

THAT BACCALAUREATE CUSTOM

YOU'D never guess where the name Baccalaureate comes from. In 1916 Professor Barclay W. Bradley of the College of the City of New York made what is apparently the only summary extant of the origin of the baccalaureate business. He pointed out then that, under the Faculty of Arts in the University of Paris—which alone may be looked on as the ancestor of the degree as it is given in the modern college—degrees were conferred on students in an initiation ceremony in which the university had officially no part and which was more like a cane rush than a solemn occasion.

The baccalaureate ceremony was a part of the great wave for fraternalization which swept over Europe in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. But within 100 years of the original voluntary and half-playful ceremony, the degree became a necessary preliminary to the ecclesiastical license to teach. And by 1400, at Paris as elsewhere in Europe, the degree was synonymous for matriculation. But at Oxford University it took a differ-

ent aspect, which was reflected in the early history of Harvard and other American colleges.

The first statutes of Harvard College refer to the baccalaureate as "the first degree, given at the end of four years of residence, to be followed immediately by three years, leading to a Master's—or 2nd degree." Since that period, as preparation has become fuller for college entrance, the baccalaureate has been pushed up to the end of the course and —Dr. Bradley noted this with some sadness—the requirements for a Master's degree have been reduced until it is only one supplementary year that is required and, as recently as 1912 or so, even that year did not demand resident study after the baccalaureate.

In 1931, Bruce Bliven wrote a baccalaureate sermon to be published in a magazine, doubtless on the theory that its appearing in print left him at a safe distance from the wrath of those who never can see anything humorous in such matters.

Mr. Bliven began relatively

tamely, contenting himself with remarking, "Gentlemen: In accordance with academic custom, it is considered desirable that you should hear a baccalaureate address." Here there should have been cries of "Why? Who said so?" But as this was on paper, Mr. Bliven was free to continue uninterrupted. "Like most academic customs," he remarked, "this one is meaningless, having no more value than any other serving of advice you may be given—which is none at all. But the wise man yields to foolish customs to avoid the wear and tear of combat, so we shall proceed with this cere-

mony."

Well, that's where baccalaureate sermons came from. But they are no longer funny and no apprentice to learning is eligible. You have to have learned. At least something. Although, come to think of it, Mr. Bliven had a wry word to say about that. "As you go forth into the world," he said, "if any of you are able to think straight and to act upon your thoughts, that fact is a tribute to the indomitable power of the human mind to survive the worst of miseducations."—*J. M., Condensed from the Christian Science Monitor.*

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AS HISTORY GROWS DIM

ALL THAT will be left of our forgotten worthies in a future dictionary:

Gladstone: a travelling bag with a specially wide mouth.

Victoria: low carriage with a broad seat.

Prince Albert: a stuffed coat, very long, formal, and never unbuttoned.

Chateaubriand: a French beefsteak, made of something else.

Lincoln: a kind of car, origin of name lost.

Jefferson: a hotel, avenue, or post office.

Napoleon, Washington, Caesar, Samson: trade names for bathroom fixtures.

Marie Antoinette, Josephine, Marie Louise, Eugenie: trade names for ladies' underwear.—*Stephen Leacock in New Yorker.*