

HARVARD "TALK" ABOUT JEWS

THERE HAS BEEN "TALK about the proportion of Jews at Harvard." Such a phrase used in the report of a meeting of the Board of Overseers called together to consider the question of limiting the entering class, has caused a wide newspaper discussion. The official statement of the Board contained no such reference. It recorded the formation of a committee "to consider and report to the Governing Board principles and method for more effective sifting of candidates for admission," and President Lowell has dismissed the charge, of intended discrimination as "idle rumor." Harvard, he is reported to have said, will remain "in the future as it has been in the past, a great university for all the people, based upon fundamental principles of great service to the community." The remark from which the offense cometh seems to have been hardly more than that the subject was being "talked about" by students and possibly by alumni and faculty, says the *Springfield Republican*, but—

"The question is now being 'talked about' the country over, and Representative Webster of Boxford saw fit to introduce in the Legislature a resolution calling for investigation of the 'alleged or proposed discrimination.' This was needless, for the university has done no more, as President Lowell assured Speaker Young yesterday, than authorize a study of the question of 'more effectively sifting candidates for admission.'"

The *Providence News* criticizes the Harvard authorities because the denial has not been made "in plain English" so that the country may "know that there has been misconstruction of an unfortunate clause in the announcement made by the college authorities":

"Up to this moment the men who control the management have been dodging a clear answer to a very important query, and their course naturally excites the distrust not only of the Jewish race but of all Americans who despise narrow citizenship.

"Harvard has been known for some of the Chinese and Japanese it has sent brilliantly through graduation courses, and some of the thinking men of far-off Siam owe their broad culture to the fact that the Massachusetts university placed at their disposal every avenue of learning. All the more surprizing, therefore, to find President Lowell and his associates now giving evasive replies to the question whether the limitation of the student body is to be carried out by reprisal against a great class of our citizens.

"The proposal that the Massachusetts Legislature should investigate the circumstances leading to the announcement of restricted scholarship should be carried forward, unless there be an honest statement forthcoming by the faculty that in the elimination of applicants there will be no discrimination against any race or religion."

Right at home Harvard is admonished that "there could be no greater mistake than such a narrow policy." It is the *Boston Post* which tells its great institution that "above all things Harvard should stand for democracy in the higher education, and for men for what they are worth, regardless of race, color or antecedents," adding:

"Take the matter of the Jews, for instance: that element of the Harvard undergraduates have done much honor to the university. Their scholastic standing has been notably high. It is credibly stated that in one subject, this year, out of nine honors, eight Jewish students received better than *cum laude*. They do not ask any favors, but students of such exceptional ability should be welcomed and encouraged.

"The public does not want an aristocratic institution at Cambridge, but a great, broad-spirited university which shall tower above racial and color lines.

"It would be an unfortunate epoch for Harvard and the community generally if any narrow spirit should get control of its policies."

That some sifting process will likely be adopted seems plausible. "Not even the most fervent fomentor of race prejudice will deny that Harvard may prescribe its



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As *John Bull* sees Dean Inge lamenting the decline from Victorian days. His words are to be found on the preceding pages.

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own qualifications in so far as learning, character and personality are concerned," says the *New York Tribune*. "So long as these standards are applied without favor, no one may justly protest." Mr. Heywood Broun, with his pleasant insouciance, suspects that Harvard "has some sifting scheme" for limiting the number of Jewish students; and he declares beforehand that he is "entirely out of sympathy with any such plan, whatever its details may be."

"Since we earned no degree from Harvard, we are not speaking as one moved to utterance by his responsibilities as an alumnus. Harvard is, however, a semi-public institution and therefore well within the concern of a meandering newspaper commentator.

"A university ought to take in anybody who can pass the examinations. If space is limited, admission should go to those who stand highest. There should be no other qualification.

"Writing in the *Evening Post*, John Palmer Gavit suggests that the solution of a condition which Harvard feels to be a problem is simple. 'There must be,' he says, 'a composite standard of intelligence and character taken together.'

"We are against that, too. We think that a university which keeps a man out because it doesn't like his character is almost as benighted as the one which would sift him out because he is a Jew. University examinations are far too fallible as it is. The difficulties of arriving at any working compromise on what is intelligence are hard enough without bringing in the enormously complex question of character. We suppose, for instance, that a young Bernard Shaw might well flunk a character test and be sent down because of conditions in Reverence. Of course, he might try to brush up on it during the summer months, but we doubt whether he could ever pass.

"A little unscrupulous guessing often prevails even in an old-style test. We once passed an examination in elementary Greek which we had no earthly business to pass. The only words which we knew in the whole passage offered for translation were the Greek equivalents for parasang and river. Unfortunately, we have since forgotten them. Using these two words as fixt points, after the manner of a man working with a cipher, we boldly filled in all the remainder and made up what seemed to us a rather convincing story of an ancient walking trip. So much of it happened to be right that the examiner gave us D minus and let us through.

"We have always taken a certain amount of pride in that, but we don't see how anybody could grow puffed up about faking his way through a character test. We don't know just what a character test is like, but we assume that it must bear some resemblance to one of these popular newspaper questionnaires which begin, 'What is your favorite flower?' and end with 'What quality do you admire most in a woman?' The conventional answers are 'The American Beauty rose' and 'Virtue.'

We must waive responsibility for Mr. Broun's Greek, but will doubtless return to the subject again as it seems likely to involve other colleges besides Harvard, and to call out a still wider newspaper discussion.