

# TRUTH.

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## WHAT TRUTH SAYS

In those days of cheap and bogus degrees, when institutions are springing into existence at which for a mere monetary consideration a person ambitious to have a handle attached to his name can have his wish gratified without submitting to any educational state it is extremely undesirable that the reputable institutions of learning, which have acquired a world-wide recognition, should show any disposition to cheapen their degrees or abate their demands in respect to literary qualification and acquirement. In this view the proposal of the Harvard authorities to curtail their college course by about one-seventh, so as to render it possible for an industrious student to obtain the B. A. degree in three years, will hardly find favor with the friends of higher education and literary culture. The principal argument urged in support of the reduction is, that the average age of graduates is too great—being for Harvard at present twenty-three years—and that in view of the additional time needed for professional training, this age is too advanced for those who will have to depend solely on their own exertions for a livelihood. It compels them to start too late in a professional or business career. This no doubt, is a fact greatly to be regretted and may well engage the attention of educationists. But to lower the amount of acquirement needed in order to obtain the degree of Bachelor of Arts is a very questionable policy. Much better would it be for those interested to seek to raise the character of the preparatory schools, and to endeavor to beget in the popular mind the conviction that a boy looking towards a college course should aim at matriculating at sixteen or seventeen years of age, which would permit his graduating at twenty-one. Of course, as the *New York Sun* observes, no valid objection could be taken to an arrangement which would make it optional with an undergraduate to obtain a degree in three years instead of four, provided he could satisfy the examiners that he had done all the work prescribed for a four years' term. What concerns us is the question, not of time, but of accomplishment. It is true that universities exercise moral and æsthetic influences as well as educational functions, but it should be permissible for the student to say whether he can afford to profit by the former advantages for more than three years. As a matter of fact a large proportion of the persons who graduate at the British universities—Oxford, Cambridge, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and St. Andrew's—spend no more than three years in the work prescribed for obtaining a B. A. degree. In like manner the foremost universities on this continent, Harvard among the rest, have a rule by which a student, passing what is called the senior matriculation which ushers him into the sophomore instead of the freshman class, may graduate in arts in three years. To extend this principle might be an advantage so as to permit an undergraduate who has entered in the freshman year to take a degree at the end of three years, or, for that matter, at the end of two, if he can pass examinations proving the possession of

all the attainments required for a diploma. Under such circumstances the prestige and value of a degree would not be in the least impaired. No residence at all is needed for a degree at the London University, and yet the diplomas of that institution are very highly prized. But the proposal of President Eliot does not contemplate allowing a clever and industrious lad to obtain a degree in three years instead of four, on condition of his performing all the work prescribed for a quadrennial term, it aims rather at reducing the quantum of acquirement, and in so far forth is calculated to lower the value and prestige of a Harvard degree.

And yet another objection to the proposed curtailment is the fact that the new regulation makes it possible for a student to obtain a degree without any knowledge of the Greek language. Now considering the difficulty which most students experience in acquiring a mastery of this ancient tongue, and the further fact that to many it appears a most vexatious method of wasting time, seeing that in the majority of cases it will never be put to any practical use, it may be presumed that a large majority of the students will express a desire to pass this subject by. Such an event, according to the Hon. Mr. Gladstone whose familiarity with Greek is one of his distinguishing accomplishments, would be cause for deep regret. Quite recently, while discussing the intermediate education which follows primary instruction and precedes university training, the great Commoner expressed himself very strongly on this point. It is his belief that all the intermediate schools should teach Greek so that each pupil as would be compelled to leave school at the age of sixteen might avail themselves of the instruction offered. Mr. Gladstone thinks that no matter what might be a young man's circumstances and intentions, it would do him good to study Greek, considered as an invigorator and humanizer of the mind. The shorter the time which a pupil is able to spend at school the more important is it, in Mr. Gladstone's opinion, that his education should keep in view the true object, which is the cultivation of the intellect for its own sake, and not for the accomplishment of any specific practical work. The purpose, he said, of an intermediate school—a purpose all the more paramount in the case of pupils who will not proceed to the university—is not to furnish the mind, as a workshop is furnished, with salable products, but to make it "a supple, strong, effective instrument," fit for any uses to which it may be applied. This result he contends is more certainly and fully secured by the study of Greek than by any other mental exercise, even though the knowledge of the language should not survive to middle life. Many educationists agree with this position, which is besides, supported by a remarkable experiment made at the University of Berlin during the ten years preceding 1880. At the beginning of that decennial period Greek ceased to be a requisite of admission to the university, and a concerted attempt was made to compare the aptitudes and achievements of Hellenists and non-hellenists in

other fields of study. At the end of the decade reports were submitted, and it turned out that almost all the members of the faculty, including conspicuously the representatives of science, bore testimony to the superior mental alertness and efficiency of those undergraduates who had studied Greek at preparatory schools. This testimony is significant and goes far to support the contention of those who advocate the study of Greek for the sake of the superior intellectual benefit derived from the exercise. But should the fashion set by Harvard be followed by any considerable number of the leading universities of the United States and Canada we may expect that the coming students will not greatly trouble themselves with a subject that demands for its mastery such persevering application and energetic labor.

Reports from the Capital state that instructions have been issued to the superintendent of the Government printing bureau that hereafter in all Government documents and publications the spelling of such words as favor, honor, labor, etc., must conform to the English usage, that is, with the "u." Canada being a British colony, it is held that we should adhere to the English language and not adopt Americanisms. This is extending the loyalty idea to a point dangerously near the ridiculous, especially seeing that the reform has common sense on its side, and was without proceeding so quietly that it may be presumed the general public were not aware that any change was taking place. It is not likely, however, that this order will have any effect upon the general practice, which will continue to ignore the useless letter no matter what appeal may be made to the loyalty sentiment. The ordinary mortal who is not blessed with the big pay and little work which rumor ascribes to many civil servants, feels thankful if he can find time to write the word in full even with the "u" omitted.

Throughout Brazil there is great rejoicing owing to the promulgation by the Government of the New Constitution. For six months the self-constituted rulers have kept the people in ignorance as to the nature of the Constitution they proposed to adopt. Meantime the country has been under dictatorial control. The new Constitution recognizes a Federal system based upon that of the United States. The President alone is responsible to the nation. The Ministers are replaced by secretaries of State, who are answerable to the President alone. Parliament will consist of a House of Representatives and a Senate. The powers of these two bodies will be of a purely legislative character, and an adverse vote by either chamber will not entail a change of Ministry. A new House of Representatives will be elected triennially, and a new Senate every nine years. The President's term of office will be six years. The first Presidential election will be by Congress, and has been fixed for November next.

Though no particulars are at hand concerning the nature of the family feast furnished by Her Majesty on the return of

her touring children, it may be presumed that the historical fact that a calf was slain, or some substitute, equally expressive of joy for the return of the wanderers, was provided. Under date of June 22nd, the Cable announced that the Duke and Duchess of Connaught landed at Liverpool this morning and proceeded to Windsor. The Queen, Princess Beatrice and Prince Henry of Battenberg, the Prince and Princess of Wales the Duke of Cambridge and the children of the Duke and Duchess of Connaught were at the station to greet the travelers and there was a general embracing. A family dinner was given at the castle at night. Many Canadians whose hearts were captured by the genial affable manner of their late distinguished visitors will join in extending congratulations to their Royal Highnesses upon their return home in safety after the many dangers on land and deep to which they have for these months been exposed.

The scheme for the amelioration of Egypt's financial condition which is being discussed by those European powers that have a stake in that greatly burdened country, is in danger of coming to nought through the refusal of France to consent to any agreement until England withdraws her troops from the valley of the Nile. It may not be uninteresting to those who are unfamiliar with the recent history of that historic land to briefly recount the steps by which she has lost so largely the control of her own affairs. When the ex-Khedive Ismail succeeded to the throne of Egypt in 1862 he found the national debt only three or four million pounds. In twenty-four years it had been increased under his reckless extravagance nearly thirtyfold. He converted Egypt into a money-lender's paradise; he resorted to every expedient known to the spendthrift to raise money; he paid enormous rates of interest; he submitted to ruinous discounts; he pledged his private estates; he practiced every deceit and outrage on his patient people. But the day of reckoning came at last. In 1876, when he could neither borrow a farthing nor return a farthing that he had borrowed, he tried to find relief in bankruptcy. Then it was that the powers, whose capitalists had loaned their money in the hope of inordinate gain, but who now saw themselves threatened with heavy loss, came to their rescue. Assuming the role of Shylock, they demanded the pound of flesh. They took charge of the finances of Egypt and from that day to this she has lived under the lash of a foreign taskmaster. And this rule at first was very oppressive, the creditors apparently imagining that the interests alone were the interests of natives, and what put wealth into pockets added to the taxpayers' pockets. But after the rebellion of Arabi Pasha and the bombardment of Alexandria the holders seemed to gain a new object and to show a greater disposition to the rights of the natives.