

disposed to concur; but I cannot understand how any one, in the face of such facts, should still insist that the influence of colleges is adverse to human progress, or that liberal studies disincite men to take part with the people against their oppressors.

Indeed, this whole charge is a striking instance of the power of mere assertion and reiteration to give currency to an opinion which, whether well-founded or not formerly, is now not only untrue, but the opposite of true. To whom is it owing that the physical sciences have made more progress during the last quarter of a century, than in any two centuries which preceded it. I will not say, to colleges wholly; but I believe I may say, to colleges mainly. Even in theology, which for obvious reasons is more stationary than any other science, wherever theological schools or colleges are established, I care not on what foundation, and the lights of a varied and concentrated erudition are brought to bear upon the study of the sacred Volume, we soon begin to see a progress. So noticeable has this at length become, that cautious men have begun to feel that danger is not on the side of stability, but on the side of change. The passion for making discoveries, for original investigation, for new ideas, has seized us all. This love of innovation is also beginning to show itself, not merely in results, but in the methods of study; and the danger is, not that we shall attempt too little, but too much; that the practicable will be lost, or compromised, in a vain striving after the impracticable.

Another objection sometimes made against colleges, especially in this country, is, that they are essentially aristocratical institutions; that they are anti-democratic in principle, inasmuch as their tendency is to uphold a privileged or favored class.

Here, again it is not difficult to trace to its source the natural jealousy, on the whole salutary, which has given birth to this charge. Colleges, of course, are for the most part, founded and endowed by the rich; they are also frequented by the sons of the rich, whose social position and means of expense sometimes, though not often, give them there, as they do their fathers in general society, an artificial and undeserved consequence. Add to this, that in some countries they are aristocratical institutions. In England, for example, political and religious causes have conspired, ever since the Reformation, to make Oxford and Cambridge little more than what they have sometimes been called,—the great finishing schools for the sons of the nobility, and gentry, with a sprinkling of talent from the middle classes, mostly intended for the church. There are also other countries in Europe, Austria, for example, where the whole scheme and apparatus of instruction, from the lowest to the highest, are avowedly conceived on the plan, not of making good scholars, but good subjects; and every body knows what absolute governments mean by *good subjects*. I do not seek to hide or extenuate these facts. View them, however, in what light you please, they do not originate in the constitution of colleges, as such, but in the general constitution of society, or in the social or political structure of particular states.

If, then, we turn from these mixed and anomalous cases, and look at the constitution of colleges, as such, we must admit that, so far from being anti-democratic in principle, they are eminently the reverse. In them, theoretically, at least, merit determines rank; natural nobility is everything; the nobility of birth and wealth nothing. And history shows that it is not so in theory alone. Throughout the Middle Ages the Church constituted almost the sole democratic element in society; that is to say, it opened a way, and almost the only one, by which the gifted and active in humble life might raise themselves to the highest places. But it did this mainly through its great conventual and cathedral schools or colleges, which had the effect to reveal talent wherever it existed, to persons who knew how to appreciate talent, and turn it to account. And so in modern times. I do not mean that colleges are the only avenues to distinction, which are here open to all; it is the glory of a free country like ours, that every avenue to distinction is open to all. Extraordinary administrative talent, extraordinary capacities for business of any kind, if accompanied by industry and integrity, are sure to raise a man to eminence. Our great merchants, many of whom began with nothing, are great men; some of them, as was said of those of Tyre, "are princes"; but so, likewise, are our great scholars. It is a sad page in the history of letters, which records the early struggles of the poor scholar;—the father laboring beyond his strength, the sister ready to give up her last indulgence, and the mother her last crust of bread, that he may complete his education. But soon the scene changes, and we behold that poor scholar standing erect and self-confident before kings.

I am aware that this objection is sometimes made to assume a subtler form; it is said, that the poor scholar, as soon as he takes his place among aristocrats, becomes an aristocrat himself. That there have been cases of recreancy of this sort, under circumstances peculiarly offensive, I do not deny; but I believe that they exist much oftener in the jealousies and suspicions of persons who would be glad of an opportunity to do the same thing, and think this evidence enough that all do it who can. At any rate there are considerations, not applying to distinction won in business and by wealth alone, which are likely to keep the educated man true to his early professions and

sympathies. In the first place, I may mention again the liberalizing effect of his studies; then, too, as a writer or public man, he is more entirely and publicly committed to his principles, which makes the abandonment of them more difficult; and even if all other motives should fail, there is the pride of intellect, which finds its gratification, not in going over to other men's opinions and ways, but in bringing them over to his.

And what shall I say of that part of the charge which represents colleges as upholding a privileged or favored class? That they uphold a learned class, and that without them no such class could well exist, I readily admit; but why this class should be called a privileged or favored class, I am yet to learn. By a privileged or favored class, taken in an objectionable and offensive sense, I understand a class which is better paid than others, or which the community is, in some way or other, heavily taxed to support. But this certainly cannot be alleged against the learned class with any semblance or shadow of justice. I do not say, as some have done, in their eagerness to repel the charge, that no labor is so ill-requited as intellectual labor; for this would not be true. Of course intellectual labor, considered generally, is at a higher rate than manual labor; but the intellectual labor which is at the highest rate is administrative and financial, and not learned. You pay the agents and treasurers of your great corporations more than you do your judges. A privileged or favored class forsooth! Take the whole profession of teachers in this Commonwealth, including religious teachers, whose work is not only intellectual, but learned. Looked to as a means of obtaining an independence, or even a competency, who will pretend that it holds out a better prospect, or so good a prospect, as many of the mechanical trades? At the same time, I do not suppose that complaints, or remonstrances, or agitation, are likely to be of much avail in this case. The evil, as in respect to most other depressed and suffering classes, is doubtless, for the most part, the consequence of a law in political economy; the supply is greater than the demand. But where the majority of a learned body are confessedly over-worked and under-paid, it is a little too hard to turn round upon them, and mock their poverty by calling them, in a worldly sense, a privileged or favored class.

But the gravest objection to colleges, and that which is most frequently in the mouths of considerate and good men, is drawn from the moral dangers, real or supposed, by which they are beset.

For a full discussion of this important topic I have not time; and, besides, it would lead to statements and counter-statements, some of which would be out of place on an occasion like the present. But it must not be passed over in silence, nor with a mere declamatory appeal, of which, as it seems to me, we have had quite enough, as its tendency is to leave a false impression as regards the actual state of things, and to create vague and unreasonable expectations.

As the inmates of colleges are collected from the whole community on no principle of selection, except, perhaps, that of worldly competency, which is not a moral distinction, it follows almost necessarily that all moral tendencies are represented there, from the best to the worst. It is not true, as a general rule, that bad moral tendencies begin to be developed there; the whole responsibility of colleges consists in this, that these tendencies, being freed from many domestic and school restraints, find opportunity there for a more rapid development. With a few, a very few melancholy exceptions, the future course of a student, both morally and intellectually, may be predicted with an almost unerring precision by the end of the first term. In my communications with parents, there is nothing which has perplexed me more, than my apparent inability to make them understand this plain statement, that to three quarters of every class, college is one of the safest places in the world, to the other quarter, one of the most dangerous.

But some may ask, Why this distinction between the three quarters, who, according to the ordinary measures of human imperfection, are upright and strong, and the one quarter, who are weak and frail? Why not bestow more care on the one quarter who are weak and frail, and make them all upright and strong?

I will begin my reply to these questions by telling the public a secret. Even as it is, more than half the care of every College Faculty in this country is actually bestowed on the one quarter who are here commended to their special attention. Is not this their full proportion? Are they alone to be thought of, and the rest neglected? But perhaps it will be said, that want of success is proof that the care is not wisely bestowed. If by want of success is meant, that colleges are not as successful in this respect now as formerly, or here as elsewhere, a fair allowance being made for the difference in general society, I deny it utterly. If, on the other hand, the words are to be taken absolutely, if you are expecting that there are to be absolutely no failures, you are expecting from colleges what is to be found nowhere; what never has been, and never can be, until God shall change the constitution of human nature.

Let me not be understood to mean, that colleges, as at present conducted in this country, are in all respects what they ought to be, and might be. Some of the difficulties are, I suppose, irremediable