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## Flotsam

"You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear!" said a philosopher, one time; yet I have seen a Classical Graduate develop into a financier, and I once met a Mathematical gold-medallist who was a clerk in a dry goods store on Lower Broadway at \$12 per week. These things prove the contention of the bookish, that a University education fits a man for anything. Was it Plato, Shakespeare, Aristotle or Bill Nye who first raised the contention that the University man, *ceteris paribus*, would make a better cook in a lumber camp than the man who had not gone through the University?

To what ignoble uses are we put! A week ago I wanted a trunk moved from one house to another. The company sent to me a man of great breadth of shoulder, kindly of countenance, patient, but very full of beer or something. He carried the trunk up stairs with difficulty. I offered him a drink and then gently expostulated with him on the evils of intemperance.

"Correct, sir," he answered, "but a man must live and must have pleasure in one form or in another. I take it where I find it. *Dum vivimus, vivamus!*"

"*Et bibamus!*" I replied, wondering where he got his phrase. "Have another!"

And he did. So, since wine brings truth, it developed that once he graduated from Cambridge. He was a younger son, as usual, and had a roving commission from his earliest youth. He had exercised it under most skies and in most capacities; had served his country in India, kept bar in Cape Town, been right-hand-man to a Yankee missionary on the Gold Coast, played fan-tan in Chinatown, San Francisco, roulette in Denver, Col., and now was a handy man in the employ of American Express. He didn't seem to mind the change of scene. He described Japan as "too sedate," the American West as "too strenuous," India as "too slow." "New York," he said, "suits me, because nobody gives a hang for you. In England I'd be a horrible example. Here I'm just alive, able to get enough to eat, and it's nobody's business. This country is free. Good day!"

So he passed out and was gone. It cost that man's people several thousand dollars to teach him to say "*Dum Vivimus*," instead of "While we're still kicking!" The lesson may have been expensive, but the student contents himself with the reflection that it did not cost him anything. The people who paid for it did it out of a sense of duty, or affection. They paid for a conscious-

ness of duty well done, for smug content. The English papa sits back and says: "Well—it's true he has not turned out well—but I gave him a good education!" So perhaps the expense was all right after all. Its products are nil, so far as they may be weighed in the commercial scales.

And the man is one of many. Every day I dictate endless "copy" to an English University graduate, and when I am old and ready to die he will still be taking copy on the typewriter, unless a happy fate lets him die first. When he first came into my hands I found reason to question the dictum quoted in the first paragraph about a University education as the universal outfitter. He was the worst typewriter and the worst stenographer that ever happened. He didn't seem to mind. I asked him if it hurt him any to spell "superficial" with a "ph," and he freely admitted that it didn't. By the time I had eighty or ninety times consigned him to glory and other places he learned that sentences and paragraphs began with capital letters and ended with full stops, but to this day, after many months of service, he is still tangled on commas, colons and the other condiments of literature as she is, or ought to be, writ.

"They are misfits," says the President of the University, "and would be more misfits if they had not had the training." Perhaps, but how do you know? Is an educated fool any better than an uneducated fool? For my part, if I had to associate with a pig, I should prefer the pig as God made him rather than the gentlemanly pig that performs at Keith's. I should feel more at home with him. If a man is merely a dolt, an idiot, or a boor, I know how to meet him, and feel at home with the gentleman. But if he happens to be an educated dolt, idiot or boor, I don't want to be near him. I want to pay deference to his degree, but I can't. So I am pulled two ways—and a change of scene is desirable.

No—I am not trying to poke fun at University training. It is a very excellent thing. But there are some "sow's ears" that one cannot make anything out of at all—let alone the silk purse of the proverb. Also it is the rankest kind of folly to generalize. Whoever designed the University—almost anyone about Knox or Wycliffe can tell you who it was—recognized this fact. Therefore all men look different. The man who undertakes to say that University men are better than other men is taking up a task that is impossible. I know some that are not. I also know some that are. The one thing that I do seem to know is that the University man, *per se*, so to speak, just out, with his pin-feathers still prominent,