

nearly all the universities and colleges prescribed a regular four years' curriculum to a student, chiefly consisting of classics and mathematics, and leading up to a B.A. degree. A youth had little or no option what he would study, for everybody was expected to take certain classes in each year, and received his degree upon having satisfactorily performed what was in each class required of him.¹ The course was not unlike that followed (till 1892) in the Scottish universities: it began with Latin, Greek, and mathematics, and wound up with logic, mental and moral philosophy, and a tincture of physics. Instruction was mainly, indeed in the small colleges wholly, catechetical. Nowadays the simple uniformity of this traditional system has vanished in the leading universities of the Eastern and Middle States, and in nearly all the State universities of the West. There are still regular classes, a certain number of which every student must attend, but he is allowed to choose for himself between a variety of courses or curricula, by following any one of which he may obtain a degree. The freedom of choice is greater in some universities, less in others; in some, choice is permitted from the first, in most, however (including the great University of Yale), only after two years. In Harvard freedom seems to have reached its maximum. This so-called elective system has been and is the subject of a warm controversy, which has raged chiefly round the question whether Greek shall be a compulsory subject. The change was introduced for the sake of bringing scientific subjects into the curriculum and enabling men to specialize in them and in matters like history and Oriental or Romance philology, and was indeed a necessary concomitant to such a broadening of universities as may enable them to keep pace with the swift development of new branches of study and research during the last forty years. It is defended both on this ground and as being more likely than the old strictly limited courses to give every student something which will interest him. It is opposed as tending to bewilder him, to disperse and scatter his mind over a too wide range of subjects, perhaps unconnected with one another, to tempt him with the offer of an unchartered freedom which he wants the

¹ The University of Virginia was an exception, having received from the enlightened views of Jefferson an impulse towards greater freedom.

experience to use wisely. One or two conspicuous universities, — Princeton, for example, — and many smaller colleges, have clung to the old system of one or two prescribed degree courses in which comparatively little variation is admitted.¹ An elective system is indeed possible only where the teaching staff is large enough to do justice to a wide range of subjects.

A parallel change has passed upon the methods of teaching. Lecturing with few or no questions to the class interposed is becoming the rule in the larger universities, those especially which adopt the elective system, while what are called "recitations," that is to say, catechetical methods resembling those of Scotland or of a college (not university) lecture in Oxford thirty years ago, remain the rule in the more conservative majority of institutions, and are practically universal in Western colleges. Some of the Eastern universities have recently established a system of informal instruction by the professor to a small group of students on the model of the German Seminar. Private "coaching," such as prevailed largely in Oxford and still prevails in Cambridge, is almost unknown.

Requirements for Entrance. — All the better universities and colleges exact a minimum of knowledge from those who matriculate. Some do this by imposing an entrance examination. Others allow certain schools, of whose excellence they are satisfied, to issue leaving certificates, the production of which entitles the bearer to be admitted without examination. This plan is said to work well.² Michigan seems to have led the way in establishing a judiciously regulated and systematized relation between the public schools and the State university, and the University of California has now an excellent system

¹ The small colleges are the more unwilling to drop Greek as a compulsory subject because they think that by doing so they would lose the anchor by which they hold to the higher culture, and confess themselves to be no longer universities.

² At Harvard I was informed that about one-third of the students came from the public (*i.e.* publicly supported) schools. The proportion is in most universities larger. There is a growing tendency in America, especially in the East, for boys of the richer class to be sent to private schools, and the excellence of such schools increases. The total number of endowed academies, seminaries, and other private secondary schools over the country in 1889-90 is returned as 1632, with 16,649 pupils (11,220 boys and 5429 girls) preparing for a college classical course; 9649 pupils (6326 boys and 3323 girls) preparing for a scientific course. But these figures are, of course, far from complete.

for inspecting schools and admitting students on the basis of school certificates.

Degrees and Examinations.—It is only institutions which have been chartered by State authority that are deemed entitled to grant degrees. There are others which do so without any such legal title, but as the value of a degree *per se* is slight, the mischief done by these interlopers can hardly be serious. B.A., M.A., D.D., and LL.D., the two latter usually for honorary purposes,¹ are the only degrees conferred in the great majority of colleges; but of late years the larger universities have, in creating new courses, created a variety of new degrees also.² Degrees are awarded by examination, but never, I think, as often in Europe, upon a single examination held after the course of study has been completed. The student, as he goes through the various classes which make up his course, is examined, sometimes at frequent intervals, sometimes at the end of each year, on the work done in the classes or on prescribed books, and the degree is ultimately awarded or refused on the combined result of all these tests. At no point in his career is he expected to submit to any one examination comparable, for the combined number and difficulty of the subjects in which he is questioned, to the final honour examinations at Oxford or Cambridge, even as now constituted, much less as they stood fifty years ago.

There is indeed no respect in which the American system is more contrasted with that of Oxford and Cambridge than the comparatively small part assigned to the award of honours. In England the Class list or Tripos has for many years past, ever since the universities awoke from their lethargy of last century, been the main motive power in stimulating undergraduates to exertion and in stemming the current which runs so strongly towards amusement and athletic exercises. Examinations have governed teaching instead of being used to test

¹ Honorary degrees are in some institutions, and not usually those of the highest standing, conferred with a profuseness which seems to argue an exaggerated appreciation of inconspicuous merit.

² Mr. D. C. Gilman (President of Johns Hopkins University) mentions the following among the degree titles awarded in some institutions to women, the titles of Bachelor and Master being deemed inappropriate.—Laureate of Science, Proficient in Music, Maid of Philosophy, Mistress of Polite Literature, Mistress of Music (*North American Review* for March, 1885).

it. In the United States, although most universities and colleges reward with some sort of honourable mention the students who have acquitted themselves conspicuously well, graduation honours are not a great object of ambition; they win little fame within the institution, they are scarcely noticed beyond its walls. In many universities there is not even the stimulus, which acts powerfully in Scotland, of class prizes, awarded by examination or by the votes of the students. It is only a few institutions that possess scholarships awarded by competition. American teachers seem to find the discipline of their regular class system sufficient to maintain a reasonable level of diligence among their students, being doubtless aided by the fact that, in all but a very few universities, the vast majority of the students come from simple homes, possess scanty means, and have their way in life to make. Diligence is the tradition of the American colleges, especially of those remote from the dissipating influences and social demands of large cities. Even the greater universities have never been, as the English universities avowedly were in last century, and to a great extent are still, primarily places for spending three or four pleasant years, only incidentally places of instruction. With some drawbacks, this feature of the American seminaries has two notable merits. One is that it escapes that separation which has grown up in Oxford and Cambridge between pass or poll men and honour men. Every student supposes himself to have come to college for the purpose of learning something. In all countries, even in Switzerland and Scotland, there is a percentage of idle men in places of study; but the idleness of an American student is due to something in his own character or circumstances, and does not, as in the case of the English "poll-man," rest on a theory in his own mind, probably shared by his parents, that he entered the university in order to enjoy himself and form useful social connections. The other merit is that the love of knowledge and truth is not, among the better minds, vulgarized by being made the slave of competition and of the passion for quick and conspicuous success. An American student is not induced by his university to think less of the intrinsic value of what he is learning than of how far it will pay in an examination: nor does he regard his ablest fellow-students as his rivals over a difficult course for high

stakes, rivals whose speed and strength he must constantly be comparing with his own. Americans who have studied in an English university after graduating in one of their own have told me that nothing surprised them more in England than the incessant canvassing of one another's intellectual capacities which went on among the clever undergraduates.¹ Probably less work is got out of the better American students than the examination system exacts from the same class of men in Oxford and Cambridge. Possibly the qualities of readiness and accuracy are not so thoroughly trained. Possibly it is a loss not to be compelled to carry for a few weeks a large mass of facts in one's mind under the obligation of finding any one at a moment's notice. Those who direct the leading American universities recognize in these points the advantages of English practice. But they conceive that the corresponding disadvantages are much greater, and are in this matter more inclined to commiserate Oxford and Cambridge than to imitate them.

Nearly all American students do graduate, that is to say, as those who would be likely to fail drop off before the close of the fourth year, the proportion of plucks in the later examinations is small. As regards the worth of the degrees given, there is of course the greatest possible difference between those of the better and those of the lower institutions, nor is this difference merely one between the few great universities and the mass of small colleges or Western State universities, for among the smaller colleges there are some which maintain as high a standard of thoroughness as the greatest. The degrees of the two hundred colleges to which I have referred as belonging to the lower group of the third class have no assignable value, except that of indicating that a youth has been made to work during four years at subjects above the elementary. Those of institutions belonging to the higher group and the two other classes represent, on an average, as much knowledge and mental discipline as the poll or pass degrees of Cambridge or Oxford, possibly less than the pass degrees of the Scottish universities. Between the highest American degrees and the honour degrees of Oxford and Cambridge it is hard to make any comparison.

¹ If this be true of England, the evil is probably no smaller under the class-prize system of Scotland.

A degree is in the United States given only to those who have followed a prescribed course in the teaching institution which confers it. No American institution has so far departed from the old and true conception of a university, approved by both history and policy, as to become a mere examining board, awarding degrees to anybody who may present himself from any quarter. However, the evils of existing arrangements, under which places below the level of German *gymnasias* are permitted to grant academic titles, are deemed so serious by some educational reformers that it has been proposed to create in each State a single degree-conferring authority to which the various institutions within the State should be, so to speak, tributary, sending up their students to its examinations, which would of course be kept at a higher level than most of the present independent bodies maintain. This is what physicians call a "heroic remedy"; and with all respect to the high authorities who now advocate it, I hope they will reconsider the problem, and content themselves with methods of reform less likely to cramp the freedom of university teaching.

Notwithstanding these evils, and the vast distance between the standard of a university like Johns Hopkins at the one end of the scale, and that of the colleges of Arkansas at the other, a degree, wherever obtained, seems to have a certain social value. "It is," said one of my informants, "a thing which you would mention regarding a young man for whom you were writing a letter of introduction." This does not mean very much, but it is better than nothing; it would appear to give a man some sort of advantage in seeking for educational or literary work. In several States a man who can point to his degree obtains speedier entrance to the bar, and some denominations endeavour to secure that their clergy shall have graduated.

Post-graduate Courses.—Several of the leading universities have lately instituted sets of lectures for students who have completed the regular four years' collegiate course and taken their B.A. or B.Sc., hoping in this way to provide for the special study of subjects for which room cannot be found in the regular course. Johns Hopkins University was among the first to devote itself especially to this object. Its aim was not so much to rival the existing universities as to discharge a function which many of them had not the means of

undertaking — that of providing the highest special instruction, not necessarily in every subject, but in subjects which it could secure the ablest professors to teach. It has already done much admirable work in this direction, and made good its claim to a place in the front rank of transatlantic seats of education. There are also many graduates who, desiring to devote themselves to some particular branch of science or learning, such as experimental physics, philology, or history, spend a semester or two at a German university. Extremely few come to Oxford or Cambridge. American professors, when asked why they send their men exclusively to Germany, considering that in England they would have the advantage of a more interesting social life, and of seeing how England is trying to deal with problems similar in many respects to their own, answer that the English universities make no provision for any students except those who wish to go through one of the regular degree courses, and are so much occupied in preparing men to pass examinations as to give, except in two or three branches, but little advanced teaching. There can be no doubt that if Oxford and Cambridge offered the advantages which Leipzig and Berlin do, the afflux to the two former of American graduates would soon be considerable.

Professional and Scientific Schools. — Besides the very large number of schools for all the practical arts, agriculture, engineering, mining, and so forth, as well as for the professions of theology, law, and medicine, statistics of which have been already given, some universities have established scientific schools, or agricultural schools, or theological, legal, and medical faculties. The theological faculties are usually denominational; but Harvard, which used to be practically Unitarian, has now an unsectarian faculty, in which there are several learned divines belonging to Trinitarian denominations; and no difficulty seems to have arisen in working this arrangement. The law school is usually treated as a separate department, to which students may resort who have not graduated in the university. The course is usually of two, sometimes of three, years, and covers all the leading branches of common law, equity, crimes, civil and criminal procedure. Many of these schools are extremely efficient.

Research. — Till recently no special provision was made for

the promotion of research as apart from the work of learning and teaching; but the example set by Johns Hopkins and Harvard in founding fellowships for this purpose has now been pretty largely followed, and in 1889–90 there were in 25 institutions no less than 172 fellowships,¹ and the unceasing munificence of private benefactors may be expected to continue to supply the necessary funds. There is now, especially in the greater universities, a good deal of specialization in teaching, so an increasing number of professors are able to occupy themselves with research.

Aids to Deserving Students. — Extremely few colleges have scholarships or bursaries open to competition like those of the colleges in Oxford and Cambridge and of the Scottish universities, still fewer have fellowships. But in a large number there exist funds, generally placed at the disposal of the President or the Faculty, which are applicable for the benefit of industrious men who need help; and it is common to remit fees in the case of those whose circumstances warrant the indulgence. When, as occasionally happens, free places or grants out of these funds are awarded upon examination, it would be thought improper for any one to compete whose circumstances placed him above the need of pecuniary aid: when the selection is left to the college authorities, they are said to discharge it with honourable impartiality. Having often asked whether favouritism was complained of, I could never hear that it was. In some colleges there exists a loan fund, out of which money is advanced to the poor student, who afterwards repays it. President Garfield obtained his education at Williams College by the help of such a fund. The denominations often give assistance to promising youths who intend to enter the ministry. Says one of my most experienced informants: "In our country any young fellow of ability and energy can get education without paying for it."² The

¹ Of these Harvard and Columbia had 24 each, Johns Hopkins 21, Yale 6, Princeton 12, the University of Pennsylvania and Cornell 8 each, Vanderbilt University (in Tennessee) 10, the University of Wisconsin 10.

² Fees, in the West especially, are low, indeed many Western State universities require none. In the University of Michigan a student belonging to the State pays \$10 on admission and an annual fee of \$20 (Literary Department), or \$25 (other departments), students from without the State paying \$25 (admission), \$30 (Literary Department), \$35 (other departments).

experiment tried at Cornell University in the way of providing remunerative labour for poor students who were at the same time to follow a course of instruction, seems to have proved unworkable, for the double effort imposes too severe a strain.

Social Life of the Students.—Those who feel that not only the keenest pleasure, but the most solid moral and intellectual benefit of their university life lay in the friendships which they formed in that happy spring-time, will ask how in this respect America compares with England. Oxford and Cambridge, with their historic colleges maintaining a corporate life from century to century, bringing the teachers into easy and friendly relations with the taught, forming between the members of each society a close and almost family tie which is not incompatible with loyalty to the great corporation for whose sake all the minor corporations exist, have succeeded in producing a more polished, graceful, and I think also intellectually stimulative, type of student life than either Germany, with its somewhat boyish frolics of duelling and comotations, or Scotland, where the youth has few facilities for social intercourse with his classmates, and none with his professor. The American universities occupy an intermediate position between those of England and those of Germany or Scotland. Formerly all or nearly all the students were lodged in buildings called dormitories—which, however, were not merely sleeping places, but contained sitting-rooms jointly tenanted by two or more students—and meals were taken in common. This is still the practice in the smaller colleges, and remains firmly rooted in Yale, Harvard, and Princeton. In the new State universities, and in nearly all universities planted in large cities, the great bulk of the students board with private families, or (more rarely) live in lodgings or hotels, and an increasing number have begun to do so even in places which, like Harvard and Brown University (Rhode Island) and Cornell, have some dormitories. The dormitory plan works well in comparatively small establishments, especially when, as is the case with the smaller denominational colleges, they are almost like large families, and are permeated by a religious spirit. But in the larger universities the tendency is now towards letting the students reside where they please. The maintenance of

discipline is deemed to give less trouble; the poorer student is less inclined to imitate or envy the luxurious habits of the rich. Sometimes, however, as where there is no town for students to lodge in, dormitories are indispensable. The chief breaches of order which the authorities have to deal with arise in dormitories from the practice of "hazing," *i.e.* playing practical jokes, especially upon freshmen. In an American college the students are classed by years, those of the first year being called freshmen, of the second year sophomores, of the third year juniors, of the fourth year seniors. The bond between the members of each "class" (*i.e.* the entrants of the same year) is a pretty close one, and they are apt to act together. Between sophomores and freshmen—for the seniors and juniors are supposed to have put away childish things—there is a smouldering jealousy which sometimes breaks out into a strife sufficiently acute, though there is seldom anything more than mischievously high spirits behind it, to give the President and Faculty trouble.¹ Otherwise the conduct of the students is generally good. Intoxication, gaming, or other vices are rare, those who come to work, as the vast majority do, being little prone to such faults; it is only in a few universities situate in or near large cities and resorted to by the sons of the rich that they give serious trouble. Of late years the passion for base-ball, foot-ball, rowing, and athletic exercises generally, has become very strong in the universities last mentioned, where fashionable youth congregates, and the student who excels in these seems to be as much a hero among his comrades as a member of the University Eight or Eleven is in England. The excessive amount of time devoted to competition in these sports, especially as regards foot-ball, and the inordinate value set upon eminence in them, have in some universities begun to cause disquiet to the authorities.

The absence of colleges constituting social centres within a university has helped to develop in the American universities one of their most peculiar and interesting institutions—I mean the Greek letter societies. These are clubs or fraternities of

¹ Sophomores and freshmen have a whimsical habit of meeting one another in dense masses and trying which can push the other aside on the stairs or path. This is called "rushing." In some universities the admission of women as students has put an end to it.

students, denoted by two or three Greek letters, the initials of the secret fraternity motto. Some of these fraternities exist in one college only, but the greater are established in a good many universities and colleges, having in each what is called a Chapter, and possessing in each a sort of club house, with several meeting and reading rooms, and sometimes also with bedrooms for the members. In some colleges as many as a third or a half, in a very few nearly all of the students, belong to a fraternity, which is an institution recognized and patronized by the authorities. New members are admitted by the votes of the Chapter; and to obtain early admission to one of the best is no small compliment. They are, so far as I know, always non-political, though political questions may be debated and political essays read at their meetings; and one is told that they allow no intoxicants to be kept in their buildings or used at the feasts they provide. They are thus something between an English club and a German *Studenten Corps*, but with the element of the literary or "mutual improvement" society thrown in. They are deemed a valuable part of the university system, not so much because they cultivate intellectual life as on account of their social influence. It is an object of ambition to be elected a member; it is a point of honour for a member to maintain the credit of the fraternity. Former members, who are likely to include some of the university professors, keep up their connection with the fraternity, and often attend its chapters in the college, or its general meetings. Membership constitutes a bond between old members during their whole life, so that a member on settling in some distant city would probably find there persons who had belonged to his fraternity, and would be admitted to their local gatherings.¹ Besides these there exist a few honorary societies into which students are elected in virtue of purely literary or scientific acquirements, as evidenced in the college examinations. The oldest and most famous is called the Φ B K, which is said to mean *φιλοσοφία βίου κυβερνήτης*, and exists in nearly all the leading universities in most of the States.

¹ There are, of course, other students' societies besides these Greek letter ones, and in some universities the Greek letter societies have become purely social rather than literary. One of them is regarded with much suspicion by the authorities.

Religion. — I have already observed that most of the American universities, and indeed a large majority of the smaller colleges, are denominational. This term, however, does not mean what it would mean in Europe, or at least in England. It means that they have been founded by or in connection with a particular church, and that they remain to some extent associated with it or influenced by it. Only 99 out of the 415 mentioned in the Education Report state that they are unsectarian. The Methodists claim 74 colleges; the Presbyterians, 49; the Baptists, 44; the Roman Catholics, 51; the Congregationalists, 22; the Protestant Episcopalians, 6. But, except as regards the Roman Catholic institutions, there is seldom any exclusion of teachers, and never of students, belonging to other churches, nor any attempt to give the instruction (except, of course, in the theological department, if there be one) a sectarian cast; this indeed is apt to be expressly repudiated by them. Although it usually happens that students belonging to the church which influences the college are more numerous than those of any other church, students of other persuasions abound; nor are efforts made to proselytize them. For instance, Harvard retains a certain slight flavour of Unitarianism, and has one or two Unitarian clergymen among the professors in its theological faculty; Yale has always been Congregationalist, and has by its charter ten Congregationalist clergymen among its trustees; and moreover has always a Congregationalist clergyman as its president, as Brown University has a Baptist clergyman.¹ Princeton is still more specifically Presbyterian, and the Episcopalians have several denominational colleges in which the local bishop is one of the trustees. But in none of these is there anything approaching to a test imposed upon professors; all are resorted to alike by students belonging to any church or to none.

In all the older universities, and in the vast majority of the more recent ones, there is a chapel in which religious services are regularly held, short prayers on week-days and sometimes also a full service on Sundays. In most institu-

¹ Brown University, formerly called Rhode Island College (founded in 1764), is in the rather peculiar position of having by its regulation four denominations, Baptists, Congregationalists, Episcopalians, and Quakers, represented on its two governing bodies, the trustees and the fellows, the Baptists having a majority.