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P A P E R

ON THE SYSTEM OF

HIGHER EDUCATION,

BEST ADAPTED TO SUCCESS IN LIFE.

READ BEFORE THE EDUCATION SECTION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCE

CONGRESS, AT THEIR ANNUAL MEETING, HELD IN

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BY

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SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Given from the age of nineteen to twenty-three years, in a College or University, what is the best system of educating a young man to fight the battle of life with the greatest success? This is the problem which engages the attention of the profoundest thinkers of our time. Some hold the University to be nothing more than a centre, where there is a professor of everything required to be known, and that the student, on entering, is to be set to the study of medicine, law, engineering, or any other useful calling. Thus he who is destined for the Bar is prepared by having his mind divided into a series of pigeon-holes, corresponding with the various branches of law, and each stuffed with a limited stock of facts, bearing on the particular subject. His intellect is not made to pass through any preliminary course of discipline to enable him to compare these facts, and to sift what is true in them from what is false. He occupies exactly the same position in respect to the knowledge of law as one of the many guides who crowd the art-galleries of Rome and Florence does regarding painting and sculpture. Such a man will discourse to you eloquently on the history of any work of art in the collection; but ask him to deduce its excel-

lence from the statement he has just advanced, and you effectually shut him up. His memory is stored with an abundance of facts; but the judgment is not trained to estimate the value of these, to examine rigidly the correctness of every lineament in the statue, and of the subtle effects of light and colour in the painting. So with the young man leaving the University for the Bar, with his stock of undigested law: he will be able to state the facts of a case, but not to show their legal bearing. So, too, with those who go forth from the University to the practice of any other profession. A knowledge of the technicalities of medicine will not make a good doctor, nor the mere acquirements of engineering a good engineer. And, indeed, it does not require a very intimate acquaintance with the various walks of life to observe that the men who ventured into their professions with no other education than like what a carpenter brings to his trade, are, with some exceptions, narrow-minded, and not read up even to the level of modern improvements in their own particular line. An exact professional course of instruction is absolutely necessary for success; but it must be preceded by passing the mind through the mill, so that after two or three years the young man can begin his special studies with reasoning powers highly-cultivated. For, although education supplies us with a particular knowledge, and a necessary one to get on in the world, yet that is not half its work—it has much more than that to do. It must teach us to make proper use of this knowledge, which is a

far higher and nobler work. To take a homely illustration, a ship is a necessary means for getting from here to any of the countries beyond the seas; but it is not enough to have the ship: it is a much more important necessity to have skilled hands to guide her safely. With still greater force this truth is set forth by Dr. Newman in his lectures on University Education:—"Some people," he says, "imagine the end of a University to consist in narrowing the mind to some mechanical trade or profession. Now, nothing can be more false than this idea; because *liberal knowledge*, as I have explained, has its own end in itself. It is forming and disciplining the intellect to think and to reason, and to discriminate in the objects of truth presented to it. This is its end without regard to anything else. This state of the intellect will not, indeed, at once make a man a lawyer, or a surgeon, or an engineer, but it will enable him to take up any of these professions with ease and success."

To cultivate the intellectual faculties in the manner described by this eminent authority, there is no better means than the study of Latin and Greek, provided it is pursued on a plan different from that which now prevails. The bulk of young men about to engage in the battle of life by way of the professions or other remunerative employment of an intellectual character, cannot devote more than three or four years to mental culture as distinct from what is called their *bread-studies*. Under these circumstances, they ought to be taught as much of the

Latin and Greek Grammar as will enable them to know the mutual dependence of the words in a sentence, and the translation, so far as to make their own way by the aid of a Dictionary—the skeleton of the language, in fact. Let the professor put into the hands of his pupil a passage from Livy, for instance, and begin by teaching him to find out the meaning of the words in the Dictionary, and showing him in the Grammar how they are related to each other. Then the historical value of terms like *Senatus*, *Tribunus*, and the geographical position of proper places are to be pointed out, while the beauty of such expressions as *medio aere* (mid-air) ought to be dwelt upon with much emphasis. When the pupil has formed the acquaintance of Livy, let him be taught to do the same with Tacitus; and in a comparatively short time he will be able to interpret with ease any of the standard Latin authors. His introduction to the Greek can be effected on a similar plan, and will be infallibly attended with similar results. By this exercise the faculties of the mind are kept actively at work, so that the student cannot fail to become a vigorous thinker, while he is also trained to express his thoughts in a most effective manner, since the Latin and Greek Classics are unsurpassed for simplicity of style.

It is said, no doubt, that Shakespeare knew little Latin and less Greek, and the same, I believe, is also true of Mr. John Bright, whose speeches are, nevertheless, models of plainness and dignity, united with clearness of idea and force of application. But,

this proves nothing more than that a perfect knowledge of our own English will, in the case of exceptionally gifted men, produce our best speakers—as Demosthenes was the first orator in Athens, though the Greek was his only tongue. A study of the modern languages, and the physical sciences must also form an important factor in preparing for the *bread-studies*: and happily this is enforced to a careful extent in the admission to the Church and the Bar; but the gates that open into the practice of the medical profession are not jealously guarded. A little Latin and less Greek is all that is required from the young man beginning his medical studies, and at the end of a few years, when he presents himself for his diploma, it is readily granted without other qualification than a rough knowledge of medicine. Surely this looks like a reckless disregard of one of the most important interests of society.

It is not for me to lay down the measure of reform demanded in this direction, but of one thing I am convinced, that never was its necessity greater than at present.

It was for this reason Dr. Newman made the School of Medicine a substantial part of the University which he established in this country. In his Report for the Session 1855-6, he says:—
 “The number of students in our Medical School was forty-three last year; in the Session which is now beginning they already amount to fifty-three. At present, as is unavoidable, they almost entirely

belong to the class of auditors who are neither subjects of the University, nor have passed the examinations in the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters. There will, indeed, be always a number of students so circumstanced, nor is it at all desirable to shut our lecture-rooms against those who, without a University education, will, under our medical professors, have the benefit of a much healthier atmosphere of thought than is to be found in other places. But this being fully granted, still our object obviously is something more than this. Our object is to form a school of medical practitioners, who will not merely avail themselves of our classes, but are identified with *Alma Mater* as her children and her servants, and who will go into the wide world as specimens and patterns of a discipline which is at once Catholic and professional."

Thus there were two classes of students in this School of Medicine—those who were merely auditors, that is, who attended lectures there, without having any further connection with the University, and, while mere auditors, were to be welcomed to the lecture-rooms of the Medical School, on the grounds that, under the teaching of its medical professors, they will be living in a much healthier atmosphere of thought. Yet it is distinctly set forth that the direct object of the University in establishing the School of Medicine was to bring as many as possible of the numerous class of medical students in Dublin under the immediate influence of the teaching and discipline of the University.

With a view to further this object, the Board, at the recommendation of Dr. Newman, established ten burses of £50 each, to be held by such medical students as would consent to pass two years in the School of Philosophy and Letters previously to their entering on their professional studies. But what was the result? In the interval of seven years—that is, from 1855-6 to 1862-3—twenty-nine students only availed themselves of these burses, which makes an average of five for each session! One cannot fail to be struck with this fact—that where there were so many medical students, so few sought to avail themselves of the very substantial advantages held out to them by this scheme. There was one cause for this result, the operation of which was palmary. The ordinary term of a medical student's course in Dublin is from three to four years. Now, the obligation of spending two years in arts previously to entering on the studies of the profession, imposed for the best of reasons by Dr. Newman, would make the student's term of medical instruction in Dublin from five to six, instead of from three to four, years.

It must be remembered, also, that the parents of young men, coming up to Dublin to study medicine, are naturally anxious that their sons should complete their course in the shortest time possible, and the young men themselves are almost all intensely eager to take the shortest possible cut, both in the matter of time and study, to their diploma. Hence the very strong attraction of a bursary of £50 a year,

with all its educational advantages, failed in great measure to induce medical students to spend two years in the School of Philosophy and Letters before entering on the special studies of the profession.

To meet this failure an arrangement was made some time afterwards by which medical students might, while pursuing their medical studies, read a limited course of philosophy and letters, entitling them to the University prizes. But this second effort in the same direction met with little success, as may be gathered from the following figures, viz.:—

1861-2	-	-	-	-	-	7
1862-3	-	-	-	-	-	20
1863-4	-	-	-	-	-	5
1864-5	-	-	-	-	-	9
1865-6	-	-	-	-	-	7
1866-7	-	-	-	-	-	4
						—
Total,						52

Thus the total number of medical students who could even be bribed to season their medical studies with a modicum of philosophy and letters, in the six years from 1861-2 to 1866-7, was fifty-two!!

Now, having these points in view, there can be no doubt that so long as medical students get their diploma without requiring from them any proof of scholarship, they cannot be attracted to submit their mental faculties to that discipline which will enable them to take up their special studies and subsequent practice with greater success. Dr. Newman's in-

duancements attracted twenty-nine students only, and after seven years they collapsed. The wider and more attractive plan adopted later on did not succeed much better. And, indeed, I cannot conceive how the medical student can accomplish his professional studies unless he have his reasoning powers previously cultivated. Take, for instance, the study of the nervous system. Why, this system includes the most delicate questions about the brain, the spinal cord, the formation of the brain, the nerve-current, and the connection of mental operations with physical processes. Then, there is the great question of the activity of our system founded on the law of pleasure—a law we may look upon as in many respects the foundation and the mainstay of our being. It is the principle of self-conservation, of self-acting impulse of the animal system. I say that the study of all this intricate system and other matters of a kindred nature demands a highly-sharpened intelligence. And it gives me peculiar pleasure to note here the opinion of the distinguished educationist who happily presides over this department of our Congress. Sir Patrick Keenan, in his admirable Report on the Educational System of Malta, suggests reforms in the University there, and among them one in reference to the education of medical students. At page 60 he says :—“ The Schools of Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, and Natural History, in all their branches, should be exclusively attached to the curriculum of arts ; and it should be made obligatory upon the medical students to attend

those schools, and to obtain certificates of proficiency on the subjects taught in them. The Professor of Political Economy might, as I have already suggested, be required to take up medical jurisprudence, and at the lectures on the latter subject the attendance of the medical students should also be made obligatory." Therefore, this most successful reformer in the various branches of education would make it obligatory on medical students to obtain certificates of proficiency in branches of liberal knowledge that would place the medical practitioner, before entering on his professional studies, or during them, under the influence of mental discipline.

The same applies to those who want to succeed in any profession or walk in the world. In the race of life there are many and different roads: there is the road of the tongue, if I may so call it, and the career of the pen, and of the chisel, and of the pencil, and of the workshop; the road of the loom, of navigation, of agriculture, and other careers which I need not mention. Now, what I contend is, that to enter on any of these walks of life with success, the faculties of the intellect must, except in the case of some exceptionally gifted persons, be drilled by training the mind into reasoning and discriminating properly. A man cannot be eloquent, in the true sense of the word, nor a good writer, nor a good sculptor, nor a good painter, nor a good designer, nor a good machinist, nor even a good weaver, nor a good carpenter, nor a good sailor, nor

a good soldier without a fair share of this intellectual awakening. I will make a convenient case. Take twenty young men who go to the practice of the medical profession with a preparatory mental training, and twenty out of those medical schools in which no such qualification is insisted upon for the diploma. Place them on the same footing, and I contend that the twenty whose minds have been previously well drilled will distance their competitors tremendously in the race of life.

Never before, perhaps, was this intellectual training a greater lever in moving and directing the world. We all know how hard it is at the present time to fight the battle of life. The competition is so keen, and the race so well contested, that if one wishes to set out on equal terms with those among whom his lot is cast, he must have a fair share of education. We must all fight our way in life chiefly with our brains, and not solely with our arms. Hence all men and women ought to receive the highest intellectual culture their circumstances will permit. Even higher education is not to be the exclusive privilege of the rich; it is not, as some pretend, a blessing to the rich and a curse to the poor. God gave us all the same faculties, and wishes us to cultivate them to the highest point of efficiency. Therefore, even the working man is not to be a mere machine like a steam-engine, but he has brains, and the more he sharpens them by study, the better will he be able to do his work. The intelligent shoemaker, for instance, does his work

better than an ignorant or unlettered one. And, indeed, if there be any force in the argument of cause and effect—and there is, most undoubtedly—it is that intellectual power has made the world achieve her greatest triumphs in progress and civilisation. What was it, for example, that launched mariners on the great ocean of discovery? What was it that first opened the great highways of commerce? What was it that enabled Vasco di Gama to show us the way to the rich products of India, and to an empire of over two hundred millions of inhabitants? What was it that enabled Columbus to discover that great country beyond the western wave, which has given a home to so many of our Irish exiles? What was it that enabled Pope Leo X. to give the first mighty impulse to the cultivation of art? “Happy,” says Roscoe, “it is for the world when the pursuits of powerful individuals, instead of being devoted to the subjugation or destruction of the human race, are directed towards those beneficial and generous ends which, amidst all his associations, Leo X. appears to have kept continually in view.”

There is no one, I am sure, in this hall who does not believe that the highest cultivation of the faculties of the mind is the sure way to success. But not alone the faculties of the intellect but of the *will* ought to be cultivated to prepare young men to encounter successfully the difficulties that throng the various walks of life. They must be prepared by a knowledge of their holy religion to practise

virtue. Hence to exclude religion from all secular education is opposed to one of the most fundamental of Catholic principles. Catholics hold that to teach a boy mathematics and the other secular branches, without teaching him at the same time to respect his parents, not to steal, nor to murder, is a bad education, and calculated to breed mischief to the State not less than to the individual. Suppose two boys taught all branches of secular knowledge up to the same point of proficiency, and suppose one of them is taught *at the same time* to command his passions and inclinations, to have a serious sense of his religious obligations, while the other begins life with no other view but that of gratifying his passions, susceptible of irritation at every restraint, impatient of control, reckless of consequences, without any regard for the will of God or man, so far as it may conflict with his own self-will, which of the two will be the better subject, the better member of society? How, in matter of fact, does the State succeed best in suppressing crime? Surely not so much by the strong arm of the law as by assisting those engaged in the instruction of youth to make their pupils not merely good scholars but good subjects. And if education is to have any influence at all for good or evil on the faith and morals of the young man, it must exercise it during the most impressionable period of life in which he passes through a university course.

This applies with particular force to the medical practitioner. His influence is second only to that of

the priest, and it is therefore of paramount importance to the best interests of the people to have him during his professional studies under the abiding influence of religion. And this proves the wisdom of that charity which prompted Dr. Newman to open, in connexion with the School of Medicine, a house of residence, which was intended to meet the requirements of parents not residing in Dublin, who were anxious to secure for their sons, while passing through their medical studies, the safeguards and comforts of home. Yet Dr. Newman's effort in this most important matter enjoyed the brief existence just of *four years*. The wider and more liberal plan worked by his successor, with a zeal that could not have been surpassed, had a much larger measure of success—perhaps as large a measure of success as could be expected under the circumstances.

But how was it that these attractions were not sufficient to draw a larger number of students into residence? The Catholic parents throughout the country are most anxious to have their sons comfortably lodged and under the care of religion, in order to be secured against the temptations of a large city. The board and lodging were such as could not be had for the same money elsewhere, and the accommodation was far superior to what medical students generally have in town. Why was it, then, they did not wish to avail themselves of these very substantial advantages? This is a question which it is very reasonable to ask and which will naturally occur to everyone who gives his mind to the subject. The true

explanation, I believe, is to be found in the preponderating tendency to dissipation which in most cases distinguishes medical students. The opportunities afforded me by my contact with medical students for some years enabled me to give a good deal of attention to their habits and to the motives that seemed to influence them. In my opinion none but inducements of the strongest kind will keep any considerable number of medical students under a rule which imposes even a modicum of restraint on their liberty. And this is the chief reason why the great majority of them held aloof from the residences where they could enjoy excellent board and lodging at a very cheap rate, and why so many withdrew themselves to squalid lodgings, where they importune their parents for money under all kinds of pretence, and often deny themselves the necessaries of life in order to save for purposes of dissipation. This is no doubt very sad, but it proves the wisdom of any legislation which would make residence and a fair share of scholarship a necessary condition for obtaining license to practise medicine. Therefore the medical practitioner in particular, and indeed everyone who goes forth from the University to fight his way successfully, must not only have his intellect cultivated to the greatest perfection his circumstances will permit, but must also have his will trained to practise virtue. Their lot will be cast in a world where competition is of the keenest description, and where the waves of human passion roll highest. With the double weapon, therefore, of religion and secular learning they

must be furnished to be able to fight the battle of life in which they are respectively to engage.

The bare system of examination is, without doubt, a serious obstacle to the success of higher education in this country. It brings the mind out of its own natural and wholesome atmosphere into the unhealthy air of a hot-house, and forces its faculties into a growth, which as soon as exposed to the sharp winds of the striving world abroad, droops and dies. Then many matters, the most important that can occupy the mind of thinking man, must be omitted from the matter for examination in a common University ; and this is decidedly a loss, so far as the absence of it will occasion neglect of the study of these subjects. Thus in fixing a common curriculum for examination in history and morals, peculiar difficulties will arise from the opposite views of men of different religious persuasions, or with different political traditions. But in this country since we cannot grow flowers in the open air at all seasons, we must have them forced in hot-houses ; so it is wise for the Catholic Bishops, worn out with the everlastingly deferred removal of their disabilities in this matter, to accept, when they could not have the best, the second best, since it is not opposed to any Catholic principle. In history and morals allowance must be made for difference of views, even when propounded in the same college, and in the case of fixing a curriculum for the examination of graduates from different colleges, the difficulty can be met in the same way, and the more irritating points omitted altogether. The Senate

will, I am sure, aim only at furthering true education by making the curriculum as wide as possible, and leaving out the irritating points of religious differences; and the examiners will, we are bound to hope, be competent men, who know how, in the selection of questions and the judging of the answers, to make fair allowance for the peculiar views and different religious opinions of the candidates. Then, as a set-off against the defects of the bare system of examination, this Royal National University will have the advantage of showing the merits of the different Colleges, and excite a keen competition upwards. It will have the advantage of bringing together, on a common platform, the youth of the best blood in Ireland, to render an account of their University course. Thus would be obtained what many most ardently desire—those advantages to youth of different creeds meeting in healthy and friendly rivalry.

This second-best and imperfect system now established by the Royal Irish University, to be successful on its own lines, needs the guiding influence of the brain that conceived and framed the existing measure of Irish Intermediate Education. Sir Patrick Keenan, who directs our proceedings here with such learning and dignity, was the man who secured for his country that most beneficial measure, passed for Ireland since Emancipation. And it is not too much to hope that he may be able to apply the same principles to a common National University for Ireland. Let the affiliated colleges be left free to teach in

their own way, and be paid for this teaching, provided its results come up to the standard of secular knowledge required by the law. Thus the evil of the system of bare examinations would be checked to some extent, by the teaching in the affiliated colleges, and thus, too, the State would not be giving to the Catholics what had been taken from the Protestants of the country, but would be paying Protestants, Presbyterians, and Catholics for teaching all branches of secular knowledge. The nation would be getting what belongs to the nation; and as to the fact that a portion of the public endowment should go to Catholics, the statesman may say that he regretted they were Catholics: he would prefer they were Protestants; but seeing they were Irishmen, it was but simple justice they should have a proportion of what was due to them as Irishmen. In the dispensation of Providence the fertilising rain is made to fall on the unjust as well as on the just; so it would be wise in a Government to follow the rule of universal Providence, and rain down its blessings, not alone upon the favoured pale of secularism, but also on that vast region beyond, so long left to arid barrenness.