

FUTURE OF A.B. DEGREE.

How the New Degrees are Gaining Ground On It.

[From Report of President Elliot of Harvard.]

One of the most interesting questions concerning the tendencies of organized American education is the question relating to the future of the A.B. degree. Fifty years ago the American colleges and universities had no other preliminary or fundamental degree. They now confer, not only the degree of Bachelor of Arts, but contemporaneous degrees in considerable variety, bearing such titles as Bachelor of Letters, Bachelor of Science, and Bachelor of Philosophy, and various degree in engineering.

These new degrees commonly represent a larger attainment in science and mathematics than the degree of Bachelor of Arts, and a smaller attainment in languages, particularly in the dead languages; and, as a rule, the examinations which admit to the courses which conduct to these new degrees are of a lower grade than the examinations which admit to the course for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

On the other hand, in instances not a few, the course of study which ends in one of these new degrees is more severe than the parallel course of study which leads to the degree of Bachelor of Arts. The use of the new degrees, although practically unknown before 1848, has now become in all the state universities decidedly larger than the use of the traditional degree of Bachelor of Arts; while in the older endowed institutions, the new degrees are rapidly gaining ground on the old degree. * * *

Of the nine universities represented in the table, three are state universities,—namely, Michigan, Wisconsin, and California. Five are endowed universities over which the state has little direct control,—namely, Yale, Pennsylvania, Columbia, Princeton, and Brown; and Cornell, the remaining university, is an endowed institution which is largely subsidized both by the state and by the United States. In the most conservative institutions, the degree of A.B. is losing ground in comparison with the new degrees.

IN DIFFERENT UNIVERSITIES.

Thus, in Yale University the number of A.B.s conferred has not doubled in fifteen years, whereas the number of Ph.D.s conferred has much more than doubled.

At Princeton University, the number of students studying for the degree of A.B. is half as large again as it was fifteen years ago; but the number of students studying for the modern degrees is nearly four times as great as it was fifteen years ago.

At Columbia University, the number of students studying for the new degrees has generally been greater than the number of students studying for the old degree; but the course for the A.B. has apparently led students more regularly to the degree than the courses for the other degrees.

In order to understand the situation in New England, it is necessary to take account of the rise of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which confers every year a large number of S.B. degrees. By adding together the candidates for the S.B. degree of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the candidates for the S.B. in Harvard University, and comparing this total with the number of candidates for the A.B. at Harvard University one gets a clear impression of the immense educational change which has taken place in Eastern Massachusetts since the Institute of Technology was founded in 1865.

CAUSE OF THE CHANGE.

This invasion of the old province of the Bachelor of Arts degree is going on in all the advanced institutions of education at a rapid rate, and is doubtless based on changed social and industrial conditions which are quite beyond the control of those institutions. It is therefore a pressing question how to secure and defend a legitimate province for the degree of Bachelor of Arts.

Thus far, Harvard has maintained the relative numerical importance of this traditional degree better than any other

American institution; and there can be no doubt that it is the Elective System in Harvard College which has secured this result. It has long been the belief of the President that to maintain the Harvard degree of A.B. in full vigor, it is desirable to broaden the range of well-taught subjects which will admit to Harvard College.

The following table, covering nine years, shows the different modes in which young men accomplish, or nearly accomplish, in three years the work required for the degree of Bachelor of Arts:

	1890	1891	1892	1893	1894	1895	1896	1897	1898
Total number receiving A.B.	282	283	293	332	348	364	396	383	392
1. Graduated in three years.....	14	18	18	9	18	17	15	23	17
Of these were credited at admission, 2 or more courses each..	2	4	3	3	4	9	5	8	8
Less than 2 courses each	3	4	5	1	3	3	4	6	2
2. Had leave of absence for Senior Year	2	2	7	15	11	22	26	31	31
Credited with 18.2 courses.....	..	..	1	6	8	11	8	13	16
“ “ 17.7 “ .....	..	1	..	2	3	2	3	4	4
“ “ 17.2 “ .....	..	1	1	1	..	4	4	6	4
“ “ 16.7 “ .....	..	..	1	2	..	5	9	6	7
“ “ 16.2 “	2	..	4	4	..	..	2	2	..
Of these were credited at admission, 2 or more courses each..	..	..	..	3	..	..	1	1	3
Less than 2 courses each .....	..	1	..	..	2	6	6	6	4
3. Registered as Seniors, but credited with 16 courses or more..	9	13	30	24	48	49	55	58	54
Credited with 18.2 courses.....	1	4	3	6	10	8	5	1	12
“ “ 17.7 “ .....	..	1	1	1	..	4	2	4	5
“ “ 17.2 “	3	1	7	5	9	11	10	10	12
“ “ 16.7 “	3	..	4	4	8	6	14	11	9
“ “ 16.2 “	2	7	15	8	21	20	24	32	16
Of these were credited at admission, 2 or more courses each..	..	2	..	1	..	..	..	2	4
Less than 2 courses each.....	1	3	3	1	1	2	5	12	11
Number credited in three years with 16 or more courses	25	33	55	48	77	88	96	112	102
Of these with 18 or more courses....	15	22	22	21	36	36	28	37	45

These three-year men are divided in the table into three groups: the first group containing those who actually graduated in three years; the second, those who obtained leave of absence for the Senior year on the ground that they had either completed, or nearly completed, the work for the A.B.; the third, those who registered as Seniors to spend a fourth year in the College, although they were already credited with sixteen courses or more, out of the eighteen courses required for graduation. The table shows the precise number of courses with which each member of each group was credited, and also how many of these course-credits had been obtained at the admission examination. The last two lines in the table show that the number of persons who complete the work for the degree in three years is distinctly increasing,—indeed, that it has doubled within six years; and also that the number of persons who come within two courses or less of completing the work for the degree of A.B. is increasing.

SOME EXPLANATIONS.

To anyone examining these figures for the first time, the query will naturally occur,—why is the third group in this table the largest? Why should men who have completed, or very nearly completed, the whole of the work for the A.B. register again as Seniors? For this course of action there are three intelligible motives:

First, a young man desires not to graduate a year in advance of most of the friends and contemporaries with whom he entered College.

Secondly, a student who needs aid may reasonably suppose that he has a better chance of a scholarship or other money aid, if he registers as a Senior, than he would have if he registered in the Graduate School. Thirdly, a young man who thus registers as a Senior—having nearly finished his work for the A.B.—may take courses acceptable for the A.M., and on completing these satisfactorily during his Senior year may receive, first his A.B. four years from the time he entered College, and then—without further residence—his A.M. five years from the time he entered College. This fifth year he may spend in a professional school, or in business, or in foreign travel or study. One indisputable inference is to be drawn from this table,—namely, that from a third to two-fifths of each College class have no need of more than three years to complete the eighteen courses required for the degree.

Since it is possible to accomplish creditably the regular four years' Col-

lege work in three years, it must also be possible to do creditably in four years much more than the prescribed amount of work. Accordingly it is common among good students to do much extra work during a residence of four years. Thus, in the class of 1897 there were, among the 143 students who received degrees with distinction, 106 who completed during their residence as undergraduates in Harvard of courses exclusive of extra admission subjects, and in the class of 1898 there were 86 such students. * * * It might be supposed that the men who attempt

much extra work do all their work, or much of it, badly; but such is by no means the case. It appears from tables * * * that the men in the class of 1897, and the class of 1898, who did most extra work during their residence as undergraduates, did all their work in an admirable manner. These facts are corroborated when the statistics of the extra work done by scholarship holders of the first and second groups in the years 1897-98 and 1898-99 are examined. * * * It appears in these tables that almost all the scholarship holders of the first and second groups do extra work, and that a large proportion of them do a great deal of extra work. Ambitious students, therefore, can either graduate with distinction in three years, or remaining four years in College they can do much work beyond the prescribed amount.



We make the engravings used in the "ALUMNI WEEKLY."

The C. W. Whittlesey Co.
281 State St.

Our line of Photographic Materials and Supplies is larger and more complete than ever before. Our facilities for doing amateur work are unexcelled.

COLLEGE MEN

will find exceedingly comfortable and well kept quarters at a most reasonable price at

MILLER'S HOTEL

39 West 26th St., - New York City.

This house is patronized largely by Yale, Princeton, Cornell, Vassar, Wellesley, Smith and other Colleges, to the students of which special rates are made.

SEND FOR CIRCULAR.

CHARLES H. HAYNES,
Proprietor.

ANOTHER
BASE BALL

SEASON means another demonstration, on a thousand diamonds in all parts of America, of the position of leadership in the manufacture of equipments for the great game of America, and for all other sports, of

A. G. Spalding & Bros.,

Chicago. New York.

CHARLES T. PENNELL,

Successor to Wm. Franklin & Co.,

IMPORTING TAILOR,

40 Center St., New Haven, Conn.

California

.. via ..

SUNSET LIMITED

This palatial solid vestibuled train, the perfection of railway equipment, consists of Combination car, containing smoking parlor, barber shop and bath room.

Ladies' parlor and stateroom car, containing a large parlor and seven state rooms, which may be occupied singly, or en-suite.

Two double drawing-room, ten section sleeping cars and Dining car in which meals are served à la carte.

Commencing December 1st, '98

SUNSET LIMITED . . .

will be operated between New Orleans and San Francisco via Los Angeles, twice a week, leaving New Orleans Mondays and Thursdays, via the popular

SUNSET ROUTE . . .

of the Southern Pacific Company. No snow, no cold weather, no high altitudes, luxurious equipment, quick time, perfect road bed. These qualities serve to make *Sunset Route* and *Sunset Limited* unexcelled as a winter route to California.

New Orleans to Los Angeles 58 Hours.

New Orleans to San Francisco 75 hours.

For descriptive literature, rates and tickets, call on or address

E. E. CURRIER,

NEW ENGLAND AGENT,

No. 9 State Street, Boston.

EDWIN HAWLEY,

Asst. General Traffic Manager.

L. H. NUTTING, Eastern Passenger Agent.
349 Broadway and No. 1 Battery Place,
New York City.