

The Yale Report of 1828

One of the most influential documents in the history of American higher education was “The Yale Report of 1828.” It was an impressive defense of the traditional way of teaching a fixed set of topics identically for each and every student in classical language, literature and science – the so-called Trivium and Quadrivium. These topics had been taught to young men (not yet women) with only minor changes for 700 years. Pretty impressive. Yale would eventually follow Michigan and Harvard and introduce an elective system and a rich diversity of modern scientific, social scientific and humanistic course offerings. But this report set Yale back 50 years. Take a look.

REPORTS
ON THE
COURSE OF INSTRUCTION
IN
YALE COLLEGE;
BY A
COMMITTEE OF THE CORPORATION,
AND THE
ACADEMICAL FACULTY.

NEW HAVEN:
PRINTED BY HEZEKIAH HOWE.

1828.

At a Meeting of the President and Fellows of Yale College, Sept. 11th, 1827, the following resolution was passed:

That His Excellency Governor Tomlinson, Rev. President Day, Rev. Dr. Chapin, Hon. Noyes Darling, and Rev. Abel McEwen, be a committee to inquire into the expediency of so altering the regular course of instruction in this college, as to leave out of said course the study of the *dead languages*, substituting other studies therefor; and either requiring a competent knowledge of said languages, as a condition of admittance into the college, or providing instruction in the same, for such as shall choose to study them after admittance; and that the said committee be requested to report at the next annual meeting of this corporation.

This committee, at their first meeting in April, 1828, after taking into consideration the case referred to them, requested the Faculty of the college to express their views on the subject of the resolution.

The expediency of retaining the ancient languages, as an essential part of our course of instruction, is so obviously connected with the object and plan of education in the college, that justice could not be done to the particular subject of inquiry in the resolution, without a brief statement of the nature and arrangement of the various branches of the whole system. The report of the faculty was accordingly made out in *two parts*; one containing a summary view of the plan of education in the college; the other, an inquiry into the expediency of insisting on the study of the ancient languages. {page 4; running head: *Resolution*. }

This report was read to the committee, at their meeting in August. The committee reported their views to the corporation, at their session in September; who voted to accept the report, and ordered it to be printed, together with the papers read before the committee, or such parts of them as the prudential committee and the faculty should judge it expedient to publish. {page 5}

REPORT OF THE FACULTY.

Part I.

Containing a summary view of the plan of education in the college.

The committee of the corporation, to whom was referred the motion, to inquire into the expediency of dispensing with the study of the ancient languages, as a part of the regular course of instruction in this college, having requested the views of the faculty on the subject, we would respectfully submit the following considerations.

We are decidedly of the opinion, that our present plan of education admits of improvement. We are aware that the system is imperfect: and we cherish the hope, that some of its defects may ere long be remedied. We believe that changes may, from time to time be made with advantage, to meet the varying demands of the community, to accommodate the course of instruction to the rapid advance of the country, in population, refinement, and opulence. We have no doubt that important improvements may be suggested, by attentive observation of the literary institutions in Europe; and by the earnest spirit of inquiry which is now so prevalent, on the subject of education.

The guardians of the college appear to have ever acted upon the principle, that it ought not to be stationary, but continually advancing. Some alteration has accordingly been proposed, almost every year, from its first establishment. It is with no small surprise, therefore, we occasionally hear the suggestion, that our system is unalterable; that colleges were originally planned, in the days of monkish ignorance; and that, “by being immovably moored to the same station, they serve only to measure the rapid current of improvement which is passing by them.”

How opposite to all this, is the real state of facts, in this and the other seminaries in the United States. Nothing is more common, than to hear those who revisit the college, after a few years absence, express their surprise at the changes which have been made since they were graduated. Not only the course of studies, and the modes of instruction, have been greatly varied; but whole sciences have, for the first time, {page 6; running head henceforth: *Report on a Course of Liberal Education.*} been introduced; chemistry, mineralogy, geology, political economy, &c. By raising the qualifications for admission, the standard of attainment has been elevated. Alterations so extensive and frequent, satisfactorily prove, that if those who are intrusted with the superintendence of the institution, still firmly adhere to some of its original features, it is from a higher principle, than a blind opposition to salutary reform. Improvements, we trust, will continue to be

made, as rapidly as they can be, without hazarding the loss of what has been already attained.

But perhaps the time has come, when we ought to pause, and inquire, whether it will be sufficient to make *gradual* changes, as heretofore; and whether the whole system is not rather to be broken up, and a better one substituted in its stead. From different quarters, we have heard the suggestion, that our colleges must be *new-modelled*; that they are not adapted to the spirit and wants of the age; that they will soon be deserted, unless they are better accommodated to the business character of the nation. As this point may have an important bearing upon the question immediately before the committee, we would ask their indulgence, while we attempt to explain, at some length, the nature and object of the present plan of education at the college.

We shall in vain attempt to decide on the expediency of retaining our present course of instruction, unless we have a distinct apprehension of the *object* of a collegiate education. A plan of study may well be well adapted to a particular purpose, though it may be very unsuitable for a different one. Universities, colleges, academical, and professional seminaries, ought not to be all constituted upon the same model; but should be so varied as to attain the ends which they have severally in view.

What then is the appropriate object of a college? It is not necessary here to determine what it is which, in every case, entitles an institution to the *name* of a college. But if we have not greatly misapprehended the design of the patrons and guardians of this college, its object is to **lay the foundation** of a **superior education**: and this is to be done, at a period of life when a substitute must be provided for *parental superintendence*. The ground work of a thorough education, must be broad, and deep, and solid. For a partial or superficial education, the support may be of looser materials, and more hastily laid. {page 7}

The two great points to be gained in intellectual culture, are the *discipline* and the *furniture* of the mind; expanding its powers, and storing it with knowledge. The former of these is, perhaps, the more important of the two. A commanding object, therefore, in a collegiate course, should be, to call into daily and vigorous exercise the faculties of the student. Those branches of study should be prescribed, and those modes of instruction adopted, which are best calculated to teach the art of fixing the attention, directing the train of thought, analyzing a subject proposed for investigation; following, with accurate discrimination, the course of argument; balancing nicely the evidence presented to the judgment; awakening, elevating, and controlling the imagination; arranging, with skill, the treasures which memory gathers; rousing and guiding the powers of genius. All this is not to be effected by a light and hasty course of study; by reading a few books, hearing a few lectures, and spending some months at a literary institution. The habits of thinking are to be formed, by long continued and close application. The mines of science must be penetrated far below the surface, before they will disclose their treasures. If a dexterous performance of the manual operations, in many of the mechanical arts, requires an apprenticeship, with diligent attention for years; much more does the training of the powers of the mind demand vigorous, and steady, and systematic effort.

In laying the foundation of a thorough education, it is necessary that *all* the important mental faculties be brought into exercise. It is not sufficient that one or two be cultivated, while others are neglected. A costly edifice ought not to be left to rest upon a single pillar. When certain mental endowments receive a much higher culture than others, there is a distortion in the intellectual character. The mind never attains its full perfection, unless its various powers are so trained as to give them the fair proportions which nature designed. If the student exercises his reasoning powers only, he will be deficient in imagination and taste, in fervid and impressive eloquence. If he confines his attention to demonstrative evidence, he will be unfitted to decide correctly, in cases of probability. If he relies principally on his memory, his powers of invention will be impaired by disuse. In the course of instruction in this college, it has been an object to maintain such a proportion between the different branches of literature and science, as to form in the student a proper {page 8} *balance* of character. From the pure mathematics, he learns the art of demonstrative reasoning. In attending to the physical sciences, he becomes familiar with facts, with the process of induction, and the varieties of probable evidence. In ancient literature, he finds some of the most finished models of taste. By English reading, he learns the powers of the language in which he is to speak and write. By logic and mental philosophy, he is taught the art of thinking; by rhetoric and oratory, the art of speaking. By frequent exercise on written composition, he acquires copiousness and accuracy of expression. By extemporaneous discussion, he becomes prompt, and fluent, and animated. It is a point of high importance, that eloquence and solid learning should go together; that he who has accumulated the richest treasures of thought, should possess the highest powers of oratory. To what purpose has a man become deeply learned, if he has no faculty of communicating his knowledge? And of what use is a display of rhetorical elegance, from one who knows little or nothing which is worth communicating? Est enim scientia comprehendenda rerum plurimarum, sine qua verborum volubilitas inanis atque irridenda est. Cic. {Cicero, *De Oratore*, Book I: "Without knowledge of many *things*, copiousness of *words* is meaningless and even absurd."} Our course, therefore, aims at a union of science with literature; of solid attainment with skill in the art of persuasion.

No one feature in a system of intellectual education, is of greater moment than such an arrangement of duties and motives, as will most effectually throw the student upon the *resources of his own mind*. Without this, the whole apparatus of libraries, and instruments, and specimens, and lectures, and teachers, will be insufficient to secure distinguished excellence. The scholar must form himself, by his own exertions. The advantages furnished by a residence at a college, can do little more than stimulate and aid his personal efforts. The *inventive* powers are especially to be called into vigorous exercise. However abundant may be the acquisitions of the student, if he has no talent at forming new combinations of thought, he will be dull and inefficient. The sublimest efforts of genius consist in the creations of the imagination, the discoveries of the intellect, the conquests by which the dominions of science are extended. But the culture of the inventive faculties is not the *only* object of a liberal education. The most gifted understanding cannot greatly enlarge the amount of science to which the wisdom of ages has contributed. If it were possible for a youth to have his faculties in the highest state of cultivation, without any of {page 9} the knowledge which is derived from others, he

would be but poorly fitted for the business of life. To the discipline of the mind, therefore, is to be added instruction. The analytic method must be combined with the synthetic. Analysis is most efficacious in directing the powers of invention; but is far too slow in its progress to teach, within a moderate space of time, the circle of the sciences.

In our arrangements for the communication of knowledge, as well as in intellectual discipline, such branches are to be taught as will produce a proper symmetry and balance of character. We doubt whether the powers of the mind can be developed, in their fairest proportions, by studying languages alone, or mathematics alone, or natural or political science alone. As the bodily frame is brought to its highest perfection, not by one simple and uniform motion, but by a variety of exercises; so the mental faculties are expanded, and invigorated, and adapted to each other, by familiarity with different departments of science.

A most important feature in the colleges of this country is, that the students are generally of an age which requires, that a substitute be provided for *parental superintendence*. When removed from under the roof of their parents, and exposed to the untried scenes of temptation, it is necessary that some faithful and affectionate guardian take them by the hand, and guide their steps. This consideration determines the *kind* of government which ought to be maintained in our colleges. As it is a substitute for the regulations of a family, it should approach as near to the character of parental control as the circumstances of the case will admit. It should be founded on mutual affection and confidence. It should aim to effect its purpose, principally by kind and persuasive influence; not wholly or chiefly by restraint and terror. Still, punishment may sometimes be necessary. There may be perverse members of a college, as well as of a family. There may be those whom nothing but the arm of law can reach.

The parental character of college government, requires that the students should be so collected together, as to constitute one family; that the intercourse between them and their instructors {*sic* throughout} may be frequent and familiar. This renders it necessary that suitable *buildings* be provided, for the residence of the students:—we speak now of colleges in the country, the members of which are mostly gathered from a distance. In a large city, where the students may reside with {page 10} their parents, public rooms only are needed. This may be the case also, in professional institutions, in which the students are more advanced in age, and, therefore, do not require a minute superintendence on the part of their instructors.

Having now stated what we understand to be the proper *object* of an education at this college, viz. to lay a solid *foundation* in literature and science; we would ask permission to add a few observations on the *means* which are employed to effect this object.

In giving the course of instruction, it is intended that a due proportion be observed between *lectures*, and the exercises which are familiarly termed *recitations*; that is, examinations in a text book. The great advantage of lectures is, that while they call forth the highest efforts of the lecturer, and accelerate his advance to professional eminence; they give that light and spirit to the subject, which awaken the interest and ardor of the

student. They may place before him the principles of science, in the attractive dress of living eloquence. Where instruments are to be explained, experiments performed, or specimens exhibited; they are the appropriate mode of communication. But we are far from believing, that *all* the purposes of instruction can be best answered by lectures alone. They do not always bring upon the student a pressing and definite responsibility. He may repose upon his seat, and yield a passive hearing to the lecturer, without ever calling into exercise the active powers of his own mind. This defect we endeavor to remedy, in part, by frequent examinations on the subjects of the lectures. Still it is important, that the student should have opportunities of retiring by himself, and giving a more commanding direction to his thoughts, than when listening to oral instruction. To secure his steady and earnest efforts, is the great object of the daily examinations or recitations. In these exercises, a text-book is commonly the guide. A particular portion of this is assigned for each meeting. In this way only, can the responsibility be made sufficiently definite. If it be distributed among several books upon the same subject, the diversity of statement in these, will furnish the student with an apology for want of exactness in his answers. Besides, we know of no method which will more effectually bewilder and confound the learner, on his first entrance upon a new science, than to refer him to half a dozen different authors, to be read at the same time. He will be in danger of learning nothing effectually. When he comes to be engaged in the study of his *profession*, he may find his way through the maze, and firmly establish his own opinions, by taking days or weeks for the examination of each separate point. Text-books are, therefore, not as necessary in this advanced stage of education, as in the course at college, where the time allotted to each branch is rarely more than sufficient for the learner to become familiar with its elementary principles. These, with a few exceptions, are not new and controverted points, but such as have been long settled; and they are exhibited to the best advantage, in the consistent and peculiar manner of some eminent writer.

Opportunity is given, however, to our classes, for a full investigation and discussion of particular subjects, in the written and extemporaneous *disputes*, which constitute an important part of our course of exercises. So far as the student has time to extend his inquiries, beyond the limits of his text-book, first faithfully studied, his instructor may aid him greatly, by referring to the various authors who have treated of the more important points in the lessons; and by introducing corrections, illustrations, and comments of his own. In this way, no small portion of our daily exercises become informal and extemporaneous lectures. But the business of explaining and commenting is carried to an extreme, whenever it supersedes the necessity of effort on the part of the learner. If we mistake not, some portion of the popularity of very copious oral instruction is to be set to the account of the student's satisfaction, in escaping from the demand for mental exertion. It is to secure the unceasing and strenuous exercise of the intellectual powers, that the responsibility of the student is made so constant and particular. For this purpose, our semi-annual *examinations* have been established. These, with the examination of the Seniors in July, occupy from twelve to fourteen days in a year. Each class is divided into two portions, which are examined in separate rooms at the same time, seven or eight hours a day. A committee is present on the occasion, consisting of gentlemen of education and distinction from different parts of the state. The degree of correctness with which each student answers the questions put to him in the several branches, is noted on

the spot, and entered in a record, permanently kept by the Faculty. But to the instructors, the daily examinations in the recitation rooms are a more unerring test of scholarship than these public trials. The latter answer the purpose of satisfying the inquiries of strangers.
{page 12}

We deem it to be indispensable to a proper adjustment of our collegiate system, that there should be in it both Professors and Tutors. There is wanted, on the one hand, the experience of those who have been long resident at the institution, and on the other, the fresh and minute information of those who, having more recently mingled with the students, have a distinct recollection of their peculiar feelings, prejudices, and habits of thinking. At the head of each great division of science, it is necessary that there should be a Professor, to superintend the department, to arrange the plan of instruction, to regulate the mode of conducting it, and to teach the more important and difficult parts of the subject. But students in a college, who have just entered on the first elements of science, are not principally occupied with the more abstruse and disputable points. Their attention ought not to be solely or mainly directed to the latest discoveries. They have first to learn the principles which have been in a course of investigation, through the successive ages; and have now become simplified and settled. Before arriving at regions hitherto unexplored, they must pass over the intervening cultivated ground. The Professor at the head of a department may, therefore, be greatly aided, in some parts of the course of instruction, by those who are not as deeply versed as himself in all the intricacies of the science. Indeed we doubt, whether elementary principles are always taught to the best advantage, by those whose researches have carried them so far beyond these simpler truths, that they come back to them with reluctance and distaste. Would Sir Isaac Newton have excelled all others of his day, in teaching the common rules of arithmetic? Young men have often the most ardor, in communicating familiar principles, and in removing those lighter difficulties of the pupil, which, not long since, were found lying across their own path.

In the internal police of the institution, as the students are gathered into one family, it is deemed an essential provision, that some of the officers should constitute a portion of this family; being always present with them, not only at their meals, and during the business of the day; but in the hours allotted to rest. The arrangement is such, that in our college buildings, there is no room occupied by students, which is not near to the chamber of one of the officers.

But the feature in our system which renders a considerable number of tutors indispensable, is the subdivision of our {page 13} classes, and the assignment of each portion to the particular charge of one man. Each of the three junior classes is formed into two or three divisions; and each division is committed to the superintendance of a tutor. Although he is not confined to the instruction of his own division; but makes such exchanges with the other tutors as will give to each the opportunity of teaching his favorite branch; yet by meeting them in the recitation rooms two or three times every day, and by minutely inspecting their conduct on other occasions, he renders a service to the police of the institution, which could be secured in no other way. It is intended that the government should be, as much as possible, of a parental character; a government of mild

and grateful influence. But the basis of this must be mutual attachment; such as can spring only from daily and peculiar intimacy. If the same teacher instructs eight or ten different divisions, in rapid succession, it will be difficult for him to feel, that he stands in a very near relation to them all. If the same student attends on a dozen different instructors, in rotation, he may respect them all; but can hardly be expected to view them with any particular affection.

The tutor of a division has an opportunity, which is enjoyed by no other officer in the college, of becoming intimately acquainted with the characters of his pupils. It is highly important that this knowledge should be at the command of the Faculty. By distributing our family among different individuals, minute information is acquired, which may be communicated to the Board, whenever it is called for. Upon this plan also, the *responsibility* of the several instructors is rendered far more definite, than when it rests upon the whole collectively. Each Professor is accountable for the judicious arrangement of his own department; and for the success with which it is conducted, so far as this depends on his personal efforts and talents. Each tutor is responsible, to a certain extent, for the progress and correct deportment of his division. But responsibility is little felt, when held as common stock among numbers, without a distinct appropriation to individuals. By a due proportion of professors and tutors, we may unite the advantages of experience, with ardor and activity; of profound investigation, with minute attention to elementary principles; of personal attachment and individual responsibility, with such an adjustment of the different parts of the system, as will give unity and symmetry to the whole. {page 14}

The collegiate course of study, of which we have now given a summary view, we hope may be carefully distinguished from several *other* objects and plans, with which it has been too often confounded. It is far from embracing *every thing* which the student will ever have occasion to learn. The object is not to *finish* his education; but to lay the foundation, and to advance as far in rearing the superstructure, as the short period of his residence here will admit. If he acquires here a thorough knowledge of the principles of science, he may then, in a great measure, educate himself. He has, at least, been taught *how* to learn. With the aid of books, and means of observation, he may be constantly advancing in knowledge. Wherever he goes, into whatever company he falls, he has those general views, on every topic of interest, which will enable him to understand, to digest, and to form a correct opinion, on the statements and discussions which he hears. There are many things important to be known, which are not taught in colleges, because they may be learned any where. The knowledge, though indispensable, comes to us as freely, in the way of our business, as our necessary supplies of light, and air, and water.

The course of instruction which is given to the undergraduates in the college, is not designed to include *professional* studies. Our object is not to teach that which is peculiar to any one of the professions; but to lay the foundation which is common to them all. There are separate schools for medicine, law, and theology, connected with the college, as well as in various parts of the country; which are open for the reception of all who are prepared to enter upon the appropriate studies of their several professions. With these, the academical course is not intended to interfere.

But why, it may be asked, should a student waste his time upon studies which have no immediate connection with his future profession? Will chemistry enable him to plead at the bar, or conic sections qualify him for preaching, or astronomy aid him in the practice of physic? Why should not his attention be confined to the subject which is to occupy the labors of his life? In answer to this, it may be observed, that there is no science which does not contribute its aid to professional skill. "Every thing throws light upon every thing." The great object of a collegiate education, preparatory to the study of a profession, is to give that expansion and balance of the mental powers, those liberal and comprehensive views, and those fine proportions of character, which are not to be found in him whose ideas are always confined to one particular channel. When a man has entered upon the practice of his profession, the energies of his mind must be given, principally, to its appropriate duties. But if his thoughts never range on other subjects, if he never looks abroad on the ample domains of literature and science, there will be a narrowness in his habits of thinking, a peculiarity of character, which will be sure to mark him as a man of limited views and attainments. Should he be distinguished in his profession, his ignorance on other subjects, and the defects of his education, will be the more exposed to public observation. On the other hand, he who is not only eminent in professional life, but has also a mind richly stored with general knowledge, has an elevation and dignity of character, which gives him a commanding influence in society, and a widely extended sphere of usefulness. His situation enables him to diffuse the light of science among all classes of the community. Is a man to have no other object, than to obtain a *living* by professional pursuits? Has he not duties to perform to his family, to his fellow citizens, to his country; duties which require various and extensive intellectual furniture?

Professional studies are designedly excluded from the course of instruction at college, to leave room for those literary and scientific acquisitions which, if not commenced there, will, in most cases, never be made. They will not grow up spontaneously, amid the bustle of business. We are not here speaking of those giant minds which, by their native energy, break through the obstructions of a defective education, and cut their own path to distinction. These are honorable exceptions to the general law; not examples for common imitation. Franklins and Marshalls are not found in sufficient numbers to fill a college. And even Franklin would not have been what he was, if there had been no colleges in the country. When an elevated standard of education is maintained, by the higher literary institutions, men of superior powers, who have not had access to these, are stimulated to aim at a similar elevation, by their own efforts, and by aid of the light which is thus shining around them.

As our course of instruction is not intended to complete an education, in theological, medical, or legal science; neither does it include all the minute details of *mercantile*, *mechanical*, or *agricultural* concerns. These can never be effectually learned except in the very circumstances in which they are to be practiced. The young merchant must be trained in the counting room, the mechanic, in the workshop, the farmer, in the field. But we have, on our premises, no experimental farm or retail shop; no cotton or iron manufactory; no hatter's, or silver-smith's, or coach-maker's establishment. For what purpose, then, it will be asked, are young men who are destined to these

occupations, ever sent to a college? They should not be sent, as we think, with an expectation of *finishing* their education at the college; but with a view of laying a thorough foundation in the principles of science, preparatory to the study of the practical arts. As every thing cannot be learned in four years, either theory or practice must be, in a measure at least, postponed to a future opportunity. But if the scientific theory of the arts is *ever* to be acquired, it is unquestionably first in order of time. The corner stone must be laid, before the superstructure is erected. If suitable arrangements were made, the details of mercantile, mechanical, and agricultural education, might be taught at the college, to *resident graduates*. Practical skill would then be grounded upon scientific information.

The question may be asked, What is a young man fitted for, when he takes his degree? Does he come forth from the college qualified for business? We answer, no,—if he stops here. His education is begun, but not completed. Is the college to be reproached for not accomplishing that which it has never undertaken to perform? Do we complain of the mason, who has laid the foundation of a house, that he has done nothing to purpose; that he has not finished the building; that the product of his labor is not habitable; and that, therefore, there is nothing practical in what he has done? Do we say of the planter, who has raised a crop of cotton, that he has done nothing practical, because he has not given to his product the form of wearing apparel?

In education, as well as in morals, we often hear the suggestion, that principles are of no consequence, provided the practice is right. Why waste on theories, the time which is wanted for acquiring practical arts? We are aware, that some operations may be performed, by those who have little or no knowledge of the principles on which they depend. The mariner may set his sails to the wind, without understanding the laws of the decomposition of forces; the carpenter may square his frame-work, without a knowledge of Euclid's Elements; the dyer may set his colors, without being indoctrinated in the principles of chemistry. But the labors of such an one, are confined to the narrow path marked out to him by others. He needs the constant superintendence of men of more enlarged and scientific information. If he ventures beyond his prescribed rule, he works at random, with no established principles to guide him. By long continued practice, he may have attained a good degree of manual dexterity. But the arranging of plans of business, the new combinations of mechanical processes, the discoveries and improvements in the arts, must generally come from minds more highly and systematically cultivated. There is a fertility in scientific principles, of which the mere artist has no apprehension. A single general law may include a thousand or ten thousand particular cases; each one of which is as difficult to be learned or remembered, as the law which explains them all. Men of mere practical detail are wanted, in considerable numbers, to fill the subordinate places in mechanical establishments; but the higher stations require enlightened and comprehensive views.

We are far from believing that theory *alone*, should be taught in a college. It cannot be effectually taught, except in connection with practical illustrations. These are necessary in exciting an interest in theoretical instructions; and especially important in showing the application of principles. It is our aim therefore, while engaged in scientific investigations, to blend with them, as far as possible, practical illustrations and

experiments. Of what use are all the sublime discoveries which have immortalized the names of Newton, Archimedes, and others; if the principles which they have unfolded, are never to be taught to those who can reduce them to practice? Why do we bestow such exalted encomiums on inventive genius, if the results of original investigations, are to be confined to a few scientific men, and not diffused among those who are engaged in the active duties of life? To bring down the principles of science to their practical application by the laboring classes, is the office of men of superior education. It is the separation of theory and practice, which has brought reproach upon both. Their union alone can elevate them to their true dignity and value. The man of science is often disposed to assume an air of {page 18} superiority, when he looks upon the narrow and partial views of the mere artisan. The latter in return laughs at the practical blunders of the former. The defects in the education of both classes would be remedied, by giving them a knowledge of scientific principles, preparatory to practice.

We are aware that a thorough education is not within the reach of all. Many, for want of time and pecuniary resources, must be content with a partial course. A defective education is better than none. If a youth can afford to devote only two or three years, to a scientific and professional education, it will be proper for him to make a selection of a few of the most important branches, and give his attention exclusively to these. But this is an imperfection, arising from the necessity of the case. A partial course of study, must inevitably give a partial education.

This, we are well convinced, is far preferable to a *superficial* education. Of all the plans of instruction which have been offered to the public, that is the most preposterous, which proposes to teach almost every thing in a short time. In this way, nothing is effectually taught. The pupil is hurried over the surface so rapidly, that scarce a trace of his steps remains, when he has finished his course. What he has learned, or thinks he has learned, is just sufficient to inflate his vanity, to expose him to public observation, and to draw on him the ridicule of men of sound judgement and science. A partial education is often expedient; a superficial one, never. Whatever a young man undertakes to learn, however little it may be, he ought to learn it so effectually, that it may be of some practical use to him. If there is any way in which every thing worth knowing may be taught in four years, we are free to acknowledge, that we are not in possession of the secret.

But why, it is asked, should *all* the students in a college be required to tread in the *same steps*? Why should not each one be allowed to select those branches of study which are most to his taste, which are best adapted to his peculiar talents, and which are most nearly connected with his intended profession? To this we answer, that our prescribed course contains those subjects only which ought to be understood, as we think, by every one who aims at a thorough education. They are not the peculiarities of any profession or art. These are to be learned in the professional and practical schools. But the principles of science, are the common {page 19} foundation of all high intellectual attainments. As in our primary schools, reading, writing, and arithmetic are taught to all, however different their prospects; so in a college, all should be instructed in those branches of knowledge, of which no one destined to the higher walks of life ought to be ignorant. What subject which is now studied here, could be set aside, without evidently marring the system? Not

to speak particularly, in this place, of the ancient languages; who that aims at a well proportioned and superior education will remain ignorant of the elements of the various branches of the mathematics, or of history and antiquities, or of rhetoric and oratory, or natural philosophy, or astronomy, or chemistry, or mineralogy, or geology, or political economy, or mental and moral philosophy?

It is sometimes thought that a student ought not to be urged to the study of that for which he has *no taste or capacity*. But how is he to know, whether he has a taste or capacity for a science, before he has even entered upon its elementary truths? If he is really destitute of talent sufficient for these common departments of education, he is destined for some narrow sphere of action. But we are well persuaded, that our students are not so deficient in intellectual powers, as they sometimes profess to be; though they are easily made to believe, that they have no capacity for the study of that which they are told is almost wholly useless.

When a class have become familiar with the common elements of the several sciences, then is the proper time for them to *divide off* to their favorite studies. They can then make their choice from actual trial. This is now done here, to some extent, in our Junior year. The division might be commenced at an earlier period, and extended farther, provided the qualifications for admission into the college, were brought to a higher standard.

If the view which we have thus far taken of the subject is correct, it will be seen, that the object of the system of instruction at this college, is not to give a *partial* education, consisting of a few branches only; nor, on the other hand, to give a *superficial* education, containing a smattering of almost every thing; nor to *finish* the details of either a professional or practical education; but to *commence a thorough* course, and to carry it as far as the time of residence here will allow. It is intended to occupy, to the best advantage, the four years immediately preceding the study of a profes-^{page 20}sion, or of the operations which are peculiar to the higher mercantile, manufacturing, or agricultural establishments.

As the instruction is only preparatory to a profession, the plan upon which it is conducted, is not copied from professional schools. There are important differences, arising from the different character of the two courses, and the different age at which the student enters upon them. In the professional institution, it is proper that *subjects* should be studied, rather than *text-books*. At this period, the student is engaged, not in learning the mere elements of the various sciences; but in becoming thoroughly acquainted with one great department of knowledge, to the study of which, several years are to be devoted. He ought to be allowed time to settle his own opinion on every important point, by the slow process of comparing and balancing the various and conflicting opinions of others. A much greater proportion of *lectures* is admissible, in this stage of education. The deep interest excited, by a long continued pursuit in the same field of inquiry, supersedes the necessity of the minute responsibility which is required in elementary studies. The age of the student, and the prospect of soon entering on professional practice, will commonly be sufficient to secure his assiduous application, without coercive influence of laws and penalties.

Although the restraints in a college, are greater than in professional institutions; yet they are less than in common academies. In the latter, the student prosecutes his studies in the presence of his instructor. At the early age of ten or twelve, he needs more frequent assistance and encouragement, in the way of colloquial intercourse, than the members of a college, who, though they are young, are not children.

Our institution is not modelled exactly after the pattern of *European* universities. Difference of circumstances has rendered a different arrangement expedient. It has been the policy of most monarchical governments, to concentrate the advantages of a superior education in a few privileged places. In England, for instance, each of the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge, is not so much a single institution, as a large number of distinct, though contiguous colleges. But in this country, our republican habits and feelings will never allow a monopoly of literature in any one place. There must be, in the union, as many colleges, at least, as states. Nor would we complain of this arrangement as in-[page 21](#) }expedient, provided that starvation is not the consequence of a patronage so minutely divided. We anticipate no disastrous results from the multiplication of colleges, if they can only be adequately endowed. We are not without apprehensions, however, that a feeble and stunted growth of our national literature, will be the consequence of the very scanty supply of means to most of our public seminaries.

The Universities on the continent of Europe, especially in Germany, have of late gained the notice and respect of men of information in this country. They are upon a broad and liberal scale, affording very great facilities for a finished education. But we doubt whether they are models to be copied in every feature, by our American colleges. We hope at least, that this college may be spared the mortification of a ludicrous attempt to imitate them, while it is unprovided with the resources necessary to execute the purpose. The only institution in this country, which, so far as we know, has started upon the plan of the European universities, required an expenditure, before commencing operations, of more than three hundred thousand dollars; a sum far greater than Yale College has received in a century and a quarter, from the bounty of individuals and the state together. The students come to the universities in Germany at a more advanced age, and with much higher preparatory attainments, than to the colleges in this country. The period of education which is there divided into *two* portions only, one of which is spent at the gymnasium and the other at the university, is here divided into *three*, that of the grammar school, the college, and the professional school. The pupils, when they enter the university, are advanced nearly or quite as far, in literature if not in science, as our students are when graduated. The institution in Germany which corresponds most nearly to our colleges, in point of attainments, and the age of the students, is the gymnasium. The universities are mostly occupied with *professional* studies. In Halle, for example, of eleven hundred students, all except sixty are engaged in the study of Theology, Law, and Medicine. But in the United States, the professional schools are scattered over the country, and many of them are at a distance from the colleges. The different denominations of christians have their separate Theological Seminaries. Students at law are distributed in the several states, to accommodate their education to the peculiarities in the legal practice of each. If to the The-[page 22](#) }ological, Medical, and Law Institutions attached to Yale College, there were added what is called in Germany a *School of*

Philosophy for the higher researches of literature and science, the four departments together would constitute a university in the European sense of the term. The proper collegiate department would still have its distinct and appropriate object, that of teaching the branches preparatory to all the others. It would, in our opinion, be idle to think of adopting in the college, the regulations and plan of instruction in a university; unless the students of the former were advanced three or four years farther than at present, both in age and acquirements. Would parents in this country consent to send their sons, at the age of sixteen, to an institution in which there should not be even an attempt at discipline, farther than to preserve order in the lecture room? When the student has passed beyond the rugged and cheerless region of elementary learning, into the open and enchanting field where the great masters of science are moving onward with enthusiastic emulation; then, instead of plodding over a page of Latin or Greek, with his grammars, and dictionaries, and commentaries, he reads those languages with facility and delight; when, after taking a general survey of the extensive and diversified territories of literature, he has selected those spots for cultivation which are best adapted to his talents and taste; he may then be safely left to pursue his course, without the impulse of authoritative injunctions, or the regulation of statutes and penalties. But we question whether a college of undergraduates, unprovided with any substitute for parental control, would long be patronised in this country.

Although we do not consider the literary institutions of Europe as faultless models, to be exactly copied by our American colleges; yet we would be far from condemning every feature, in systems of instruction which have had an origin more ancient than our republican seminaries. We do not suppose that the world has learned absolutely nothing, by the experience of ages; that a branch of science, or a mode of teaching, is to be abandoned, precisely because it has stood its ground, after a trial by various nations, and through successive centuries. We believe that our colleges may derive important improvements from the universities and schools in Europe; not by blindly adopting all their measures without discrimination; but by cautiously introducing, with proper modifications, such parts of their plans as are suited to our peculiar situation and character. The first and great improvement which we wish to see made, is an elevation in the standard of attainment for admission. Until this is effected, we shall only expose ourselves to inevitable failure and ridicule, by attempting a general imitation of foreign universities.

One of the pleas frequently urged in favor of a partial education, is the alleged *want of time* for a more enlarged course. We are well aware, as we have already observed, that a thorough education cannot be begun and finished in four years. But if three years immediately preceding the age of twenty-one be allowed for the study of a profession, there is abundant time previous to this for the attainment of all which is now required for admission into the college, in addition to the course prescribed for the undergraduates. Though the limit of age for admission is fixed by our laws at fourteen, yet how often have we been pressed to dispense with the rule, in behalf of some youth who has completed his preparation at an earlier period; and who, if compelled to wait till he has attained the requisite age, “is in danger of being ruined for want of employment?” May we not expect, that this plea will be urged with still greater earnestness, when the present

improved methods of instruction in the elementary and preparatory schools, are more and more accelerating the early progress of the pupil?

But suppose it should happen that the student, in consequence of commencing his studies at a later period, should be delayed a little longer, before entering upon the duties of his profession; is this a sacrifice worthy to be compared with the immense difference between the value of a limited and a thorough education? Is a young man's pushing forward into business, so indispensable to his future welfare, that rather than suspend it for a single year, he must forego all the advantage of superior intellectual discipline and attainments?

We well know that the whole population of the country can never enjoy the benefit of a thorough course of education. A large portion must be content with the very limited instruction in our primary schools. Others may be able to add to this the privilege of a few months at an academy. Others still, with higher aims and more ample means, may afford to spend two or three years, in attending upon a partial course of study, in some institution which furnishes in-{page 24}struction in any branch or branches selected by the pupil or his parents.

The question is then presented, whether the college shall have all the variety of classes and departments which are found in academies; or whether it shall confine itself to the single object of a well proportioned and thorough course of study. It is said that the public now demand, that the doors should be thrown open to all; that education ought to be so modified, and varied, as to adapt it to the exigencies of the country, and the prospects of different individuals; that the instruction given to those who are destined to be merchants, or manufacturers, or agriculturalists, should have a special reference to their respective professional pursuits.

The public are undoubtedly right, in demanding that there should be appropriate courses of education, accessible to all classes of youth. And we rejoice at the prospect of ample provision for this purpose, in the improvement of our academies, and the establishment of commercial high-schools, gymnasia, lycea, agricultural seminaries, &c. But do the public insist, that every college shall become a high-school, gymnasium, lyceum, and academy? Why should we interfere with these valuable institutions? Why wish to take their business out of their hands? The college has its appropriate object, and they have theirs. What advantage would be gained by attempting to blend them all in one? When in almost all our schools, and academies, and professional seminaries, the standard of education has been enlarged and elevated, is this a time for the college to *lower* its standard? Shall we fall back, and abandon the ground which, for thirty years past, we have been striving so hard to gain? Are those who are seeking only a partial education to be admitted into the college, merely for the purpose of associating its *name* with theirs? of carrying away with them a collegiate *diploma*, without incurring the fearful hazard of being over-educated? Why is a degree from a college more highly prized, than a certificate from an academy, if the former is not a voucher of a superior education? When the course of instruction in the one, is reduced to the level of that in the other; to be graduated at either, will be equally honorable. What is the characteristic difference between a college and an academy? Not

that the former teaches more branches than the latter. There are many academies in the country, whose scheme of studies, at least upon paper, {page 25} is more various than that of the colleges. But while an academy teaches a little of every thing, the college, by directing its efforts to one uniform course, aims at doing its work with greater precision, and economy of time; just as the merchant who deals in a single class of commodities, or a manufacturer who produces but one kind of fabrics, executes his business more perfectly, than he whose attention and skill are divided among a multitude of objects.

If our treasury were overflowing, if we had a *surplus fund*, requiring us to look out for some new object on which to expend it, there might perhaps be no harm in establishing a department for a brief and rapid course of study, so far connected with the college, as to be under the superintendance of the same board of trust. But it ought to be as distinct from the four classes of undergraduates, as is the medical or law school. All the means which are now applied to the proper collegiate department, are barely sufficient, or rather are insufficient, for the object in view. No portion of our resources, or strength, or labor, can be diverted to other purposes, without impairing the education which we are attempting to give. A London university, commencing with a capital of several hundred thousand dollars, and aiming to provide a system of instruction for the youth in a city whose population is more than a million, may well establish its higher and inferior courses, its scientific and practical departments, its professional, mercantile, and mechanical institutions. But shall a college, with an income of two or three thousand a year from funds, affect to be at once a London university? Should we *ever* become such an institution, our present undergraduate course, ought still to constitute one distinct branch of the complicated system of arrangements.

But might we not, by making the college more accessible to different descriptions of persons, enlarge our *numbers*, and in that way, increase our income? This might be the operation of the measure, for a very short time, while a degree from the college should retain its present value in public estimation; a value depending entirely upon the character of the education which we give. But the moment it is understood that the institution has descended to an inferior standard of attainment, its reputation will sink to a corresponding level. After we shall have become a college in *name only*, and in reality nothing more than an academy; or half col- {page 26} lege, and half academy; what will induce parents in various and distant parts of the country, to send us their sons, when they have academies enough in their own neighborhood? There is no magical influence in an act of incorporation, to give celebrity to a literary institution, which does not command respect for itself, by the elevated rank of its education. When the college has lost its hold on the public confidence, by depressing its standard of merit, by substituting a partial, for a thorough education, we may expect that it will be deserted by that class of persons who have hitherto been drawn here by high expectations and purposes. Even if we should *not* immediately suffer in point of *numbers*, yet we shall exchange the best portion of our students, for others of inferior aims and attainments.

As long as we can maintain an elevated character, we need be under no apprehension with respect to numbers. Without character, it will be in vain to think of retaining them. It

is a hazardous experiment, to act upon the plan of gaining numbers first, and character afterwards.

We are sensible there is great imperfection in the *execution* of the purpose to give a thorough course of instruction. The observations which we have made on this subject, relate rather to what we would *wish* to see effected, than to what we profess to have actually accomplished. Numerous and formidable difficulties are to be perpetually encountered. One of the principal of these, is the call which is so frequently made upon us, to admit students into the college with *defective* preparation. Parents are little aware to what embarrassments and injury they are subjecting their sons, by urging them forward to a situation for which they are not properly qualified. Of those who are barely admitted, one and another is, from time to time, dropped off from the class. Here and there one, after making his way, with much perplexity and mortification, through the four years, just obtains a degree at last; which is nearly all the benefit that he derives from his residence here. Whereas, if he had come to us well prepared, he might have held a respectable rank in his class, and acquired a substantial education.

Another serious difficulty with which we have to contend, is the impression made on the minds of a portion of our students, from one quarter and another, that the study of any thing for which they have not an instinctive relish, or which requires vigorous and continued effort, or which is not imme-^{page 27}diately connected with their intended professional pursuits, is of no practical utility. They of course remain ignorant of that which they think not worth the learning. We are concerned to find, that not only students, but their parents also, seem frequently more solicitous for the *name* of an education, than the substance.

The difficulties with which we are now struggling, we fear would be increased, rather than diminished, by attempting to unite different plans of education. It is far from being our intention to dictate to *other* colleges a system to be adopted by them. There may be good and sufficient reasons why some of them should introduce a partial course of instruction. We are not sure, that the demand for thorough education is, at present, sufficient to fill all the colleges in the United States, with students who will be satisfied with nothing short of high and solid attainments. But it is to be hoped that, at no very distant period, they will be able to come up to this elevated ground, and leave the business of second-rate education to the inferior seminaries.

The competition of colleges may advance the interests of literature: if it is a competition for *excellence*, rather than for numbers; if each aims to surpass the others, not in an imposing display, but in the substantial value of its education. When the rivalry becomes a mere scramble for numbers, a dexterous arrangement of measures in beating up for recruits, the standard of attainment will sink lower and lower, till the colleges are brought to a level with common academies. Does it become the patrons and guardians of sound learning, to yield to this depressing and deteriorating influence? Our country has ample resources for furnishing to great numbers the means of a thorough education. At the same time, peculiar temptations are here presented to our youth, to induce them to rest satisfied with a partial and superficial course of study. In Europe, the competition among literary

men is so pressing, that those of moderate attainments can have little hope of success. But in this country, the field of enterprise is so wide, the demand for even ordinary learning is so urgent, and the occupations which yield a competent living are so numerous and accessible; that a young man of a very limited stock of knowledge, if he have a good share of self-confidence, and a driving, bustling spirit, can push himself forward into notice and employment. He may even mount the steps which lead to office and popular {page 28} applause. If he fail to enlighten his countrymen by his intellectual superiority, he may at least attract their gaze by the tinsel of his literary ornaments. This is the allurements to a hurried and superficial education. We have abundant supplies of this Lombardy-poplar growth, slender, frail, and blighted. We should like to see more of the stately elm, striking deep its roots, lifting its head slowly to the skies, spreading wide its grateful shade, and growing more and more venerable with years. There are few instances of a more improvident expenditure of time and money, than that which is wasted upon a superficial education. The parent often labors hard to furnish his son with the means of acquiring that which is of no substantial value, when with a little more time, and a small additional expense, a foundation might have been effectually laid, for high literary excellence, and professional distinction.

Our duty to our country demands of us an effort to provide the means of a thorough education. There is perhaps no nation whose interests would be more deeply affected, by a substitution of superficial for solid learning. The universal diffusion of the common branches of knowledge, renders it necessary that those who aspire to literary eminence would ascend to very elevated ground. They must take their position on a summit which towers above the height of surrounding ranges of hills. In the midst of so enlightened a population, can he be distinguished, whose education has scarcely given him more enlarged views, than he might acquire, by conversation in stages and steam boats, or the reading of newspapers, and a volume or two of elegant extracts?

The unexampled multiplication of schools and academies in this country, requires that colleges should aim at a high standard of literary excellence. The conviction is almost universal, that the former, as well as the latter, admit of great improvements. But who are to make these improvements, and give character and tone to our systems of instruction, if there are few men of thorough education in the country? He who is to arrange an extensive scheme of measures, ought himself to stand on an eminence, from which he can command a view of the whole field of operation. Superficial learning in our higher seminaries, will inevitably extend its influence to the inferior schools. If the fountains are shallow and turbid, the streams cannot be abundant and {page 29} pure. Schools and colleges are not *rival* institutions. The success of each is essential to the prosperity of the other.

Our republican form of government renders it highly important, that great numbers should enjoy the advantage of a thorough education. On the Eastern continent, the *few* who are destined to particular departments in political life, may be educated for the purpose, while the mass of the people are left in comparative ignorance. But in this country, where offices are accessible to all who are qualified for them, superior intellectual attainments ought not to be confined to any description of persons.

Merchants, manufacturers, and farmers, as well as professional gentlemen, take their places in our public councils. A thorough education ought therefore to be extended to all these classes. It is not sufficient that they be men of sound judgment, who can decide correctly, and give a silent vote, on great national questions. Their influence upon the minds of others is needed; an influence to be produced by extent of knowledge, and the force of eloquence. Ought the speaking in our deliberative assemblies to be confined to a single profession? If it is knowledge, which gives us the command of physical agents and instruments, much more is it that which enables us to control the combinations of moral and political machinery.

Young men intended for active employments ought not to be excluded from the colleges, merely on the ground that the course of study is not specially adapted to their pursuits. This principle would exclude those also who are intended for the professions. In either case, the object of the undergraduate course, is not to finish a preparation for business, but to impart that various and general knowledge, which will improve, and elevate, and adorn any occupation. Can merchants, manufacturers, and agriculturists, derive no benefit from high intellectual culture? They are the very classes which, from their situation and business, have the best opportunities for reducing the principles of science to their practical applications. The large estates which the tide of prosperity in our country is so rapidly accumulating, will fall mostly into their hands. Is it not desirable that they should be men of superior education, of large and liberal views, of those solid and elegant attainments, which will raise them to a higher distinction, than the mere possession of property; which will not allow them to hoard their treasures, or waste them in senseless extravagance; which will enable them to {page 28} adorn society by their learning, to move in the more intelligent circles with dignity, and to make such an application of their wealth, as will be most honorable to themselves, and most beneficial to their country?

The active, enterprising character of our population, renders it highly important, that this bustle and energy should be directed by sound intelligence, the result of deep thought and early discipline. The greater the impulse to action, the greater is the need of wise and skilful guidance. When nearly all the ship's crew are aloft, setting the topsails, and catching the breezes, it is necessary there should be a steady hand at helm. Light and moderate learning is but poorly fitted to direct the energies of a nation, so widely extended, so intelligent, so powerful in resources, so rapidly advancing in population, strength, and opulence. Where a free government gives full liberty to the human intellect to expand and operate, education should be proportionately liberal and ample. When even our mountains, and rivers, and lakes, are upon a scale which seems to denote, that we are destined to be a great and mighty nation, shall our literature be feeble, and scanty, and superficial?

REPORTS
ON THE
COURSE OF INSTRUCTION
IN
YALE COLLEGE;
BY A
COMMITTEE OF THE CORPORATION,
AND THE
ACADEMICAL FACULTY.

NEW HAVEN:
PRINTED BY HEZEKIAH HOWE.

1828.

Part II.

Containing extracts from that part of the report of the faculty in which the resolution of the corporation is more particularly considered.

* * * * *

By a liberal education, it is believed, has been generally understood, such a course of discipline in the arts and sciences, as is best calculated, at the same time, both to strengthen and enlarge the faculties of the mind, and to familiarize it with the leading principles of the great objects of human investigation and knowledge. A liberal, is obviously distinct from a professional, education. The former is conversant with those topics, an acquaintance with which is necessary or convenient, in any situation of life, the latter, with those which qualify the individual for a particular station, business or employment. The former is antecedent in time, the latter rests upon the former as its most appropriate foundation. A liberal education is fitted to occupy the mind, while its powers are opening and enlarging; a professional education requires an understanding already cultivated by study, and prepared by exercise for methodical and persevering efforts.

{ page 31 }

Such seem to be the views, on which the system of collegiate education is founded. It has been believed, that there are certain common subjects of knowledge, about which all men ought to be informed, who are best educated, who are prepared to mingle to the best advantage with persons of different tastes, ages and pursuits, and to enter with the best prospects of success, on the details of professional study and practice. As this education, which is called liberal, was originally founded on existing objects of literary interest and pursuit, it has always had reference to such objects, and has varied with the varying state

of knowledge. What, therefore, at one time, has been held in little estimation, and has hardly found a place in a course of liberal instruction, has, under other circumstances, risen into repute, and received a proportional share of attention. It is not now the inquiry, whether the changes in the collegiate course have been sufficiently great and frequent;—it is enough for the present purpose, to state the fact of such changes, and to admit their propriety.

An education, then, to be liberal, should have reference to the principal branches of knowledge, and as knowledge varies, education should vary with it.

The subject of inquiry now presented, is, whether the plan of instruction pursued in Yale College, is sufficiently accommodated to the present state of literature and science; and, especially, whether such a change is demanded as would leave out of this plan the study of the Greek and Roman classics, and make an acquaintance with ancient literature no longer necessary for a degree in the liberal arts. Before considering this topic directly, it may be useful to premise a few remarks on another branch of liberal education, in order more clearly to exhibit the kind of objections which are often thrown out, some against one part, and some against another, of the whole course of collegiate study;—and to make more apparent the limited and inadequate views of those who urge them.

The usefulness of mathematical learning is generally admitted, and few persons, perhaps none, would consider that course of education liberal, from which the mathematics are wholly excluded. At least, the study of the mathematics is allowed a prominent place in those institutions in which, what is called a practical education is the professed object aimed at, and from which the ancient languages, on the {page 32} ground of their being of little or no practical utility, are in part or wholly excluded. If it is asked, on what grounds the pretensions of mathematical learning rest? the reply is at hand. The study of the mathematics, by the consent of the ablest men who have been conversant with the business of instruction, is especially adapted to sharpen the intellect, to strengthen the faculty of reason, and to induce a general habit of mind favorable to the discovery of truth and the detection of error. Mathematical science, furthermore, lies at the foundation of most of the practical sciences, or affords valuable aid in illustrating their principles, and in applying them to the purposes of life. It forms the best preparation for pursuing the study of physics in all its branches, and is not without its use, at least in its indirect influence, in most of our reasoning on other subjects.

But here it is sometimes objected, that though much of this may be true, still mathematical knowledge, to most students is of little practical use. The plain rules of arithmetic, it is said, are all which most men ever find occasion to apply, and if to these rules is added a knowledge of bookkeeping, few, indeed, feel the want of more extensive information in this department of knowledge. Why, it is asked, should a student be compelled to devote years to the acquisition of a species of knowledge, which is useful only, as it enables him to advance the study of navigation, surveying, astronomy, and other sciences, into which mathematical principles largely enter, when he has no wish or expectation to engage practically in either of these sciences,—and will probably from his distaste for the whole subject, forget in a few years, what he has learned with so great

labor? If a man occupied in divinity, law or physic, wishes to know any principle in navigation, let him inquire, says the objector, of some one whose business it is to understand this science. If he wishes a substance analyzed, let him apply to the professional chemist, if he wishes to know the name of some mineral, its properties, or its use, let him ask the mineralogist, who from his love of this science, has made himself familiar with the numerous facts and details which it embraces, and who, by his far superior knowledge in his profession, finds actual employment within its precincts. If it is important, that he should know the times of the rising and setting of the sun and moon, the time, quantity, or duration of an eclipse, let him purchase an almanac, which is a much shorter way to {page 33} the whole of this knowledge, than to determine even one of these particulars by his own calculation. Let those study the sciences, and those only, who have a taste for them, and who expect to pursue at least some one science for a livelihood. If the knowledge of any science is of use, the demand for this knowledge will insure not only its existence, but its prevalence to the exact extent needed; and every thing beyond this is not only superfluous but injurious. Those act in opposition to the plainest principles of political economy, who manufacture for the market an unsaleable article. If wares are not wanted, who does not see, that there will be a glut? and the manufacturer, who shall persist in furnishing them, will work his own ruin{;} that is, institutions, in which mathematics are taught beyond their actual application to use, will of necessity be deserted by the public.

But notwithstanding all these difficulties and objections, the knowledge in question is still practical, not in the narrow view of it which the objector takes, but in a sense higher and wider, and which it may be useful briefly to explain. The student, who has laid up a fund of mathematical knowledge, and has extended his inquiries to those sciences which depend upon mathematical principles, though he is employed in the practical application of no science, yet is brought into an important relation to those who are so employed, and experiences from this relation the most important benefits. He is able to judge of the pursuits of others, to estimate the value of those pursuits, to understand the progress of science, and to feel an interest in the occupations of a large portion of mankind. Whether his own station in life is public or private, whether he engages in a professional career, or is called upon to discharge the duties of a magistrate, the occasions for employing his knowledge are innumerable. Granting, that he loses from his memory, many or most of the details of the sciences, he still knows where to apply for information, and how to direct his inquiries, and is able to judge correctly the talents and pretensions of those who are prominent in any one department, and whom he may wish to employ in the accomplishment of actual business. He is acquainted with the region where he is, acts more understandingly in what he undertakes, and is found, in consequence of his knowledge, to be, in all his transactions, a more practical man. The student, likewise, by familiarizing himself with the general principles of the sciences, prepares {page 34} himself for pursuing, to whatever extent he chooses, any one branch, for which he finds himself to possess talents and inclination. Educated in this way, besides the advantages of mental discipline which have been already mentioned, he enlarges the circle of his thoughts, finds in his superior information, new means of benefiting or influencing others, and his mind is thus far liberalized by liberal knowledge.

It is on the same general grounds, that the use and necessity of classical literature in a liberal education may be defended. That this study occupies, at the present time, an important place among literary pursuits, both in Europe and America, will not be denied. In the British Islands, in France, Germany, Italy, and, indeed, in every country of Europe in which literature has acquired distinction and importance, the Greek and Roman classics constitute an essential part of a liberal education. In some countries, classical studies are reviving from a temporary depression, in others, where no such depression has been experienced, they are pursued with increased ardor, and in none, are they known to be declining in public estimation. There may be more variety of opinion than formerly, as to the use of classical learning in certain departments of life; but the conviction of its necessity in the highest education, that which has any claim or pretence to be denominated liberal, is not known to have sustained any considerable change. The literature of every country of Europe is founded more or less on classical literature, and derives from this source its most important illustrations. This is evident not only from such works as have long since appeared, and which form the standard literature of modern times, but from those most recently published, and even from the periodical works of the day. Classical learning is interwoven with every literary discussion. The *fact* only is here insisted on, and this is undeniable. Whoever, then, without a preparation in classical literature, engages in any literary investigation, or undertakes to discuss any literary topic, or associates with those who in any country of Europe, or in this country, are acknowledged to be men of liberal acquirements, immediately feels a deficiency in his education, and is convinced that he is destitute of an important part of practical learning. If scholars, then, are to be prepared to act in the literary world as it in fact exists, classical literature, from considerations purely practical, should form an important part of their early discipline. {page 35}

But the claims of classical learning are not limited to this single view. It may be defended not only as a necessary branch of education, in the present state of the world, but on the ground of its distinct and independent merits. Familiarity with the Greek and Roman writers is especially adapted to form the taste, and to discipline the mind, both in thought and diction, to the relish of what is elevated, chaste, and simple. The compositions which these writers have left us, both in prose and verse, whether considered in reference to structure, style, modes of illustration, or general execution, approach nearer than any others to what the human mind, when thoroughly informed and disciplined, of course approves, and constitute, what is most desirable to possess, a standard for determining literary merit. This excellence of the ancient classic writers is, indeed, doubted or denied;—and it becomes, therefore, necessary to adduce such proof of it as the subject admits.

The case here to be considered is not unaccompanied by analogues. In the range of human improvement, there are other facts nearly allied, both in their character and circumstances, to this now asserted, which afford it very powerful support. Architecture and sculpture, in their most approved forms, not only had their origin, but received their perfection in Greece. These arts may have been, in certain respects, modified in the progress of time, changes may have been introduced to accommodate their productions to the necessities and manners of a later age; yet the original works of Grecian genius are

the models by which artists, even at the present time, direct their labors, the standard by which, in a great measure, their merits are determined. It is in vain to pretend that this is the effect of prejudice, the bias of early impressions, and the undue veneration of antiquity. The statuary, in modelling a head or an arm, has nature always in view, yet he refers notwithstanding to the remains of Grecian art as his best guides, the surest interpreters of nature itself. His work is not imitation, it is a nearer approach to perfection through the skill derived from the contemplation and study of superior excellence. In architecture, the eye of one least conversant with antiquity is struck with the simplicity and just proportions of Grecian models; and these first impressions are strengthened by observation and reflection. Time, which brings to light so many defects, and suggests so many improvements in most of the discoveries of {page 36} men, has added its sanction to the perfection, which followed the efforts of the early cultivators of architectural science.

If, then, sculpture and architecture, after the revolution of so many centuries, still derive aid from the remains of ancient skill, it ought not to excite surprise, that in other departments of taste, antiquity should exhibit the same excellence; we need not wonder, that in poetry and eloquence, it should have likewise left specimens, worthy to become patterns for succeeding ages. That this superiority belongs to ancient literature, is proved by the only proper evidence, the voice of men of letters in every country where the classics have been studied, and where a correct taste has prevailed. It is unnecessary here to cite authorities. The literature of Europe attests the fact. Hardly a question can be named where the practical decision of mankind has been more absolute.

But the study of the classics is useful, not only as it lays the foundations of a correct taste, and furnishes the student with those elementary ideas which are found in the literature of modern times, and which he no where so well acquires as in their original sources,—but also as the study itself forms the most effectual discipline of the mental faculties. This is a topic so often insisted on, that little need be said of it here. It must be obvious to the most cursory observer, that the classics afford materials to exercise talent of every degree, from the first opening of the youthful intellect to the period of its highest maturity. The range of classical study extends from the elements of language, to the most difficult questions arising from literary research and criticism. Every faculty of the mind is employed; not only the memory, judgment, and reasoning powers, but the taste and fancy are occupied and improved.

Classical discipline, likewise, forms the best preparation for professional study. The interpretation of language, and its correct use, are no where more important, than in the professions of divinity and law. But in a course of classical education, every step familiarizes the mind with the structure of language, and the meaning of words and phrases. In researches of a historical nature, and many such occur in the professions, a knowledge, especially of the Latin language, is often indispensable. The use of a thorough knowledge of Greek to a theologian, no one will deny. It is admitted that instances may be found of distinguished success in these pro- {page 37} fessions, where the advantages of a classical education were not enjoyed;—but success of this kind proves only that talents may sometimes force their way to eminence through powerful

obstacles. In settling a plan of education, the inquiry should be, not what some men of uncommon endowments have done, but what most men find necessary. Even in cases of extraordinary success, such as have been now alluded to, the want of classical knowledge has often been felt and lamented.

In the profession of medicine, the knowledge of the Greek and Latin languages is less necessary now than formerly, but even at the present time it may be doubted, whether the facilities which classical learning affords for understanding and rendering familiar the terms of science, do not more than counterbalance the time and labor requisite for obtaining this learning. Besides, a physician, who would thoroughly investigate the history of his profession, will find a knowledge of the ancient languages, essential to his object. In all the professions, likewise, a knowledge of general literature is of high importance as a qualification for extensive intercourse with mankind. The formality of the professional character, where the course of reading and thinking is confined to one channel, has often been remarked. The mere divine, the mere lawyer, or the mere physician, however well informed he may be in his particular profession, has less chance of success, than if his early education had been of a more liberal character.

For these very obvious advantages, which now attend the study of classical literature in the college, the course of study which, it is understood, would be proposed as a substitute, promises but few and partial equivalents. Instead of the poems of Homer, which have had so extensive and important an influence on the heroic poetry of all succeeding times, and which, it cannot be denied, are constantly appealed to as establishing many of the most important canons of criticism, we are presented in several new courses, with the *Henriade* of Voltaire, and the *History of Charles XII.* of the same author, in place of the historical writings of Livy and Tacitus. This is a specimen of the improvements in education which are the occasion of so much boasting, an example of a change to render knowledge more practical and popular. But in what sense, so far as an acquaintance with the rules of taste, and a familiarity with those general principles by which literary merit is judged, is a knowledge of the *Henriade* more practical than a knowledge of the *Iliad*? How is the former to qualify its possessor to act in the literary world in a manner more advantageous than the latter? Do we find that by critics of eminence, Voltaire as a poet has a higher place assigned him than Homer, or that they consider him as a model to be more carefully studied and imitated? Or to make the inquiry more general, in order to understand the true spirit and genius of English literature,—which is of the greatest practical use, the literature of France, or the literature of Greece and Rome? The most superficial acquaintance with the principal authors in our language, is sufficient to excite wonder, that such questions should be seriously asked.

If the new course proposed, considered as an introduction to a knowledge of general literature, is altogether inferior to the old, and far less practical in its character,—it will be found not less deficient for the purposes of mental discipline. To acquire the knowledge of any of the modern languages of Europe, is chiefly an effort of memory. The general structure of these languages is much the same as that of our own. The few idiomatical differences, are made familiar with little labor, nor is there the same necessity of accurate

comparison and discrimination, as in studying the classic writers of Greece and Rome. To establish this truth, let a page of Voltaire be compared with a page of Tacitus.

Nor is this course of education which excludes ancient literature, less objectionable as the foundation of professional study. The student who has limited himself to French, Italian and Spanish, is very imperfectly prepared to commence a course of either divinity or law. He knows less of the literature of his own country, than if he had been educated in the old method, the faculties of his mind have been brought into less vigorous exercise, and the sources of the knowledge which he is now to acquire, are less accessible. If it is said, that the course of exclusive modern literature is intended for those who are not designed for professional life, the reply is, that the number of those who obtain a liberal education, without at first deciding whether they shall be professional men or not, is far from inconsiderable. Many, who originally suppose their minds determined on this subject, alter their determinations from circumstances, which they could not foresee. Adopt the course proposed, and {page 39} many would enter upon it, merely from novelty, more from a persuasion, that it would be attended with less labor; and the consequence would be, that the college, so far as this cause should operate, would be the means of lowering the professional character of our country. But here it will be asked, Is the literature of the modern nations of Europe to form no part of a course of liberal education? Is not modern literature a subject of discussion as well as ancient? Undoubtedly it is, and facilities for acquiring the more popular languages of Europe should be afforded in our public institutions. The claims of the modern languages are questioned only when they are proposed as substitutes for the ancient, not when they are recommended on their own merits. If modern literature is valuable, it should be studied in that way, which leads most directly to a thorough understanding of it, and this way lies through the literature of the ancients. If the languages and literature of Italy, France and Spain, beyond what is merely superficial, is an object with the student, they should be acquired through the Latin; nor is there reason to doubt, so far as experience affords the means of judging, that this is the most expeditious mode of acquiring a familiarity with the languages in question. To begin with the modern languages in a course of education, is to reverse the order of nature.

Modern languages, with most of our students, are studied, and will continue to be studied, as an accomplishment, rather than as a necessary acquisition. Those likewise who spend time in learning to speak the modern languages, soon lose their knowledge, unless they live where these languages are in constant use; nor can there be a doubt, that students do as generally neglect their French, Italian and Spanish, in after life, except when these languages are retained by the course of business, as they neglect their Latin and Greek. This is especially true in professional life, where the demand for a knowledge of the modern languages, in comparison with the ancient, is altogether inconsiderable. To suppose the modern languages more practical than the ancient, to the great body of our students, because the former are now spoken in some parts of the world, is an obvious fallacy. The proper question is,—what course of discipline affords the best mental culture, leads to the most thorough knowledge of our own literature, and lays the best foundation for professional study. The ancient languages have here a de-
{page 40} cided advantage. If the elements of modern languages are acquired by our students in

connection with the established collegiate course, and abundant facilities for this purpose, have for a long time, been afforded, further acquisitions will be easily made, where circumstances render them important and useful. From the graduates of this college, who have visited Europe, complaints have sometimes been heard, that their classical attainments were too small for the literature of the old world; but none are recollected to have expressed regret, that they had cultivated ancient learning while here, however much time they might have devoted to this subject. On the contrary, those who have excelled in classical literature, and have likewise acquired a competent knowledge of some one modern European language besides the English, have found themselves the best qualified to make a full use of their new advantages. Deficiencies in modern literature are easily and rapidly supplied, where the mind has had a proper previous discipline, deficiencies in ancient literature are supplied tardily, and in most instances, imperfectly.

A sort of middle course, has, indeed, been proposed by some, by which students for admission to college are required to have some elementary knowledge of Latin and Greek, but after they are once admitted, the ancient languages are to be thrown aside, and modern languages alone attended to. Or students, on their admission to college, are to have their option, whether to pursue this new course, or the one long established. Both parties start in this case, it is said, from the same point, and like travellers to the capital of the Union, take different roads, but at last, that is, when they graduate, all come together again, before their final separation to the various occupations of life.

But this project is liable to the objection, that students who should discontinue the study of Latin and Greek on their admission to college, would know just enough of these languages to undervalue and hate them. These would be the persons to proclaim on every side the worthlessness of ancient literature, that they had learned the Latin and Greek languages, and had derived no benefit from them, that they had even forgotten all they ever knew. All which, with the exception of their over estimate of their former knowledge, would be, as respects themselves, the exact truth. Besides, these persons, thus educated for the purposes of real life, would in many instances after graduating, find it practically convenient to set up as instructors in these worthless languages. With few, or rather no qualifications, for the office they would assume, the cause of instruction must necessarily suffer under their management. The college, if ancient learning is to be retained at all as a part of its course, as it must rely on its graduates to instruct in the preparatory schools, would be the first sufferer from this improved system, and thus be made to minister to its own destruction.

It is besides a matter of some curiosity to know, what is intended, by the final union of students who take these different paths. That they would find, at the end of their course, that they had all acquired the same education, is certainly not the meaning, as this contradicts the original hypothesis. The only union manifest is this, that they would all be admitted to a degree. They would unite in receiving their diplomas. If to obtain the honors of college, as they are called, was the great object of an education, this improvement in the old collegiate course might be considered as real. But if the substance and not the shadow, if the thing signified and not the sign only are aimed at,—the

question is still open for consideration,—whether these different roads would not lead those who travel them, to entirely different regions.

Manifest, however, as is the fallacy of substituting a diploma for an education, this scheme might not improbably be approved of by a portion of the community, and a temporary popularity follow the change. Nor is there reason to believe, that this is the limit of improvements on the old modes of literary travelling.

* * * * *

Such, then, being the value of ancient literature, both as respects the general estimation in which it is held in the literary world, and its intrinsic merits,—if the college should confer degrees upon students for their attainments in modern literature only, it would be to declare *that* to be a liberal education, which the world will not acknowledge to deserve the name,—and which those who shall receive degrees in this way, will soon find, is not what it is called. A liberal education, whatever course the college should adopt, would without doubt continue to be, what it long has been. Ancient literature is too deeply inwrought into the whole system of the modern literature of Europe to be so easily laid aside. {page 42} The college ought not to presume upon its influence, nor to set itself up in any manner as a dictator. If it should pursue a course very different from that which the present state of literature demands; if it should confer its honors according to a rule which is not sanctioned by literary men, the faculty see nothing to expect for favoring such innovations, but that they will be considered visionaries in education, ignorant of its true design and objects, and unfit for their places. The ultimate consequence, it is not difficult to predict. The college would be distrusted by the public, and its reputation would be irrecoverably lost.

Another plan for improving on the collegiate system, is,—to confer degrees on those only who have finished the present established course,—but to allow other students, who do not aim at the honors of the college, to attend on the instruction of the classes as far as they shall choose. This scheme, it is supposed, has a manifest superiority over all others. It will satisfy the wishes of those who are pleased with the old system, and open the advantages of the college to such as from their circumstances wish for a partial education. That an education may be partial, and still useful, is not denied. Such an education must, after all, be that which is acquired by the great body of the community. That the means of such an education should be abundant, that the encouragement to it should be every way adequate to the object, all acknowledge. The only question is, whether two schemes of education, so diverse, can be properly united in the same seminary. The objections to such an union in this college are obvious and great.

* * * * *

In colleges differently constituted from this, such a union might be unobjectionable; here, certainly, both classes of students would only injure each other.

* * * * *

But with respect to all proposals of this kind, the inquiry should be, is there such a demand on the part of the public for these changes as to make it imperative on the college to adopt them in any of the forms in which they have been presented? That there are complaints of the old system of collegiate education in some of the public journals, that individuals are clamorous on this subject, and consider every thing old as of course wrong, and everything new as of course right, is admitted. But that the great body of the supporters of {page 43} this college, those to whom it is to look for countenance and patronage, are to be numbered in the ranks of these innovators, no reason appears for believing. By persevering in the course of conferring degrees, on those only who have been thoroughly disciplined in both ancient and modern learning, the college has much to expect, and nothing to fear, but by deserting the high-road which it has so long travelled, and wandering in lanes and bye-paths, it would trifle with its prosperity, and put at hazard the very means of its support and existence.

After these general remarks on the question which has been postponed, it may not be thought irrelevant to the subject, to notice briefly a topic, which, of late, is almost invariably introduced whenever the present state of our colleges is discussed. Allusion is here made to the charge reiterated in so many forms, that colleges, even in this country, are places where abuses are cherished, where antiquated notions and habits are retained long after they are discarded by all the world besides, and especially, that, here all improvement is opposed, and as far as possible excluded.

One writer, who may be thought to speak authoritatively on this point, says, “the course of public instruction remains, after the lapse of two centuries, nearly the same.” “The system of European education has been transferred, with little variation, to our American colleges. And, whatever may be the state of things there, I hesitate not to say, that in this country, important improvements are necessary.” Another writer, after stating that our systems of education were derived from the European institutions, and that, at first, they were ill adapted to the peculiar character of this country, goes on to say, “The same systems, however, with slight alterations, have been brought down to the present day, and now reign in our public seminaries,—while the general circumstances of the country have become totally changed.” And again, “Is it wise to endeavor to qualify a youth for exertion and usefulness in the United States, by methods designed to form ecclesiastics under the monarchies of the old world?”

From such representations as these, the impression is left on the minds of many, that our colleges, are, in every important respect, what they were when originally instituted, that the last persons to make improvements in education, are those to whom education is a business, and particularly, that {page 44} those who instruct in colleges, surpass all others in stupidity, and are content to be forever grinding in the same mill, with their eyes fixed on the path in which they are constantly moving the same round. It is unnecessary here to go into a general defence of our colleges,—a few statements respecting this college will be sufficient. What Yale College was in its infancy we are told, in part, in Chandler’s Life of Dr. Johnson, the first President of King’s College, New York. Dr. Johnson graduated in 1714, and his biographer probably derived his information respecting the college, as it was at that time, from Dr. Johnson himself. “For many

years,” says Dr. Chandler, “the utmost that was generally attempted, at the college, in classical learning, was to construe five or six of Tully’s orations, as many books of Virgil, and part only of the Greek Testament, with some chapters of the Hebrew Psalter. Common arithmetic, and a little surveying, were the *ne plus ultra* of mathematical acquirements. The logic, metaphysics, and ethics that were then taught, were entangled in the scholastic cobwebs of a few paltry systems, that would now be laid by as proper food for worms. Indeed, at the time when Mr. Johnson took his Bachelor’s degree, the students had heard of a certain new and strange philosophy, that was in vogue in England, and the named Descartes, Boyle, Locke, and Newton, had reached them, but they were not suffered to think that any valuable improvements were to be expected from philosophical innovations, &c.”

From the peculiar prejudices of this writer, some of his representations are to be received with important deductions, but that his account of the college, at the time Dr. Johnson was an undergraduate, so far as it respects the extent of the course of study, is substantially correct, appears from other evidence altogether independent. Dr. Benjamin Lord of Norwich in this state, in the year 1784, being then ninety years old, wrote to President Stiles an account of the college, as it was when he was a student. Dr. Lord graduated the same year as Dr. Johnson, that is, in 1714. In his letter he says, “Books of the languages and sciences recited in my time, were Tully and Virgil, Burgersdicius’ and Ramus’ Logic, Pierson’s Manuscript of Physics, &c. We recited the Greek Testament, knew not Homer, &c., recited the Psalms in Hebrew. We recited Ames’ Medulla on Saturdays, and also his cases of Conscience sometimes. As {page 45} for Mathematics, we studied and recited little more than the rudiments, some of the plainest things in them;—our advantages in that day, were too low, for any to rise high in any branch of literature,” &c. Surely it will not be maintained by any one, who has the least knowledge of the subject, and who has no sinister object in view, that from 1714 to 1828, only “slight alterations” have been made in the system of education in this college. So far is this from being true, that new departments have been added, and the course of languages, mathematics, physics, and indeed every branch, has been greatly enlarged. It is now impossible to trace the successive changes with exactness. It is obviously implied in the language of Dr. Chandler, who was himself a graduate of the college, that great improvements had been made even in his time. It is well known, that the study of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, was greatly advanced during the Presidency of President Clap. Attention to English composition and oratory was much increased about the year 1770, and in subsequent years. Within the last thirty years, the changes which have been introduced, both into the course of study, and the mode of instruction, are within the recollection of members of the faculty and of the corporation. By what appears to be a wise provision in our laws, the selection of text-books, the mode of instruction, the course of the examinations, and many of the most important details in the practical concerns of the college, are left to the judgment and discretion of the faculty, the corporation having at all times the right of revision. No question has engaged the attention of the faculty more constantly, than how the course of education in the college might be improved, and rendered more practically useful. Free communications have at all times been held between the faculty and the corporation, on subjects connected with the instruction of the college. When the aid of the corporation has been thought

necessary, it has been asked, and by this course of proceeding, the interests of the institution have been regularly advanced. No remark is more frequently made by those, who visit the college after the absence of some years, than that changes have been made for the better, and those who make the fullest investigation, are the most ready to approve what they find. The charge, therefore, that the college is stationary, that no efforts are made to accommodate it to the wants of the age, that all exertions are for the {page 46} purpose of perpetuating abuses, and that the college is much the same as it was at the time of its foundation, are wholly gratuitous. The changes in the country, during the last century, have not been greater than the changes in the college. These remarks have been limited to Yale College, as its history is here best known; no doubt, other colleges alluded to in the above quotations, might defend themselves with equal success.

* * * * *

In a report, in which so many interests of the college are brought into view, and in which it is deemed proper that some of its internal regulations should be stated and defended, it may be justly expected by the committee, that some notice should be taken of certain statements lately made respecting all our colleges by a writer, who from his situation might be believed fully acquainted with the real state of facts, and to have weighed with some care the import of his declarations. Ordinary mistakes or misrepresentations should pass unheeded, but, in the present instance, silence might be interpreted as an admission, that charges of very grave import have been correctly preferred. This is the apology, if any is necessary, for making two of these charges the subject of remark.

According to this writer, “the public examinations at most of our places of education, except West Point, have been miserable farces, which have imposed on nobody, not even on the students subjected to them.” “It is idle,” he says, {“}to think of hurrying, in a single day, through the examination of sixty young men in the studies of a year,” &c. Though the gentlemen of the committee may be aware how little applicable this censure is to the examinations of this college, yet it may not be improper to state with some particularity, how these examinations are in fact conducted. If they are really farces, it is time that a reform should commence. Each of our classes is examined twice a year. At the close of the year, the three lower classes are examined in the studies of the year, each of them in two divisions. Somewhat more than a day is assigned to each class, and as each class is examined in two divisions, the time is the same as if each class was examined in a body about two days and a half. At the close of the month of April of each year, the three lower classes are examined in all their studies from the time of their admission to college. The time is extended; in other {page 47} respects, the examinations are the same as before. In April, the senior class is examined in the studies of the senior year to that time, and the mode of the examination is the same as of the other classes. In July the Seniors are examined for their degrees. They are examined in two divisions, and on the whole college course. For a number of years past, this examination has extended through not less than three days, and sometimes three days and a half, at the rate generally of eight hours a day. As the class is in two divisions, this is the same as an examination of six or seven days for the whole class together. All examinations in the languages are *ad aperturam libri*, and in no study, does any understanding exist between the examiner and

the examined as to the course which the examination is to take. It is very seldom, that any student is absent from the examination of his class, and never, especially from the examination for degrees, except for very urgent reasons. Whenever individuals are absent, they are always examined afterwards, and more particularly, than they could have been, at the regular time. For absence, therefore, there is no inducement. It should be added, that during the examination for degrees, the ordinary instruction in the college is uninterrupted; and during the other examinations, the interruption is only partial. If all this is a miserable farce, it would be interesting to know what would be a reality. If it is in fact a farce, it has not been suspected either by those who examine, or by those who are examined, or they have not rightly apprehended the meaning of the term. That these examinations can admit of no improvement, is not pretended. Any suggestions from the committee or the corporation on this subject will be received with all possible attention. It ought, however, to be distinctly stated, that, in the opinion of the faculty, the examinations of the classes, as now conducted, are a powerful incentive to study, and afford the means, especially in connection with other opportunities, of forming a satisfactory opinion of the attainments of each individual student.

The other charge, which, on the present occasion, appears to demand notice, is, that in none of our colleges is there any thorough *teaching*. “The most that an instructor now undertakes,” says this writer, “in our colleges, is, to ascertain from day to day, whether the young men who are assembled in his presence, have probably studied the lesson {page 48} prescribed to them. There his duty stops.” And again—“Not one of our colleges is a place for thorough *teaching*, and not one of the better class of them does half of what it might do, by bringing the minds of its instructors to act directly and vigorously on the minds of its pupils, and thus to encourage, enable and compel them to learn what they ought to learn, and what they easily might learn.” That the faculty of this college have always fallen upon the best methods of instructing, or, in all cases, have done the utmost which it has been in their power to do, they will not say; but to the assertion, that all they undertake “is to ascertain from day to day, whether the young men assembled in their presence have probably studied the lesson prescribed to them,” they would oppose an unqualified denial. The most abundant pains are taken to explain and enforce the principles of every branch of learning to which the students are required to attend, not only when they are assembled in classes, but often, as they need assistance, individually. If the faculty know what is meant by “bringing the minds of the instructors to act directly and vigorously on the minds of their pupils,” they think they should fail in their duty to themselves and to the institution, if they did not assure the committee, that, in their belief, something very much like it exists here.

The writer goes on to ask, “Who in this country, by means here offered him, has been enabled to make himself a good Greek scholar? Who has been taught thoroughly to read, write, and speak Latin? Nay, who has been taught any thing at our colleges with the thoroughness that will enable him to go safely and directly onward to distinction in the department he has thus entered, without returning to lay anew the foundations for his success?” That the students of this college learn every thing in the several branches here taught, which it is desirable to know, is not maintained. Their instructors are very far from laying claim to such attainments themselves, nor have they known or heard of any

set of instructors, either at home or abroad, whose just pretensions rise so high. That in classical literature, particularly, all is not accomplished which in other circumstances might be hoped for, is not denied. That this branch of the collegiate course is gradually improving, amidst all the discouragements under which it labors—discouragements which originate chiefly from without, that many scholars leave the college {page 49} each year so well versed in the Greek and Roman classics as to perceive and relish their beauties, and to be able and disposed to make future advances in the same department, and that all who graduate derive from their classical knowledge important aid in their professional studies, and in their other pursuits, is what we believe. That in every department, our students are taught with that thoroughness which enables them, with proper exertions—a condition so far as we know, presupposed in every country—“to go safely and directly onward to distinction in the department they have thus entered, without returning to lay anew the foundations for their success”—there is no higher evidence to be produced, than general notoriety, and to this the appeal is made.

* * * * *

[As the two parts of this report were written independently of each other, a few of the same topics were considered in both. These topics have been retained in the second part, so far only as they were introduced in a somewhat different connection.]

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE CORPORATION.

To the Corporation of Yale College —

The Committee appointed “to enquire into the expediency of so altering the regular course of instruction in this college, as to leave out of said course the study of the dead languages{,} substituting therefor other studies, and either requiring a competent knowledge of those languages as a condition of admittance into the college, or providing instruction in the same for such as shall choose to study them after admittance,” respectfully report;—

That aware of the magnitude of the proposition presented to them, and its direct bearing upon the interests and reputation of the college, looking as it does to a fundamental change in its organization and laws, and involving a radical departure from the original object of its establishment, the committee deemed it advisable to refer the subject to the faculty of the college with a request that their views, in regard to the matter, resulting from long experience and careful observation in the business of instruction, might be fully explained, and their objections to the proposed innovation adduced and discussed. {page 50}

The committee are much gratified that the faculty, in the document herewith submitted, have taken a comprehensive view of the whole course of instruction, and developed the elements of a liberal education and the principles by which it should be regulated and administered, exhibiting forcibly the intimate connexion which classical literature has

with other learning and the sciences, and the facilities afforded by its preliminary study in their attainment.

The ability with which the subject has been discussed, by the faculty, relieves the committee from a high degree of responsibility.

This paper having fully and ably exhibited the considerations which ought to be weighed and regarded in forming a decision upon the contemplated measure, it may be considered that, by its presentation, the committee have fulfilled the trust confided to them. It is hoped, nevertheless, the importance of the measure will be considered a sufficient apology for briefly detailing the grounds of their opposition to a scheme calculated in their judgment fatally to affect the prosperity of the college.

In the universities of Europe, as well continental as insular, a thorough knowledge of the ancient languages seems to be universally deemed an important prerequisite to the attainment of very considerable success and reputation in either of the learned professions, while ignorance of those languages, constitutes an obstacle to literary distinction, seldom surmounted.

The learned world long ago settled this matter, and subsequent events and experience have confirmed their decision. By the estimation in which classical literature is held in any community, its advancement in civilization and general learning may be satisfactorily ascertained. On this subject in Europe, a concurrent opinion and practice appear to prevail among men of distinguished learning, or of professional, or political eminence, and in our own country, it is presumed, there is not great diversity of sentiment, in the same class.

It must, indeed, be admitted, that in France, immediately preceding and during the revolution, the learned languages were neglected.

But that example, neither by its literary or moral results, can demand our imitation. What have been the effects of that neglect upon the literature of that country? Notwithstanding highly important improvements and discoveries {page 51} have there been made in some of the sciences and arts, and the mineral and geological kingdoms have been penetrated and explored with untiring zeal, and matchless ability, and the arts of war brought to great perfection, her literary fame is eclipsed. In literature, Germany has left her far behind, and the effect upon the learned professions, and the statesmen of France, is already perceived.

If, with the enlightened opinions and settled practice of one portion of Europe, and the disastrous experience of the other before us, we consign classical literature to a secondary place or inferior rank in the course of instruction, and even admit and graduate students, as it is proposed to do, without the slightest knowledge of the ancient languages, may we not expect that the high literary reputation which this institution has hitherto maintained will be essentially impaired? Indeed this college would probably, at no distant day, sink into a mere academy, while its degrees, being no longer evidence of great literary and

scientific attainments, would become valueless. The standard of scholarship would not only be lowered here, but we should become directly accessory to the depression of the present literary character of our country.

On the contrary, we are the people, the genius of whose government and institutions more especially and imperiously than any other, demands that the field of classical learning be industriously and thoroughly explored and cultivated, and its richest productions gathered. The models of ancient literature, which are put into the hands of the young student, can hardly fail to imbue his mind with the principles of liberty, to inspire the liveliest patriotism, and to excite to noble and generous action, and are therefore peculiarly adapted to the American youth. To appreciate justly the character of the ancients, the thorough study and accurate knowledge of their classics, in the language of the originals, are indispensable, as the simplicity, energy, and striking peculiarities of these pristine exemplars of freedom which are forcibly and beautifully displayed in their models of classic literature, are scarcely more discoverable in ordinary, or even the most faithful translations, than are the warmth, animation, and intellectual illumination of the living, active and intelligent being, in the sculptured imitation of statuary.

While classic literature is pursued in other civilized, and Christian countries, with constantly increasing avidity, every {page 52} measure having a tendency to depreciate the value and importance, or to discourage the pursuit of high classic attainments, in our own country, should be resisted, and no reasonable effort should be omitted to enhance the estimation in which education shall be held by the great body of the community.

Let the value of a collegiate education be reduced and the diffusion of intelligence among the people would be checked, the general standard of intellectual and moral worth lowered, and our civil and religious liberty jeopardized, by ultimately disqualifying our citizens for the exercise of the right and privilege of self-government.

Interwoven therefore, as the measure under consideration is, with the structure of our invaluable institutions, endangering their durability; and tending as it does to discourage, by undervaluing what has hitherto been deemed an important branch of learning, and involving a departure from the well and long established opinions and practice of the learned and wise, the committee would for these reasons alone, pronounce its adoption a most hazardous experiment.

The committee, however, do not rest their opposition to the proposed plan solely on the considerations already suggested. The thorough study of the ancient languages, particularly the Latin and Greek, not only before but subsequently to an admission into college, they are fully satisfied, is, in many respects decidedly and positively useful to the pupil. In the intellectual discipline of youth, the importance of the study of those languages, in their opinion, cannot be reasonably denied, and will hardly be questioned by many whose judgments are guided by the light of experience. Such study carries the young pupil back to the earliest era in the history of mental efforts, lays open to him the most simple and original operations of the mind and acquaints him with its brilliant and unrivalled productions. It stimulates to industry and severe and faithful application, by

proving to the student that the mines of learning can be penetrated only by unceasing exertion, while it admonishes him of the inutility and fate of genius when unaided by deep and laborious research. The student's memory is thus rendered retentive, his recollection quick, and his power of critical discrimination more accurate. Beginning with language in its primitive simplicity and tracing its progress to its present state, the student can hardly fail to improve his taste and to enlarge his capacity to think, and to communicate thought. {page 53}

The acquaintance with the elements of language and the mythology, as well as the chronology and geography of the ancients, which he derives from their classics, naturally excites in the mind of the student, an ardent desire of knowledge, while his imagination is fired by their poetry and eloquence. The heroic exploits they celebrate may indeed arouse his ambition, but their wisdom of their precepts will enlighten and guide his judgment, and temper his ardor, directing him to the fields of science, with the hope of obtaining valued, but bloodless trophies, in the conflicts of mind. Having access to the depositories of the earliest and most splendid results of mental labors, he seizes the refined treasures of antiquity, and pursuing the operations of gifted intellects, in later times, his mind becomes well stored with knowledge, and he is fitted not only for intercourse with the learned throughout the world, but for general usefulness.

It is urged that the dead languages are not necessary nor used in the intercourse and business of life even by the scholar, and that the time spent in acquiring them is, as to all practical results, lost. But the committee do not consider this objection well founded. Who would consent to part with the mental discipline the study of algebra imposes, or direct the student to lay aside Euclid because the perfect arrangement of the signs of the one, or the problems and demonstrations of the other, may not be directly and practically useful to men of business? These exercises give vigor to the mind, generate a habit of close and connected thought, and prepare the student for the successful use of the materials he may have derived from miscellaneous learning. But the reasons for dispensing with the study of classical literature are not more cogent, resting as they do, on the inadmissible postulate, that the student should be confined to merely practical learning.

The study of Greek as a branch of elementary education, not only discloses the degree of perfection to which language was early carried and its susceptibility to almost mathematical precision, as a means of communication, but, at the same time, brings the student to the contemplation, and to an intimate knowledge of a most extraordinary and unexampled people, whose intellectual history exhibits unrivalled success, and must continue through the progress of time to be an object of intense and augmenting interest. If for no other reason, as the means of cultivating a knowledge of the {page 54} philosophy and powers of language, and improving taste, and style, the ancient languages should be early, faithfully and perseveringly studied.

The utility of classical literature to the learned professions however, presents a further and in the opinion of the committee, a strong motive for its holding a prominent place in the course of collegiate studies. High respectability without its aid, may indeed be

attained, as it has been, by lawyers of extraordinary mental endowments, but such, it is presumed, will generally be found to lament their inability to command the rich illustrations and embellishments, which the scholar copiously draws from classic learning. The deep and intimate knowledge of human character too, so essential to the lawyer and the statesman, can be most effectually attained by exploring and developing the springs of human action, in all ages. By the various comparisons thus instituted, the indispensable qualification of a lawyer, a statesman, or a judge, sound and discriminating judgment, may be greatly improved, if not actually acquired. This inestimable characteristic of wisdom, is not formed by casual and superficial views of men and things. They ought to be studied, investigated and scanned industriously, deeply, carefully and minutely through all the developments of history up to the ancient classics, in their original language, by him who desires distinction as a jurist or a statesman.

To high attainments and extended usefulness in physic and surgery, the importance of a knowledge of the Latin and Greek languages will hardly be denied, when it is recollected that a great portion of the language of those arts, even in their present advanced state, has a classic origin.

Without classical literature, the Divine will experience serious embarrassment in a profession of tremendous responsibility and infinite moment. The ancient languages having been made the organs of communicating revealed religion to man, the originals must be considered the standard of accuracy and truth, and the only safe resort to explain and remove difficulties and doubts too often occasioned by translations either ignorantly or wilfully erroneous.

In a matter of such deep concern, what teacher will be disposed to forego any available means of ascertaining the truth? As by biblical criticism, controversies involving eternal interests are often determined, faithfulness to the souls of men imposes an imperative obligation to read and know the Scriptures in their original simplicity and purity. {page 55}

Indeed to dilate on this point cannot be necessary, as ignorance of classical learning and the safest means of explaining the oracles of truth, in this profession, must be generally deplored. If then we desire, in accordance with the example and intentions of the Fathers and Patrons of this Institution, to know and communicate the truth in its simplicity, beauty and force, the ancient languages will here become the objects of more intense pursuit, and augmented patronage. The single consideration that divine truth was communicated to man in the ancient languages, ought to put this question to rest, and give to them perpetuity. Besides, classical literature, while it opens the most copious sources of illustration and explanation, enables him who has made proficiency in it, with the more effect, to press the performance of duty.

It has been urged that if the study of the ancient languages shall no longer be required as a preliminary of admission into the college, or as a part of its regular course of studies, the time of the student may be usefully employed in acquiring a knowledge of his own and other modern languages. But so intimately is the English connected with, so directly

is it derived from, compounded of and built upon the ancient languages, that, to the thorough knowledge of it, the study of those languages is indispensable. Indeed, these languages may be considered the basis of most of the modern.

That the modern languages most extensively spoken should be learned, both by students who expect to be called abroad, either by business or in pursuit of science, and by those who seek literary distinction, the committee willingly concede. But the readiest way to acquire the modern languages in general use, is to become well versed in the ancient, from which they are derived.

By a competent understanding of Latin, it is generally admitted, the progress of the student in French, is much facilitated. The committee therefore, are satisfied, that in the more advanced periods of collegiate life, when the student shall have made sufficient progress in the ancient classics, the French may be studied without any derangement of the established system, and with great advantage as a parallel course. Even the French, however, in their judgment should not be substituted for the classics, either as a condition of admission, or in the regular course of study, or as a test of scholarship. The committee do not deem it an equivalent course. The Spanish and Italian are so easily acquired by {page 56} one who is versed in Latin, that they may well be considered as appendages to it, and need not in the opinion of the committee, be included in a systematic course of collegiate studies, where this language is taught; much less are they entitled to precedence. The present regulation which allows the students to study French and Spanish at their option, the committee deem judicious and proper, and they are of opinion that suitable facilities should be continued to all who may signify their desire to study those languages, when properly advanced in the ancient.

The considerations briefly adverted to, in the necessarily rapid view which they have taken of the subject referred to them, have brought the committee to the conclusion that is inexpedient so to alter the regular course of instruction, at this college, as to leave out of the same, the study of the ancient languages.

Fully convinced of the importance of the thorough study, and an accurate knowledge of the ancient languages, and believing that much misconception regarding their utility has arisen from the fact that they have been but partially studied and acquired, the committee have seen with approbation, that within the last twenty-five years those languages have here received increased attention, and that the classical and other attainments required as a qualification for admittance into the college, have been considerably augmented. The effect of such augmentation has evidently been to elevate the character of the institution, and the standard of scholarship. The period of academic preparation having been prolonged, and consequently the age, at which students will ordinarily apply for admittance extended, they are enabled the more successfully to pursue the studies requiring maturity of intellect, and further to advance in learning and science.

Approving highly the course which has hitherto been pursued, the committee entertain the opinion that the terms of admission may very properly, be gradually raised so as ultimately to render necessary, as a condition of admission, much greater acquirements,

especially in the classics, than the laws of the college at present prescribe. The committee, however, do not deem it advisable that the corporation should act on this subject, until they shall have availed themselves of the information and experience of the Faculty, and received from them a specific recommendation.

Yale College, September 9th, 1828.