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### COMPARATIVE VIEW OF EDUCATION IN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES.

The object of the present article is not to give a detailed account of education either in Britain or in the United States, but only to point out in what particulars their methods and means of instruction differ. The writer's knowledge is derived from personal observation, from teachers, and from official documents.

The differences observable in the education of the two countries, has naturally arisen from the different circumstances of each. The United States have labored under the disadvantages of a more scattered population, and more urgent demands upon their time to procure the necessaries of life. When the colonists arrived in the new world, they had to clear away the forest, build houses, fence in their fields, and defend themselves and their possessions against wild beasts, and more formidable wild men; besides attending to the many wants of a newly established community. This left less time and means to be devoted to education. At the same time, the value of practical knowledge would be more appreciated than in a country where less labor was requisite to procure a subsistence, and the absence of all time honoured abuses, and invidious distinctness of classes, would naturally produce a system adapted to the whole of the community. Hence the education of the United States aims more at *immediate* practical application, and embraces a wider range, while it is less thorough in the amount of knowledge which it communicates on any particular subject, and less efficient as an instrument of mental discipline.

The plan of teaching the higher branches by means of printed questions is more common in the United States, than in Britain, where the student is generally required to answer such questions as his teacher may ask. Instead of a single text-book, the British student is frequently required to master several treatises on the subject. The teacher gives out a certain subject for study, and mentions the authors that may be consulted. When he comes to examine the scholar, he does so in a general way, without caring whether the answers to his interrogatories are given in this treatise or that.—On the contrary, in the United States, one book only is generally studied by the scholar. Another difference in the method of teaching, exists in regard to written exercises. These are much more common in Britain, where the examinations for degrees are frequently conducted altogether in this way, some of the teachers being present the whole time to see that the student obtains no assistance, either from books or notes, or from a third party.

The branches taught in Britain are fewer in number, and consist chiefly of such as were cultivated in early times. The sciences of recent origin, such as geology and chemistry, generally form no part of the regular course in the higher Institutions; but the extent to which the subjects of study are taught is usually greater. This is particularly the case with the classic languages, and with the mental and moral sciences. The time devoted to study is nearly the same in both countries, being only a little longer in Britain. Hence, as the subjects taught there are fewer, they can afford to teach them more thoroughly and extensively. The greater number of teachers, and the larger libraries belonging to the first class seminaries, also give in that country an additional advantage.

The branches which the British student is required to master, in order to obtain a degree, differ widely in the various colleges of Britain; but they are almost always fewer than in the United States.\* The more recent institutions, such as London University, require more studies than Oxford or Cambridge. The reader must not suppose, however that the subjects which are not specified as essential and necessary to be pursued to obtain a degree, are therefore not taught in the British seminaries. There are no branches of human knowledge, of general interest, which may not be learned in most of the Universities. Thus Oxford has professors of Arabic, Sanscrit, Botany, Civil Law, &c., although attendance on these classes is optional with the candidates for degrees. The attendance at such classes is generally small, and the professors are paid in a great measure from the annual proceeds of endowments.

\* In this respect, Scottish Universities most nearly resemble those of this country. The small number of subjects requisite for an examination at Oxford, would rather surfeit an American student.

The ancient practice of declamation is much less common in Britain than in the United States. It is altogether optional in many of the English Universities, and has been totally discontinued in most of the Scottish. The practice of giving prizes and honors to distinguished students is more common in Britain.—In most Institutions, the efforts of a few Students are quickened by the hope of reward and distinctions.—The general absence of these hot-bed stimulants is a decided advantage to the Colleges of this country.—We state as the result of considerable observation, that prizes and honors lead to superficial attainments, and stimulate to fevered exertion those who require no stimulant, while they produce no effect whatever on those who do. The great object is the prize, not a profound knowledge of the subject; and it is a common case with distinguished prize-takers, at the end of their curriculum, to sell their books, with the fixed determination of never paying any more attention to the subject. Within a month after the opening of a class, the superior attainments, and external advantages, or abilities, of a few members, make it evident to all the rest that competition will end only in defeat, and therefore they pay no regard whatever to prizes or honors which they cannot attain.

On the subject of discipline, we remark that much more severity is practised in Great Britain than in this country. The injunction of Solomon, not to spare the rod, is generally observed in the schools and academies: and the fines, public reprimands, and expulsions, which are sure to follow any marked violations of the college rules, are such as would cause a loud outcry among the students of American colleges. The doctrine that moral suasion alone is in every case omnipotent, most British teachers, of every class, consider not only untrue, but ridiculous. In consequence, however, of the early discipline applied to the rising generation, they are generally less inclined to violate the rules when they enter college than pupils in the United States; and hence, rebellions, offering personal violence to teachers, playing practical jokes on fellow-students, &c., are much less common among them. In the lower seminaries the lash is applied not only for misconduct, but for negligent study.

With respect to the price of tuition, and the facilities for obtaining an education, the advantage is decidedly in favor of the United States. Free schools, so common in all the northern and middle states are almost unknown in Britain. It is true that there are several such schools both in England and in Scotland, but they are not open to the public generally. They rather resemble the military school at West Point, in respect to the terms of admission, which are mostly in the hands of a few individuals. These often show a preference which excludes the more deserving portion of the youth; and therefore these schools are frequently in a very languishing condition. As the wages of the working classes are lower than in the United States, while the necessaries of life are dearer, it is no wonder that illiterate parents should not care to send their children to school; and hence the gross ignorance of a large number of the poorer classes throughout England. In Scotland the public schools established in every parish are endowed,\* so that the charges for tuition are much lower than in England. Hence the number of persons totally illiterate is comparatively small. The Sunday Schools have done much in England in teaching children to read. The number attending these schools in England and Wales in 1833, exceeded one million and a half. Still the number of illiterate persons in that country is very great. In 1840, one-third of all the men, and one-half of all the women married were unable to write. In Ireland, popular education is much more generally diffused. Until very recently England had no system of public education for the people at large; and the one recently started is very limited and unsatisfactory. By an estimate in the Year Book, of the number actually educated in England, it appears that in the provision for the instruction of the whole population between 1800 and 1840 there is a deficiency of half a million. In the United States, provision is made for furnishing all the people with the means of educating their children at a cheap rate, and very frequently without any charge, while the price of labor, and the necessaries of life are such that almost all possess ample means of educating their children without any public aid.

The condition of academic education in these respects is very

\* The teachers in these schools are almost all graduates of colleges, and besides the elementary branches, they teach the classics and mathematics.