

## A FRENCH COLLEGE SIXTY YEARS AGO.

FOR three months in the year Parisians desert Paris to rejoice elsewhere in the air and the sunshine, but with the month of October they are at home again. A consolation awaits me upon my own return from the country, for I shall find my books once more—my dear and most cherished friends. During a protracted malady of the eyes, when for more than a year I was deprived of their use, I would from time to time take up a book which I could not even see, but which I recognized by the touch, to caress it sadly while I asked if this were to be indeed a final farewell.

My library is unpretentious, containing books which are for use and not for any outward show. They were acquired one by one. I have bound them, taken care of them, and changed their positions many times before determining their final resting-place. To-day, albeit there are close upon 25,000 volumes, I can go with eyes closed and find each one. This little book-case on the right contains one hundred small, well-thumbed volumes—the Tauchnitz collection of Greek classics. They are not faultless. They do not contain a single note, but give the text and no more. The print is rather small, and the paper is quite valueless. But I obtained this Plato, this Aristotle, this Xenophon, and this Plutarch for less than the Plato of Bekker would alone have cost me. For a long time these hundred books constituted my entire library. At that period I knew a little Greek and I relied upon the absence of any notes, translations, or summaries in order to become the more readily familiarized with the language; like a foreigner who, wishing to learn a language of which he is totally ignorant, engages board with natives who do not understand a word of his own idiom. Here, alongside the others, are the Alexandrines. But with Plotinus the learned editions begin. I now became rich enough to make the purchase of books. It was necessary to send abroad for them; for not a single French bookseller possessed a Plotinus or a Proclus. When the house of Didot published one of these rarities the

number was small and they were bought for public collections from a sense of duty, while private individuals bought none at all. Farther along are the volumes of the "*Revue des Deux Mondes*." I contribute to the "*Revue*," exerting myself to remain philosophical; but I become profane. Books of history and of literature make their appearance. A few years more and I shall be overwhelmed with books on jurisprudence and administration law. I even possess some shelves devoted to political economy and religious controversies.

While surveying my books in a certain fashion I review my life, for my library and I developed together. With these, I was a very youthful professor fresh from the *École Normale*; with those, I had become a professor at the *Sorbonne*. This pile of political works recalls my first election as deputy, some forty-eight years ago. I had just made my appearance in the Council of State, but I was well informed in pedagogical questions, to which I had applied myself long previous to my appointment as minister. Every now and then I discover with amazement numerous notes secreted among my books; a long-departed science which in other days gave me infinite trouble and of which no other trace is now left me but these yellow leaves that I shall never read again.

I was asked recently concerning the books or teachers whose influence upon my mind has been greatest. At first the question lacked interest for me, since I have trouble enough to support the present without an expenditure of time or strength in philosophizing upon my early life;—and of what import is it to others to learn the sources of the stream, since the stream has not become a river? Reflection shows me, however, that the date of my birth invests the question with peculiar interest.

I was not brought up under the Revolution, but during that uncertain period which was neither the past nor the future. In France, at least, the world was slowly recovering after the fearful convulsions which had destroyed so much. People began to reflect that search must be made amid the ruins in a common endeavor to revive men and things which were considered annihilated, but which experience showed to be indispensable. Napoleon was the first to conceive the grand possibility of an immediate revival of the vital forces of society by the adjustment of them to those changed conditions which the Revolution had produced and which in its turn the Revolution had evaded. The fusion thus effected between the old and the new order was not

without violence. It required all the force which lay in him and the supremacy of strength lent by the sanguinary memory of the Terror to give a semblance of reality to a mere comedy. His genius saved him: another Jacobin become king would have been nothing better than the king on a stage. The revulsion to the past, a masquerade under Napoleon, came to be a reality under Louis XVIII. The adhesion to new ideas appeared, on the other hand, a masquerade to those who were unable to watch the forces fermenting behind the official world. Ultraists were spoken of at this time as being greater royalists than the king; it might be said, and with equal truth, that the royalists, restored to power after an eclipse of thirty years, were even greater royalists than their fathers had been. The dogma of royalty, as well as that of legitimacy, was more scientifically expounded and more implicitly applied than before the "disorders." As the Republic had not ceased to contend, Bonaparte had at hand a corps of officers which, if insufficient, could easily be recruited.

In the case of the public schools he was less fortunate, for here was a question of reform connected with that of the army; of brave fellows there was a sufficiency, but thoroughly-instructed officers had to be made. When he wrenched the government from the weak hands of the Directory the system of education, hitherto of a twofold character for the young,—*i. e.*, the universities and the religious corporations,—was still disorganized. The fate of the clergy and their congregations is well known. Primarily the civic oath had been forced upon the priests, and the refractory among them were dismissed, exiled, imprisoned, or massacred. Others, who had sworn allegiance to the constitution, suffered a similar fate speedily after. Europe was inundated with French priests reduced to the extremest destitution; in France such as had hitherto escaped death assumed a disguise and lived in daily dread of the guillotine. The universities, as well as the convents, were destroyed, and the majority of their members, who were priests, suffered a common fate with others of their profession. The colleges were without instructors and there would have been no pupils—for the colleges were closed by order and the faculties suppressed by law. Diplomas were forbidden to be given, since no one was to be privileged above another. The schools were closed or converted into hospitals or barracks. The larger number of the libraries were plundered or given over to the municipalities. The books, transferred from the university or the convent to the town hall, were packed in bales and lay there in the garret. I have myself seen similar bales—

containing perchance rare treasures—which had lain undisturbed since the Reign of Terror.

The Convention, true to its custom, thought to create new schools on the same day it did away with the universities and convents. This reform was effected by its usual procedure, and a great public function was created and placed in the hands of the state. There were no teachers: it was necessary to make them. The teachers, the methods of instruction, the curriculum of study,—all must be improvised. The idea was propounded to create at Paris a high-class institution, where the art of teaching should be imparted, to be called the “École Normale.” The instructors were to be men distinguished in letters, sciences, and art. Masters being thus found, it was necessary to procure pupils for them, and this became the task of the administrative departments. A certain number of pupils were sent from each department to the École Normale at Paris to remain six months, when, on returning home, they were to take a secondary normal course in imitation of the education received at Paris, or else were immediately to exercise the function of instructors. The plan appeared both good and simple. But the professors in the big school at Paris were selected because of their notoriety, and not because of special aptitude—a fact which precluded the possibility of harmonious combination. These lettered and learned men might make discoveries, and they knew how to write, but the majority of them could not teach. No special schedule was imposed upon them, but it was understood that pupils, issuing from their instruction, would be completely trained as teachers. Their very genius militated against them, since they were forced to stoop so far beneath their own merit. Again, on the other hand, it transpired that among them were several whose ability was inferior to that of their scholars. Studies were to assume the form of lectures, when the professors might be interrogated and criticised.

The criticism began on the first day, and in several sections was overwhelming. Scholars no longer took the trouble to attend the lectures of incompetent professors, and the professors, commanding neither respect nor attention, either no longer gave their lessons or made but an indifferent preparation. The normal schools, opened in the current of applause, disappeared several months later under a scornful indifference. The departments, stripped of every resource, pressed by the necessities of war, and a prey to the anguish engendered by the action of the Committee of Public Safety, lost their interest in the schools and would vote no more subsidies.

From the normal schools the First Consul took his idea of an instruction centralized at Paris, but which should be the same all over France. Far, however, from leaving the professors of this unique body their liberty of action, he looked upon the University as a regiment, enforcing its acceptance of a puissant hierarchy, a programme of studies, and a creed. Barely did he permit the schools created through private enterprise to vegetate alongside this powerful body, notwithstanding their submission to his control and the payment of revenue. He accorded his University many privileges, but he found the completion of his plans frustrated through the inadequacy of the staff.

The college at Vannes, where in 1827 I entered as a scholar in the third class, had, as instructor to the sixth class, an ancient deacon who had not assumed the orders of priesthood; he had been here in 1793 and he returned again in 1808. The professors to the third and sixth sections were priests too young to have filled chairs under the *ancien régime*, although the teacher of rhetoric, M. Jéhanno, occupied the same post in 1793. He could barely have been adolescent then; but it was not rare at that period to become a professor of philosophy on the same day one ceased to be a student of philosophy. Jéhanno resumed his post after the interval of a decade, and he continued to occupy it twenty years later during the Revolution of July. He combined the functions both of principal and teacher. He loved me, and I returned his affection. He was more than fifty years old when I knew him. A very small man with a round, pink face, always cheerful, a pedant to the tips of his fingers; a lover of children, who returned his affection, he was at once both venerated and feared by them. He possessed a collection of some twenty anecdotes which it was his habit to repeat with peals of laughter until we came to know them by heart and whose perpetual repetition afforded us supreme satisfaction. He had not taken priestly orders, nor had he married, although marriage would in nowise have altered his manner of living. He wore black woollen stockings drawn over the knees, black silk breeches, a black waistcoat with long skirts which fell about his legs, a cinnamon-colored coat cut *à la française*: such also was his dress in 1793. He wore the same wig, and lived in the same house as he did then; and he probably sallied forth to college at the same hours, carrying the same portfolio and the same copy of Virgil. I regret to be obliged to confess that he would occasionally read to us the more beautiful passages in the "Génie du Christianisme," his sole concession to modern authors. He never advanced beyond Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Vertot; and he considered it

an indulgence of our youthfulness when he added a few pages of Fénelon.

Our professor of mathematics, well versed in arithmetic and geometry, obtained his licentiate's degree several years after the time when I left college.

In the first story of the college, full of mysterious objects which had been shut up there for twenty years, was a physical cabinet where no one ever entered and where everything was covered with the venerable dust of time. To utilize all these wonders the departmental council desired to procure the services of a professor. An annual stipend of four hundred francs was voted, and M. Jéhanno ran around to all the doctors in the town to propose this fine plan and to offer them this magnificent salary. It was refused by all. In conclusion, the invitation was extended to a justice, noted for the compliancy of his character and the feebleness of his mind. He alleged with hesitation that he knew nothing of physics, but M. Jéhanno replied triumphantly that he could learn it, and the board of education presented him with a copy of the "Elements of Physics," written in the preceding century by the Abbé Nollet. The fact that this amazing professor never had more than five or six auditors in a college where the other classes numbered from eighty to a hundred pupils, demonstrates the good sense of the people of Brittany.

Such being the condition of my college at Vannes when I entered in 1827, it may practically be said that my student years fell toward the middle of the seventeenth century. The character of this college admitted of no change; a century and more ago the methods and curriculum of study were identical. Latin was well taught; beyond Latin we learned nothing at all. Our professors consented indeed to read us portions from obscure historians who were brought to my remembrance at Rome before the inscription: "Here Romulus and Remus were suckled by the she-wolf." Of the study of physics and our cabinet I have just given an accurate description. Our professor of philosophy, who was looked upon as a great man and who afterward became a deputy, had in his possession three massive volumes, the "Philosophia Lugdunensis" ("Lyon's Philosophy"), the property of his predecessors and which he in turn was to transmit to his successors. In the first volume were treated the various forms of argumentation: syllogism, dilemma, etc. The second volume treated of metaphysics. I recall this definition of "idea": "I ask you, Monsieur, what is an idea?" And the pupil replies: "An idea is the clear representation of an



object really present before the mind." The third section of "Lyon's Philosophy" treated presumably of theology, but was in reality a development of the catechism. Our master knew that philosophy had become modified since the writing of his text-books. He had heard of Condillac, who applied the theory of the "idea" by the illustration of the cover of a pot filled with hot water; and of a young man, Cousin by name, who enjoyed a modicum of fame at Paris, and whose misfortune it was to talk much without saying anything. Following this declaration he would read aloud some pages from the "Philosophical Fragments" of which we did not understand a single word and which provoked us to Homeric bursts of laughter; then, inspired with renewed confidence, we would return to the ancient philosophy of our fathers.

This being the condition of the colleges previous to the Revolution it may well be asked whether their suppression was not justifiable, and their reestablishment a mere mockery. It should be remembered, however, that in education the choice of a teacher is of greater importance than the selection of method or programme. The Empire had taken what it could from the surviving members of the ancient faculty of instruction: the Restoration, coming after, had caused the elimination of Voltairism from the ranks, while the monks, preserved by their insignificance and the stupefaction of old age and long suffering, resumed their former vocation only with immense difficulty. The colleges, all-sufficient for the France of the *ancien régime*—and of which that at Vannes was a specimen, perhaps even a caricature—possessed eminent masters who reciprocated the affection of their pupils and won a wide respect by reason of an exemplary life and boundless devotion; men skilled in the ancient tongues and literatures, knowing only the greatness of our century, but knowing it thoroughly. With these qualifications they produced men, and here and there a scholar. At this period there was no question how to provide intellectual pastures for fifty thousand college students, nor for five hundred thousand pupils in the primary schools. For the minority of scholars who presented themselves many teachers were not required.

Unstinted praise has been showered upon Napoleon I as the founder of the University; and it is true that he thereby accomplished an immense service. There were in reality no schools; those established in 1795 were scattered sparsely over the land, empty for the most part, and providing inadequate instruction. The Emperor did all that force could do. He founded numerous colleges and schools, but even he was powerless to establish them everywhere. Nor could he have filled

them, for teachers were lacking. He reduced the number of pupils by incorporating into the army children who had not attained their growth. He insisted on a select number to fill elevated posts, since he wished to be well attended and was careless whether his soldiers could read or write. He had time to create and organize the University in every respect. His was the conception and his the frame; herein lay his strength. Time would have furnished the new creation both men and children. The Convention before him had conceived a unique system of instruction which, emanating from Paris, should permeate all France and even replace religion. It had, so to speak, cast this idea upon the breeze, but it did not germinate, since there was a lack of vitalization. He dreamt of a university which was to be also a clergy. Of his *grand maître* he made a sort of *chef d'ordre*. To him he gave a spiritual and moral authority over the faculty, armed him with all necessary power to govern, and to suppress, whenever necessary, the private schools existing independently of the state institutions. His admirers wish only to see the creation of a unique University for entire France; they have overlooked the suppression which went hand in hand with the creation. Simultaneously with the determination to establish a university he decided that there should be but one. The Church, chiefly concerned, was not deceived. She comprehended that in the end she would be deprived of her most valued privileges. The expectations of the University were not disguised. Bound to conform outwardly with reverence, so great was the haste to enjoy and use its triumph that it even encroached upon religious instruction; a catechism was prepared which it was hoped to see used exclusively in its schools and finally in the diocesan and parochial establishments. This was a blow directed against the liberty of religious propagandism, against religious freedom itself. It was also directed against liberty of thought; for if religious liberty and liberty of thought are in perpetual strife in our country the fault lies with both. There is but one sort of liberty, *i. e.*, *liberty*, and this liberty suffers beneath the blows dealt alternately by the blind partisans of free thought and religious freedom.

The Emperor understood the rights due to neither the one nor the other; he belonged to the school of Louis XIV, "I am the State." But, without a change of sense, he had changed the form. He said, "Liberty; it is I." Examine the metaphysical significance of his proclamations and declarations and it will be observed that throughout his career he considered that, having been elected by universal suffrage and regarded as the representative of the pleasure of the masses, every



increase of his dictatorial power was the emanation and accomplishment of the will of the people. It is the greatest sophism of which history preserves the remembrance. But beyond the injustice which, unobserved, the Emperor committed, the omnipotence with which he invested his University constituted the chief cause of its decline. In every case human activity requires competition for a proper development. Contest is a condition of life. Inoculated by its founder, the University for seventy years has suffered from this passion to stand alone; when competition fails, liberty recoils and its force is lessened. Deprived of the spring of activity, it becomes not only benumbed but fossilized; blood and muscle are lost. All things exist in this world by virtue of variety and for union. Variety standing alone is anarchy, and union if alone is atony. Anarchy is better than atony; fever is better than death. In education general liberty is to be preferred to a particular school. The latter would be of a religious nature, which is impossible. It is neither a religion nor a system of philosophy: it is nothing. It is not a religion, since it is a human institution; nor a philosophy, since it is enjoined upon all.

The founder of the University and his undiscerning admirers committed a mistake in recognizing only two forces, *i. e.*, the secular and the clerical. For, primarily, the secular power does not stretch beyond the sciences and literature, a dominion of sufficient extent without the addition of theology; while, in the second place, the clerical power, although strongly united by faith and a common hierarchy, secretes a potent element of variety,—the variety of method. Were I, for example, to regard purely objectively my ancient college at Vannes during eight working days, a knowledge of its origin would not be necessary for me to affirm that it had been founded by the Jesuits. A father, entering his son at an ecclesiastical college, already knows what his religious instruction will be, and is fully cognizant of the profound differences existing between the training of the Jesuits, the Oratorians, the Lazarites, and the Dominicans. Admitting the method of the University to be good (personally I believe it to be so), admitting it to be the best or even (which I am far from believing) the finest possible, I should still regret the fact that it stands alone, since it is able to adapt itself neither to a variety of aptitudes nor requirements. It would come to regard all innovations as a misfortune. The enforced unity of education is synonymous with a proscription of educational progress, or, still more absolutely, with the proscription of all progress. The defenders of unity have not failed to say that formerly in France the

custom was for people to reside in their proper town or province, whereas now-a-days it has become the custom to travel; that the requirements of life compel the father of a family to change his abode. To provide a material, without a moral, change to the environment of his sons is of immense advantage. He will find at Marseilles a professor of the third class who continues the lessons received from another teacher of the same section at Brest. There will be no difference between the lessons of to-day and those of yesterday. When a student presents himself for his baccalaureate the examiner cannot discern the college to which he belongs. The same method, programme, and doctrine prevail at Paris, Marseilles, and Brest. It is also the same graduate and almost the same man.

Do you perceive in all this a supreme advantage? O Humanity, thou resemblest a pendulum with incessant sway from right to left! Nothing perpetual hast thou except thy perpetual motion, subject ever to the same laws, to end ever with the same result! If, perchance, one of thy members escape from the inflexible law, thou criest out at eccentricity and thou execratest him; or at originality and thou exaltest him! What need to render originality so rare and so perilous, by warring forever against individuality? Individuality is an element of life: unity is the grandeur of it. But have a care, for absolute unity without variety is death!

In the college at Vannes there was no library. Over a door in the first story, alongside the physical cabinet, was inscribed the word "Library." The door of massive wood had felt the ravages of time. Broken away from the hinges, it stood ajar, the closed bolt no longer entering the staple. Here we made search for some volume to speak to us of long centuries past. But the shelves were empty and covered with dust. It was evident that long ago, probably in 1794 at the dispersion of the Jesuits, everything had been carried away. But to what spot had the spoilers taken their booty? It was neither in the town hall nor at the headquarters of the police. The theological works, not unlikely, had been disposed of at auction. Destutt de Tracy made the disdainful observation that humanity would be rendered a service were all the works on theology collected and burnt. "For," said he, "if sold at auction even as worthless paper these good-for-nothing rags might still be read by fools." Our disappointment was severe to find nothing now remaining upon the shelves that had formerly perhaps contained many a treasure.

We were saturated with the "Philosophia Lugdunensis." At this period there were no newspapers. A curate at the Cathedral, corresponding with the "Society of Good Books," occasionally received some edifying and some stupid volumes; none the less was it a sincere delight to me when I could procure some of them. These works were not of the highest order of merit, but still they were books. I had indeed my "Euchologion" wherein, beside the fine things, were numerous banalities; but I knew them all by heart. At this period I was the "king" of the college at Vannes, and I know not whether it was a matter for felicitation or for regret. In my heart I believe it would have been better for me simply to have been the first in my class; the situation was rendered absurd. Not for a moment did I regard these exaggerations seriously; but when two years later I entered the École Normale the difference between the superiority attributed to me and the humble position to which I had descended was sufficient utterly to discourage me, and nearly a year went by before I could recover from the shock.

At Vannes I passed from triumph to triumph. I was not allowed to compete for the prizes in philosophy; I was given a prize of honor superior to all the rest. But in the midst of these honors my life was one of difficulties. My family, completely ruined while I at the age of fourteen years was still at the high school at Lorient, and unable to defray the expenses of my education, had resolved to apprentice me to a watchmaker. Notwithstanding, an effort was made which enabled me to enter at Vannes, whither I went on foot, and where I passed through the third class as a boarder at reduced rates in a little seminary maintained by a Lazarite, Father Daudet. At the end of three months, when about to enter the second class, my father declared he could do no more, his last resource being exhausted. But in this excellent school there existed, among other relics of the past, a custom which saved me. The praiseworthy pupils of rhetoric in the second class gave lessons to their comrades in the fifth and sixth classes, at a most absurd charge it is true, but which none the less helped them to earn their daily bread. I told my story to the principal, requesting him to find me pupils. I was not fifteen years old, but I was the glory of the college. The principal, desirous to see me remain, with the greatest difficulty procured me six pupils whom I united in a small class. I devoted to them an hour in the morning and again an hour in the evening, receiving in payment from each boy the sum of three francs a month. The manager of the Shallette accepted me as a

boarder at eighteen francs a month. The college passed a resolution exempting me from payment for lessons: the board of education presented me with two hundred francs. In this way I was enabled to finish the two years' course of study.

Carrying a small lantern in my hand, I might be seen every morning at six o'clock passing down the Rue de Chanoines, dressed in an ordinary calico jacket under which I wore a woollen waistcoat. I may say that I was adopted by the entire town and that every one showed me the greatest kindness.

I once saw one of my old pupils again. His name was Du Pontavice. He died, as have most of my pupils, before me. At the time we met he was superintendent of schools at Blois, and I was then minister. The prefect presented the superintendent who, in tears, asked me if I had forgotten him. I embraced him very heartily; and in that instant I seemed to review my whole life which I thought then already finished, whereas in fact it had only begun.

JULES SIMON.

## THE NEXT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY.

OF the rapid developments in education which have taken place in the United States during the last twenty-five years, quite the most important has been the rise of universities. This movement has had two points of departure: on the one hand, a number of older institutions, much alike in their general conformity to a common, though not wholly definite, standard, have built upon the historic college a more or less extended superstructure of postgraduate departments and professional schools; while, on the other hand, large gifts of money have brought into existence several new institutions, in many respects better equipped even at the start than their older rivals. These new-comers, to be sure, have not always been heartily welcomed. From time to time there has been heard from one or another of the older universities a murmur of jealousy, protesting that it would have been better to strengthen existing endowments than to create new ones; but each of the new foundations has easily demonstrated its right to existence, and others have followed. There seems to be no sufficient reason for supposing that the founding of new universities in this country has ceased, or that all public-spirited individuals will henceforth be content merely to add somewhat to the effectiveness of institutions already established. The same causes which have produced the new universities of recent years—great and rapid accumulation of wealth, the philanthropic spirit, and the desire to perpetuate a name in worthy form—still operate, and make it entirely probable that the list which includes the Johns Hopkins, Clark, Leland Stanford, and Chicago universities will before many years be again added to.

This rapid development of universities, however, has given rise to not a few difficult and perplexing questions, to some of which no definite or well-accepted answers have yet been given. It can hardly be said that educational thought in the United States has yet evolved a clear and consistent theory of a university. The university occupies its present position partly by accident, partly as the result of conditions, either in its past or in its immediate environment, over which it has had but imperfect control, and partly because of certain ideas impressed