

*Oxf. Alm.* 1849

THE TOWERS OF OXFORD

(From left :—New College, Merton, Music Room, All Souls, St. Mary's, Cathedral, Radcliffe Camera, Bodleian, Schools Tower, Wadham.)

PLATE I

# OXFORD

## OUTSIDE THE GUIDE-BOOKS

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MCMXXIII

### III. MEDIEVAL EDUCATION IN OXFORD. 1300-1500

#### THE ACADEMICAL CONSTITUTION.

IN the last chapter we have sketched the origin and development of the University. By about 1300 its Constitution was, in brief, as follows. (1) The chief officer was the *Chancellor* (first found in 1214), whose considerable judicial powers were in practice hardly limited by an ill-defined dependence on the Bishop of Lincoln or (as was more than once claimed, notably in 1415) by the Archbishop of Canterbury's powers of Visitation. He was often a person who also held high office in Church or State, and therefore during unavoidable absence from Oxford found it necessary to appoint a resident Commissary or (2) *Vice-Chancellor* (from 1230 at least) to represent him. There were also (3) two *Proctors* appointed yearly, whose names are recorded from 1267 to the present time—an institution of great interest, not only from their wide powers of discipline over the students, but also because, like the *Tribuni Plebis* in ancient Rome, they represented the general body of Masters of Arts and stood for the common rights of that class, being invested with

### CONSTITUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY

considerable rights of election (with the Vice-Chancellor) to University offices, and of veto. (4) The *House of Congregation* is venerable indeed, the academic House of Commons. It consisted of all Regent Masters of Arts, that is of all Masters of Arts for two years after they had received that degree, and it will be remembered (see p. 25) that no one could proceed to the superior degrees in Law, Medicine or Theology until he had completed the course of Arts. It is still limited to officials and resident Masters and Doctors; while (5) *Convocation* is the larger body of graduates throughout the world, and is not older than the 16th century. Legislation now requires the sanction of both bodies, but since Laud's Code (1634), a smaller body now called (6) the *Hebdomadal Council* (because it meets once a week) originates all legislation. All these six institutions still exist.

Up to this point we have very briefly surveyed the University system, so far as it concerns the elder members, the ruling class, the teachers and their organization. Hardly a word has been said of the younger men, so full of possibilities and promise. If half of the purpose of the University was (and is) to increase knowledge, the other half is to educate the rising generation. What shall the masters of the future be taught, and what shall they be left to discover for themselves through the free intercourse of academical Society? These subjects have agitated Oxford for seven centuries, and probably will never be settled.

## MEDIEVAL EDUCATION IN OXFORD, 1300-1500

### THE COURSE OF STUDY.

The old Quadrangle of the Schools (now the Bodleian Quadrangle, built in 1612-19 partly on the site of former Schools) lays before us, written for ever in stone, the whole course of Medieval Education. The scholar or student, when he first 'came up,' was supposed to enter the Quadrangle by the great gateway beneath the Tower of the Five Orders, and to be impressed by the scene which confronts him. In face of him are three doors, two labelled respectively 'Schola Medicinæ' on the left, 'Schola Jurisprudentiæ' on the right, and the third, widest and largest (in the centre) beyond the Proscholium or vaulted walk, leading to the Divinity School (the Schola Theologiæ). These represent (see p. 25) the Three Superior Faculties. But both to left and right, between him and the three already mentioned, are eight other doors also labelled, and he soon discovers that the Quadrangle is a group of lecture rooms, each door being assigned one or more subjects of instruction, and that the Eight have to be passed through in due order, before the Three can be approached. In old days, he had to look forward to seven years of study in the lecture rooms to left and right, which belong to the Faculty of Arts, before he could emerge as Master of Arts with a sufficient general education, and enter on the further prolonged study of one of the three Superior Faculties representing specialized work—either Law, which teaches him the rights of a man among other men, or Medicine, which ministers to

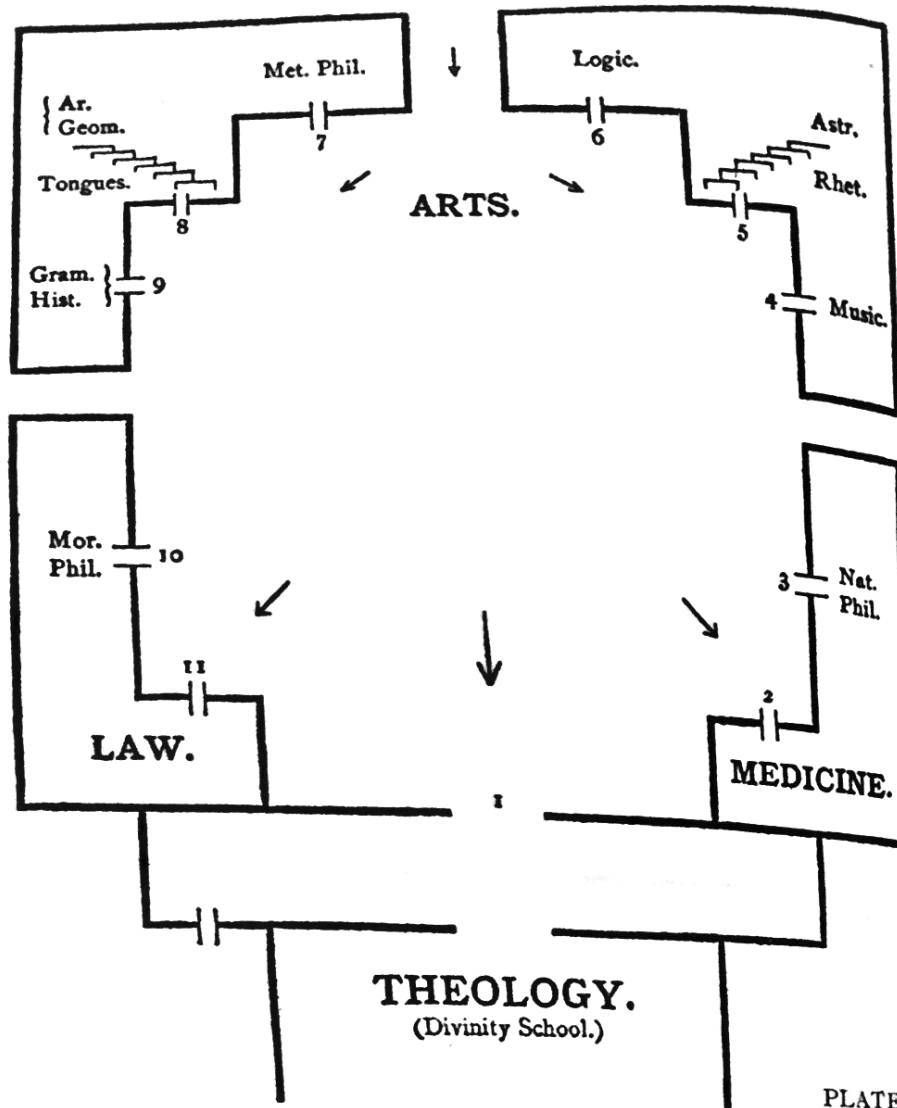
## COURSE OF STUDY

bodily health, or Theology, which claims to satisfy the highest part of him—the soul. Such was the Course of Study of the Middle Ages, based on the histories of Greece, Rome, and the Christian Church, and built on the experience of centuries. And since Science came in under the term Natural Philosophy, the scheme was adequately wide, in theory. In practice much depended on the spirit in which the long task was approached, for both wits and work were needed, and there were few of the social amenities of modern times.

The accompanying diagram and notes, if studied, will make the rest of this chapter more intelligible than mere description.

# THE SCHEME OF MEDIEVAL EDUCATION AT OXFORD.

(Gateway.)



THE QUADRANGLE OF THE SCHOOLS, NOW PART OF THE  
BODLEIAN.

(Built in 1612-19.)

The four corner staircases led to the first floor. Thus Medicine was over Natural Philosophy, Astronomy was over Logic, and Rhetoric over Music.

PLATE 2

## COURSE OF STUDY

ARTS.

(Degrees B.A., M.A.)

Trivium.	Quadrivium.	Philosophies.	Tongues.
Grammar ( <i>degree</i> ).	Music (B.Mus., D.Mus.).	Moral.	Greek.
Logic (=Dialectic).	Arithmetic.	Metaphysical.	Hebrew.
Rhetoric ( <i>degree</i> ).	Geometry.	Natural.	—
	Astronomy.		History.

THE 'SEVEN LIBERAL ARTS.'

LAW	THEOLOGY.	MEDICINE.
( <i>B. Can. Law, B.C.L.</i> ) ( <i>D. Can. Law, D.C.L.</i> )	(B.D., D.D. or S.T.P.)	(B.M., D.M.)

(*Obsolete degrees are in italics.*)

THE 'SEVEN LIBERAL ARTS.'

*Gram* loquitur, *Dia* vera docet, *Rhet* verba colorat :

*Mus* canit, *Ar* numerat, *Geo* ponderat, *As* colit astra.

'Tis Grammar teaches how to speak, And Logic sifts the false from true, By Rhetoric we learn to deck Each word with its own proper hue.	Arithmetic of number treats, And Music rules the Church's praise; Geometry the round earth metes, Astronomy the starry ways.
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THE SEVEN LIBERAL ARTS.

The ordinary Classical Course at Oxford in the second half of the nineteenth century—namely Responsions, Classical Moderations and the Final School of Literæ Humaniores—represented the sum and crown of the educational scheme of the Middle Ages. In general terms, the first part was elementary Latin, Greek and Mathematics; the second, advanced Latin and Greek, including Homer, Demosthenes, Virgil and Cicero to begin with; the third, the history and philosophy of Greece and Rome. Except for elementary Rhetoric, Music and Natural Science, the ancient Faculty of Arts is here almost completely represented. It may be said to be a thousand years old, for it is directly based on the traditions of the schools created by Charles the Great, about A.D. 800, cathedral schools, and reaching its fullest expression in the 12th century University of Paris. The scheme was further developed and modified on English soil, but never radically changed. A course with such a history deserves attention.

The 'Seven Liberal Arts' first bear that well-known title in the 6th century of our era (Cassiodorus, *d.* 575), and their division into the *Trivium* (the 'three-way course') and *Quadrivium* (the 'four-way course') occurs early in the next century (Isidorus Hispalensis, or Isidore of Seville, *d.* 636).

GRAMMAR, LOGIC

*The Trivium.*

(*Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric.*)

*Grammar* in the early Middle Ages implied not only grammar in our sense, but also the study of Latin literature, both classical (such as Virgil and Cicero) and, to a less extent, Christian (Prudentius, Juvenius, Sedulius, all in Latin verse). But when Universities arose, and Logic began to dominate the schools, the literary side of grammar dwindled, and grammar was narrowed down to what it means now, the teaching of the grammar and syntax (of Latin). The chief authors read were Terence, Priscian, Boëthius and Donatus.

*Logic* is to many persons a dull subject: but to the medieval student it became a matter of endless interest, while to his seniors it was, in philosophy and theology, one may say, all in all. It is the art or science which is concerned with the formal laws of thought, that is to say with the common moulds into which all correct thinking and reasoning on any subject can be cast. It is therefore of universal use, as mathematics are in science, and to the medieval mind extremely attractive. Given certain premisses, the conclusion was, or seemed to be, inevitable. If your opponent in debate conceded certain general propositions to start with, you held him in a vice; he could not escape a conclusion resulting from them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The common example of a syllogism, as it is termed, is:

All men are mortal	}	<i>premisses</i>
Socrates is a man		( <i>præmissa</i> ).
Therefore Socrates is mortal		<i>conclusion.</i>