

student who has the intention of honestly obtaining a degree. Therefore in what follows we lay no claim to originality but try to present, as it were, the echo of many discussions, comparisons and conversations which we have treasured up, as not the least valuable proceeds of our college life.

Year by year the fact is being more forcibly presented that the time allotted for a college course is too short for the work to be accomplished. The ever-widening fields of human research are steadily presenting new subjects, which the liberally educated seem required to know, or must of necessity know, to engage successfully in a chosen pursuit. But if room be made for these innovations, somewhat of the old standard syllabus must be given up, and, as this by previous abridgments has been reduced to a minimum, those who have these matters to arrange are brought face to face with a difficult problem.

Harvard tried to solve the difficulty in her case by granting elective studies after the freshman year. Objections to such a plan must arise in every mind—objections too by no means trifling, or unimportant, but touching the very foundation of college instruction. It might almost be said that this was an avowal of inability on the part of the Corporation to squarely meet the difficulty, since, instead of fixing a course, they allow each student to choose for himself, and thus be responsible to himself for his success or failure. Even if all could not be satisfied, it would truly seem better that men who have grown gray in the cause of education, whose lives have been spent in instructing youth, and who must of necessity be the better judges in a matter of this kind, should lay out a course of prescribed studies. The average collegian of the second year has but vague notions of his future pursuits, and so, cannot if he wished choose with certainty a course with such a bearing. He may, indeed, have a preference which may be replaced subsequently by another preference,

so that, if held to his original choice, he is tied to studies he dislikes, and if allowed to choose again, begins a habit utterly subversive of any real progress. But the presumable evil does not end here. Nothing ought to be more diligently combatted than the feeling that the four years of college life is to finish the substance of man's knowledge; that study will end with the reception of a degree, in so far as study is an appointed requisite task; that study for the professions or scientific pursuits is more dependent on the matter, than on the spirit of collegiate instruction. Undoubtedly the course may contribute something that will be available to professional life, but to make it wholly subordinate to that idea would be to lose sight of its real aim, which is surely that of teaching *how to study*.

It is the application of method to study, the learning how to direct the faculties in the way which will lead to the best results, and the practical illustration of this in the sciences pursued, that constitutes after all the essential value of college education. The importance which the physical sciences hold in human affairs demands that the proper methods of studying them be more fully illustrated than has hitherto been done in our leading institutions of learning. It is a legitimate demand which must be heeded; since society at large is more deeply interested in the sciences which contribute to every day comforts and enjoyments than in abstract principles of morality or law. But here more than elsewhere caution and method are needful, since these subjects from their novelty and manifold phases offer inducements to build up visionary hypotheses. The college course should afford such training as will point out in any after-time the principles upon which one should base his investigations of labor. With such a course, and a board of professors understanding the mutual relations of their departments, the conditions of success would seem as far as possible to be provided. But it