserved; their privileges and precedence were maintained from the early days, through the Republic, and the commotions which darkened its fall, into the period of the Empire that ruled the whole known world. They were, in fact, the guardians of something constantly needed by the civilization of their time. Fire was a necessity of life, but difficult to produce, and it was essential to have a place where it could always be found.

Centuries later, in the Middle Ages, another kind of institutions arose in Europe which has also shown a marvelous permanence. These institutions were the universities. One of them was founded on the banks of the Seine, at what was then the small, medieval, walled town of Paris. Unbroken, it witnessed the change from feudal times to the centralized monarchy, the wars of religion, the strife of the Fronde, the upheaval of the Revolution, the tyranny of the Empire, and the oscillations of the political pendulum in the nineteenth century. It not only survived all these shocks, but has kept abreast of the growth of human thought and maintained, even enhanced, its position and its influence. In the same way, Oxford and Cambridge passed through the Wars of the Roses, the convulsions of the Commonwealth, the Restoration and the Revolution in the seventeenth century, and later, the gradual

evolution of the older forms of government into the democracy of the present day.

These are merely striking illustrations of the permanence of universities. They have endured for the same reason as the Temple of Vesta, because they kept alight a sacred fire needed by men. The light they guarded was that of knowledge, and constantly they added fresh fuel to its flame. Without the light shed by scholarship and science, men would be in the dark; or rather, although the light shines around them, they would not see. Sir Isaac Newton, in discovering the theory of gravitation, opened from his rooms in the great court of Trinity College, Cambridge, the eyes of men to see the structure of the universe, and illumined the human understanding. Earlier still, Harvey, in discovering the circulation of the blood, made possible a wholly new departure in the knowledge of medicine. In our own day, Pasteur taught the world to see bacteria, or rather to see their presence and operation, to which it had hitherto been blind. The countless lives that have been saved, the vast amount of suffering avoided by making men perceive the effects of these microscopic forms of life, is known to every one. Chemistry, at first the plaything of the curious, has in a little more than a century grown until it has given us control over the powers and resources of nature. Such secrets are revealed to-day mostly in the universities, and almost wholly by men trained within their walls. Nor is there any reason to suppose that, so long as these institutions maintain their vigor, the streams of new light will become less. On the contrary, with the

expansion of knowledge, the starting-points for fresh discoveries are greatly enlarged.

Physical Science offers the most obvious examples of the growth of knowledge and the light it sheds on man's life upon the planet; but the service of institutions of learning is not less important in those matters which deal with human relations. We know little of the foundations upon which those relations rest, and of the laws that govern them. We are apt to think the condition with which we are familiar is natural and necessary, until disturbances, such as have accompanied and still more have followed this war, reveal its insecurity. Neither order nor progress in the organization of society can be solid unless built upon solid foundations, and it is important, therefore, that those foundations should be constantly examined and their condition reported to the inhabitants of the house. But in order to understand the condition of the substructure we must know how it was built.

Physicians tell of strange cases of men who lose suddenly all recollection of their previous lives, and who in consequence either become senile, mere automata, or wander away, leading strange, unnatural lives, until something brings back the memory of their previous existence. A man who should forget his past would become either an immutable creature of habit, or go off wildly at a tangent. Without his own experience, life would be to him chartless. Now what experience is to a man, the knowledge of its past is to a people. Without that, it becomes immobile or unstable. The barbarous races that have no scholars are unchanging, unprogressive; those more civilized, who disregard them, have tried political and social experiments that have rarely, if ever, endured.

The main subject of a general education is, and properly ought to be, what the race has been and thought and done; and the wider the conception of the race and its doings, the broader and more profound the education. For want of a better word, these are commonly called the humanities, because they are directly concerned with man. From their nature, they furnish the chief landmarks, or points of departure, for navigating the unknown sea of the future. The knowledge of these things is stored in books. Libraries are its great depositories. But he is a rare man who can use a library, who can really get at its stores of information, without having been taught to do so; and it is the institutions of higher learning, the universities and colleges, that possess the key and can teach its use.

The wide-spread belief in a coming change of greater or less magnitude in social relations is not a reason for neglecting the study of man and of his experience in the past. On the contrary, it should be an incentive to a more profound examination and a wider diffusion of the knowledge of these things. So long as a mariner keeps within sight of land his longitude is of less importance to him; but when he puts out to sea he ought to be sure of the exact point from which he sails. In times like these, our people cannot know too much or too accurately about where they are and how they got there.

Universities do two things. They teach men to open their eyes and they discover new things for men to see. The first is essential for a civilized, and the second for a progressive, people. Without seers to show them what to see, men can perceive little. What is it worth while for a community to do for a man or an institution that can open the eyes of the blind—and all men are born mentally blind?

SURE DWELLINGS

BY MARY ELLEN CHASE

WHEN it was proposed in Dorset Village to raise the minister's salary from five hundred to six hundred dollars in recognition of forty years of faithful service, not a few parishioners were frankly and noisily skeptical. Miss Drusilla Means, salary solicitor, led the opposition. She declared the project preposterous.

"Fifty dollars would be unheard-of," she asserted to every pursued and captured listener, "but a hundred's nothin' short o' sacrilege! Haven't I collected in this village for nigh onto twenty years? Don't I know to a cent what each one 'll give? If my conscience would allow, couldn't I tell of them that haven't paid their last year's signin', and the one before that? Don't I know if it wa'n't for rusticators, we'd go without the gospel in Dorset? And comin' right now just after Mis' Harriet Norton's left all she had to the Maine Missionary Society instead of to the church! I declare, I don't know what they're thinkin' of!"

But Miss Drusilla and her followers, still objecting and unconvinced, were obliged to give way before the forces of organized labor. The Ladies' Circle proudly reported forty dollars' surplus from the last August sale; the Lookout and Social committees of the Christian Endeavor Society, inspired by the enthusiasm of a recent convention, pledged twenty-five dollars to be raised by socials and ice-cream sales; the Ladies' Social Library heroically promised ten, trusting to an increase in the demand for "shares"; the Odd Fellows, of which organization the Rev. Phineas Holt was an honored member, came forward with a promise of fifteen; finally the Village Improvement Society, breaking all

precedent, voted, after a secret session of the executive committee, to patch up the old flag and complete the hundred dollars.

Miss Drusilla, seeing in part the actual funds, and bound to respect the reliability of those to come, intrenched herself behind the bulwark of the future. Hopeful as was the prospect of the first hundred, how about those to come? But Dorset, in the main, refused to be anxious. Tacitly understanding its own village psychology, it knew that, although individuals might decline to sign subscription-sheets, they could be lured indefinitely to ice-cream sales, socials, and red-hash suppers. Moreover, it received reassurance in the added knowledge that the years of the Rev. Phineas Holt were already well beyond threescore and ten. Even if, "by reason of strength," they should become fourscore, the time was not far off when a younger man would ascend the Dorset pulpit at a minimum salary. The village, therefore, glorying in its triumph, wrote its pastor by the hand of Mrs. Tobias Blodgett, president of the Ladies' Circle, and looked expectantly forward to an exceptionally social year.

The Rev. Phineas Holt, with his wife Abbie, was working among the perennials in the front yard when young Enos Blodgett brought his mother's letter. The minister, leaning on his garden rake, read it, passed his hand across his eyes as though to clear his bewildered vision, and read it again. Abbie, busy among the larkspur with early witch-grass, that infester of New England gardens, and thinking the communication but a notice to be read from to-morrow's pulpit, did not see his agitation. When she