

above-mentioned kind. Desiring [to obtain a good specimen of this not very common bird for our collection, I expressed my regret at not having the gun, but the servant replied: "Never mind, if you wish, we will get the bird." And he caught it with my assistance in the above way without injuring it.

Marburg, March 16

CARL OCHSENIUS

Flying-Fish

JUNE 11, 1873, at sea 300 miles south of Panama, I saw a man-of-war hawk and a school of bonitos in pursuit of a school of flying-fish. As one of the latter came out of the water, closely pursued by his enemy, the hawk swooped down, not fifty yards from the ship, but missed his prey, the fish *apparently* turning from its course to avoid him. A second attempt was more successful, and the hawk flew off with the flying-fish in his talons. The whole affair was plainly seen, as also was the continued chase of the flying-fish by the bonitos.

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Commander U.S. Navy

U.S. Torpedo Station, Newport, R.I., U.S.A., March 10

THE OXFORD COMMISSIONERS ON PROFESSORS

WE are not disposed to agree with the outcry which has been raised in some quarters in reference to the proposition of the Oxford University Commissioners to enact certain regulations with the view of compelling Oxford Professors to reside in the University and to give lectures.

Some of the Commissioners' regulations relating to this subject appear to many to be ill-advised, but they have been improved by the recent modifications, and the general intention seems not only a right one, but also one which must be carried out whenever public opinion is brought to bear on the matter.

A very simple view of the matter may be suggested. The professors in the English Universities might be put on the same footing as are the professors in German Universities. In those Universities the professors carry on abundant research; they also give very numerous lectures, usually what may be called "representative courses," that is, courses in which an attempt is made to present to the student the main outlines and much of the detail of the subject professed. Even in the Collège de France at Paris, which is *not* (strictly speaking) an educational institution, each professor is required to give an annual course of lectures (to the number of forty, we believe).

Research and the advancement of learning are, we do not for a moment doubt, the highest, and therefore in a certain sense the first business of University professors. It is perhaps because this is so generally admitted that the Commissioners did not at first insist upon it. But it is in order that he may teach—not huge popular audiences nor cram classes, but devoted thoroughgoing students—that the professor creates new knowledge. His best result is not new knowledge itself, but new youthful investigators ready and able to carry on the researches which he has commenced, and through which they have learnt method and gained enthusiasm. There is no stimulus to research so healthy and so sure as that afforded by the opportunity of converting a class of generous-minded young men into ardent disciples and loving fellow-workers.

Hence, it may be maintained, there is no necessary antagonism between *true professorial teaching* (i.e. definite courses of lectures) and the profoundest study and research.

That the Commissioners have introduced no binding regulations with the object of forcing a professor to carry on research, is, we believe, a proof of wisdom and a just tribute to the dignity of such work. No regulations can make an investigator: the question as to whether a given professorship will be used for the advancement of

science and learning is decided before any regulations can have effect, viz., when the choice of a person to fill the post is made. If he is a "searcher" already, he will remain so; if he is not, a bad choice will have been made, and no regulations as to research can ever amend it. It is, however, well that the Commissioners have seen fit to improve their first set of regulations in so far as to state that an Oxford professor is *expected* to advance the study of the subject to which his chair is assigned.

The measures which the Commissioners propose for insuring the delivery of lectures by Oxford professors are objectionable on the ground that they are purely penal. They should be persuasive. The German professor is only too glad to give a thorough and attractive course of lectures if he has it in him to do so, because he thereby doubles or trebles the income which he derives from endowment. The Oxford Commissioners have made a great mistake in prohibiting the professors from charging fees for the compulsory course of two or three lectures a week. All students, whether belonging to the professor's own college or not, should be liable to pay fees to the professors for attendance on their courses of instruction, whether lectures or laboratorial. It is only by so arranging the position and endowment of a professor that he is both able and willing to increase his income by the fees paid by his class, that a really firm and satisfactory basis for the regulation of a professor's duties can be obtained.

It has been maintained that where an income derived from an endowment of 600*l.* can be increased to 1000*l.* a year by the receipts from lecture-fees, the professor will be anxious to give such lectures as will attract students—and in spite of objections ready to hand, it is held that those are the lectures which should be given. It is not true that a professor so circumstanced will necessarily degenerate into a mere examination coach. If he should be tempted to do so the fault lies with the examination. The professor should himself have a voice in the arrangement of the examination, and care should be taken by the University that it is so organised and defined in all its parts that students who have carefully followed a high class of professorial teaching, such as would be offered by a Huxley, a Ludwig, a Bunsen, or a Fischer, should come to the front in it rather than those who have crammed with some newly-fledged classman, or with an experienced "coach" versed in all the artifices of sham knowledge.

It appears to be an excellent and necessary provision to which it is to be hoped that the Commissioners will adhere in spite of all opposition, that the professors in each faculty should with other University teachers in the same faculty constitute a council having the power of controlling to some extent the lectures of each individual professor. There is no degradation in this; it is the almost universal custom in existing Universities. The faculty has to provide for the teaching of its proper studies, and naturally must exercise a friendly control over the extent and scope of the courses of instruction offered by its members.

It is owing to the absence of any such control at the present moment that even by those Oxford professors who do lecture, no representative course on *any subject* is ever given. A student in Oxford cannot by any possibility attend a thorough *course* of lectures or laboratory instruction in physiology, nor in zoology, nor in botany, nor in physics, nor in chemistry. And yet in the smallest as well as the largest of the often despised "medical schools" of London, a student has provided for him courses of from thirty to a hundred lectures every year in all these subjects, as well as in others, to be attended, of course, in successive sessions. The same absence of complete or representative courses of instruction is to be noted at Oxford in other departments, such as philology, archæology, various departments of history, &c.