

THE AIM AND VALUE OF THE COLLEGE COURSE.

An address delivered by Prof. Higgins, at the opening of the College, October 8th, 1894.

The tendency to run in grooves that have been made for us by those who preceded us is so strong that we sometimes find ourselves doing things without knowing exactly why we do them. We do what our fathers did, or what we see others doing, sometimes simply because it is the fashion, at other times because of some fancied advantage which may or may not be realized. We pursue a good which we never reach, while some other benefit may come to us which we had not anticipated. In some departments of human activity it may matter comparatively little whether we understand clearly the reason for the course we follow or not, provided only we do the right thing. It is not essential to a man who handles a buck-saw that he should know WHY a sharp saw does better work than a dull one, provided only that he knows the fact and keeps his saw sharp. But in most kinds of work it is important that we should understand the nature of the tools we use and the rationale of the process by which results are to be accomplished. The higher the character of the work in which we are engaged, the more imperative it becomes that we should clearly understand our relations to it, and the consequences that may result from any modification of our methods of work. The artist who would carve in marble the lineaments of the human face must not only have a clear eye and a steady hand, but he must be able to know in advance what will be the effect of the least change of the angle at which he holds his chisel, or of the force he puts into the blow with which he strikes it. Still more important is it that we should work thoughtfully and wisely when our work has relation to the development of human character. If, instead of shaping the lifeless marble into the semblance of a living man, we are working directly upon the living man himself—to develop, strengthen and equip a living soul for the labor and conflict of life, it would be unpardonable in us not to use our best endeavors to understand ourselves, our relations to the work we are trying to do and the nature of the consequences, to ourselves or others, of the course we are pursuing. And this is true not only of those who are seeking to influence and mould others, but also of those who are themselves being moulded. The student as well as the teacher should study these questions of methods and results. He should, if possible, understand clearly what the goal is that he hopes to reach, and have some more or less clearly de-