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THE FINE ARTS AS AN UNDER-GRADUATE STUDY.

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OF THE SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY.

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A correct system of education must be based upon a comprehensive view of the universe in its totality. If any important element in humanity, or in the external universe, is neglected, the system will be imperfect, and will fail to develop symmetrical individual characters and to produce a perfect civilization.

Man is a compound being, composed of spirit and matter, having a body and a soul. His spiritual nature may be subdivided into the moral, the intellectual, and the esthetic faculties. Religion, science and art, in their various relations and combinations, cover all the ranges of activity of the human spirit. The word *science* is here employed in its true and comprehensive sense, not in its limited or popular sense as confined to the natural sciences. The term *art* is here used as a collective term for the fine arts.

The fine arts fall naturally into two grand divisions: First, the arts which appeal to the eye, called in English the formative arts, the chief of which are architecture, sculpture and painting; and, second, the arts which appeal to the ear, termed in German the sounding or speaking arts, for which we have no corresponding terms in English, the chief of which are music, poetry and oratory.

In America, moral, scientific and esthetic education occupy very unequal status. From the very earliest settlement of the colonies extensive provision has been made for the moral and religious education of the people. Education in science (using the term in its widest sense), though pushed with less vigor, has been provided for in certain branches, although the different portions of scientific education have been cultivated in unequal proportions and often in very unsystematic methods. But from the founding of Harvard College, in 1636, to the present time, very little opportunity has been given in any of our schools for instruction in the fine arts.

In our colleges especially, esthetic education is almost entirely ignored, the whole of the college curriculum being devoted to the scientific and the moral departments of education. Of art, in its theory, its history and its practice, the American college teaches nothing. The only modification of this statement is with reference to rhetoric and elocution. Of music, painting, sculpture and architecture, the American college curriculum contains literally nothing; and yet the graduates of these colleges are to be, more than any other persons, the moulders, the directors, the cultivators of public taste. They are to be our editors, and will praise, condemn or criticize, in the columns of their journals, the works of art that are from time to time produced. Rising to prominence in every department of business, they are to act as commissioners or trustees in the erection of buildings for schools, academies, colleges, universities, churches, hospitals for the sick, the blind, the deaf and dumb and the insane. On behalf of the commonwealth, they are to be charged with the erection of edifices for the city, county, State and nation. They are to decide upon the adorning of these buildings with paintings and statuary, and with the tasteful laying out of parks and other public grounds. As enterprising and successful men of business, they are to decide upon the architectural style and adorning of their own stores, factories, hotels, houses, banks, station-houses, and other buildings connected with railroad and other corporate bodies. First and foremost in every enterprise, they will especially need all the qualifications for the performance of their various duties. As many of these duties will thus require of them a high esthetic culture and general knowledge of the fine arts, this culture and knowledge should be secured to them in their college course, for after they enter upon their professional life, they do not and they cannot acquire such knowledge and culture.

The question will then arise, how far is it practicable to give artistic education and esthetic culture in our colleges without encroaching upon the courses of study as now established?

In answering this, we must bear in mind that the object of collegiate study is not to give professional attainment in any one branch of study, but it is to give good habits of mind and to lay the foundation of general culture to a class of advanced students, preliminary and preparatory to their entering upon the more limited field of professional study. If, in accomplishing these ends, it should be necessary to slightly reorganize the courses of study as now established, it will be no valid argument against introducing these new studies. It is wise to change and foolish not to change when valid reasons require the change.

The integrity of the college courses of study would not be materially disturbed by the introduction of the following studies: First, esthetics, by lectures, twice a week during the first term of the senior year; second, the history of the fine arts, by lectures, once a week during the second and third terms of the senior year; third, free-hand drawing, by lessons, twice a week during the first term of the junior year; fourth, perspective drawing, by lessons, twice a week during the second term; and fifth, architectural drafting, by lessons, twice a week during the third term of the same year.

This would give an outline view of the theory and the history of the fine arts, to all who graduate from our colleges. With the foundation thus laid for the intelligent understanding of the fine arts, future reading will supplement this limited scholastic instruction, according to the tastes and opportunities of the individual graduates.

As the majority of collegiate students do not receive any instruction in the practice of drawing, drafting, or painting, in the preparatory schools, it could not be expected that the limited time thus given, during the junior year, to acquiring practical skill in drawing would usually lead to any great degree of proficiency. Indeed, professional proficiency is not expected, nor is it aimed at, in any of the studies in the college course; drawing thus will be no exception to other studies, as they are of necessity pursued in colleges. The limited time thus given to the practice of drawing, in its various branches, will, however, be of great use to every student, in enabling him to understand better the nature, the value, the merits and the defects of various works of art and of design, and will suffice to guard the graduate from making some of the many annoying, mortifying and ridiculous mistakes which even eminent and educated Americans so frequently make in judging, purchasing, and treating of works of art.

As drawing is now becoming more generally a branch of elementary education, in the primary and high schools, the time may not be distant when the majority of college students will have received some instruction in the rudiments of art, and thus the time given to this subject in college will be of more definite use and value.

The instruction thus given in the fine arts in the college can be most efficiently supplemented by means of museums illustrative of the history of architecture, sculpture and painting. With but limited appropriations for this purpose, a museum can be procured which will be of great value to the students. The formative arts

appeal to the eye. No description will be a substitute for seeing the works themselves. Reproductions, in plaster of paris, of all the important works of sculpture and of architectural details, can be procured at a limited cost. Photographs and engravings will give very clear ideas of the larger works of architecture, of all works of sculpture and of most paintings. A few thousand dollars thus expended will provide an art museum of far more interest and value to the college students than twice or thrice the amount expended in museums of geology, mineralogy or zoölogy.

As this department of study is of such importance, and requires such special attainments on the part of the professor, a chair of the fine arts should be established in the faculty of all colleges and universities. Though there are few in America who have received the peculiar training required for filling such chairs successfully, the supply would equal or exceed the demand soon after such a demand really exists. In the German universities there are always several professors of esthetics and the history of the fine arts. In the single University of Berlin, eighteen courses of lectures upon the fine arts were delivered during the last winter.

We can easily foresee how different will be the status of the public taste in America, when those who receive a liberal education in our colleges and universities, and thus become leaders in all departments of social and professional life, shall have correct knowledge of the fundamental principles of esthetic culture, and a general knowledge of the scope, the methods and the spirit of the several branches of art.

