

himself and his probable course in life, to allow a wide range of options. There are thus in our present system many roads open to the student, and I would desire to give him some suggestions as to what he may best do in those cases where the choice is left to himself.

I may say frankly to him that he will not find it to his advantage to follow the advice of every one who may advance claims to superior knowledge. In our time nearly every man of any education thinks himself qualified to be an educational reformer or, what is perhaps quite as troublesome, an educational conservative. One tells us that we must have nothing but training—another that we must have nothing but what is practical—one that the time-honored narrowness of the curriculum of our ancestors is the acme of perfection—another that everything ought to be abandoned for the new sciences and literature. One raves of the conflict of various studies and of the distraction of mind and injury to health which it causes; another inveighs on the narrow pedantry which crams men with a few obsolete subjects. One tells us that professorial lectures are useless and that reading and practical work are everything; another knows that the essence of education consists in the direct influence of educated minds on the student. If the student is to settle all these difficulties for himself he may become gray-haired before he begins his educational course. On the other hand it is not advisable that he should follow implicitly and at once his own impulses. What is he to think or to do? There are a few common-sense reflections which may be of use in the matter. One is that while the course of studies fixed by usage or by college regulations may not be absolutely the best possible, or that which is adapted for every kind of mind, it is probably one that has shaken itself into shape by long use, and which may be the best attainable relatively to the means at hand, and the work that can be roughly done for many kinds of mind, thrown together in a college class. This may reconcile the student to some things, the reason and fitness of which may not be quite apparent. Besides, whatever may be the demerits of the established course, it is in this alone that he can have the full benefit of competition with others, and can avoid the tendency to desultory and uncertain study. In looking back on my own student

life and in that of those over whom I have had influence, I have had occasion to be more and more impressed with the importance of this.

Another consideration is that, up to a certain point, the studies that a young man may most dislike may be the best for him, because best fitted to train the weaker points of his mental organization. No man starts with a perfectly balanced mind, and the special bias which he may have may not be the best. Again, it is not desirable that men should be allowed to run at once into their chosen specialties without some previous general ground work. I can myself remember how I was held back and tied to studies which I would gladly have escaped, and yet I have had reason to believe that, however agreeable for the time, such escape would have been all the worse for me.

Still another consideration is that no man can be absolutely certain which of the departments of literature or science he is required to study may be most useful to him in after life. It is true no professor or combination of professors can certainly predict this; but for that very reason it is well that the young man should lay a foundation of some breadth, even if he should subsequently build only on certain parts of it. The rain falls on the barren road as well as on the fertile field, and so it must be to some extent with education. It is quite certain that many things taught in college must be quite lost sight of in after life, yet the discipline which they give remains, and few of us fully know how much of our present success and usefulness may be due to the residue of those half-forgotten studies; while we do know that many of them, lying like almost extinguished embers, have suddenly flashed up to aid or to guide us in some difficult part of our career.

These thoughts should induce the student to bend his neck as patiently as he can to the yoke which may be laid upon him and to submit to the rules which prescribe his course of study and the conditions under which he can pass examinations, gain prizes, or attain to degrees and honours; while these conditions and restrictions are themselves parts of his training, for he who would rule must learn to serve. But they do not oblige him to become an unreasoning machine, or to forego the exercise of his own judgment. On the contrary, there is the most ample scope for this. And here, also, I may ven-