

are to acquire certificates and titles. But the truly typical instances of instruction setting up for education are the examining bodies which assume the title of university, though lacking every single distinctive feature connoted by that ancient and once unambiguous term. Examinations are not essential to a university, nor are pleasant topic to discuss. What I am here more immediately concerned with is the effect which cheap university degrees will have upon the lower classes, or masses, who obtain them.

If the knowledge obtained by this instruction—I mean the preparation for the examinations—were to be utilised in the sphere of life occupied by the graduates, very good results might sometimes ensue. Here and there may also be found a dormant genius, whose energies are awakened by this stimulus, and who starts from mere examination work into independent thinking. I have never yet heard of such a case, but we must suppose it possible. The great danger, which is not theoretical or threatening, but practical and pressing, is that these titles conferred upon the poor and ambitious will set them to despise their own sphere, and seek the occupations of what are called gentlemen. Take the case of modern Greece. Here the Government gave free university education to any pauper who could support himself by the most menial occupations at Athens. This system crowded the country with graduates and licentiates, all qualified for the learned professions. What is the result? Fields, even in Attica, are lying fallow; every young graduate despises the plough and the counter; he must be a man of letters, an advocate, a politician, one of the intellectual classes. And so the cafés are political clubs; the daily press inundates the public; the professions are ruined

with crowding, while the actual resources of the country in agriculture, mining, and the like are lying undeveloped.⁴

The case of Ireland is likely to be very similar. An examining body, styled the Royal University, established by the side of the old and real University of Dublin, gives all the degrees required for professions for a few examinations and a few pounds.⁵ I need hardly tell anyone, even superficially acquainted with the country, that its farmers are so slovenly and ignorant, its business men so idle and slack, that we may safely aver not one-half the natural produce of the island is realised. Of course there are exceptions—admirably cultivated spots in the country, and energetic people in the towns; but they *are* exceptions, and what I say is strictly, if not universally, true. If the new spread of instruction were producing its expected results, these faults should be rapidly disappearing. I cannot see any such gradual improvement, but I can see very plainly that all the professions, including those of politics and of the press, are being crowded with second-rate persons. The old traditions of the Church, the Bar, the Hospital are vanishing; amid the throng of inferior men real eminence is disappearing; profits are becoming so small and precarious as to impair the liberty, and with it the dignity, of the professional man. The change of tone in these classes is even

⁴ While I am writing these words I hear that the present Prime Minister, the wise and enlightened M. Tricoupis, has established university charges at Athens, and so has driven away a hungry crowd, which would not, or could not, afford even nominal fees.

⁵ I know very well that a section of this establishment consists of the old Queen's Colleges, which are genuine teaching bodies. They were forced into the new system against their will, and are even now only a fraction of the crowd that comes up for examinations.