

I am not one of those who think that a university should be a sort of cloister and a professor a kind of monk. Yes it has to be practical, and must turn out graduates who are able to earn their own living. We have to do this for various reasons. In this country we have no leisure class, in the older sense of a leisure class who stand on the backs of those beneath, who live at ease, and let their brains go, and who hand down only their privileges from father to son, on the ground that the sons do not need their brains. Such a class will probably never come here. Obviously a university must reckon with that fact. We must therefore give our young men an ability to earn their living. The university must give to the student who comes to it, in short, some training so that he may be an economic member of society. Here, then, is the seat of learning. There is the student poring over a book. What is he in search of? Wisdom? Not a bit. He wants a diploma so that he can be a druggist. In our highly specialized life each profession and even each trade has become a kind of closed corporation, and what the university must hand out is the information that will enable the young man to enter these trades and professions. So you have the curious spectacle of students cramming up this information in order to get the subsequent liberty of forgetting it again by passing an examination.

There is no use in the university setting itself against this tendency, which is demanded by practical necessity. True it leads us to mistake this ability to cram for a final examination for real learning. To those who have passed through it the examination hall looks dreary. To those who have not yet passed through it it possesses, I may say, all the fascination of the horrible. To those who are able to look down at it from above, it seems absolutely dreary, and even ludicrous. You might ask then, why do we not get away from this foolish Chinese fashion? (Applause). I see you are just as eager for the change as I was in my time, but let me say your opinions on that subject will change. In about four years even the youngest of you will say, "No, keep the examinations. They do the students good." The universities in fact must keep the examinations. You cannot judge what a student knows by looking at him, though sometimes you can tell what he does not know. Moreover the professor would need the fairmindedness of the goddess of Justice herself to rank his students without the aid of an examination. We cannot expect to supersede the mechanical efficiency of the examination method as a means of distinguishing between students.

What follows from this then if the case is as shown, or is as it seems to be? In the first place those who cry out that we must be practical may be met by this argument, first, that very often the most practical man will be one who has been trained in what seemed the least practical way. The study of the dead languages is certainly a case in point. It can be argued that the study of Latin has no connection with making a living (except in the case of the despised professor who makes something like a living in that way), because there are no people who speak Latin or Greek to whom we might sell many yards of colored cotton. But these languages in another sense are of