

from the following: "Anything reticulated and decussated at equal distances with interstices between the intersections." Would he for a moment suppose that it was the definition of *net work*? Yet such is the fact; and it is one of the best instances of that system that can be adduced. So heavy a style may indeed sit with average grace, on such an intellectual giant as the dogmatic Doctor, but for retaining the interest of his readers how greatly does even he lose by contrast with his chatty little biographer Boswell? But it is his feeble imitators that we would consider. Innumerable are those who recklessly meddle with his ponderous tools without the strength and ability to wield them. It is this striving after long derivatives and doubly and trebly complex sentences, that, is most of all, the germ of this prevalent error we are deprecating.

The formation of proverbs, perhaps, best illustrates the cogency of brief forms of expression. A lengthened treatise, inculcative of a single moral or ethical point, strikes less forcibly on the attention and memory than the same idea stated in the form of a simple maxim. How would the philosophy of "a rolling stone gathers no moss" appear in such a garb as this: "those whose tendencies are erratic, and who fail in application to a set undertaking, but are fickle and volatile, will never attain to, I say not the acme, but the medium, nay, the beginning of success." This could be extended to many times its length, still expressive of the same idea and proportionally diminishing in effect.

The Greeks, it appears, were such ready thinkers that shortened forms, such as *Zeugma* and the *Constructio Prægnans*, were quite general, their quick perception enabling them to comprehend the full meaning intended, from certain indications of it. Happy Greeks! We, in our greater dulness, though somewhat appreciating, do not worthily emulate that advantage, nay, it is to be feared we do not properly and systematically aim at emulation.

Independent of a literary range, it is of interest to note those examples of laconicism that history has stamped for immortality, and to observe the character of the men from whom they come. It is these, men of deeds not words, who have mostly convulsed the world, and it seems as though no other style of utterance would at all be in consonance with their character. Can we conceive of Leonidas entering into any more lengthened defiance than the laconic "come and take them," in answer to Xerxes' haughty demand

for the surrender of his arms. Almost as household property has Cæsar's celebrated despatch become, *veni, vidi, vici*. Of course: What else could Cæsar do but come, see, and conquer? Though it be to the glory of our neighbours over the border and not to our own, we cannot but notice the dispatch of the gallant American Commodore, after the well-fought battle on Lake Erie: "We have met the enemy and they are ours." Nor yet ought we to overlook the words of brave Lawrence, borne mortally wounded from the bloody deck of the Chesapeake: "Don't give up the ship." Such as these are the expressions that never die. And now, as we call to memory these instances of brevity that have at times attracted our notice, there is one that strikes more impressively than any other. Is there, can there be, a more touching description indicative of a Saviour's love, His sympathy with our failings, His adoption of a true human soul, than that shortest expression of deepest sorrow: "Jesus wept"? To the adoption of a system of laconics, then, we look. Let derivative spelling remain. We can so shorten our style as to render orthographical change needless, keeping ever in mind that "brevity is the soul of wit," and not of wit only, but of every expressed mind-production.

A NATIONAL UNIVERSITY.

BY R. T. NICHOL.

There are some questions which disappear and recur with comet-like periodicity. They lead a sort of vagabond life; and like importunate tramps persist in their calls till satisfied. It is remarkable too that their advocacy produces no very acrimonious discussion, and that the opposition to their proposals, if it appear at all, is generally apathetic. This is in fact the main reason of their lingering and eccentric existence. Those denominated "burning questions," no matter what their intrinsic value, are kept prominently before the public, like bad-tempered children, by their very noise, and promptly disposed of in obedience to the popular demand. The other unfortunate class, however, obtain but scant consideration; and are settled finally only in consequence of a feeling of weariness, such as won justice for the widow of Scripture. And all this because men are, on the whole, sufficiently convinced of the truth of their prominent propositions, and refuse to take the trouble to scrutinize them more closely.

Of this nature seems to be the notion of a National, that is, Provincial, University.

Few, I fancy, will be found to dispute the desirableness of such an institution; few blind enough not to perceive the fallacies and misfortunes of our present system. Evidently too, it is the only solution of the difficulty.

To have several—in Ontario there are six—corporations empowered to grant degrees, each of which fixes its own standard, is an unsatisfactory and confusing state of affairs. That two men are legally entitled to write the same letters after their names, is no guarantee in the world that they possess at all similar excellence in scholarship. It never could be, under the most favourable circumstances, more than an approximate test, but now the difficulty is six-fold increased.

University affiliation, then, is the remedy to which we must look for relief.

But though men are pretty unanimous on this point, they seem disposed to wrangle as to the way in which it shall be effected. Now the root of all their disputes lies in the diversity of ideas respecting a University—its essential functions, aims, and constitution.

Of all errors on this point, the most common is that which confuses the terms—College and University.

A College is not a University; nor need a University be necessarily represented by a College. For us, a University is essentially only a degree-granting body. It is true that most Universities have an authorized training-school, or set of training-schools, where students are prepared for the University examinations, and these are the Colleges; but in all essential functions the two bodies are perfectly distinct. Each has its own officers, its own rules, its own duties.

On this basis nothing could be easier than University affiliation. It would require only that a central board, elected by the colleges conjointly, should send down to each of its constituents in the provinces, the papers for the intermediate and degree examinations, or, if need be, require the candidates to present themselves in the metropolis.

Uniformity would thus be gained—a gain inestimable—and yet the colleges left to form their internal arrangements as they chose.

This is the theory of the case. In practice, doubtless, there would be individual jealousies to compose, and individual rights to clamour for recognition. The task, nevertheless, would