

THURSDAY, JUNE 6, 1872

BAD GREEK OR GOOD GERMAN?

AN event occurred on Thursday last at Cambridge, not in itself, perhaps, of imposing magnitude, but yet fraught with very important consequences. For this long while back an agitation has been going on with the purpose of making Greek no longer absolutely essential to the Previous Examination (or "Little Go," as it is popularly called), but of allowing French or German, or both, to be substituted for it at the option of the candidate. As any long-headed man might have foreseen, the genuine scholarship and liberal intelligence of the University are in favour of such a change; but the opposition has been neither feeble nor silent. Discussion has abounded more and more, and "fly-sheets" have fallen like the latter rain. The advocates of the change seem to have been more or less governed by a dislike to many words, and to have had large faith in the merits of their cause; their opponents, on the other hand, appear to have believed in the efficacy of much speaking, and in the effects of arguments drawn from all quarters, and looking all ways; their papers and speeches, all put together, form as pretty a piece of incoherence as may be found in a literary day's march, and would have been a perfect godsend to the great Skepsius when he wrote his famous tract *Au hominibus mens absit*. The reasons indeed for making the change were so clear and cogent that there seemed hardly any hope of its being accomplished. Yet by one of those freaks of fortune which are met with even in the Universities, wisdom prevailed; and by the vote of the Senate on Thursday last, which will, in all probability, be speedily ratified at a second meeting, the student who desires to go out in an "honours" examination henceforth need not at his Little Go scratch up a smattering of bad Greek, if he satisfies his examiner that he possesses a real knowledge of French or German.

We trust that the scientific workers at Cambridge will take heart at this happy issue of the struggle, and gird up their loins for the heavy task of introducing order and system into the chaos in which the natural science studies at Cambridge are now lost. Let them set to work at once, and no longer wait for that *Deus ex machina* of the Royal Commission, who at present sit aloft, like the gods in Tennyson's "Lotos Eaters," and of whom it might be said, "Though their wheels are grinding finely, yet they grind exceeding slow."

The graduates of the University of London too might do well to ponder over this result. It is one of the marks of good tone at Cambridge to be very imperfectly acquainted with the Metropolitan University, except so far as its scholarships and examinerships are concerned; and accordingly it was stated more than once in the course of the discussion, and used as an argument against the proposed change, that the University of London had recently refused to make Greek optional at its Matriculation Examination. Our better informed readers are probably aware that the Senate, the real governing body of the University, have the matter at this very moment under their consideration, and, without wishing to fore-

stall the future, we may presume to say that beyond doubt a change will soon be made. It is perfectly true that Convocation, in spite of the Report of its Annual Committee, hesitated to recommend the change; and this seems to have led to the mistake of the Cambridge advocates of bad Greek; but it is well known that, as indeed a sound knowledge of human nature would lead one to expect would be the case, there is among the body of graduates of the radical University, a mass of partly rabid and partly stupid conservatism, which, if it had its own way, would soon bring the University to ruin. Happily the executive Senate, being for the most part selected by the Crown, is wise and liberal, and is especially animated by the feeling that the University, if it is to fulfil its function, must grow with the growth of time, and change with changing things.

It is not a little to the credit of the older University of Cambridge that she should have been actually the first to remove one more of the old-fashioned swaddling clothes, which have been checking the development of youthful science, and we trust it is an earnest of still greater changes which she means to take in hand. Science has been too long at that old University a sort of blind Samson, bound with many cords, and serving chiefly to make sport for mocking Philistines of the classical and mathematical tribes. It is time his cords were loosed, and his strength made use of for the general advancement of the University.

OUR NATIONAL INDUSTRIES

IT is believed by many scientific men that research is all but dead in England. Whether we confess it or not, England, so far as the advancement of knowledge goes, is but a third or fourth-rate power. It is not our present purpose to inquire into the causes of all this; whether, as some say, it is because our professors are so rich, or whether, as others affirm, because all arrangements for the increase of knowledge are so poor, but rather to call attention to the certain influence of this on the wealth—let us put it in the most sordid manner—of the nation in the future.

In this inquiry we find to our hand, in a recent number of the *Birmingham Morning News*, an article on the future extension of Birmingham industries, by Mr. George Gore, whose important researches are well known. We know no one better qualified than Mr. Gore to discuss the subject, and no town where it is more important that the subject should be ventilated, for Birmingham has received much from and has given nothing to original scientific research; but the conclusions to be drawn from the article are in no way limited to Birmingham.

In this article Mr. Gore first considers by what general means the chief trades of Birmingham were first originated and improved; and then discusses whether we can by similar means, applied in a more effectual manner, lay the foundation of other new trades and improvements. Mr. Gore writes:—

"Let us consider German-silver and its manufacture. That substance is an alloy of copper, zinc, and nickel; it owes its peculiar whiteness or 'silver-like' appearance to the latter metal, and cannot be made without it; it is certain, therefore, that by whatever means