

THE COLLEGE CURRICULUM IN THE UNITED STATES

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The College Curriculum in the United States by Louis Franklin Snow

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LOUIS FRANKLIN SNOW

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CURRICULUM IN
THE UNITED STATES**

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THE COLLEGE CURRICULUM IN
THE UNITED STATES

BY
LOUIS FRANKLIN SNOW

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE collegiate curriculum in the United States is a growth and not an accident. Its genesis is to be found, as is that of many other of our institutions, in the older world, whence our ancestors came. The earlier forms of its establishment here follow closely the European prototype. But as time elapses, circumstances change, needs increase, and demands upon it multiply, the pristine simplicity of the original is altered, and the present product astonishes by the complexity of its diversity and the variety of its detail. Yet, from the earliest to the latest record of the course of study in our colleges, an unbroken chain of development can be traced, a logical sequence of events can be established, and the causes that led to the inevitable consequence can be clearly shown. It is even possible to push the inquiry one step farther and to discover whence the inspiration was first derived; to trace the educational ideals, that now govern and that have governed our collegiate instruction, back to their source and to reveal the vitality of the union that exists between the higher education here to-day and the higher education of past times.

That this phase of college life has been heretofore neglected is a trifle surprising. Even so soon as collegiate instruction began, the reporter and the historian seem to have made it their particular business to concern themselves with many minor details of the management of the enterprises. We have full accounts of lotteries conducted for their support. The gifts and donations from interested people are carefully spread upon the records. The cost of new buildings and the ceremonies of dedications and commencements, with the attending riots and disturbances, are set forth in elaborate terms, but

the real work of the college—the lectures given, the recitations heard, the text-books used—has been either wholly neglected or is mentioned in such brief fashion as to give but a vague idea of what was the actual condition of things scholastic.

While we might naturally expect that something very like the actual state of things might exist in the earliest times, before the country was organized, still it would seem reasonable that, when accounts began to be regularly kept, the record of the course of study in the colleges would become a public care. But the historians of the colleges refrain from giving much information, that has lain directly at their hands, and have passed on to the more striking fields of architecture, or of finance, or to the eulogy of some favorite professor or remarkable president. Interesting as are these tributes to scholarly worth, they uniformly fall short of the accurate information desired, and we search their pages vainly to find, in brief, an account of classroom methods or scholastic discipline of a given period. The only sources from which to study the collegiate curriculum in the United States, are the private records of the Trustees and the Faculties of the various colleges, so far as they have been preserved, supplemented by the catalogues of the institutions, "laws and statutes," and "rules for the government," printed reports of committees of one body or the other, and such diaries and memoirs as singular students have sometimes occupied their seemingly abundant leisure in compiling. It is from documents of this character that the data contained in the following chapters have been secured.

The conclusions reached, from a study of these documents, divide themselves into two classes: conclusions that relate to the effect of the college course upon the community; and secondly, and conversely, the effect of the community upon the college course. In the one case we are led directly to an examination of the schedules and plans of recitations and lectures of the various institutions; in the other, to a consideration of the environment in which the institutions have been placed, and to a review of the criticisms, direct or indirect, to which they have been exposed. These two forces in action and