

1. It is a common complaint that a great deal of English business is marked by unintelligent rule-of-thumb routine. This would seem to be the natural result of putting boys into the office at sixteen or seventeen and never giving them a chance to widen their mental horizon.

2. During the last few decades there has been a marked acceleration of the speed of industrial and commercial change. The application of science to machinery involves more frequent changes in manufacturing processes. The extension of means of communication means a widening of the area of competition and a frequent transference of markets. All this calls more and more for mental flexibility, alertness, adaptability on the part of traders. Men need, more than they did fifty years ago, to be able to think round and about their business, to lift themselves above its daily details and to judge of it as a whole. But such qualities are certainly not likely to be stimulated by early absorption in the subordinate routine of a particular occupation. There is some chance of promoting them by courses of instruction which shall accustom the future trader to survey a wide range of industrial undertakings, to watch the development of the world's great markets, and to estimate the resources and capabilities of other nations.

3. Elderly merchants and manufacturers are often heard to lament that the rising generation does not take the same keen interest in business as in their young days. On inquiry it usually appears that the young days to which they refer were those in which they were themselves creating their businesses, and that the rising generation means 'the sons and grandsons to whom they hand over businesses already established. We may be sure that, for a long time to come, many of the leaders of industry will be self-made men, and that they will be keen enough about their work. But much of the trade of the country must be carried on by men who inherit their positions; and it is asking too much of human nature to expect such men to feel the same zest in their occupation as their fathers who made their own way. But if nothing can come up to the stern joy of original creation, its place can, in some measure, be filled by intellectual interest in the occupation. This is what a commercial training can give, such as the University of Birmingham proposes to provide.

4. Unfortunately, as things are at present in England, the better the educational opportunities have been, the greater is often the distaste for business. A correspondent, who has ample means of judging, writes thus: "Americans succeed because of knowledge, a good start, no looking back, and no regrets. They take to business like a duck to water. English public-school men don't—they go into business because they are shoved in. They despise it; and they vow that when they have made enough money they will clear out as soon as may be." This is an extreme way of putting it, but it expresses a widespread sentiment; and yet manufacture and trade are even more fundamental social functions than—let us say—the lawyer's calling; upon them depends the prosperity of the masses of the people; and they are not a whit more selfish than some of the "professions." If they are despised it is not because they are money-making, but because they have not been made intellectually interesting. Yet they are as capable of being made intellectually interesting as most of "the professions." To be brought to realise the larger issues involved in business decisions; to understand the place a man's own undertaking occupies in an industry as a whole all over the world, and the relation of that industry to others; to be accustomed to weigh conflicting considerations for and against a particular policy; to get into the habit of following the larger movements of manufacturing progress and international trade, and to learn how to get oneself at the best accessible information—in foreign sources as well as English—surely this, if anything, will prevent business from being dull.

5. Another indication of the defects of the system—or rather the want of system—that has hitherto prevailed in this country is to be found in the common complaint on the part of the heads of great industrial enterprises that they are unable to obtain for their service anything like a sufficient supply of men capable of assisting them in the higher work of their business. Efficient executive officers can, perhaps, be promoted from the ranks; but men to whom may be delegated a share of responsibility in management can seldom be found among those who have been engaged all their lives in merely carrying out orders. It is because their previous training has not accustomed them to take a large view of the policy of a business as a whole, to reflect on the relation of its several parts, and to consider the movement of markets and the fluctuations of price as the results of general as well as special causes. This is where a survey of business problems such as a student should obtain in a course of higher commercial education ought to be of value, not so much as furnishing him with direct precedents as in fostering a certain habit of mind—assuming, of course, that he possesses a mind that can acquire the habit.

6. And, finally, it may be observed that a vague sense that something is desirable in the nature of special training is already widely diffused among business men, and shows itself in the attempts men of high commercial position often make to enable their own sons to "learn business." Apprenticeship to a merchant still survives in some places; but the apprentice can only acquaint himself thereby with the details of one particular occupation: it is very seldom that the principal cares to talk over with him the motives which determine his action. Some parents pay a premium to an accountant to allow their sons to have "the run of the office" for six months or a year. This may be a most valuable experience in some cases; but in most it must be very much of a chance how much the young man really learns; and it can never be so beneficial as a well-planned course of instruction over the whole field of accounting, such as may be devised in a Faculty of Commerce worthy of the name. Some, again, send their sons for a period of foreign travel. This again may be profitable; but it would be much more beneficial if the traveller took with him some preliminary knowledge of the industrial resources and organization and recent history of the country he visits. And, finally, some who make large use of machinery put their sons through part of an engineering course—an excellent policy, again, if the future work of their lives is to lie entirely on the *technical* side of business, but positively dangerous (when unbalanced by training in other directions) if they are to take in charge the *commercial* side of business. For it