

**EVOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY;
FIRST ANNUAL ADDRESS BEFORE
THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA,
JUNE 11, 1889**

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GEORGE E. HOWARD

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"EVOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY,"

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UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA, JUNE 11, 1889

Billott
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With the Author's Compliment.

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EVOLUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY.

Institutional history is of peculiar value because within its sphere—by no means a narrow one—it constitutes an unusually trustworthy and unbroken record of social and intellectual progress. An institution is as truly a living organism as is a plant or an animal. It germinates, flourishes, or decays as do the ideas, sentiments, and desires of which it is the outward expression. Its phases of growth conform to natural and ascertainable laws; and the teacher of history does well when he constructs the major part of his curriculum on the solid basis of political organizations. Here, at any rate, his method may be rigidly scientific. What he loses in breadth, if indeed he lose anything, is more than counterbalanced by depth and precision. Social embryology and animal embryology present similar phenomena to the observer. And, while the naturalist necessarily treats his subject from the historical point of view, the student of comparative institutions is more and more inclined to ascribe to his branch the character of a biological science.

But while political institutions are beginning very properly to occupy a large space in the university life, there are organisms of a different nature whose history is scarcely less interesting or instructive. Among these not the least noteworthy is the university itself: a noble product of social advancement, designed at once for the cultivation of the intellect and for the expansion of the boundaries of knowledge. Indeed the importance of three or four of the early centers of learning in determin-

ing the character of mediæval and modern society is incalculable. Thus the University of Paris—to take the most remarkable example—exerted during eight centuries a vast influence on European history; and the standard of culture in our own country is indirectly affected by the survival of that influence even at the present time. It may not therefore be entirely inappropriate to spend the hour set apart for the first anniversary address before this Association in tracing the genesis and evolution of the ideas and constitutional mechanism which enter into the general conception of that institution of which the American state university is the most recent type. The following topics will be briefly considered:

1. The Studium Generale; or the origin and character of the mediæval university.
2. The triumph of the college over the university, notably at Oxford and Cambridge, and the influence of the English university on American schools.
3. The Renaissance of learning, particularly in the United States.
4. The relation of the state university and its alumni to the social organism.

I.—THE STUDIUM GENERALE.

Previous to the beginning of the twelfth century the only institutions of learning which existed in Europe were the cathedral and monastic schools. Here were acquired such scanty elements of knowledge as enabled the stolid monk or the ignorant and superstitious priest to administer the dull routine of his office. Through the long period of national gestation, commonly described as the "dark ages," but a feeble ray of classic learning was able to penetrate, notwithstanding the temporary revival under Charles the Great.¹

¹ A slight tradition of ancient learning was preserved throughout the middle ages; but, as Mr. Mullinger has shown, it was "the highest excellence of the scholar to render all profane literature subservient to the illustration of the scriptures." The principal text books of the period were the

But at length the new nations were born, and mediæval man demanded a wider opportunity for the exercise of his physical and intellectual powers. This was first sought in the Crusades. But the most remarkable effect even of the First Crusade was the expansion of the mental horizon. Curiosity was excited and a thirst for knowledge aroused. With this general cause a second, narrower though scarcely less potent, coöperated to produce a demand for new and more efficient means of instruction: the practical need of systematic training in the learned professions.

Accordingly, in the early years of the twelfth century, associations were formed almost simultaneously at Bologna and Paris, for the purpose of securing certain kinds of instruction

Historiarum adversus Paganos Libri VII, of Orosius; the *De Nuptiis Philologiae et Mercurii et de Septem Artibus Liberalibus Libri Novem*, of Martianus Capella; the *De Consolatione Philosophiæ*, together with the translations and commentaries, of Boethius; the *De Artibus ac Disciplinis Liberalium Litterarum*, of Cassiodorus; and the *Origines*, of Isidore. By Boethius and Cassiodorus some knowledge of Porphyry's *Isagoge* and of the logic of Aristotle were preserved; by Orosius, a follower of Augustine, the mediæval theory of history was formulated: *divina providentia agitur mundus et homo*; by Isidore was effected the "incorporation of the remains of pagan learning with the new theology;" while through the allegory of Martianus "was transmitted to the universities of Europe the ancient division of the *trivium* and *quadrivium*." The first of these courses comprised grammar, logic, and rhetoric; the second, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. But the literature and culture of the period preceding the rise of universities were meagre in the extreme, and "almost exclusively possessed by the clergy." For the foregoing statement and a learned discussion of the history of education between the fourth and twelfth centuries, see Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge*, I, 1-64. The best monograph on the revival of learning under Charlemagne is *The Schools of Charles the Great* (London, 1877), by the same writer, containing also a sketch of the imperial, cathedral, and monastic schools preceding the reign of that monarch. Short accounts of the Palace School may be found in Guizot's *History of Civilization in France*, III, 30-54; Mombert's *History of Charles the Great*, 241 ff.; and Newman's *Rise and Progress of Universities*: abridged in Bernard's *American Journal of Education*, vol. 24 (1873), pp. xlv-viii. Cf. Prantl, *Geschichte der Logik*, I, 626 ff., 672 ff.; Hallam, *Literature of Europe*, I, 1-15.

which could not be afforded by the ecclesiastical schools.¹ These associations were simply scholastic guilds or spontaneous combinations of students and teachers for mutual aid and protection; and they were evidently formed on the analogy of the contemporary craft guilds, more particularly the guilds of aliens in foreign cities,² which had made their appearance in western Europe probably at an earlier day.³

The earliest scholastic bodies of this character were com-

¹ The most important monograph on the genesis and early history of European universities is Father H. Denifle's *Die Universitäten des Mittelalters bis 1400*, not yet completed. The first volume, 815 pages, entitled *Die Entstehung der Universitäten des Mittelalters*, appeared in Berlin, 1885. Vol. I of Kaufmann's *Geschichte der deutschen Universitäten* is also devoted to the *Vorgeschichte*. An older standard treatise is Meiners' *Geschichte der Entstehung und Entwicklung der hohen Schulen unseres Erdtheils*, 4 vols., Göttingen, 1802-5. I am especially indebted to Savigny, *The Universities of the Middle Ages*, in Barnard's *Am. Journal of Ed.*, vol. 22, pp. 273-330, translated from his *Geschichte des römischen Rechts im Mittelalter*, vol. III; Mullinger, *Universities*, in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, XXIII, a most excellent general sketch; his *University of Cambridge*, vol. I, 65-131, where the universities of Bologna and Paris are compared; Döllinger, *Universities, Past and Present*, in Barnard's *Journal*, vol. 20, pp. 737-765; *The University of Paris*, in Barnard's *Journal*, vol. 24, pp. 745-776; from Drane's *Christian Schools and Scholars*, a second edition of which has since appeared (London, 1881); an article entitled *Universities*, in the *North American Review*, vol. 27 (1828), pp. 67-89; and a most interesting account of *Italian University Life in the Middle Ages*, in the *British Quarterly Review*, July, 1884, pp. 28-46. On the University of Paris, see further Thurot, *De l'Organisation de l'Enseignement dans l'Université de Paris* (Paris, 1850); Budington, *Die Universität und die Fremden an derselben im Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1876); and Dubarle, *Histoire de l'Université de Paris* (Paris, 1844). I have been greatly assisted in the search for material by Dr. G. S. Hall's admirable *Bibliography of Education* (Boston, 1886), comprehending in sixty major classes the more important publications in the whole field of pedagogical literature.

² Mullinger, *Universities*, *Ency. Brit.*, XXIII, 831, 833; *University of Cambridge*, I, 72, 77. Cf. Savigny, *Universities of the Middle Ages*: Barnard's *Am. Journal of Ed.*, vol. 22, pp. 276-280.

³ Such combinations of strangers for mutual assistance may have been the *gegildan* of Ine, 16, 21; Ælfred, 27, 28; Æthelstan, VI, 8, § 6; Schmid, *Gesetze*, pp. 28, 86, 166. Cf. Konrad Maurer, *Kritische Ueberschau*, I, 91 ff.; Schmid, *Glossar*, 588-9.

posed entirely of foreigners uniting to resist the rapacity and violence of the citizens of towns where they gathered to hear some celebrated teacher. Thus the first of the many such associations gradually formed at Bologna was probably the so-called German Nation, while the Tuscan Nation, or that of the native students, was the last.

So it appears that the scholastic gild—a voluntary private association originally unprotected or unsupported by any civil or ecclesiastical authority—is the embryo from which were ultimately evolved those two mighty organizations, the universities of Bologna and Paris, each the fruitful mother of a numerous group of celebrated schools. They were the veritable *matres universitatum*: Bologna, the parent of universities of the democratic type—namely those of Italy, Spain, and southern France; Paris, the parent of universities of the centralized type,—those of northern France, England, and Germany. A brief comparison of the principal features of these two institutions, so far as they enable us to understand the genesis of existing elements of the university life and constitution will now be presented.

In the first place, it is important to observe that the mediæval word *universitas* was originally employed, like the word *societas*, “to denote any community or corporation regarded under its collective aspect.”¹ It thus required a modifying phrase to give it significance. In this way it was employed as the name of the scholastic gild itself. The

¹“In the language of the civil law all corporations were called *universitates*, as forming one whole out of many individuals. In the German jurisconsults *universitas* is the word for a corporate town. In Italy it was applied to the incorporated trades in the cities. In ecclesiastical language the term was sometimes applied to a number of churches united under the superintendence of one archdeacon. In a papal rescript of the year 688, it is used of the body of the canons of the church of Pisa:” Makden, *Origin of the Universities*, 13: cited by Mullinger, *University of Cambridge*, I, 71. Cf. his article in *Ency. Brit.*, XXIII, 831; Savigny, *Universities of the Middle Ages*, in *Barnard's Journal*, vol. 22, p. 325; and *Barnard's Journal*, vol. 9, pp. 49–55.