

Register 4/4/94.

AN HISTORICAL DOCUMENT.—In the course of a lecture on "Ancient Universities," delivered by Dr. Bevan at the Adelaide University on Tuesday night, the reverend gentleman said there had come into his possession an old copy of the Justinian code which was part of the digest which was studied by the Bologna professors. It was dated 1452, was printed in Venice, and was a very remarkable specimen of the printing of that time, and he thought he could not do better than present it to the Chancellor for the term of his natural life, and then it might be placed on the shelves of the Adelaide University.

The Advertiser

THURSDAY, APRIL 5, 1894.

THE PAST AND PRESENT OF UNIVERSITIES.

DR. BEVAN, during his stay in Adelaide, has afforded much intellectual enjoyment to those fortunate enough to have had the opportunity of hearing him. The number of his auditors was on Tuesday evening surprisingly small by comparison with what might have been expected, but this was apparently due to a misunderstanding in connection with the issuing of invitations. Any shortcoming in that respect was amply atoned for last night, when the not too spacious library of the University was crowded and a spirit of rollicking good humor was abroad. The powers of the lecturer were somewhat wasted on the task of weaving in between the lyrics short snatches of introductory matter; but he gave fresh proof that his character has a strong humorous side; fresh proof also of his deep sympathy with the harmless delights of those who are separated from him in years, though not in spirit, by the span of some half century. However, the occasion of his first lecture, that on "Ancient Universities," was by far the more important, and those who heard it could only regret its comparative brevity. Dr. Bevan apparently shares the opinion of Artemus Ward that an hour and twenty minutes is just the time that the attention of an audience can be thoroughly held. But they would willingly have heard, for example, something of Cambridge, which for some reason has always attracted more Australian students than Oxford; and which, if not altogether ancient, is at least old enough for Chaucer to have placed on the shoulders of its scholars one of the doubtful legends that he borrowed from Boccaccio. But a vivid picture was drawn of life at Oxford and Paris, Bologna and Salerno, with glimpses of earlier conditions in Greece and Egypt. Especially was dwelt on the emerging from what Dr. Bevan styles "the so-called dark ages." He named but considerably passed lightly over the differences between Nominalists and Realists, and other schools of theologians. Some attention is paid to these disputants, by-the-way, in Longfellow's "Golden Legend," where also, in the scene at the school of Salerno, the various requirements for a degree in medicine are given with great accuracy. The Doctor Serafino, it may be remembered, so far forgets himself as to call his rival a "wretched, wrangling culler of herbs," while the Doctor Cherubino uses even stronger language concerning a certain treatise on the irregular verbs. The stage direction, "They rush out fighting," is also in accord with what Dr. Bevan had to tell of the medieval seats of learning.

The lecturer would only admit two motives for the student entering a university. The one is the wish to learn thoroughly some specific subject, the other the desire to gain "culture" by learning a little of everything. The latter was the motive assigned to Cicero, Horace, and Ovid, and certainly the desired result seems to have been attained by them—at any rate by the two first named. It would seem, however, that this corresponds very closely to the ordinary, or "poll" degree, which has come to be despised by comparison with the "trips" degree that implies a closer attention to some specific branch of learning. Some twenty years ago John Ruskin said in one of his lectures at Oxford, "You do not at this instant, some of you, I am well assured, know what a university means. Does it mean, for instance, a place where everybody comes to learn something, or a place where somebody comes to learn everything? You are trying to make it mean, practically and at present, the first; but it means, theoretically and always, the last." It is the old conflict between the specialist and the "all-round man," and the triumph of the specialist is one of the marked features of this age. But the motives actuating the student are to-day somewhat complex. Many men go to a university simply because it is considered in their social environment the proper thing to do. Many others of a slightly different standing are sent there to acquire culture of manners rather than of mind, and possibly to make desirable or useful friendships in the process. Yet others, it must be feared, visit the halls of learning with the intention of simply having a "good time" and earning if possible a place in the eleven or a seat in the eight. Incidentally, a respectable degree may be captured in the meantime, great facilities in that respect being now offered. And the growing tendency to offer masterships at public schools to men who have a record of physical achievement as well as one of scholastic honors gives a new stimulus to the struggle for success in athletics. All this, it must be admitted, applies chiefly to the great English universities. The question of enforced residence is one that has an immense bearing upon university life. Where this is not required the *alma mater* is a severe abstraction and cannot well command the keen and enduring affection known to those who have, at the outset of life, made a home with her—a home apart from and contrasted with that which family life affords. It is true that a university that only teaches and examines, like that of Adelaide, is not likely to attract the dromes already alluded to; they have nothing to gain from it that they cannot find as well outside its walls. Its standard of scholarship is likely therefore to be a high one. But, rightly or wrongly, there has come to be expected from the graduate of Oxford or Cambridge a certain quality that London—whose degree is a far more real certificate of learning—does not profess to impart. It was on the question of social unity that the speaker addressed himself so earnestly to the students last night; and if all those who are entrusted with the training of the undergraduate mind had his own geniality and power of persuasion, the corporate feeling between teachers and taught would no doubt be far stronger than it is.

Finally, great and convincing preacher as Dr. Bevan is, he forbore with much tact from obtruding himself in that capacity. His deep and earnest personality could not fail to assert itself throughout; and it was this, in fact, that rescued from any suspicion of tedium the necessary enumeration of names and dates and figures.