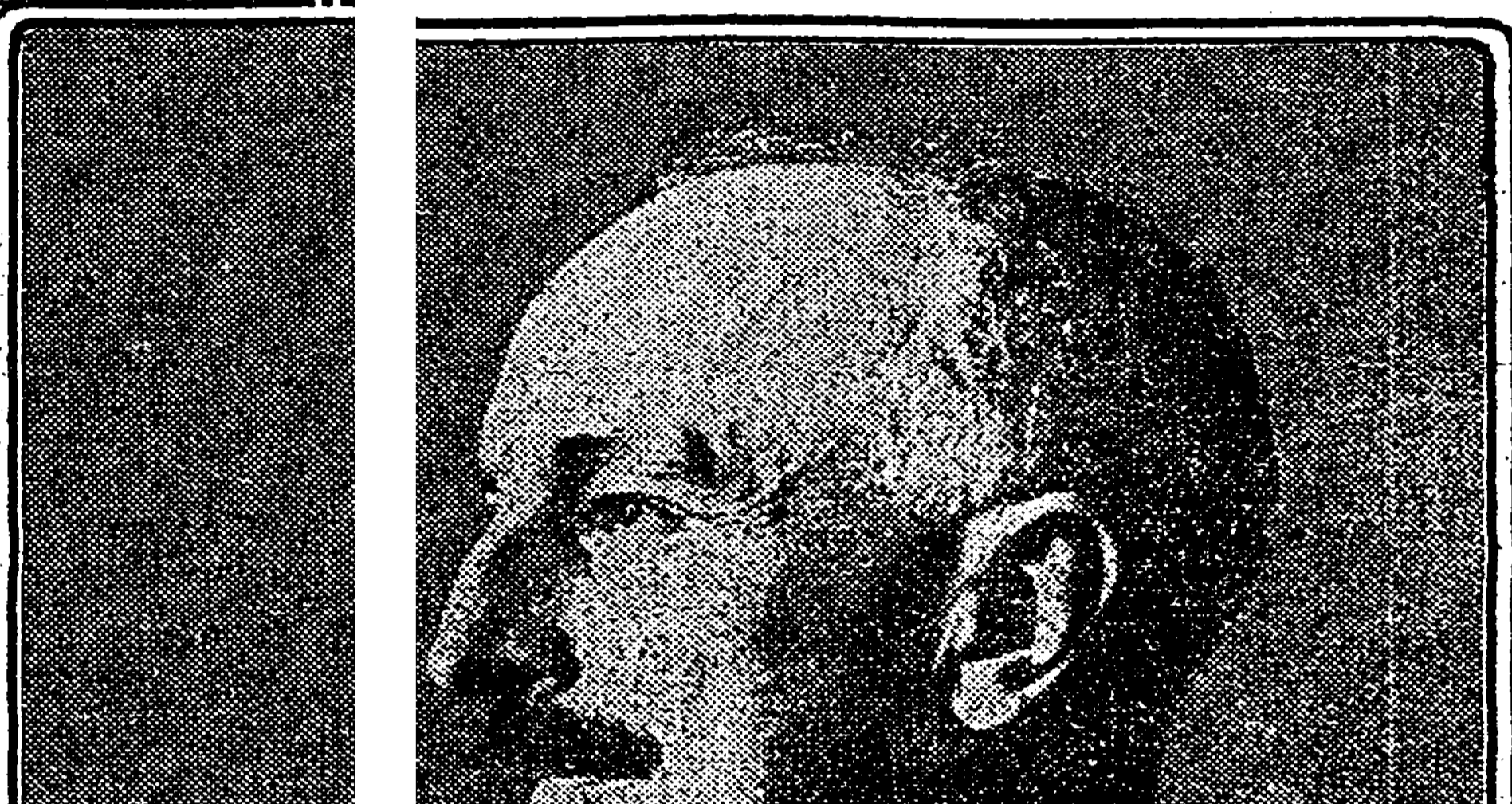


# GOVERNMENT IS INVESTIGATING FAKE UNIVERSITIES



The U. S. Bureau of Education.

Degrees Given Practically for a Few Dollars---Institutions That Sound Big on Paper but Shrink on Investigation---The Oriental University's Odd Curriculum.



Dr. K. C. Babcock, Who Is Probing Fake Educational Institutions.

## Catalog OF ORIENTAL UNIVERSITY



Dominion Heights, WASHINGTON, D. C.

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Title Page of the Elaborate Catalogue of the Oriental University.



COLLEGE degrees of all kinds are in great demand in this country at the present time, and plenty of people who do not possess them, and who cannot conveniently obtain them by legitimate means, are very willing to pay money for them.

This state of affairs has brought into existence large numbers of "fake" educational institutions, organized for no other purpose than to furnish degrees to order.

The abuse has become so serious that the Government Bureau of Education has taken it up, and is now engaged in making a thorough investigation of it, with a view partly to the exposure of such swindles and more importantly to the bringing about of legislation by Congress and by the various States which shall put a stop to the business.

Dr. K. C. Babcock, who has been placed in charge of the inquiry, says that when he was President of the University of Arizona, a few years ago, he often received letters from people who wanted to know "on what terms" he would grant them a degree of Ph. D., or what not. Thus it was that he first got a notion of the extent of this sort of traffic. That anybody should apply to a reputable educational institution for "green goods" of this description seems strange. But (says Dr. Babcock) the "fake" colleges, established for the selling of degrees, are largely a development of the last ten years.

The principal centres of this form of enterprise are Washington and Chicago. In the District of Columbia there is no adequate law for the chartering and control of educational establishments. In Illinois there is a like situation of affairs, and Chicago, with its large population, affords an excellent market.

Unfortunately, the laws governing such matters are very loose in nearly all of the States, and particularly so in the South. New York and Pennsylvania, on the other hand, have the best and most stringent laws. In those States any disobedience of the terms of a charter is liable to bring about its withdrawal, compelling the institution to go out of business.

Congress will be asked to make a law governing matters of the kind in the District of Columbia, and efforts will be made to persuade the legislatures of the various States to adopt similar measures for the extirpation of a kind of mischief which does much more harm, directly and indirectly, than might be imagined. It is, of course, a pure swindle to start with. The "fake" colleges and "universities,"

as some of them call themselves, seem to have given vigorous exercise to their imagination in devising new kinds of degrees with attractive titles. For example, there is the degree of B. H., which stands for Bachelor of Humanics. M. H. is Master of Humanics, and B. P. E. is Bachelor of Physical Education—suitable for a graduate in boxing or advanced gymnasium work, one may suppose. B. Accts. signifies Bachelor of Accounts, (a degree which may appropriately be held by a bookkeeper,) and anybody who has a taste for the gentle art of aviation may become a B. Aer., which signifies Bachelor of Aeronautics.

Not a few of the correspondence schools call themselves universities or colleges, and distribute degrees with utmost liberality, when the fees required are paid. It is noted by Dr. Babcock that of thirty-nine degrees held by the Faculty at one of these schools, eighteen were bestowed by the school itself—a most generous recognition of the merits of its own corps of instructors.

When it is considered that only two States (New York and Pennsylvania) have laws defining what a college is, it is not surprising that there should be more or less dispute in regard to such matters, giving even the smallest correspondence school (which may perhaps consist of nothing more than one enterprising gentleman and a couple of typists) liberty to call itself a university. If it so wishes. But, says Dr. Babcock, a large part of the mischief is done by real colleges of more or less good repute, which grant easy, or low-standard, degrees. Some of them, indeed, find this sort of business very profitable.

Some highly respectable colleges are accustomed, as a matter of regular routine, to grant the degree of Master of Arts to every alumnus two or three years after graduation—merely, be it understood, as a matter of compliment. This has been called the "gentleman's degree"; to be an M. A., and able to write the letters after one's name, is the dignified and proper thing for a man of education and social standing.

Nevertheless, too much liberality in such matters has an inevitable tendency to lessen the value of degrees. Take the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, for example. It is a favorite: there is hardly anybody who does not like to be able to write Ph. D. after his name, at least on occasions. It is pleasant to feel that one has a right to be called Doctor, though one may not care to use the title.

Demand and supply always go hand in hand, and thus it comes about that this

particular degree is being largely dealt in at the present time, and Doctors of Philosophy are becoming exceedingly common. Even the correspondence schools turn them out in quantities.

Ewing College, an old and well-known institution in the Middle West, advertises a non-resident course for the degree of Ph. D. The catalogue of that institution says: "For some years Ewing has had a non-resident course leading to the degree of Ph. D. Only those who have completed the full college course are entitled to enter for this degree. Its object is to give the student some of the latest and best thought to arm him against the error of the times and to equip him for the battle of life. No course has brought the college so much favor as this." One may suppose that it involves the reading of a few books, the writing of a thesis or two, and a little correspondence with the President of the institution.

What definite and exact value, then, is to be placed upon the degree of Doctor of Philosophy? The same remark applies to medical degrees. A young man, after four years at the high school and another four years in college, spends four years studying medicine at the Harvard Medical School. Another young man comes out of a grammar school and studies medicine three years in some other institution. Both are graduated as M. D.'s; yet the difference between them in point of educational equipment is enormous.

Only the other day the Bureau of Education received a letter from a Zulu chief, signing himself "I. Bud-M'belle," who wrote from Lenge, in South Africa. He said: "As you may be in a position to know about the status and location of the so-called McKinley University of Louisville, could you kindly send me some information about it? I want this information in the interest both of American education and African education. Recently the McKinley University has been conferring very high degrees on persons in this country. For example, it has conferred a Ph. D. on a person who has not and could not pass the matriculation of our University. This man has never been to America. It is such things as these that make men skeptical of some American degrees."

Presumably the writer of this letter had been educated in England. As for the McKinley University, no facts in regard to it have yet been obtained.

Negro colleges are much given to the granting of fancy degrees. One of the most remarkable institutions for the education of negroes is situated in the suburbs of Raleigh, N. C. It publishes annually an elaborate catalogue, (this being its eighteenth year,) which gives a list of students covering several closely printed pages. There is a Board of Directors and a Faculty numbering twelve professors. One finds in the catalogue a full description of the College Preparatory Department, the Normal Department, the Industrial Department, and the Model School; and the college course is divided into four years—from Freshman to Senior—the educational scheme be-

ing supplemented by a special theological course, the graduate in which receives a degree of Bachelor of Divinity.

It is further stated that law, medical, and dental departments will soon be added. Terms, \$8.50 a month, in advance. All pupils are "required to bring quilts, sheets, pillowcases, napkins and ring, a shawl and overshoes; also a lamp." Kerosene is furnished.

This institution, incorporated under the laws of North Carolina, Feb. 15, 1894, is described in the catalogue as "one of the largest schools in the South for the race—able to accommodate more than 600 students." Students who are healthy and able to do farm work will be paid for such labor at the rate of five cents an hour, their earnings being deducted from fees charged.

Every year the President of this thriving institution goes North, lectures on his work, and collects contributions. His favorite stamping ground is Massachusetts, where the people are always ready to put up money for their education.

The attention of the Bureau of Education having been attracted to the university near Raleigh, a special investigation of it was made, resulting in the discovery that the institution consisted of a cotton plantation belonging to the President, on which was one very dilapidated

building. In this building seven or eight colored children were found learning arithmetic and their A. B. C.'s. All of them belonged to the President's own family, and the only teacher was his daughter.

The catalogue of the "university" for the last year winds up with a letter signed by the President, who says: "When viewing the arduous work through which I have passed, and the guidance of Almighty God, I cannot but seize this opportunity to express myself—not from any other cause but gratefulness.

"There is no school for the benefit of the race which has had so humble an origin as this, and yet if signs mean anything is destined to be one of the foremost for the higher elevation of our people.

"I cannot forget to thank the generous white people of the Old North State and elsewhere, who have so kindly helped me in this work. While thanking for the past, I earnestly plead for their aid in the future.

There is in the City of Washington a "university" which offers ten courses of study, out of which the applicant may choose any four for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Each course requires the reading of two specified books, standard popular works on the subjects in ques-

tion being named,) and nothing else is demanded beyond payment of the moderate sum of \$75. There are no examinations. The student is put on his honor, and the faculty says to him: "We are willing to accept your statement without further certification." Nothing could be easier. It might be called the "absent" educational method. The student reads the eight books (or says he has read them,) pays the money, and becomes a Ph. D. For an additional \$15 he may be a Master of Arts also.

Most remarkable of all such institutions thus far looked up by the Bureau of Education, however, is the so-called Oriental University, located on Dominion Heights, conveniently out of the way, in the neighborhood of Washington. Its catalogue is bound in a red paper cover, with striking designs suggestive of the Far East. On the inside of the cover is a statement to the effect that an International Academy of Sciences, Arts, and Letters has been started in connection with the institution.

Says the catalogue: "We had every variety of institutions of learning in the United States except an Oriental university; hence the seat of the International Academy of Sciences is at the Oriental University of Washington, D. C." What could be more lucid and obvious?

It is further stated that "one of the greatest objects of the Oriental University is to gradually establish the highest standard of education found anywhere." It seeks "mental and moral development in its richest diversity, giving mind and soul all the perfection they are susceptible to, not only transmitting past knowledge, but also introducing future elaboration and growth as grasped already by present-day geniuses in the various branches of learning."

Just so much meaningless jargon, of course. But lots of people are imposed upon by that sort of nonsense. The Oriental University is described in the catalogue as affiliated with many educational institutions in various parts of the world, including Solomon's Temple University (Inc.), at Jerusalem, and the Latent Light Culture Institute, Tinnely Bridge, India.

It is stated in the catalogue that the founder of the university was a former missionary named Holler, who, it is noticed, still remains its President and dean. Among the dozen or so degrees attached to his name are those of S. T. D. and S. O. D. though what they signify is not explained. Incidentally, he is Professor of "Theomonism."

The faculty presents a lengthy and imposing list, and includes a Professor of Theologic Symbolics, a Professor of Oodontology, Bacteriology, Psycho-Therapy, and French and South American Languages, and also a Professor of Aviation and Bahalism. The last is also Assistant Professor of Common and Equity Law. There are eight "extraordinary profes-

sors," one of whom teaches political economy and Esperanto.

Judging from the statements in the catalogue, there is a greater accumulation of knowledge in the faculty of the Oriental University than can be found in all the other higher educational institutions of the United States put together. It covers every imaginable subject.

But, while courses in all these subjects are offered, it by no means follows that anybody takes them. One does not have to. Here again we have the possibilities of the "absent" method of education very much developed, and the applicant has only to pay his money in order to get any degree he wants. He may even select courses in astrology, typesetting, tropical architecture, invalid cookery, and bill collecting; if those strike him as "soft electives."

It is further announced in the catalogue that for \$100 anybody can buy a scholarship "good for one complete education in each of succeeding generations." Think of being able to secure the education of one's progeny and descendants through indefinite centuries by the single very moderate payment of \$100! But this offer, it should be understood, will not stand indefinitely. The catalogue frankly says: "As soon as 500 scholarships are placed the price will be raised considerably. We urge everybody to secure a scholarship, as it will save thousands of dollars."

The business of selling degrees assumed its worst phase nearly twenty years ago, when the notorious Dr. Buchanan established a diploma mill in Philadelphia. He sold medical degrees cheap to all comers, and made a great deal of money. Other institutions of the kind started up and thrived for a while, but eventually the authorities pounced down upon them, and were driven out, and most of the States made laws prohibiting the practice of medicine by anybody not a graduate of a recognized medical school.

The Bureau of Education is gathering all the facts it can get together about educational institutions of all classes in this country, with a view to classifying them in relation to their standards (which vary so greatly) and their methods. If a man has the degree of Bachelor of Arts from Yale it means something definite; another man, who has an equivalent diploma from some comparatively unknown (or possibly non-existent) institution, may or may not possess even a fair common school education. The colleges are to undergo at the hands of the Government a comparative evaluation, and what is ascertained respecting them will be placed at the service not only of educators but of the people at large. Eventually the data collected will be published.

Incidentally the "fake" colleges will be driven out of existence. They have become a serious nuisance, and they have got to go.