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CONTENTS OF THIS NUMBER :

I. EDUCATION IN VARIOUS COUNTRIES.—(1) University Reform at Oxford. (2) Summary of the Report of the English Committee of Council on Education for 1867-68. (3) Opinions of English School Inspectors on Compulsory Education. (4) Adult Education in France. (5) Remarks on American Systems of Public Instruction. (6) The New American University. (7) Provision in the Old World and the New Scientific Education.....	145
II. PAPERS ON EDUCATION IN CANADA.—(1) Educational Status of Canada. (2) New Dominion English, the Language of the Provinces. (3) Sunday Schools in Ontario and Quebec. (4) Education of the Coloured People in Canada.....	150
III. MONTHLY REPORT ON METEOROLOGY IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO.....	152
IV. PAPERS ON PRACTICAL EDUCATION.—(1) Bishop Strachan's Method of Teaching. (2) Courtesy of Manner and other Characteristics of a Teacher. (3) Keep a hopeful, patient Spirit. (4) A Teacher's Sympathy with his Pupils.....	153
V. BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES.—(1) The Most Rev. F. Fulford, D.D., Metropolitan of Canada. (2) Sir Henry Smith.....	155
VI. PAPERS ON SCIENCE AND NATURAL HISTORY.—(1) Important Facts about Telegraphing. (2) The Trades of Animals.....	156
VII. MISCELLANEOUS FRIDAY READINGS.—(1) Summer's Dying. (2) The Queen and the Highlandman. (3) Queen Victoria's Model Farm. (4) The Bavarian Sovereign and the School Boys. (5) Reading for Farmer's Boys. (6) Plant Trees round the Home and School House.....	157
VIII. EDUCATIONAL INTELLIGENCE.....	158
IX. DEPARTMENTAL NOTICES.....	159

I. Education in various Countries.

1. UNIVERSITY REFORM AT OXFORD.

(From the London Times.)

It is of great importance that the scope and dimensions of the University Reform just accomplished at Oxford, should be thoroughly understood. Its practical effect, as we have already observed, may be stated in half a dozen impressive words. Any lad whose parents can afford, say £40 a year, may, in future, "go to Oxford," and, what is more, may be insured to a great extent against the temptations to extravagance hitherto prevailing. On these terms, the benefits of a University education and the advantages of a University degree, will be henceforth obtainable. At the same time, it should be added, in any explanation of the subject, that already and before these changes the necessary expenses of University education were certainly not above £80 a year, so that, in fact, the chief improvement consists in removing the incentives to superfluous expenditure, which have hitherto stood in the way of academical economy. It was pretty well known that any student might get his degree at either Oxford or Cambridge for £200 or thereabouts, but then it was also known that, as a matter of fact, very few did so. The contagion of expensive society proved too strong for the young economist, and the possible £200 swelled practically into £500 or £600.

We may say, therefore, that in future an Oxford degree is not only nominally but actually to be procured for an outlay not exceeding £40 a year for three years together; but then

follows the important question—what is to be done with the degree when obtained? An Oxford education, though it may only cost half as much money as before, will still cost just as much time, and the "unattached," just like the College graduate, will have to begin working life at twenty-two. What are the limitations in the way of profession or calling which this age imposes? What percentage of the youth of this country can prudently accept these limitations? In other words, how many lads will find their account in taking an Oxford degree even at half price? These are the inquiries by which the results of this new "opening" must be practically governed, and we have already stated, though in no captious or unfriendly spirit, our doubts about the prospect. It is highly probable that a certain number of young men who shrink from the temptations of College life will embrace the opportunity of University life afforded by the new system, and these, as an experienced correspondent argued, may come from a new class or stratum of society; but still they must, upon the whole, come with the same views as are entertained by the classes already frequenting the University. They will expect to become clergymen, schoolmasters, tutors, perhaps here and there lawyers, or physicians. But what is the "opening" offered by these professions, and how many fresh mouths are likely to find pasture on such fields? We have no doubt that a few young curates may begin their duties as graduates instead of Literates, and a few ushers, perhaps, may now write themselves Bachelors of Arts who would have dispensed with that title before. The father of a large family, again, may send two sons into the Church instead of one, and all privileges of University education will be cheapened together; but will this economy affect a class large enough to leaven the actual constituencies of the Universities in any appreciable degree? We cannot but doubt it.

The point on which the whole case turns, appears to us to be this:—That the new "opening" can only concern lads of imperfect education and indifferent promise. If the extension now given to the Oxford system did really for the first time offer poor lads a chance of bettering their condition, and rising in the world, through the honours and emoluments of the University, we should be ready to admit that the results might be incalculable. This, however, as we have explained in previous observations, is not the case. This kind of "opening" has been effected by the Universities long ago, and on terms infinitely