

**THE AMERICAN
COLLEGES AND THE
AMERICAN PUBLIC**

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The American Colleges and the American Public by Noah Porter

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NOAH PORTER

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BY
NOAH PORTER, D. D.,
Professor in Yale College.

"IT IS NOT NECESSARY THAT THIS SHOULD BE A SCHOOL OF THREE HUNDRED OR ONE HUNDRED OR FIFTY BOYS, BUT IT IS NECESSARY THAT IT SHOULD BE A SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN GENTLEMEN."—*Dr. Thomas Arnold, of Rugby.*



NEW HAVEN, CONN.,
CHARLES C. CHATFIELD & CO.
1870.

TO

THEODORE D. WOOLSEY, D.D., LL.D.,
President of Yale College,

A SINCERE FRIEND OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRESS,

AS WELL AS OF

ALL TRUTH AND GOODNESS,

THESE PAPERS ARE INSCRIBED,

BY THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E .

Many of the thoughts and arguments contained in this volume may be found in four articles published under the same title in the *New Englander* for 1869. Much new matter has been added in relation to the topics which are treated in those articles, and several additional topics have been considered. The interest which the general subject of college and university education has excited in the community, as well as the very great importance of the topics discussed, constitute, it is believed, sufficient reasons for the publication of these papers in their present form. The author has spoken freely of the opinions and arguments from which he dissents, for the reason that the principles which have been usually received upon the subject of higher education have been boldly assailed. The assailants of what has been approved by the practice of many generations, and has been valued in the calm judgment of the majority of candid and considerate scholars, could not reasonably expect that their proposed experiments would be accepted without being discussed, or that extemporized promises or prophecies would be received without being challenged and scrutinized. Whatever has been written in the way of criticism, has, however, been written in no unfriendly spirit. The views which are the most sharply criticised have been expressed by persons whom the author holds in high esteem and with whom he is connected by friendly

relations. To prevent any possible misapprehension it ought to be said that while the author has received very cordial sympathy and many valuable suggestions from the officers of the college with which he is connected, he only is responsible for any views or reasonings contained in this volume.

The author by no means regrets but rather rejoices that the attention of the American public has been so earnestly summoned to reconsider these questions, and that the theory and administration of college education have been subjected to severe and persistent criticism. He is confident that the colleges themselves will reap important advantages from this free discussion, and that as the result, whatever is worth retaining in the college system, will be valued more highly, and will be administered with greater zeal and efficiency, and as a consequence the American Colleges and the generous and liberal education which they profess to give will be appreciated more highly than ever by the American Public.

Yale College, May, 1870.

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THE AMERICAN COLLEGES
AND
THE AMERICAN PUBLIC.

I.

HISTORICAL AND INTRODUCTORY.

The American Colleges have of late been somewhat formally challenged by what is called *the American Public*, to appear before its tribunal, and to give a satisfactory explanation and defense of their system of discipline and study, on penalty of being either condemned or "suffering a default." The challenge has been repeated too often, and from too many quarters, to be wholly neglected, however confident the friends and defenders of the college system may be of the goodness of their cause.

It should be remembered, however, that the present is not the only time when this system has been seriously called in question, or when important changes have been proposed in order to bring it into nearer conformity with the so-called spirit of the times, the alleged wants of educated men themselves, and the demands of what was termed public opinion.

In August, 1826, a detailed report was presented to the Board of Trustees of Amherst College proposing

very important modifications of its course of study. This provided, among other features, for the addition to the "present classical and scientific four years' course," of "a new course equally thorough and elevated with this, but distinguished from it by a more modern and national aspect, and by a better adaptation to the taste and future pursuits of a large class of young men, who aspire to the advantages of a liberal education." It also provided for "a department devoted to the science and art of teaching; but more especially, at first, to the education of schoolmasters," and also for "a department of theoretical and practical mechanics." The proposed course, which was to be equally thorough and elevated with the old, was to be distinguished by the following features, viz., the greater prominence given to English literature; the substitution of French and Spanish, and eventually of German and Italian, for Greek and Latin; the study of Practical Mechanics; greater attention to Chemistry, Natural History, to "Modern History, especially the History of the Puritans," and to "Civil and Political law, embracing the careful study of American Constitutions." To these might be added "Drawing and Civil Engineering." Ancient History, Geography, Grammar, Rhetoric and Oratory, Mathematics, Physics, Intellectual and Moral Philosophy, Anatomy, Political Economy, and Theology, were retained in both courses. In conformity with this plan, the studies for this parallel course were assigned to the several terms of the four years' course, text-books were selected, and it was confidently expected that many who aspired to the degree of B. A. would prefer the studies which were believed to