

as to the proper and distinct meaning and application of these terms; partly because it has nothing to do with my argument, and partly because it is not likely to lead to any definitive or satisfactory results. Use, reputable use, and not reason or consistency, determines, for the most part, how words are to be understood; and reputable use, in this case as in many others, varies in different countries. *University* has one signification in Germany and Scotland; another in England; and still another in France. In this country, also the ambiguity has been still further complicated by an accident of history. Our oldest colleges, in the beginning, were nothing but colleges in the most limited sense of that term, and therefore were so denominated. Some of them, however, when considered in connection with their scientific and professional schools, have grown into a resemblance to the German and Scotch universities, but still prefer to retain the old name; while on the other hand, colleges of yesterday, which can hardly yet aspire to be colleges, have chosen to begin by hanging out what I suppose is regarded as the more showy and attractive sign of *university*. Be this as it may, I have nothing to do with names; I look at things. By *college* or *university*, for, according to the common practice here, I use these terms interchangeably, I mean an institution founded and provided for the purpose of giving, not primary instruction, nor intermediate instruction, but the highest instruction. A college or university aspires to impart, not merely the measure of teaching which is necessary to practical life and good citizenship, but that which is necessary to scholars: in one word, the highest form of the learned culture of the age. And in order to fulfil this function, that is to say, to do in fact what it aspires to do, it must have an ample public library, and scientific apparatus, and also a corps of living teachers, each one of whom is expected to know the last word in his particular department of study.

Now I say that such an institution is not only a fit place for the highest intellectual culture, but, in the existing state of human knowledge; indispensable to it. In the infancy of science, when the sciences were but few, and one after another was to be created, genius was everything. For this reason, in the early history of every science the greatest names are those of solitary thinkers and experimentalists. Less than a century ago, Priestley, with the rudest instruments and materials, could immortalize himself by brilliant discoveries in chemistry. But to take up chemistry now, where he and his illustrious followers have left the science, and to extend it by further discoveries equally brilliant, requires all the genius of Priestley, and in addition to this, all the refinements of art, together with a familiar acquaintance with whatever has been done by others in the same field of inquiry, as the ground of new experiments and new generalization. If it should be said that books alone might supply the necessary teaching, I answer, that the question is not what *might* be, but what *will* be. And besides in the present state of science, and especially of what are called the progressive and demonstrative sciences, what are books, what are journals even which aim to make us acquainted with the latest movements in the scientific world,—what are all these at least to beginners, without the cabinet and laboratory? Moreover, the true teacher, above all, if he is looked up to as one who has mastered and extended an important branch of human knowledge, does more than teach; he *inspires*. And one teacher for everything will not do. Some of us can remember when what now make eight or ten distinct sciences were taught as one, and by one person, under the name of Natural Philosophy, and eight or ten more under the name of Natural History. But so rapid of late has been the progress of the sciences thus grouped together, and as a natural consequence, so complete the subdivision of scientific labor, that now a teacher, in order to keep himself on a level with the highest teaching in any one of these subdivisions, and still more in order to assist in elevating it, must make it his specialty, and live for that alone. Meanwhile, the unity and integrity of human knowledge must not be broken. At a place of the highest general education, all the legitimate elements of a liberal culture must be provided for; all must be represented in their connection and just proportions in the mind of the institution; not, of course in a single mind, for that, as we have seen is impossible, but in an aggregate mind; and this aggregate mind constitutes a college, a university.

Let me not be understood to mean, that passing four or seven years at a college or university will compensate for the want of natural ability or of moral character. Natural ability and an earnest purpose in life without a liberal education will do a great deal more for the individual and for the public, than a liberal education without natural ability and an earnest purpose in life. I am no advocate, I am no admirer, of refined and polished mediocrity. Culture is no substitute for genius. The alternative is not genius or culture; we would have both. In the existing state of society and the human mind, where the interests and connections of men have become so multiplied and complicated, it seems to me that no one can hope to exert a marked influence on the great courses of thought or action, without doing about as much harm as good, unless he has both;—genius, that culture may not be thrown away upon him; and culture, that genius may not run out into presumption and extravagance. And this is precisely what colleges would bring about in the educated classes. Colleges do not create

genius, I allow; neither do they stifle or extinguish it where it already exists; their highest function is to make genius wise, many-sided and safe.

But there are specific and radical objections to colleges in general, and to colleges constituted as they now are, which it will be proper to explain, and if possible to obviate.

In the first place, it is objected, that colleges are naturally retrospective and stationary; that no generous movement for truth or humanity ever originated here, or ever found countenance and sympathy there. For this reason, some are inclined to regard them as a standing army in the pay of a bigoted and selfish conservatism; others, unwilling to ascribe to such institutions vitality of any kind, prefer to stigmatize them as no better than the hulks of a stranded past.

There is generally, in objections which have taken fast hold of many minds, some nucleus, or at any rate some show of truth, out of which the whole has grown. And so in this case. I admit that the natural position of the scholar in respect to change and reform is that of liberal conservatism, or, as I should prefer to express it, conservative liberalism. As a general rule, the inmates of colleges do not belong to that class of people who are likely to be stung into revolt by want or oppression. And besides, it cannot be denied, that the more a man knows, especially of history, society, and human nature, the more distrustful he becomes of mere outward and artificial revolutions,—of any revolutions, in short, which are not the providential unfolding of principles, of an inward and organic life already begun. Unless we have the proposed object at least in idea, that is to say, unless the people and their leaders know what they want, agitation and revolution are almost an unmixed evil; and so, I suppose, colleges as a body would pronounce. So far, I am willing to admit, they are naturally allied to the great conservative interests of society. If, however, on the strength of this, any should hurry to the conclusion that colleges, as such, are opposed to progress, or to just and practicable reform, it would be in contradiction to nature and fact.

Consider, for a moment, who they are who make up the public opinion which prevails in these institutions. They consist, for the most part, of young men, in whom hope predominates over fear, enthusiasm over calculation and interest, whose appointed studies make them familiar with the bold and original thinkers of all ages, and whose private reading and private sympathies are apt to be attracted to the writers constituting what is called Young Europe or Young America, and this, too, with little knowledge of the practical difficulties in the way of radical change. Now, reasoning from the nature of the case, are these the persons whom we should expect to carry to excess a reverence for ancient landmarks, give up the thought of improving upon what has been, and be too content to stand still? Look, then, at the facts. If we go back into the Middle Ages, it is impossible to read the life of such men as Alebard without being convinced that whatever there was then free of thought, or of progress, which is the child of free thought, found its centre of action in the universities. Likewise in the Lollard movement in England, the aurora of the great Reformation, we are told that the universities partook, with the quickness and heat of young life, of the national awakening; so much so, that Wickliff and his followers were on the point of gaining the upper hand at Oxford itself,—nay, would probably have done so, but for the interference of despotic power. And when Luther came, he met nowhere with a more earnest and efficient support than among the students who flocked from all quarters to the University of Wittemberg, until it became, to borrow Luther's own expression, "a perfect hive."

The same general observation applies to the more recent struggles for civil freedom. On the eve of our own Revolution one of the Fellows of this College wrote to Thomas Hollis respecting the students here; "They have caught the spirit of the times. Their declamations and forensic disputes breathe the spirit of liberty. This has always been encouraged, but they have sometimes been wrought up to such a pitch of enthusiasm, that it has been difficult for their Tutors to keep them within due bounds; but their Tutors are fearful of giving too great a check to a disposition, which may, hereafter, fill the country with patriots." And after the war was over, it would seem that the College was thought to have redeemed its early pledges; for Governor Hancock, in his speech at the inauguration of President Willard, did not hesitate to call it, "in some sense, the parent and nurse of the late happy Revolution in this Commonwealth." But why multiply instances to prove what we might confidently conclude beforehand would be? Who does not know that, in all the efforts during the present century to introduce free institutions among the Continental nations of Europe, the professors and students in the universities have, as a class, hazarded the most, and suffered the most? Sagacious observers, judging after the event, may pronounce these men precipitate,—blame them for plunging the masses into a conflict for which they were unprepared, and which has ended, as might have been expected, in riveting their fetters more strongly than ever. They may do more; they may hold them up as a warning against theoretical politicians and reformers; some may even have the heart to deride them as martyrs and confessors to a folly, to a dream. All this I can understand; in part of it I am