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PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

For the present purpose, by "public schools" must be understood, not the institutions which pass under that name in Ontario, but the intermediate academies which serve to bridge the chasm between elementary and collegiate instruction—such as, in fact, are distinctively known in England as public schools. In the current number of the *Princeton Review* an interesting paper appears from the pen of Professor SLOANE, of Princeton College. He had been instructed by the President of his College to visit the great foundation schools of England, with a view of ascertaining how far it was possible and desirable to copy the system in the United States. Across the lines, and elsewhere perhaps, grave complaints used to be heard touching the lamentable want of grounding in those who matriculated at the colleges. The same complaint has frequently been heard from Scotland, where advanced students are often sorely hindered in their progress through the university by the backwardness of less fortunate undergraduates. Necessarily, also, the time and energies of the professors are frittered away in accomplishing work which should have been ready to their hands as a condition precedent of matriculation. The consequence of defective high school education is conspicuously seen everywhere in the lowering of collegiate standards, at all events at entrance. In Ontario, thanks to the energy of the Educational Department, and the keenness of rivalry amongst our high schools, the objection to our system, as developed by time and necessity, has in great part lost its force. At the same time it may be useful to examine the result of Professor SLOANE'S investigations, if only because American and Canadian needs, in this respect, are more or less coincident.

The professor rejects, as altogether unsuited to a new country, two peculiarities of the English public school—exorbitant fees, and what is known as the 'fagging' system. The nominal charges at Eton are $720 annually; at Winchester, $545, and at Rugby, $595; whilst at Clifton, a modern institution, they amount to $540. These are the schedule fees; "but they do not at all represent the necessary expense of keeping a boy at school." The extras must be added, and the fare at the boarding-house supplemented from the pupil's pocket-money. He must pay his assessment towards maintaining the games also; and thus altogether at least $175 must be added to the annual charges. The endowments in foundation schools are on the wealthiest scale, yet nevertheless the expense is intolerable except to those who belong to the rich and aristocratic classes. Dr. SLOANE shows that this drawback to the general diffusion of liberal culture is not only unnecessary but invidious. It tends to a class monopoly of academic advantages, and contrasts most unfavorably with German practice in institutions which resemble Eton and Winchester. Here then was one English feature in public school management, suited to an aristocratic country, but certainly not to be copied in the New World.

The fagging system has been vigorously assailed and most pertinaciously defended in England. Stated in the simplest terms, it amounts to a recognition by the school authorities of the control exercised by the older boys over the younger. The Sixth and Upper Fifth Forms have power to exact menial offices from their juniors, and also to inflict corporal punishment upon them. They restrain and correct, but also protect their 'fags,' and, as known from the entertaining work of Mr. THOMAS HUGHES, are not usually hard task-masters, whilst they prove themselves, on occasion, doughty champions. The arguments for and against the system need not trouble Canadian or American readers. It may possibly train boys, first in the exercise of obedience, and then prepare them for the legitimate use of power. But obviously the practice could not be transplanted to America. The spirit of individualism and personal independence, not to speak of self-respect, is too strongly developed on this side of the Atlantic, to admit of any experiment of the kind. It may be that our boys are less amenable to discipline and control than might be desired; yet the sacrifice of their free and expansive natures to the back-board constraint of fagging would stunt not only their intellectual but their moral growth. The institution is suited to an aristocratic society, but could by no possibility be naturalized in the free atmosphere of the Dominion. To Canadians it would certainly seem out of the question that an arbitrary power of punishment should be entrusted to boys under any circumstances.

Professor SLOANE complains also of the "excess of examination" in English public schools, and quotes Dr. WEISE, who alleges that "the iron of examination has entered into the soul of the nation." It can hardly be true that it was forged at Oxford and Cambridge, because at the Universities no complaint can be made on that score. But in the public schools, so many as forty-four examinations in little more than a month does seem altogether excessive. It is clear, however, that in this number are included mere class examinations, held weekly, to satisfy the master of his pupils' progress. They are, in fact, what we generally know in Canada as reviews or recapitulations. It is not improbable, therefore, that both Professor SLOANE and Dr. WEISE labor under a misapprehension as to the "iron of examination." This is the more apparent when the former proceeds to explain the method of classical instruction practised in England, and points out its superiority over the American plan. "Together," he remarks, "with all that we cultivate, they prize and inculcate a living acquaintance with the spirit of the classics. They read, note and compare more than we do, with reference to the spirit of the text." This point is illustrated by questions put during ordinary readings, the aim of which is to extend the pupil's knowledge, to send him in quest of parallelisms and contrasts in thought and expression, not only in the ancient classics but in the best writers in his own language. It can hardly be just, therefore, to apply the invidious phrase, 'forcing system,' to a plan so liberal, searching and comprehensive. In the matter of Greek and Latin composition, again, the writer shows that, at the best public schools in England, the exercise instead of being the stiff, pedantic task it practically turns out to be in the States, is a substantial discipline both in English and in classics. The aim is to turn idiomatic Latin or Greek into idiomatic English and *vice versâ*, with special regard to peculiarities of style and niceties of diction. The aim of the instructor, in fine, is not mere translation from one language to another, but the substitution of classical ideas, as well as phrases, for those English ones to which they are most closely analogous. Thus the spirit, rather than the letter which killeth, constantly appears to view.

Considerable stress is laid upon the intellectual and moral strength of the English public school master. Their aims, the Professor shows, have entirely changed during the past fifty years. On the Winchester College arms may still be read the memorable motto, enforced by a representation of the long Winton-rod,—*Aut disce, aut discede; manet sors tertia cædi.* But the reliance of the masters is no longer upon flagellation. "They are no longer," says Dr. SLOANE, "fitly characterized by the Westminster boy's translation of *arma virumque cano*, arms and a man with a cane. Their effort is not to beat a certain quantity of Latin and Greek into the dullest heads, or punish with severity the slightest offence against decorum. They believe that boys who possess ability must be well taught, and, in particular, thoroughly examined; but that the main benefit in school-life for all must come from the formation of character and the cultivation of manliness. Everything is sacri-