

ACADEMICAL DEGREES:

ESPECIALLY HONORARY DEGREES IN THE UNITED STATES.

OUR system of learned and higher education in the United States has been borrowed, with some changes, from that of England; and the English universities were themselves built on the plan which was originated in continental Europe in the fourteenth century. One feature of the university system was the degrees, given on satisfactory evidence of proficiency to such as offered themselves, after a certain term of study, for examination. In process of time, to these literary honors earned by study, others, purporting to be of the same value, were added, which did not necessarily imply previous study or examination, or even residence at a learned school, and were often bestowed apart from any evidence of learning or literary merit. These degrees, conferred *honoris causâ*,—honorary degrees, as they were styled,—were not very uncommon, by the side of such as were conferred on examination, at the time when our earliest colleges were founded. But our earliest colleges themselves did not give to their graduates, or to any distinguished persons not educated within their halls, any such honorary testimonials for quite a number of years after their foundation. A person who may have the curiosity to satisfy himself on this point has only need to look at the first pages of the catalogues containing the names of graduates of Harvard or Yale to see that this is true; he will find there doctorates in theology, and a few in law, conferred by the universities of Scotland, by one or two of those of Holland, and by Oxford and Cambridge—the latter, however, conferring their honors principally on those in the colonies who had forsaken the Puritan plans of church government, and had gone over to the Church of England. That the right to confer such honorary degrees existed in the new colleges of the colonies was a matter of doubt at first will be made to appear in the sequel. But these doubts gave way after a long interval, and a precedent was established for the action of every new college, which, for a little more than a century, has been freely and constantly followed. The multiplication of colleges, which are generally schools of philosophy and the arts only, has led to an increase of honorary degrees even in law and theology, to say nothing of degrees in other branches; so that at present

many friends of sound learning are inquiring whether this conferring of the highest degrees without examination is not a cause of harm to the whole system of education, and whether it might not be better to give up altogether such degrees so conferred, or, if that be impracticable, in some way greatly to diminish their number. To this and other points relating to honorary degrees the present article will be devoted. But since a judgment on this matter cannot well be formed without some historical statements, our aim will be, first of all, to take a brief look at the degrees given in the early universities on examination, and at the honorary degrees as they crept in, both before and since the time when the earliest colleges in the English colonies were founded. We shall confine ourselves chiefly to degrees in law and theology.

The word "university," as a term of Roman law, denoted a *corporation* or *commune*, whether of a civic or a social kind; and in its mediæval acceptation, when used of a community of teachers and scholars, it was readily applied to such as were engaged in the studies of a single department of knowledge, or even to teachers and scholars from a particular part or country of Europe so united together. Thus at Bologna, where law was first studied on a large scale, there was early in the twelfth century a university of citramontanes or Italians, and another of ultramontanes or students from beyond the Alps. Not long afterward a third such institution, called the *universitas artium*, arose, where the study of the liberal arts was pursued; and to this that of medicine was added about A. D. 1316. In the same fourteenth century a fourth or theological university was added, and at length these corporations were united together. Canon law was taught in connection with civil law, and not in connection with theology. About the same time that Bologna became a school of law, at Salerno, in southern Italy, there arose a school of medical art, which, however, after some time, ceased to flourish, and gave way to other medical schools, especially to one founded at Montpellier in southern France. The theological school of Paris grew, at an early date, out of a monastic school into what may be called a theological university. In process of time the liberal arts, including philosophy and the

science of medicine, were here taught with theology; but by the management of the popes, who directed matters relating to learned studies in the interests of the Bologna law faculty, this important department of instruction was kept out of the curriculum in the University of Paris.

From these three centers universities, with minor differences and peculiarities, yet adhering on the whole to a single general form and idea, spread over Europe. We must omit to speak of the *nations*, as they were called, or groups of students from the same quarter or country united together, of the relations of the universities to the popes, and of the internal constitutions of the universities themselves.*

At first the *personnel* of these institutions consisted of teachers, quite independent in their instructions, and of students freely attending their lectures; but afterward usage and law determined who should teach, and prevented collisions which might arise between the teachers in the same departments. The end of the course, for each student who desired to become a teacher or to enter into some position in practical life, was an examination conducted by a faculty of promotion according to the statutes or usages of the university. If the examination was satisfactory, it was signified by the title which he acquired of bachelor, as in law, or theology, or arts. The bachelor seems to have acquired his name first in Provence and France, where *bachalar* was used to signify an owner of a peasant's estate of considerable size, which ranked below a knight's property, just as this first degree was below that of a fully qualified teacher. The term *licentiate*, although not properly denoting a distinct degree, was used of a person who was permitted to teach in the interval between his first and second or higher examination.

The titles for persons admitted to the higher degrees were drawn from the simple Latin words *magister*, in its relation to the scholar or pupil, and *doctor* or teacher. They meant nothing more than the right of teaching: the first, of teaching in the liberal arts; the second, of teaching in law, civil or canon or both, or in theology or medicine. Sometimes the student in law might offer himself for both civil and canon law, in which case his degree would be J. U. D., *juris utriusque doctor*, or for one of the two, as J. C. D., *juris civilis doctor*, etc., other terms being D. C. L., LL. D., etc. The candidate for the office of Doctor of Law in the early times, as at Bologna, was first subject to a private examination, for

which two texts were put into his hands, both from Roman or both from canon law; or one from each of these branches of law if he sought for graduation in both. He exhibited his work the same day on which it was laid before him; the doctor who presented him conducting the examination, and others, if they saw fit, making objections to his expositions. If when his trial was over he was accepted, he was called a *licentiate*, and might remain in this intermediate condition for some time; or, if he wished, he might appear at an early day in the cathedral, where after a discourse and a juristic prelection, at which students might dispute against him, he was proclaimed a doctor amid appropriate formalities.†

There were in different countries, in the course of time, different practices which it would be beyond our limits to speak of, or which we are not acquainted with. In regard to a usage which dispensed with final examinations, although not with attendance on lectures and a stated time of study, we beg leave to cite a passage from Ersch and Gruber's *Encyclopaedia*, vol. XVI., *voçe Doctorat*:

"The honor of a doctorate was bestowed ordinarily by special promotion, on application of a candidate made to the proper faculty; and it was an exception when distinguished men were graduated by free movement of a faculty, in order to give them a public proof of respect. The opposite state of things took place only among the theologians [where and to what extent?], who got their promotions regularly *causâ honoris*. Many faculties granted a diploma at once [*i. e.*, without examination] after the proper fees were paid, and a scientific [or scholastic] treatise had been handed in. Such doctors were wont to be treated with some want of respect, and were called *doctores bullati* [in allusion probably to the Roman boys who wore the *bulle*], as contrasted with those who had passed through a full examination. In reference to those, the saying was in use, *Sumimus pecuniam et mittimus asinum in patriam*. In most of the faculties the candidates were promoted only after a complete and rigorous examination. First, the aspirant had to undergo a trial of his fitness before the appropriate officer, as, for instance, before the archdeacon of the cathedral church at Bologna, or at Paris before the superintendent of the cathedral school, out of which, in part, the University of Paris was developed. If the candidate was, on examination, found worthy of a further test, there was set before him a problem or question to be solved in Latin. When this was laid before the faculty of promotion and was found satisfactory, the examination, properly so called, began; after which, if he had passed through it successfully, there remained for him to hold a disputation; and then the dean went through the ceremony of promotion, and the candidate took an oath that he would fulfill the duties of the doctorate."

He thus had a right to remain and lecture at the university, in the department where he

* An article entitled "The Rise of Universities," drawn chiefly from Savigny's "History of Roman Law in the Middle Age," and written by the author of this article, appeared in the "New Englander," vol. x., No. 1, 1852, from which much here is drawn.

† Compare the article in the "New Englander" already cited, vol. xi., p. 31.

had been found to be a proficient; or he might be called to some office in the state or in the ecclesiastical system, which must have had great need of canon lawyers. The rules and usages of Bologna prevailed more or less in southern Europe; those of France in France, Germany, England, and other northern countries.

Hitherto we have found no higher degrees which were not won without some previous study; and probably the degree of bachelor was never given without examination, even where the theologians got their doctorates on the easier terms above described. But a practice began of promoting distinguished men to the higher degrees, we know not when; and such honors were given not only to those who had had them in their own universities, but also to others who were without liberal education, or whose life at the university had been interrupted. This usage has existed for a long time, and, if we are not in an error, through all the countries of Europe, wherever there are universities. Sometimes degrees are given in the way of honor to persons who have acquired special distinction out of their own department. Thus, not many years since, a military officer in Germany received the degree of Doctor in Theology on account of an extensive and learned biography of Calvin.

The English universities, so far as pertains to the conditions for being admitted to the higher degrees, have not materially departed from the practice of the mediæval times. They have in substance the same system of graduation and interval of time between a lower and a higher degree, and the same examinations before a public officer of the university and others, which were in use centuries ago; but for the higher honors study at the university is not strictly required.

For the rules we must refer to the calendars, which, however, will show some considerable departures from the early usage, especially in recent times. It is enough if a formal connection is kept up with the university. As we have no space for details, we give here only the rules which regulate the granting of the degrees in theology. At Oxford the degree of Doctor of Divinity may be obtained four years after admission to that of Bachelor in Divinity, and this again, if we understand the rule, three years after taking the degree of Master of Arts. As the degree of Master of Arts cannot be taken until in the twenty-seventh term from matriculation, the whole

time, there being four terms in the year, from the beginning to the D. D. is nearly fourteen years. A candidate for the degree of B. D. is required to read two dissertations before the Regius Professor of Divinity, and a candidate for the degree of D. D. to read three exegetical lectures on parts of Scripture. At Cambridge a master of arts or law may be admitted to the degree of Bachelor of Divinity in the seventh year from his graduation, and the candidate for D. D. must be a B. D. of not less than five years' standing. The rules in regard to the proceedings require the candidate for the lower degree to keep an "act," or read a dissertation in English or Latin on some subject connected with Scriptural exegesis or theology, and the candidate for the higher to prepare a similar dissertation in Latin or English, his particular subject having been approved beforehand by a majority of the professors of divinity. The dissertation must be printed before the degree can be obtained. We must omit the regulations for degrees and examinations of bachelors and doctors in law.

If the lists of the highest degrees on examination in theology and law to which we have access can be any guide for forming a general judgment, few proceed so far in their course. At Oxford, in 1879, we find seven doctorates in theology and one in law to have been thus given; and at Cambridge, in 1882, one in divinity and five in law.

How far the higher degrees are held in estimation, and how far they fulfill the end for which they were originally designed, may be questionable points. All are not of one opinion in this respect. Archbishop Whately, in his very entertaining evidence before the Oxford Commission, does not hold them in very high repute (Report, etc., Lond., 1852). He says that "if any Oxford man were asked whether the degree of M. A., and those in law and divinity, do not convey, at least to *some* of our countrymen, *some* notion of merit or proficiency, more or less, of some kind, and whether, therefore, a university *so* conferring these degrees as to create or keep up a false impression is not guilty of a kind of fraud on the public, I do not know what he could answer." And again he says: "I can think of but one remedy—to limit the number of these degrees, allowing only a certain proportion of the whole number of members of the university to obtain them, or so many annually."* Whately, be it observed,

* An appendix to Newman's translation of Huber's "History of the English Universities" is instructive, as showing how canon law ceased to be taught and candidates for degrees in this branch of law fell off as the Reformation prevailed; and also how degrees in civil law became gradually fewer in the sixteenth century. After 1533 there were no doctorates in canon law given at Cambridge, of which there had been 54 between 1500 and that year. There was, indeed, no use for them after appeals to the Pope had been prohibited. From 1500 to 1662 the doctorates of civil law, conferred on examination, were in all 184.

refers here to degrees given on examination. It is probable that, since he wrote, a great improvement for the better has taken place. But is there really any difficulty in making the examinations hard enough to deter or reject those who are not real scholars? Could a body of learned men fail of coming to the conclusion that the examinations must be severe enough to frighten away those who are unqualified? And may not the number of honorary doctorates disincline some persons to offer themselves for an examination who otherwise would pass it with honor?

The practice of granting honorary degrees has long prevailed in England, and was in full blast when the earliest colleges in the English colonies were founded. These are given for a variety of reasons besides scholarship—as to persons of rank, foreign envoys in Great Britain, distinguished writers, political leaders, and so on. Confining ourselves to the statistics of the present time, we find that at Oxford, between 1848 and 1879, the honorary doctorates in civil law (D. C. L.) and in theology conferred were 307 of the former and 39 of the latter, besides 23 degrees of Master of Arts. These were published chiefly at the “*Encænia*,” or days of commemoration of founders and benefactors, which are held annually in June. At Cambridge a distinction is made between honorary and *titular* degrees. The latter, answering to honorary degrees as ordinarily understood, were, in twenty-four years, between 1859 and 1883 inclusive, 143 LL. D.’s and 12 M. A.’s. No doctorates in theology are found among degrees of this class. The honorary degrees, so called, which seem to be confined to persons of rank or official station, are conferred on privy councilors, bishops, or bishops designate or elect, judges of the Supreme Court, deans of cathedrals, heads of colleges, and peers and sons of peers, unless they come as *juvenes* to the university, when they can have only the degree of B. A.

We now pass over to a very important feature of the English universities, as forming the original model after which the places of higher learning and science in the United States took their first form. We refer, of course, to the colleges, which, although not peculiar to England, have had a prominence given to them there which they attained and retained nowhere else. These colleges were somewhat monastic, and consisted of students who were, especially at first, from the same part of the country, gathered around a master (for whom the titles were various, such as master, president, provost, principal, dean) and his assistants, who were called *socii* or *fellows*—that

is, fellow-teachers and governors of the college or school. It shows the connection and tradition followed in the New England colleges, that at Harvard and at Yale the corporations, although not teachers, are in the first acts relating to the foundations styled presidents (or rectors) and fellows. These officers led a common life with their students in a building, the property in which did not necessarily at first belong to the university, but might, with all the original endowments, have been contributed by friends of religion and learning to the earliest founder, or might have been given by the founder himself. The principal work of the president and his fellows, besides that of watching over the life and character of the pupils, was to aid them in understanding the prelections of the professors, who were, as such, university officers, but might be connected with some college also. The common life, the moral and religious training, the preparation for university duties, were a very good work, but not a work essential to the existence nor to the earliest form of the universities. The professors, the lecturers, the examinations, the degrees, the honors, all belonged to the universities. After the invention of printing and the easier access to books and to texts (which at first, in civil law at least, were written out by copyists and sold to students), lectures declined in importance, and the fellows and others in the colleges became the principal instructors in study; and thus the college side of education, which now chiefly consisted in Greek, Latin, logic, and mathematics, prevailed to a great degree over the oral instruction by public lecturers. Meanwhile some of the most important sciences, such as law and medicine, were transported to the city of London; and to a great extent that which was the original work of the professors and of the faculties was taken from the officers of the old university system, the examinations and the conferring of degrees remaining in their hands as their exclusive, as it had been their original, province. As for degrees, and honorary ones in particular, a change of the old plan, committing these into the hands of the college authorities, would have been most injurious to the whole system by introducing into it rivalry and disharmony in their worst shapes. And, on the other hand, to take away the power of conferring degrees from the universities would have been still more disastrous—if, for instance, a plan could have been adopted of transferring the power to grant them to officers appointed by the state. The removal of the studies of law and medicine to a great extent from the old centers of study, although it abridged and lowered the impor-

tance of those institutions, was perhaps inevitable, and may never be repaired; but the new sciences, and the enlargement of the field of study in metaphysics, philology, and history, if earnestly taken advantage of, as they now seem to be, may make up for the loss of branches which have found a more convenient home in the great capital. Certainly it does not look at present as if the English universities would be necessarily injured and be obliged to fall behind by any new advances of human knowledge.

When the first New England colonies were founded it was nothing strange that the Puritan ministers, who were chiefly graduates of the two universities, should copy the college system, which was the most living part of the university system. It was the part of the education which admitted of immediate application in the circumstances of the new settlements, and one which would open to the heads and fellows an influence religious and moral over the undergraduates. It is also evident that the poverty of the new colonies was quite unequal to the great burden of erecting so vast a structure as that of an English university.

That degrees in arts, as well the degree of bachelor as that of master, should be felt to be essential in the newly founded institution at Cambridge is quite natural. Rules made during President Dunster's administration, in 1642,—the year of the foundation of the college,—contain forms relating to the conferring of degrees in arts *pro more academiarum in Anglia*. In the act of June 27, 1692, it was enacted (in section four) that "the president and fellows of said college shall have power from time to time to grant and admit to academical degrees, as in the universities in England, such as in respect of learning and good manners they shall find worthy to be promoted thereunto." Under this act Increase Mather received the degree of S. T. D., being then president. The reason given for this shows that higher degrees in the several branches taught in universities were thought of: "And whereas it is a laudable custom in universities . . . to confer academical degrees or titles on those who by their proficiency as to knowledge in theology, law, physic, mathematics, or philosophy have

been judged worthy thereof, it is hereby enacted," etc. Under this act Increase Mather, as we said above, was created a Doctor of Theology, and two others, John Leverett, afterward president of the college, and William Brattle, both graduates of 1680, received the honor of Bachelors of Theology. But the Privy Council in England, having rejected this act in 1695, practically denied also any right under the original charter to the conferring of such honorary degrees; although what was done between 1692 and 1695 remained in force, because neither the legislature of the colony nor the Privy Council disallowed it. Things continued thus until 1771, when Nathaniel Appleton, a graduate of 1712, was honored with the degree of S. T. D. with no intervening precedent after the degree given to Increase Mather spoken of above. The first degree of Doctor of Laws ever granted in Harvard College was given to Washington in 1776. The Constitution of Massachusetts, framed in 1781, gave the first undoubted authority that existed to confer any degrees whatever, if indeed we can go so far as to find this right granted even there in undoubted terms.*

The act for liberty "to erect a collegiate school" in his Majesty's colony of Connecticut, October 9, 1701, gives express power to the undertakers, partners, etc., ". . . to grant degrees or licenses, as they or those deputed by them shall see cause to order or appoint." And the charter of 1745, which was substituted for the earlier one at the instance of the President and Fellows of Yale College, provides that said corporation "shall have power to give and confer all such honors, degrees, or licenses as are usually given in colleges and universities to such as they shall think worthy of them." This charter remains until now, except so far as it has been altered by the president and fellows' own consent and request.

In neither of these institutions, with the exceptions already mentioned, was any higher honorary degree conferred until the near approach of the Revolution, although quite a number of graduates of both received academical honors from abroad. Cotton Mather was honored in this way in 1710, and Benjamin Colman in 1731, both of them by the Univer-

* The reprint of this Constitution in Poor's edition of the "Federal and State Constitutions" (i. 969) contains the following provision: "The president and fellows of Harvard College in their corporate capacity, etc., shall have, hold, etc., all the powers, authorities, rights, etc., which they now have or are entitled to have, hold, etc., and the same are confirmed unto them, etc., forever." It may be still asked whether they then had, and so whether they now have or are entitled to have, the right of conferring degrees or higher degrees under this charter. The question, however, is not of any practical moment.

It deserves remark that the term "university" is here made synonymous with "college." "Our wise ancestors laid the foundation of Harvard College, in which university," etc. We may add that Cotton Mather in his "Magnalia" (iv., pp. 132 *et seq.*) uses the word in the same way: "I see not why such marks of honor may not be properly given by an American University as by an European," etc.

sity of Glasgow; and Rector Cutler of Yale College, a graduate of Harvard, received the same honor from Oxford in 1723, but not until he had conformed to the Church of England and had been deposed from his rectorate. In the course of years a number of other ministers of the gospel, graduated at Yale, who followed Cutler in his movement, were in like manner rewarded; as Johnson, afterward president of King's College—now Columbia—in New York, Caner, Chandler in 1745, and somewhat later Seabury, subsequently bishop of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut, and first prelate of the Church of England in America. Many others from both institutions, and from other colleges in the colonies, had such degrees from Scotch or Dutch universities, the motive for which must have been to honor prominent men of non-Episcopal churches. As for honorary degrees given by American institutions themselves in the eighteenth century, we have room only for one or two particulars in addition to what has been said of Harvard. Yale College gave the degree of S. T. D. for the first time, in 1774, to Benjamin Lord, a graduate of 1717, and of LL. D., in 1787, to Chief Justice Dyer, first of all its graduates. During and after the Revolution this practice extended, so that every newly founded college exercised this power without scruple; and a person who could take the trouble to search the charters given in the last century, as well as the vastly greater number given in this, would probably find that they all received the power to grant such degrees as were then in use, if they did not acquire a wider privilege. Thus Dartmouth College, under a charter of 1769, honored with the degree of S. T. D. Benjamin Pomeroy, who had been at Yale a classmate with Wheelock, Dartmouth's first president; and Princeton College, founded in 1746, and opened in 1757, exercised this power before the Revolution, as in the case of a president of Yale in 1774.

It is perhaps deserving of remark that the frequency of honorary degrees in theology during the latter part of the century had no perceptible effect in calling forth talent and learning. The speculations in theology and metaphysics proceeded from the followers of Jonathan Edwards more than from any other source; but this eminent man did not live into the time when the theological honors were freely dispensed by places of learning in the colonies, nor was he as highly

estimated in his life-time as he has been since his death. As the century proceeded in its course, however, and especially after the Declaration of Independence, the colleges then existing took the providing for academical honors into their own hands, and the youngest of them started in this career at not far from the same point of time with the oldest. The habit thus fastened on the United States began by a kind of necessity, if we would follow the same path which had been pursued in Great Britain and on the Continent. Yet in so doing we adopted not the original plan of conferring the highest degrees on examination upon those who offered themselves for that purpose, but the plan of selecting men of age and prominence, who rather conferred honor on the colleges than acquired honor for themselves. As the country spread, the demand for new colleges and for what began to be styled universities* spread *pari passu*, and the names of the new institutions grew larger the more humble was their origin. All of these acquired by charter, it would appear, the same right of conferring degrees, honorary or other, which the oldest had been permitted to exercise, with no limitation of their power in this respect. The extent to which this power has been exercised it is not easy to ascertain with accuracy; yet statistics in this matter are needed to test our opinions. To these statistics we now come, and shall endeavor in all brevity to show first, by a statement of the higher honorary degrees conferred by the two oldest colleges (which are selected as being fair representatives of the rest), what the condition of things has heretofore been; and then, by other statements, what the number of such degrees is at the present time.

The degrees conferred *honoris causâ*, without examination, are S. T. D. and LL. D. These may be placed under two heads, one of which includes such as are given to graduates of these two institutions, whether by the Alma Mater herself or by some other seat of learning; the other includes the same kinds of honorary degrees given to other persons, whether graduates of other institutions or not graduated at all. The honorary degree finds its place on the catalogue of graduates, whenever it is conferred on them, after the person's name, and under the year of graduation. For instance, the literary honors of John Adams, President of the United States, will be found in the cat-

* The confusion of college and university appears as early as 1701, in "proposals for erecting a university in the renowned colony of Connecticut." So the writer afterward speaks of a Synod being gathered for settling a university, etc.; and again says: "There have been many famous universities without colleges." The writer may have been a Massachusetts minister who was not in sympathy with the leading persons at Harvard.

alogue of Harvard graduates under the year 1755, when he received his degree of Bachelor in Arts, although his academical honors were given to him long afterward—between 1780 and 1797.

The degrees of Doctor in Law and in Theology conferred on graduates of Harvard by their Alma Mater or by other places of learning before 1801 were in all, if our count is right, 179, of which 108 were conferred by Harvard itself, and 71 came from other quarters. Between 1801 and 1879, 206 graduates of Harvard received honorary degrees, 91 in law and 115 in theology. Of the degrees in law 56 came from Harvard itself and 36 from other sources. Of the degrees in theology 64 were conferred by Harvard and 51 proceeded from other sources.

The honorary degrees of a similar rank granted by Harvard to non-graduates or to persons graduated at other institutions were in all 218 in number, of which 55 were in theology and 163 in law. The first honorary doctorate in law, if Increase Mather's in 1692 is not counted, was conferred on General Washington in 1776.

The higher degrees conferred on the graduates of Yale College down to 1801 (between 1702 and 1800) were in all 144, of which 55 were in law and 89 in theology. Of these 90, 22 in law and 68 in theology were conferred by other institutions, and 33 in law and 21 in theology by Yale College itself. From 1800 to 1880 the higher degrees were in all 360, in theology 220, in law 140. Of the honorary degrees in theology, Yale conferred 15 and other institutions 205; of those in law, Yale conferred 50, and other institutions conferred the doctorate in law upon 90.

The higher honorary degrees given by Yale to persons not there graduated were in the second period in all 91, 37 in theology and 54 in law. The first of these degrees was given in 1766.

We beg leave to make two remarks on the lists pertaining to the last period, one of which is that the degrees received by graduates of Yale were very numerous, exceeding by about 150 those conferred by other colleges on graduates of Harvard, while Yale itself conferred only 15 on its own graduates. The causes which brought this state of things about were the great number of students at Yale then having the ministry in view and their dispersion over a large part of the United States. This of late years has in a measure ceased. And, again, the reason why only 15 honorary doctorates in theology were bestowed by Yale on its graduates out of 220 was chiefly owing to the feeling which some of the "fellows" or corporation had in re-

spect to honorary degrees, and especially to degrees in theology. From 1835 to 1869 there were no such degrees given, we believe, either to its own alumni or to any other persons. Not long after this feeling had given way to some extent, a rule of the corporation made a limit to the number of such honorary degrees which could be given in any one year, and a committee, consisting of professors from the several faculties or departments, was appointed, whose annual duty it was to examine a report made on names proposed for such honors. It is worthy of mention that the policy of the college authorities did no harm, apparently, to the graduates or to the college. The doctorates in theology were more numerous than before, from the opening of other channels, yet the feeling against higher degrees was not confined to the place of learning spoken of.

These statements will show what the older colleges have been doing in the way of bestowing academical honors since the time of the Revolution. As for the annual number of such honors conferred by all the institutions in the United States exercising this power, our materials are scanty, and are chiefly drawn from Commissioner Eaton's reports for 1879, 1880, and 1881. In the first of these years the doings of 281 places of learning with degree-conferring powers are published; in the second there are reports from 285 such institutions. There were created in 1879 150 doctors in divinity and 85 in law, and in 1881 128 of the former and 65 of the latter—in all for two years 428. For 1881 we have had no complete account until this article was all but furnished. We now learn from Mr. Eaton's report for this year that the honorary degrees of D. D. or S. T. D. conferred in that year were 165, and of LL. D. 86. The reports come from 306 institutions, many of which, described as agricultural colleges or industrial universities, etc., would not think of conferring the degrees with which we have to do.

An article in the "Independent" of August 17, 1882, throws light on the number of ministers then living who had had the degree of D. D. or S. T. D. conferred upon them. Among the Congregationalist ministers in Massachusetts, one out of eleven was found to bear the title, but if the retired ministers were reckoned in, the ratio would be as 1 to 8. In the Presbyterian Church (of the Northern States?) there were, according to the same authority, 610 Doctors of Divinity, or 1 to about 8.3 of the 5086 then belonging to the denomination. In the Episcopal Church there were in 1882 545 clergymen who had received doctorates, or 1 out of 6.5. The propor-

tionate number among the Methodists and Baptists must be much less, but is sure to increase with the learning and zeal which are putting the ministers of these bodies on a level with their compeers belonging to denominations formerly stronger.

Of the doctorates of law, which are far from being few, we have but meager statistics; and as our main object in this essay is the value and estimation of degrees in theology, we feel less interest in hunting doctorates of law out from college catalogues and other documents. We may, however, mention here a single fact which shows how the tendency to use new degrees in awarding scientific honors has begun to show itself. The degree of Ph. D., which in Germany is what M. A. has been in England and the United States, has been used for a few years among us as a degree conferred on examination upon students in science. There certainly can be no objection to this novelty, if the examination is severe and thorough. But some colleges, chiefly if not entirely seated in the Western States, went beyond this, and gave the degree to some who, without an examination for it, had gained some distinction in physical sciences. It was according to logic and analogy so to do; but a convention of scientific men, more than a year since, protested against this extension of the field of honors, and their protest has been received, we judge, with no dissatisfaction by the country.

From what has been said thus far in regard to honorary degrees, we may safely draw the conclusion that by ancient usage the *colleges* of the United States have no right to confer any degrees whatever, whether honorary or as the reward of scholarship determined by examination. If we depart from the precedent of earlier times, it may fairly be pleaded that in the circumstances in which the early colonists found themselves the conferring of degrees on examination was a necessity, whether supported by precedent or not; but the giving of higher degrees never was in the hands of colleges properly so called, and only pertained to bodies properly styled universities, where faculties of instruction were united together in one corporation. To the university alone it belonged to make laws in regard to examination, to prescribe what studies should be required for degrees, to fix the length of residence before a student could offer himself for a degree; nor, so far as we are aware, had the single colleges, in those universities where they existed, the least right of interfering in the general system of education so far as to put one study in the place of another prescribed by the general statutes: the governing board alone, however it might be called, could or-

dain what criterions and tests for scholarship should be made use of. Still less could a college in the university, if there were any colleges there, give degrees *honoris causâ*. The king might express his wish to have such and such honors conferred on particular persons; but the wish had no effect until complied with by the university acting through its officers or senate. The university, perhaps, might introduce new degrees by its inherent power; but the whole subject of degrees was outside of the province of a college, whose business was to train up persons who could have degrees from the university, if they were found worthy on examination. Hence, to confer the power of giving degrees, such as are usually given in universities, on an infant college in a new colony, seems to imply some ignorance of what universities were, or a strong hope that one faculty would expand into three or four.

But another point deserves consideration. The degrees on examination followed the approval of the particular faculties, or of committees from their members. This implies that the universities, for their own credit or even self-preservation, committed the examinations in a department of study to professors or instructors in that department; nor can we suppose that teachers belonging to other departments interfered with their office. This, we presume, is the case in all respectable colleges; the corporation or fellows or supreme authorities, by whatever name called, will not give degrees, unless to those students whom the teachers pronounce worthy of such honor. Some universities did not have the full complement of four departments or faculties; thus that of Paris had for a long time, as we have already said, no faculty of law. Now, suppose that such a university, with the faculty of law wanting, should have undertaken to give degrees in law, common or civil or both, without examination, would that have been endured? If the University of Paris, in its earlier times, had taken this license, would there not have been a general outcry, and would not the Pope have considered it an indirect attack on his authority? This is but acting according to the very fair rule that neither examinations nor degrees ought to be permitted in any branch of an institution, where there is no corps of instructors in that branch competent to decide on the merit of a candidate to receive such a degree. According to this principle, where in a place of learning a certain branch of study is not taught, there ought to be no degrees given in it. If, for instance, law or theology is not taught, there should be no degrees in law or theology. As well might a medical school give degrees in

the arts or in theology, or a theological school make doctors of medicine; as well, we mean, so far as analogy is concerned; for in matter of fact such a passing over into another department of study would be unauthorized, complained of, and condemned. And yet among us, small colleges, where there is only a faculty of arts, are, as we find from year to year, in the constant exercise of such power, even to the using of new degrees unknown before.

But there is a ready reply to what we have said, drawn from established usage. The distinctive characteristic of the American colleges has been, it will be said, growth, without legislation, both in the colonial and in the national form of our existence. In answer, we say that the progress of the American higher education has indeed been, in most respects, more rapid and more satisfactory than could have been anticipated. But if there are excrescences in the system, such as seem to be hurtful to the advance of real study, every educated man ought to desire that they should disappear. Such we hold to be honorary degrees, especially doctorates in law and in theology; and we believe them to be so little in accord with solid learning that we could wish them to be suppressed, or, if that is impossible, checked and regulated. We intend, however, in this article to go no further than to urge the propriety of going back to the original system of granting such degrees, like all others, to persons who, on their own responsibility, offer themselves for examination. As for the present system of high degrees without examination, we intend to do no more than to show what its evils are, and to inquire whether a return to the old plan, still pursued, we believe, in all the universities of Christendom where faculties of law and theology are found, may not have a good influence on the standard of learning and on the value of the higher degrees themselves in all parts of the country.

The higher honorary degrees, as it has been made to appear, were not conceived to be within the competence of the earliest colleges in the colonies to bestow; and with one exception they were not conferred by them between the founding of Harvard and the years just before the Revolution, or nearly a century and a half. If, at that time, a plan could have been introduced of granting such degrees on examination, it might have been preventive of much evil; but the Revolution cut off to a great extent the former sources of supply, and it is remarkable how all the colleges within a few years provided for themselves in this respect. From this time

onward the stream of honorary degrees has run in a smooth channel, nor has the supply ever failed. But the abundant supply has brought with it a sense of the evil which attends such a way of helping ourselves to honors. Some of the evils are the following:

In the first place, these honorary degrees are bestowed on no evidence of thorough learning in theology or in law, and thus are in no way certificates of deserving the honors, saving that, for some reason or other, the corporation of a college regards the person thus honored as a man worthy of notice beyond most of his fellows. But whether he was a scholar or not, whether he was a theologian or an accomplished lawyer or not, in the estimate of the board governing a college, does not appear. There are so many causes for a man's taking rank above his fellows in the same profession, so much ambition for notoriety in some persons, and so much shrinking from it in others of equal abilities and learning, that, as an actual distinction between those who deserve a degree and those who do not deserve it, such honors are of very little worth. Add to this that the ways of obtaining them often take away what would otherwise be their value. By this we do not mean to intimate that a person eager for such an honor will use unworthy means to secure it, or that his friends, understanding his wishes, will so act in his stead; but we mean that the trustees of a college have no sure means of judging of the relative, and still less of the absolute, merit of names brought before them; that the trustees themselves are not a body capable, in the time which they can afford, of forming a judgment in such a case; and that, if the object in view is to find among its own graduates or in the body of graduates of all the colleges the man who ought to be honored before all others, this is by no means an easy problem to solve. We are acquainted with the method which one of the largest institutions in the land has for a dozen years or more acted upon, which in substance is this: The number of honorary degrees is limited by a standing rule, and a committee from all the departments or faculties is called together to act on names submitted to them, without which no honor can by ordinary rules come before the corporation. This shows a conscientious desire to do a duty fairly and deliberately; but whether the committees from the faculties would pronounce the plan to be satisfactory we very much doubt.

We have also a right to say that this distribution of honorary degrees is to a great extent unmeaning. It fails of selecting the most worthy; it disappoints many, as is probable,

and gratifies a few, and those few not, of course, the best fitted to fill the place; it by no means selects the most learned and useful scholars, but rather those who have an artificial or undeserved prominence. The desire to obtain the honor is a desire which no man should indulge, and yet the uncertainty and unreasonableness of the rules of selection provoke such a desire especially in persons who have no good claims by which it can be justified. If the honor of a doctorate in theology is given to ministers of one denomination, it will in the end be given to those of another,—not in order to encourage a learned ministry, but owing, in part, to the sway of the spirit of equality, and because, in part, it gives a title which is as good as if the largest university had conferred it, as well as a standing in the upper section of one's fellow ministers. Perhaps, too, it may help him in getting a good parish. The social distinction conferred on a man by an academical honor, whether deserved or not, is not an inconsiderable motive for desiring and even for seeking it; and the value of titles is perhaps nowhere more highly estimated than in a democratic country like ours. Thus the official title which attaches itself to a person in a civil, military, judicial, or political sphere is commonly given rather than the christian name, not merely because it is shorter to say Colonel or Major or Mr. Smith, but also because it is supposed to afford pleasure to the person so addressed. It is owing to these causes that addresses by word of mouth, or on the covers of letters, have gradually fallen down from their original honorary meaning, so as to be open to almost all men,—such titles, we mean, as Esquire, Master or Mr., and Honorable. In this widening of the use of titles, they come to mean at length little or nothing, and instead of distinctions are bestowed on all men. Who that adds the title of *Esquire* to a name on a letter ever thinks of the aristocratic employment which it once denoted? It is getting to be very much the same in regard to doctorates in theology. They carry with them no evidence of learning, but only a certain indefinite superiority above others in the same sacred calling.

The estimate of the value of honorary degrees will be, of course, affected by the number of institutions which have the authority to confer them. There are more than three hundred colleges which can confer honorary degrees, and over their trustees there is no control. As it is generally unknown from what source these honors in each particular case proceed, those who wear the honors will pass on an equality, and the number of the institutions will only diminish the respect

for the title when it accompanies the name of a minister of the gospel; for men will be slow to believe that the opinion of so many unknown boards of trustees, giving the highest distinction in learning, is to be greatly respected, any more than they can trust as many mints throwing out coin over the country with no general board of control, or banks issuing paper at discretion. In England the small number and great size of the universities make their judgments to be respected over the literary world; but even there the honorary degrees can do very little good to the system. It is rather the system which in a measure supports this excrescence of literary honors conferred without examination.

What we have said thus far of honorary doctorates in theology will apply to the same honors in law, only that the latter are honors in a more exclusive sense. They are used with less frequency than the theological ones, either as suffixed to individual names on the title-pages of books or in addresses. Thus a judge who had the title would hardly choose to have it attached to his name in court, or, indeed, anywhere else, since his official name commands respect. Add to this that, as an honorary degree, it is more frequently bestowed on men of political distinction, on distinguished writers or other men of mark, than on lawyers; so that it is given to a very miscellaneous class of important men, and thus indicates no special kind of talent or proficiency. It is thus more a compliment than anything else; it might be spared without being missed, and is not very much valued when it is conferred. But why should compliments invade places dedicated to the realities of learning and science?

It is somewhat humiliating to have to mention here the forged degrees which have within a few years been detected and exposed in the United States; and yet, as they bear upon our subject, they deserve mention, because but for honorary degrees such forgeries would hardly have been attempted. The most notorious of these dealers in *bogus* degrees, nearly all of which were pretended degrees in medicine, was one Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, whose career is exposed by Mr. Eaton in his Report on Education for 1880, pages 157-165. To his purchases of charters as early as 1858, his opening a market for certificates of doctorates in medicine, his detection and pretended death by drowning, his subsequent arrest and confinement for trial, we can only allude. One remarkable circumstance attending his career was that a commerce was opened between him and a man in Great Britain, who was without doubt aware

of the fraud. This person writes from London to ascertain whether he could "grant him a degree, honorary or otherwise," for gentlemen to be introduced by him, "they proving themselves proficient to write a suitable petition in Latin, and forwarding their testimonials and manuscripts and printed works, or to pass an examination in this college (at London), the questions to be proposed by yourself. If you would oblige me by doing this, I will guarantee you £1000 a year, or £8 or £10 for each degree."

The detection of this fraud did not put an end to the species to which it belongs. One Stickney obtained a charter from the Legislature of New Hampshire, and sold degrees of the *Nova-Anglica (!) Universitas Artium et Scientiæ*, which had no real existence; and in the winter of 1882-3 the managers of a medical college, which, if we mistake not, had procured a charter, and was removed from its original place of work to Boston, were entering on the same career, when the law put a stop to further proceedings. We are aware that the responsibility for such frauds is not wholly to be imputed to the bestowal of honorary degrees, and that the medical art is that one which especially offers a chance of successful imposture, since the pretenders in it well know how easily the poor and the ignorant are exposed to the deceptions of quacks; but this much may be said at least: that honorary degrees, although they have lost their repute to some extent, are yet held in esteem by very many, and carry with them an impression that other degrees also, somewhat resembling them, proceed from respectable sources.

If, now, honorary degrees in the very important departments of theology and law are liable to the charges which we have made against them, and especially to that of doing harm to thoroughness and honesty in learning, what is the cure for this? Either they should be thrown aside altogether or be retained under restrictions; while the old system, in use since the foundation of modern universities, of degrees given on examination in law and theology, which still exists all over Europe, ought to be restored. To abandon honorary doctorates altogether may be found impracticable, and cases may occur in which a study begun in all fidelity is interrupted by sickness or poverty. In such cases, which are not very numerous, where the lower degrees of various kinds had been sought for by earnest study, but were not regularly attainable owing to the misfortune of the student, it has been not unfrequently the practice to give the degree at a subsequent time, even without examination. This comes near to an honorary degree, yet the intimate knowledge of the student's ac-

quisitions, until illness or poverty blocked the way, places this on a different ground from those degrees which are simply honorary. It might be well, also, to reward discoverers of important principles in science, who had had, perhaps, no public education whatever, with the honors which incorporate them among those who rose by regular stages to the higher platform of learning; but if this should be found desirable, let such rewards be reserved for cases which would be rare and of distinguished merit. As for the rest, let the way be opened to any graduate, if he feels it important, to prepare by the study of years for the highest degree within his reach, and that whether he resides within the college walls or outside of them. This is the bravest course for the individual himself. He offers himself, we will suppose, for the lower degree or baccalaureate in law or theology. The time when this first degree after graduation could take place should be not so very early; it might be at the end of four years from his graduation. Then the higher examination for his doctorate should be long enough afterward to give him time to become a proficient in the science which he pursues—eight years, perhaps, from his graduation as a bachelor in law or theology. The tests of his fitness for this higher degree, which would generally demand a separate examination, might be selected as they have been hitherto, and the examiner or examiners would naturally belong to the faculty within which the studies are included. In theology, for instance, exegesis of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures would naturally be one of the most important subjects, then the history of the church and of theological science, together with some essay, selected by the candidate but approved by the examiners, on some branch of theological study. In law the examination would naturally take the same course, with an essay as before. If the essay offered by any candidate were thought to be of peculiar value, it might be published by order of the examiners at the expense of the university. The faculties concerned in the examination ought to be remunerated at the candidate's cost, since it was his choice that laid the burden upon them.

For a time at least, faculties of law, theology, medicine, or natural science, having no connection with a group of other faculties, might exercise this power of conducting the higher examinations by themselves; but the healthy rivalry of different branches of learning would probably be found so stimulating that no experienced instructor could wish to have them pursued apart. Residence at some place of study other than those which have faculties capable of examining candidates ought to be

encouraged, but at first not required. This concession, if found hurtful, could be withdrawn, and, at all events, certificates of good character ought to be demanded. Other provisions would be suggested when the system was put into operation.

These remarks are suggested in part by a difficulty which examinations for the highest degrees must encounter, owing to the number of smaller and feebler places of learning, where there is but one faculty of instruction—not to speak of those professional schools in law, medicine, or theology where honorary degrees are seldom given. The smaller institutions would hardly venture to conduct examinations in anything unless it be philosophy and the arts, although they might give honorary degrees by the score. The difficulty here referred to will in the future be in part removed by the rise, in connection with some of the colleges scattered here and there through the country, of new faculties which will furnish an encyclopedic education. Of course, three hundred or more respectable universities would be out of the question; but if there were twenty, or even fifteen, fully officered, endowed, and furnished with libraries of adequate size and completeness, they could meet the wants of the country for a long time to come. One of their uses would be to open their doors to the graduates of colleges having but a single faculty of instruction, who should desire, at no very great distance from their

homes, to carry their studies further forward than they could at their own place of graduation. This would be just what is done at those institutions where there are at present schools in theology, law, science, and medicine. There is no distinction there made between students who come to such schools from among the graduates of the institutions themselves and those who come from other quarters.

If such a system could have a fair start, it would probably meet with success. The great obstacle to its success would be the practice, which would not cease at once, of honorary degrees which do not reveal the source from which they come, but may be given as readily and freely by the smallest, and feeblest, and newest college in the land as by the oldest and most thorough. If the degrees given on examination and those given without examination should coëxist, one of the two must be driven out of the field to a great and increasing extent. We hope that there may be a trial of strength between the two. Let those who have won honors for themselves by hard and conscientious study put the name of the institution where they earned their degrees on their printed works, let them show how and where they became learned and accomplished scholars, and there will be little doubt that the present plan of giving honors without instruction and without proof of qualification will at length give way.

Theodore D. Woolsey.

PEACE.

O PEACE! thou swift bird, flying
 Out from the hearts of men,
 How is it thou art trying
 Thine empty nest again?
 I strove so hard to woo thee,
 I told my sorrows to thee,
 I sighed to have thee stay,
 Yet thou wouldst fly away.

A noise of quick wings whirring
 Along the air at night!
 A sound of soft wings stirring,
 And thou wast in from flight.
 Too late I would retain thee,
 Too soon I would regain thee;
 For lo! thou camest still
 And wentest at thy will.

By what supreme endeavor
 Shall I insure thy rest?
 How shall I hold thee ever,
 Shy bird, my loving guest?
 What gift of mine shall win thee?
 What longing is within thee
 That one so poor as I
 May wholly satisfy?

Yet if thy stay is fleeting,
 At least I shall be glad
 To dream of future greeting
 And know the joys I had.
 From all earth's good I choose thee,
 Nor can I wholly lose thee;
 When most I feel thy lack
 Thy light wings bear thee back.

Isaac O. Rankin.