

DALHOUSIE Gazette

AMERICA'S OLDEST COLLEGE PAPER

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Once again this year the impressive ceremony known as Convocation comes around, when proud parents pour into town to watch their young receive degrees of one sort or another, and professors heave a sigh of relief, and watch another crop go out into the cold, hard world. Like Thanksgiving, Convocation is on the way to becoming one of those quaint domestic celebrations, when members of a family confer gifts on each other, indulge in the extravagance of a turkey or some similarly palatable beast, and the greeting-card companies hasten to turnout an appropriate piece of pasteboard complete with envelope which they can sell at exorbitant prices.

The student of American universities, whose boundless enthusiasm for celebrations of any sort is well known, throws himself wholeheartedly into the thing, and puts on a splendid display for the folks, while the significance of the occasion, if any, usually escapes him. Like Munro Day, these celebrations mean that there are no classes, and should be taken advantage of as such.

Just what significance of Convocation, and of degrees, is at the moment is rather uncertain.

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There was a time when the university degree was a difficult thing to acquire. The undergraduate had to measure up to a certain standard before he was even allowed to write exams, and when he did write those exams he very seldom failed. Nowadays it is a source of justifiable pride to modern educators that higher education is open to many more than it used to be, and it has also occurred to some that the introduction of mass production techniques has reduced the quality of the product. A part of the old machine has been lost in the process, and it is probably the fact that the old universities were not content to simply expose undergraduates to learning—they taught them first how to learn and assess whatever they did assimilate.

Nowadays undergraduates come to college with less training than they used to have, and far younger than they used to be. The universities, where they might have thought it necessary to increase instruction in method and approach, have almost dropped it altogether. The undergraduate is exposed to facts, neatly tied up and labelled, and if he can remember about fifty percent of the factual material for four years he will receive a degree.

What meaning, if any, the process has for him, is another matter. Standards of education are certainly lower than they used to be, and the emphasis on method has vanished. Only in professional schools and business courses is knowledge dispensed adequately, which may indicate what the present generations consider important and what they do not. Education is too confused in the public mind with making a living for its reaction to be at all different.

Whether or not the universities themselves encouraged this trend is another matter. They have to compete. One thing is certain: the graduate of a professional school emerges into a world where he knows exactly what his job will be, what his market value is and how much he is worth to prospective employers. He is honest enough not to pretend to any scholarly propensities, usually because they do not matter to him. But what of the Arts student?

He receive a mass-production degree, unless he has specialized and continued in some special field. His general education will be, in any case, pitiful compared to older standards. He is little better off than he was when he came from a slightly-better-than-average school, except for the doubtful acquisition of a few more facts.

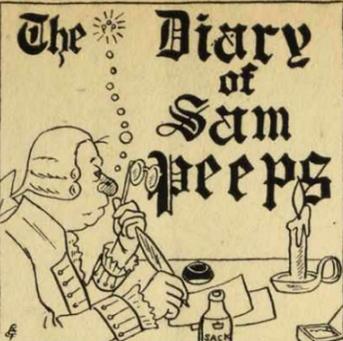
One factor is that there are too many universities which compete for their students. Where they used to do this by offering better instruction than their competitor, the American development is to hold out football and fraternities—the making of many an otherwise worthless institution. All this, of course, is beating a dead horse, which might be labelled "education" quite appropriately.

To the practical the subject is one for idle academic conjecture, not to be confused with the important realities of life. Education, even in universities, is secondary to the things that matter, like public support and a homelike atmosphere for the benefit of parents. Never before in the history of education have so many institutions owed their existence to things less connected with education.

* * * * *

All of which brings us back to the ceremony which confers degrees, when alumni flock in to entertain the departing, and parents collect to receive their transformed children back to the fold. To the professors another class is being sent out into the world. Exactly what it means to the new graduate is another matter. Few are naive enough to think that a pass B.A. makes them scholars, and many suspect that their earning power is not much better than it was before. They are leaving a place where they have spent four of the best years of their lives, which they may remember with pleasant feelings.

After the excitement of the impressive ceremony, what has the graduate got? We don't know.



The Diary of Sam Peeps

Tuesday, March 8 — Up betimes to the editorial rooms of the Spectator, early edition) where I did meet sundry scoundrels, Less Ozone, Exclamation Genulflect, Bend Pinelee, Erect Poorter, Brace Fastentimber, Andy MacEyewash and Din Drunkwoman. All this day a great coming and going of students—all rejoicing and in high spirits—for this is Morrow Day.

This night a great rumor that one of the elders of the college on the hill has fallen into disgrace—he has certain fallen. Dean Catastrophe, the exponent of the new cult, inevitabilism, did misjudge his distance, and missed a chair in the great gymnasium causing himself some embarrassment, and causing a sharp upswing in the sales curve of the liniment trade. However, he was not the only one to miss a chair during the evening's celebrations.

Wince All-in has been gunning for Gusto McSpike, the bartender, in the Morrow Day show. He has avowed that he will slay McSpike, for the athletic bartender did feed him a mickey during the show. And that's not all.

Arthur "Sir Laurence" Hairline, director of the great show is rapidly reaching a state of bankruptcy, I am told. He has to pay for several hats similar to those worn in the western colonies, and the notorious Knave Flusher who met his demise in the show, but recovered, is suing him for a patch for a pair of pants which were damaged in the action.

Wednesday, March 9—Oblivion!!

Thursday, March 10 — At last—up! Did ever a man have such a head? My pate is apt to split this day—must be something I ate.

Had a long talk with Doctor Otto, Tuesday, and when I did tell him that my interest in education was so great, and that I might return to the college on the hill to study the law next year, he did say, hastily, "Mr. Peeps, you have a great future in Journalism." This, methinks, was a hint of sorts. This is what makes college life so interesting.

Willie Quaker Oats is in a great quandry he tells me. Tuesday night he did meet a beautiful girl, he thinks. And he has a phone number written on a sheet of paper. But he doesn't know if the phone number is hers—and he doesn't know what she looks like, which is all very strange.

Glad to hear that Pushie Blue-Coal has been made queen of the campus. She is a most prominent girl on the college scene and is well liked by all the young blades.

A great convocation was held Tuesday morning at the Trafalgar Square Club, and therein were gathered all the interested Dull-housians, listening to the quartets rehearsing for the singing festival heard later in the day. Best of all these was a group from a society know as Skid Row a—notorious collection of bounders. They did bribe the judges to win.

Gorge Mound did cause a great scene at the club when he accused all and sundry of pilfering his cloak. It was a scruffy old thing anyway, and the one he stole to replace it was not bad at all. Privately, I think he did never have a cloak.

Groundhog Petesdaughter and John W. Typhoon McStrato-Cumulus engaged in a mighty altercation Wednesday morning, whereat there was great rattling of sabers, and threats of annihilation. All was developing into a duel of the first water when some cool heads, led by Robber Bob'sdaughter, did put an end to it, and all were friends again.

Am resolved that I shall begin the great studying tomorrow, for the tests of knowledge are in sight.

COKE AND MUSIC FOR HAPPY MOMENTS

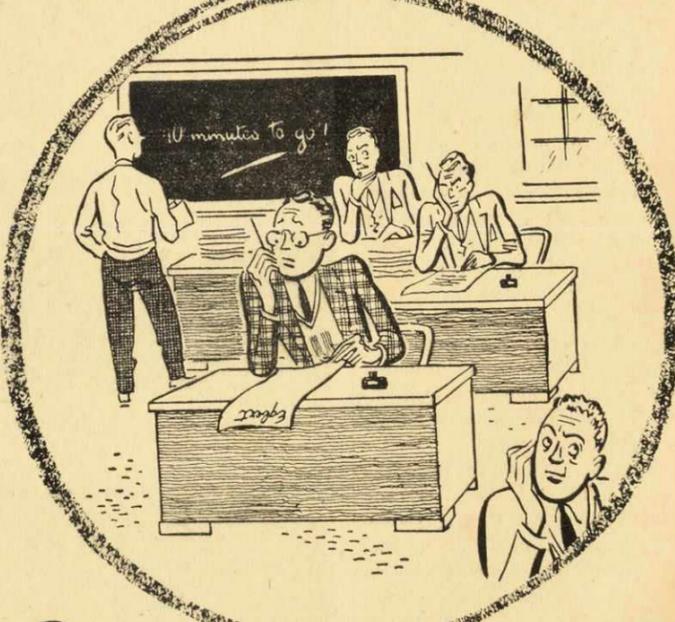


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Around the Campus with Egbert



Egbert says

... "I wonder how many other fellows'll be writing supps this fall"

Egbert seems to be a little pessimistic... but who isn't around exam-time. That's when you wish you had a little more gen to fall back on.

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