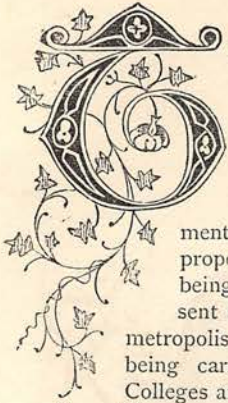


WINTER SESSIONS AT THE LONDON COLLEGES.



O prevent any misconception as to the purport of the following paper which its title may be considered to provoke, it may perhaps be as well to tell our readers, at the outset, that it is only of the Winter Sessions of the Evening Departments of the London Colleges that we propose to speak—our aim, indeed, being to give a slight sketch of the present state of evening education in the metropolis, as exemplified by the work now being carried on by the leading London Colleges and Institutions.

Some fifty years ago the idea of affording the means of evening instruction to those who were busily employed with hand or brain during the day was first mooted and was strongly advocated by the late Dr. Birkbeck, who may well indeed be called the pioneer of evening classes and lectures. He, it is needless to say, was the projector and founder of that Institution which bears his name, and which was destined to be the parent tree from which thousands and thousands of vigorous offshoots have sprung, not only in this country, but also in America and on the Continent. The ice once broken, the start once made, evening classes and lectures were commenced all over the country. To use the words of a writer of the period—"The whole country seemed moved by one principle, and in but a short time temples of science were reared in every corner of the land." Nor was this movement of fifty years ago a mere Will-o'-the-wisp, a passing fancy due to the excitement of the hour, but a real, permanent, ever-increasing power, which has now become one of the great signs of the times, and must be reckoned as anything but an ignoble factor in the calculations of those who would solve the ever-recurring problem of the education of the masses.

In glancing then at the present standing of evening education in the metropolis, we may not only glean much important information relative to the London Colleges in particular, but taking the capital of the country as representative of the other large towns throughout the land, we may gather a fair idea of the colossal proportions to which the little tree, planted half a century ago, has now attained.

It will, of course, be impossible for us to consider in detail the curriculum of each of the numerous Colleges and Institutions now engaged in the work in London; we must confine ourselves to a peep at some of the more important, both in point of standing and in numerical strength, such as King's College, the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution, the City of London College, and the Working Men's College.

At King's College a special Evening Department has been instituted, and classes are held in about thirty subjects, representing Languages—Ancient and Modern—Law, Literature, Science and Art. Every year two

courses are held—a winter course extending from October to March, and a summer course from April to June. The fees for the winter course are as follow:—For any single class (except Divinity and Practical Chemistry), £1 11s. 6d.; for four classes, £5 5s.; for five classes, £6 11s. 3d.; if Practical Chemistry be included, 10s. 6d. extra in either case. The Divinity lectures are free to all students attending any other class, but if none other be attended, a charge of 10s. 6d. is made. The fees for the second half of the winter course (from January to March) or for the summer course (from April to June) are £1 1s. for one class, and £3 10s. for four classes. In proof of the actual value of these classes, it may be stated that during the winter session of 1875—76 553 students attended classes, taking on an average two classes each.

It is very noticeable that at King's College (as indeed at all other Institutions of the same kind throughout the country) the Language Classes are the most largely attended, and this fact coupled with another—the great influx of students to the Arithmetic and Book-keeping Classes wherever held—appears to us a very healthy guarantee for the present and future commercial prosperity of the nation. At King's College, Languages—Ancient and Modern—are particularly well represented, as the following figures will show:—French, 117 students; Latin, 85; German, 74; Greek, 68. A reason for the proportionately large attendance at the Classical lectures may be found in the fact that King's College seems specially engaged in preparing candidates for the Universities and the higher examinations in the Law or the Civil Service, and does not follow the example of other Colleges in sending up candidates for the commercial examinations held under the auspices of the Society of Arts, nor for the science examinations of the Government Science and Art Department.

Students at the Evening Department of King's College, by attending twelve courses of lectures in addition to three courses of Divinity during three winter sessions, and by conforming to certain regulations as to examination, &c., may obtain the diploma of Associate (A.K.C.). Students passing satisfactorily through specified courses of lectures, intended to prepare them for the Law, the Civil Service, commerce, or science, may also obtain special diplomas, in respect of which the College authorities announce that every effort will be made to obtain their recognition by the heads of offices and the great employers of labour in each department. A number of prizes (in money and books) and certificates are also offered to successful students, but of these it is impossible to speak in detail, nor indeed is it necessary to do so, as full information on this and other points may be obtained from the College prospectus and syllabus.

One other subject deserves a passing word before we leave King's College. With a view to meet the requirements of those who desire to enter Holy

Orders, but are unable for any length of time to relinquish the trades or professions in which they earn their living; it has been determined (with the approval of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, and the Bishops of London, Winchester, and Rochester) to allow candidates for the Theological Testamur to attend two out of the three requisite yearly courses of study during the evening, the third year only being given up to morning lectures and classes. By this arrangement it will be seen that a surrender of one year's profitable occupation alone is required of students desiring to obtain this valuable certificate, which is accepted by almost all the bishops as a qualification for candidature for Holy Orders. The amount payable for the whole course of evening classes during the first two years (six terms) is six guineas per term, with £4 5s. 6d. entrance-fees; the charge during the last year's (three terms) attendance at the morning classes is twelve guineas per term. Thus the whole cost of the King's College Theological Testamur is now just under £80.

At the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution, as to the foundation of which some mention has already been made, no less than 100 classes are held, and these in about fifty subjects, embracing almost every conceivable study. Here the student may, if he feel inclined, busy himself with abstruse subjects like Hebrew, Philosophy, and Differential Calculus, or he may revel in the lighter paths of Music and Elocution. The fees at this Institution appear at first sight absurdly low, but when we examine the list of students, we begin to understand to some extent how such an immense establishment can be carried on at such low rates, another instance being here afforded of the truth of the time-worn saying, "It's the number that pays." There are two separate scales of charges—one for members of the Institution, and another (rather higher) for non-members. As, however, the cost of membership is only 18s. per annum for gentlemen, and 12s. for ladies, it will be apparent to all who care to compare the list of fees that it is far cheaper for a student who intends to join two or three classes to become a member at once. Members have in addition the further privileges of free use of the reading-room and library, containing upwards of 7,000 volumes, and free admission to the weekly lecture, entertainment, or concert held in the theatre. The fees for members vary from as low an amount as 1s. for the entire course of nine months to £1 per term of three months (this latter charge being quite exceptional, and to be referred to later on); while for non-members the fees are in every case a few shillings higher. The French class may perhaps be taken as an average one, and here the fee is 3s. per term for members, and 5s. per term for non-members. There are some classes in which merely nominal fees of from 1s. to 3s. per course of nine months are charged, but this low rate is the result of the valuable aid afforded to this and all other similar Institutions by the Government Science and Art Department. The lecturers are in reality paid by Government, as they receive

a grant of from 10s. to £4 per head for every student under their tuition who, having attended the requisite number of lectures, satisfactorily passes the Departmental examinations. A great inducement is thus held out to the lecturer to push forward his students, while to these latter it becomes almost a point of honour (though, of course, no pressure of any sort is brought to bear on them) to make the best use of their time during the lectures, and to compete for a certificate at the examination.

No better evidence of the valuable work being done by this Institution can be adduced, than the fact that during the first term of the last year's session no less than 3,090 students attended classes, and it is estimated that the total for the first term of the present winter session is about the same. Many of these students join more than one class, and, as a matter of fact, the 3,090 above-mentioned attended more than 4,500 classes. The following figures will show roughly the number of students in the largest classes:—Vocal Music, 950; French, 500; German, 200; Arithmetic, 200; Shorthand, 200; English Grammar and Composition, 200; Mathematics, 170; Elocution, 150; Instrumental Music, 150; Book-keeping, 130; Experimental Physics, 120; Writing, 100. Figures like these speak for themselves.

A special class to prepare candidates for the London University Matriculation has been started this winter, the fees for which are £1 per term to members, and £1 5s. to non-members. All who take an interest in the important subject of University extension, will be pleased to hear that this class already numbers twenty-nine students.

At the Science and Art Department examinations, held in May of each year, three Royal Exhibitions of £50 per annum for three years, three of a like amount at the Royal College of Science, Dublin, and six Whitworth Scholarships of £100 per annum for two or three years, are awarded; and, as a rule, two or three of these, together with a large number of the Queen's Prizes and Medals, are annually obtained by members of the Birkbeck Institution.

This Institution also sends up a number of students to compete at the commercial examinations instituted by the Society of Arts, and has always been very successful in obtaining a large share of the valuable prizes offered by that Society. In addition, the prizes offered by friends of the College and by the Educational Council, to be competed for by the members alone, are of no mean value, amounting in the aggregate to about £150.

Before leaving this Institution, it remains for us to notice that *only* a few years after its first establishment it was deemed advisable to throw open all its benefits to ladies, as it was rightly felt by its promoters that every effort should be made to help forward the education of that sex which was denied so many of the advantages open to the other. The Birkbeck was therefore in the van of the great movement of the last few years in favour of the higher education of women, and the value of its policy has been shown by the large number of ladies who have taken advantage of the

opportunities afforded by its lectures, classes, and examinations.

At the City of London College, with classes in about thirty different subjects, there was, during last session, an average of more than 1,200 students, many of whom attended more than one class. As might be expected at a College in the very heart of the City, what may be called the commercial classes receive the greatest attention. Thus the French classes have on an average 380 students; Shorthand, 130; Arithmetic, 120; German, 100; Book-keeping, 100.

The fees for the different classes (inclusive of use of the reading-room and free admission to lectures and entertainments) vary from 4s. to 10s. per term.

At the latter College there are classes for the preparation of candidates for Second-class Government Clerkships, and also for Excise appointments. Fees for the first of these classes: £1 per term of six weeks, or £1 15s. per term of twelve weeks. For the Excise class: 12s. 6d. per term of six weeks, or £1 1s. per term of twelve weeks.

The City of London College is, like the Birkbeck, in union with the Government Science and Art Department, and with the Society of Arts, and reaps the benefit of their examinations, and of the scholarships and prizes connected therewith. The College has also its own yearly examinations, at which a large number of prizes are offered. Pass examinations for bank and other clerkships are also held twice every month.

The Working Men's College, as its name would lead us to expect, depends for its students mainly upon working men, although it also numbers a fair proportion of clerks in its ranks. Classes are held in some twenty subjects, the general fee being 4s. per term for classes of one hour a week, and 6s. per term for classes of two hours. As at all the other Colleges, the students are most numerous during the first term of each session (from October to December), and they then average about 300 in number, the French, English

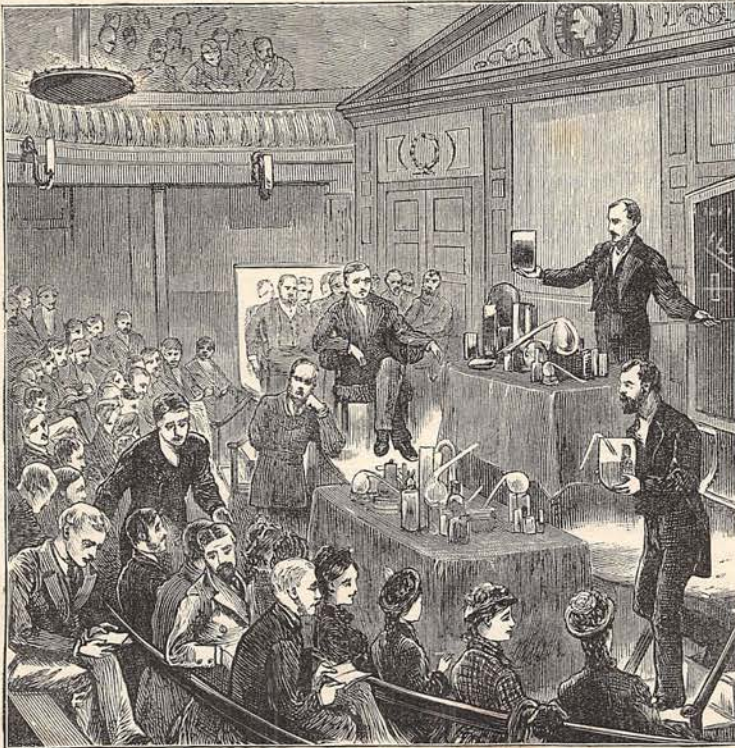
Grammar, and Arithmetic and Book-keeping being the most largely attended classes, the total averaging 100, 60, and 40 in each of these respectively.

And now in conclusion let us gather up the threads, and take a general survey of the character of the work that is being carried on in the Evening Departments of the London Colleges.

It will at once be recognised that the students consist almost entirely of those who are busily employed during the day either in the professions, commerce, or the workshop. At one at least of the principal Institutions, all the advantages are open to women equally with men. The extent of the work done is fully proved by the numbers of students on the books of each Institution; when

we compute the number of those annually attending evening classes in the metropolis at 10,000, we believe we are well within the mark.

It is in the commercial element (Modern Languages, Arithmetic, and Book-keeping) that the different classes seem strongest, though science, in consequence of the great aid and encouragement at present afforded by the Government Science and Art Department, has now gained a very strong footing. In addition,



AN EVENING LECTURE AT THE BIRKBECK INSTITUTION.

all the Colleges in question seem determined to lend every aid in their power to the higher University education, and are strong upholders of the schemes for University extension; they are also all more or less engaged in preparing candidates for the open degrees of the University of London, full information as to which was given in a paper published in this Magazine in December, 1875.

Without a doubt there are thousands in every walk of life, holding high positions in politics, commerce, law, literature, science, and art, who owe no mean portion of their advancement to the valuable advantages for education which evening classes and lectures afforded them in their younger days—advantages unknown to and undreamt of by their forefathers half a century ago.

G. W.