

**THE AMERICAN  
COLLEGE: A  
CRITICISM**

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The American College: A Criticism by Abraham Flexner

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**ABRAHAM FLEXNER**

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AMERICAN COLLEGE**

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**A CRITICISM**

**BY  
ABRAHAM FLEXNER**



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1908**

*Empire*



## PREFACE

This book is based on an educational experience of almost twenty years, in the course of which I prepared many pupils for college; I tried also to observe their development during and after their college careers. Subsequently I spent two years as graduate student at two different American universities, and something above a year in England and Germany, where I enjoyed opportunities for observation. I have, moreover, frequently compared notes with teachers in secondary schools, colleges, universities and professional schools, whose experience has been in some respects fuller and more



## PREFACE

direct than my own. But as their communications were made in confidence, I am compelled to forego the support which they would lend to the argument.

ABRAHAM FLEXNER.

*New York, June 20, 1908.*

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## THE AMERICAN COLLEGE

courses, calculated to meet every conceivable demand; an unheard-of accumulation of opportunities and resources; and to how little avail! Well, it must then be impossible! The average boy is simply not educable. It is useless to repine. The capable fellow gets an education, the others get something. This is the instructor's state of mind a few years after the institution of a system recommended by the diametrically opposite course of reasoning. For the elective system was in effect a profession of confidence in the actual capacity and probable seriousness of the average boy. It assumed that he possessed ability and might be led to develop purpose. Yet in the face of its attempt to enlist his energy in congenial effort, the college finds itself forced to a low standard. A degree may be won