

**THE GOSPEL OF  
WORK,  
MAY 29, 1901**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649008698

The Gospel of work, May 29, 1901 by George Mann Richardson & David Starr Jordan

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**GEORGE MANN RICHARDSON & DAVID STARR JORDAN**

**THE GOSPEL OF  
WORK,  
MAY 29, 1901**



---

ADDRESSES AT THE TENTH ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT  
LELAND STANFORD JUNIOR UNIVERSITY  
MAY 29, 1901

---

## THE GOSPEL OF WORK

GEORGE MANN RICHARDSON

*Professor of Organic Chemistry, Leland Stanford Junior University*

UNIVERSITY OF  
CALIFORNIA  
LELAND STANFORD'S VIEWS  
ON HIGHER EDUCATION

DAVID STARR JORDAN

*President, Leland Stanford Junior University*

---

PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY  
STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA  
UNIVERSITY PRESS  
1901

118745  
75

TO VIVI  
ANASTASIA

UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA

## THE GOSPEL OF WORK.

GEORGE MANN RICHARDSON.

Horace Greeley is said once to have made the remark: "Of all horned cattle, the college graduate is the most to be feared."

There still lingers in some quarters a decided prejudice against the college graduate. You who are going out from us to-day as graduates will no doubt be made to feel this. It rests with you, in part, to determine whether the next class that goes from the University shall find this prejudice greater or less than you will find it. It is not very difficult for us to see some of the reasons for this lack of confidence. In the first place, I do not believe that it is in most cases a prejudice against a higher education or against educated persons, except as it is owing to a confusion of terms. It is common to assume that the college graduate is necessarily an educated man or woman, but this is a fundamental error. It has thus far been found impossible, even in our best and most thorough colleges and universities, to devise any system of exercises, requirements, or examinations which will make it perfectly certain that the holders of their diplomas shall be educated men and women.

An education is, in one respect, like a contagious disease—not every one who is exposed to it takes it. The diploma which you receive to-day is merely a certificate that you have been exposed to an education; whether you have taken it or not, your future life alone will determine. Undoubtedly a great part of the prejudice against the college graduate comes from direct contact with the uneducated college graduate, and in so far as this is the case, I believe

M44500

Horace Greeley was right,—such college graduates are, to say the least, to be viewed with suspicion.

The chances are that any young man who has spent four of the best years of his life in college and has neglected to make good use of his opportunities, will continue to follow the same course after he graduates; and such are not the kind of people for whom "the world stands aside to let pass."

The most important principle for our guidance in life is a thorough realization of the law that nothing that is worth having is to be had without work. When this law has been completely accepted and becomes part of our moral fibre, other things will be added unto us:—we have started on the right road.

Ignorance of this law or the effort to evade it is the cause of much disappointment, misery, and crime. There are no short-cuts to knowledge, to power, or to happiness. "Eminence in any great undertaking implies intense devotion thereto, implies patient, laborious exertion, either in the doing or the preparation for it. "He who fancies greatness an accident, a lucky hit, a stroke of good fortune, does sadly degrade the achievement contemplated and undervalues the unerring wisdom and inflexible justice with which the universe is ruled." Those who are continually seeking an unearned happiness are the people that the world can best spare.

An education which is itself acquired by hard work cannot be considered as a device for getting along in the world without work: it merely makes our work the more effective, it enables us to work at the long end of the lever,—but work we must. Genius is sometimes looked upon as a substitute for hard work, but this too is an error, as we shall quickly recognize when we read the biographies of a few men of acknowledged genius. In fact, most men of this class have exhibited an astonishing capacity for work. On the other hand, it is really surprising how closely the results of application and energy resemble the results of genius.

Any system of education which fails to develop in the individual a clear recognition of this great law of work must



remain unsatisfactory. The individual who fails to recognize this law or who does not act according to it cannot be considered as educated.

The old system of education, in which the time was spent in studying Latin, Greek, and mathematics, was an excellent system for those to whom it appealed, as is proved by the grand characters that have been developed by it. It was, however, a very wasteful system, as many of the young men who went to college did not become interested in this particular kind of work. Some of this latter class, however, were nevertheless educated by the contact with earnest and educated men and by the countless other educational forces continually at work outside of the classroom at every college.

But too large a number of men succumbed to the habit, formed by four years' practice, of doing lifeless things in a listless way.

An abundance of leisure is a trial to which few men are equal; it is a trial that should not needlessly be thrust upon young people before habits of work have been established.

As the weakness of the old system came to be recognized, new subjects were added to the college curriculum to make it more generally attractive, or, as some would say, to make it "broader." There were added a little modern language study, a little history, a little political economy, a little science, and so on, until the older college course was so diluted that it offered very little training in serious scholarship, and the results very well illustrated the old adage, "He who embraces too much, holds but little."

While the old difficulty was far from being overcome by these changes, a new difficulty, a lack of thoroughness, was introduced. "A broad education,"—what crimes have been committed in that name!

The demand still frequently voiced for a fixed course of study which shall best fit the "average man" for the life of to-day is wholly irrational. It is not worth while to exchange the tyranny of the old fixed course of study for the tyranny of a new fixed course of study.

Owing to the endless variety of human characters and human tastes, and owing to the present extent of human knowledge and human activities, such a course of study is an absolute impossibility. Such a process for producing machine-made men would be prodigally extravagant of human material. In thus attempting to produce a uniform product, the very best part of the mental equipment of many men would be cut away or hindered in growth to make them fit into a system which at best is artificial. The best preparation for the life of to-day is to know well something worth knowing,—if possible, to know it better than any one else knows it. Such a knowledge is attained only when the work necessary to it strikes a responsive chord in the individual mind.

Our American universities are tending in the right direction, it seems to me, in offering the student a wide range of studies and then allowing him to select for himself those to which he will devote his attention. A university with unlimited means should extend knowledge and offer instruction in every worthy subject. A subject to be worthy must be, first, such that its serious study offers good mental training, and second, such that a knowledge of it tends toward human advancement. But the university with unlimited means is an ideal which has no realization.

It is the first duty of a university to do *well* that which it undertakes. There is no doubt but that much of the criticism which has been called forth by this introduction of "electives" into the university curriculum is more than justified by the consequent crippling, owing to inadequate means, of work previously undertaken, and to an equipment wholly inadequate to do justice to the new work. The expansion of the curriculum under such conditions is thoroughly dishonest, and the results are most deplorable. It is a vulgar form of self-advertisement to which no university should stoop. Desirable as it is to have a wide range of studies from which the student may select, expansion of the curriculum in any given institution is justifiable

only when the work already undertaken is adequately done.

Since all universities are hampered from a lack of funds, it is eminently desirable that all universities should cooperate in this expansion of their curricula, and instead of following the old and narrow policy, dictated by petty jealousies, of establishing new departments because they have been established elsewhere, let each university look to develop where other universities have not developed, so that somewhere, here or there, the student will be able to find the thing he needs for his highest development.

With ample opportunities for studying worthy subjects the student should be able to find in the university that thing which will best enable him to find his sphere of greatest usefulness in the world, that thing which awakens his enthusiasm,—and it is not of great importance what the thing is; it is the *awakening* that is of supreme importance; *that* is the first great step towards a sound education.

One student will gain inspiration from the great epics of Homer, Dante, or Milton; another will be thrilled and incited to higher effort by reading the earth's history in the earth's crust; a third will have his soul stirred and be able to detect nature's immutable laws by the study of the venation in the wings of insects. Any work which is thus capable of inspiring men to new and nobler effort can ill be spared from our educational system.

James Russell Lowell is reported to have said that his admiration for Dante lured him into the little learning that he possessed; while the direction of Darwin's work was determined by his desire to know all about coral reefs. As often as not it is the teacher, and not the subject taught, that first arouses the interest of the student.

Thomas Jefferson said of one of his old teachers, that the presence of that man on the faculty of the College of William and Mary fixed the destinies of his life. The university that has a Mommesen, a Lowell, or an Agassiz in its faculty is in the possession of a power for good that is beyond estimation. How important it is that the student