

## HOW A "SEMINARY" IS CONDUCTED AT JOHNS HOPKINS.

THE main Greek lecture room of Johns Hopkins is in the third story of the plain brick building fronting on Howard Street called the Administration Building. It is a large, oblong room, running the whole width of the house, and lighted by two windows at each end. Down the centre are two long tables, placed end to end, and round the walls hang open book-cases, in light brown wood. Above the cases stand several engravings of figures in Grecian costume, and over the door, a plaster-cast on a red ground of a celebrated temple-pediment. Other pictures stand on the floor, which is covered by a handsome carpet and the walls are hung with a light coloured paper. Altogether it has a tidy, homelike air, very different from the bare, forlorn aspect of the ordinary college hall or recitation room.

There are some twenty-five men, sitting at the tables with their text-books and writing materials before them, chatting quietly or reading in a business-like manner. These are the advanced students, graduates of other universities who have come here to perfect themselves in their several specialties. Their faces are all strongly marked and individual, and illustrate the national, well-nigh cosmopolitan, character of the university. Here are men not only from almost every State in the Union but from England, Canada, and even Greece. They are of all ages, from the grizzled professor who has left his own classes to take a special course here, to the fresh-faced young graduate who took his degree last commencement. There is only one of the cane-seated arm-chairs which is not occupied, the one at the head of the table at the eastern end. This is the professor's place, and just behind, between the two windows, is his black-board.

But the electric bell announces sharply that the ten minute interval between lectures is past. And punctually on the stroke of ten the white door opens at the upper end of the room, near the book-case with the dirty-bust of Plato atop, and the professor enters. He is a tall, massively-made man of sixty or thereabouts, with a dark complexion, a conical, bald forehead, and a full, well-trimmed beard, black but slowly turning iron-gray. He walks slowly but stiffly, for he was the colonel of a Southern regiment in the war and still carries a bullet in his leg. His name is well known to the world of scholars, and he is probably the greatest Grecian in America. He takes his seat leisurely and arranges his books before him in a deliberate way. Then he says, in a low voice, with a sort of crack in it, and muffled by his beard:

"Will Mr. — continue his interpretation."

Mr. — begins accordingly without any preliminary to read from his manuscript; and although we can hear the modern street-car rattling and jingling past all the hour, we are transported at once to the seat of the Peloponnesian war. The "interpretations" are arranged on this plan: At the beginning of the term the "Fellow" assigns to each member of the "seminary" a certain portion of the author to be read by the class. On these twenty or thirty lines the student concentrates all his energy: reads all the authorities on the subject, collates texts and notes: and each in turn reads and explains these to the class, of course with an accompanying translation. Mr. — had read his translation and the larger part of his notes the day before, and is now simply furnishing his grammatical comments. He proceeds rapidly, undoing this word-tangle, explaining that construction, correcting the other corrupt reading: and strengthens each position by quotations from German authorities, editors, or commentators. From time to time the professor makes a comment, asks a question, or requests the repetition of a note. The other men pay strict attention, following the reader with their own text books, and occasionally jotting down something in their memoranda. The "interpreter's" position is a dignified but not always a pleasant one. Not only is his audience extremely critical but, as the minutest accuracy is insisted upon, a single false quantity, a slip in a reference, the quotation of an antiquated etymology or exploded theory is apt to bring down sharp comment from the professor. In German student phrase this is "being on the card-plate" (*presentir-teller*); but American professors have more mercy on the unfortunate man who makes a mistake than their brethren in Germany. Though the work is purely technical, the "seminary" is rarely dull, even to the uninitiated listener; the professor is a well-known wit, and his flashes of fun and pleasantries light up dreariest subject, and make the most tedious discussion interesting. At last the interpreter stops short and gathers his papers together. The professor looks up, and asks:

"Is that the extent of the interpretation?"

Then he proceeds to give a brief criticism of the way the student has performed his task, reviewing his work and intermingling blame and praise. He then turns to the "Fellow," the tall New Englander at his left hand, who has charge of such matters, and asks who comes next; the next man is on the opposite side of the table, and to show the wide sweep of the university's influence, he is from Toronto, as the man who has just finished is from Baton Rouge. The new "interpreter" begins promptly: "My passage is from chapter so and so," and reads off his translation rapidly. How the Platæans being hard pressed resolved to escape, and chose for that purpose a dark, stormy night; how all went well till one of them, in climbing the wall, tumbled down a brick which aroused the enemy. And just at this interesting juncture he stops and begins his commentary on the grammar of the passage just as his predecessor had done. The difference is not in the kind, but in the quality of the work. Just as in the previous case, authority, comment, editor's opinion, come thick and fast; and just as before the professor plies his man with questions and explanations. In the midst of it the telephone-like call of the bell announces ten minutes to eleven, and the class seems to relax and some men stretch back in their chairs. The professor finishes his sentence, and asks:

"Is the time up? Then we shall continue the interpretation on Friday."

He slowly piles his books one on top of another, and leaves the room in the same deliberate way in which he had entered it. The men sit quietly till he rises.

This is one adaptation of the "seminary" idea which plays such an important part in the German university system. The design is to make the student for the time, the instructor, thereby training him to teach and forcing him to thorough method and original investigation. The other "seminaries" in Johns Hopkins, the English, the German, the Historical, etc., pursue much the same plan but differ in important details.

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## READINGS FROM CURRENT LITERATURE.

### NATURALIZATION OF BRITISH SUBJECTS IN THE UNITED STATES.

IN the meagre report which is all that we have seen of Mr. Goldwin Smith's address to the Canadian Club on Wednesday week, he appears to have given the British-Americans resident in this country some very good advice in the matter of getting themselves naturalized and taking an active part in American politics. If the stories be true which the British-American Association told him about the numbers which such naturalization would add to the electorate—90,000 votes in this State, and 40,000 in Massachusetts—its importance, both to Americans proper and British-Americans, can hardly be overrated. The latter would, if they acted together, control every election both in New York and in Massachusetts. If, for instance, they voted with the Republicans, they would overcome the majority with which our Democrats always "leave the city," and destroy that constant Democratic leaning which makes New York an uncertain State. That British-Americans—that is, the Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Canadians resident here—would, as far as temperament and character go, be very valuable additions to the voting body in the United States, there is no question. They are for the most part sober-minded, industrious, and law-abiding men, who mind their own business carefully and let that of other people alone. They have, too, in a very high degree, as Mr. Goldwin Smith pointed out in his lecture, the political sense which has made England the political model for so many successful and unsuccessful "nationalities." That they have a fair readiness for political jobbery, the history of British politics reveals clearly enough, but it has always been held in check by their eminent capacity for, and eminent success in, lawful and honourable modes of making money. Consequently, an Englishman or Scotchman will hardly ever take to "politics" as a livelihood as a matter of choice, or until he has tried and failed in everything else. He is by nature, too, a very indifferent intriguer or "manager." He loves open-handed methods, and, in spite of considerable natural pigheadedness, is probably more amenable to argument than any other politician in our day. Votes are still sometimes changed in the British House of Commons by speeches, and we do not know of any other legislative body of which that can be said.—*The Nation (New York)*.

### AMERICAN DEMOCRACY.

THERE is one characteristic of American democracy which should not be passed over, and that is its tendency to hero worship. Politics are much more a matter of persons than of principles, and the leader of a political party is a hero to his followers and a monster to his opponents. From heroes to heroines is a short step, and the present President's charming wife is worshipped and set on a pedestal as "the first lady of the land." If all hero-worship took such a harmless form as this latest development, there would be little to be said against it; but it is significant that it should spring up in the oldest and most conservative democracy in the world, and is one more proof of the ineradicable tendency of human nature to find some one to look up to and admire, however scrupulously the doors may be shut against an aristocracy, so called. In the East, especially in Boston, classes are at least as clearly defined and as jealously discriminated as in England, and society gains in refinement and charm what it loses, perhaps, in robustness and breadth. It is a well-established fact that there is no more fascinating creature to be found anywhere than a thoroughly well-born and well-bred American lady. The petty rules of social life vary considerably in different cities and states; and the fact that there is no overpowering centre like Paris or London to lay down the law for all the "provinces" gives a good deal of piquant interest to a journey through the States, which is lost in countries where the national life is more centralized. But the general tone of respect and courtesy towards women of all classes is unmistakable, and affords the Americans a legitimate source of pride. It is difficult to sum up the net result of impressions left on the mind by a hasty journey through Canada and the States—difficult because of the vastness and variety of the subject-matter, because of the similarity and the contrast with our own habits and institutions. But there is no question that few tours can be much more instructive than the one I have faintly sketched out to a young Englishman who wishes to trace the results of English blood and English tradition transplanted into a new country. If plants and animals alter in colour and shape through changes of soil and climate, we cannot expect our fellow-countrymen to remain exactly like ourselves, at a distance of several thousand miles, under widely different conditions. But we may well be proud that we can claim for brothers and cousins many millions of thriving, energetic Canadians and Americans, who present a spectacle of industry, vigour, and courageous foresight such as the world has never seen before.—*Nineteenth Century*.