

DRAWING AS A SUBJECT FOR COLLEGE ENTRANCE CREDIT.¹

THE college seeks to perpetuate its own ideals. These ideals have found expression in the curriculum. This has changed from time to time, but the changes have not kept pace with the evolution of society. Hence, whenever a new subject gets recognition from the college, it is the result of a new demand in society ; and the initiative is taken, not by the college, but by the lower school which is in closer touch with the people. The college at first seems deaf to such a demand ; but gradually, as the pressure increases, the college modifies its curriculum. And so the process goes on, the college yielding only to pressure.

What is true of the college curriculum is true of its requirements for admission. The college wants its students prepared in the fullest possible degree to pursue the particular studies it offers. When the college emphasizes classics and mathematics in its curriculum, classics and mathematics are emphasized in its requirements for admission ; when science and government are allowed a large place in the curriculum, science and history are accorded a place in the preparatory course. Even if it were granted that this practice of restricting the preparatory course was the wisest from the college point of view, which may be doubted, it certainly does not encourage the broadest and soundest secondary-school training

It has been maintained that the best preparation for college and the best preparation for life, for those who cannot attend college as well as those who can, is one and the same thing. The verdict of high-school teachers, as shown by recent writings and modifications of the secondary-school curriculum, is that the narrow preparatory school of the past is not the best that can be given to young men and young women who go from the high school directly into their life-work. Accepting this verdict of

¹ Read at the conference of affiliated and co-operating schools of the University of Chicago, autumn meeting, 1902.

the high-school teachers, then it follows that, if the contention that the best preparation for college is also the best preparation for life is well founded, the college must modify its requirements. Even if this contention is not true, would it not be good educational policy, as well as good pedagogy, for the college to recognize a wider range of subjects in the secondary school?

Is it not possible that the college would be the gainer? It would then keep its hold upon a larger part of the curriculum of the secondary school — a hold which it is losing as fast as new subjects are introduced into the secondary school, and these are increasing in response to the legitimate demands of the people. The college would then influence favorably these newer subjects, guarding against a too narrow utilitarianism, and insuring in them a reasonable percentage of the culture elements.

We are all aware that many colleges have taken and are taking steps in the direction here suggested. Encouraged by the more democratic spirit of the universities, many of the colleges have come to recognize scientific and historical studies. In this connection it is interesting to know that at the meeting of the executive committee of the College Entrance Examination Board of the Middle States and Maryland, held November 9, 1901, it was voted to add botany, geography, Spanish, and drawing to the list of subjects in which examinations are held. This was to meet the needs of the colleges accepting the examinations. (Chemistry and physics were, of course, already on the list.) The number of students taking the examinations in these new subjects last summer was as follows: in botany, 5; geography, 6; Spanish, 9; and drawing, 136.

As already suggested, the all-important question that, as a rule, the college has asked in the past when selecting a subject for entrance credit is this: "Is this subject a necessary part of the most direct preparation for the work that the student is to do during his four years with us?" If not, this subject is left out of the list. Under these conditions, so far as I know, drawing has found no place among subjects accepted for college entrance, except, recently, in such cases as Columbia, in the schools of

architecture and engineering, and Harvard in the Lawrence Scientific School, where definite requirements in drawing are made, and Minnesota, where drawing is allowed entrance credit in the colleges of mines and engineering. This requirement at Harvard and Columbia, however, is for the same reason that the older subjects, as mathematics and Latin, are required in the classical college, namely: to enable the college to do a higher grade of work in that subject. There is no apparent consideration of the special needs of pupils of secondary-school age and very little consideration of the culture value of the subject to students of that age. The aim is to master certain technical difficulties—the grammar of drawing.

Is not the time at hand when the college should recognize drawing on higher ground than direct technical preparation for courses in science and engineering?¹ Why should not the college, in determining whether drawing or any other subject is fit to receive entrance credit, ask also the questions: What is its social value? Of what practical value is it to the individual? Does it possess culture elements? Is it a subject that belongs especially to the secondary stage of education? When answers to such questions as these are given their due weight, drawing will be found on the list of credit subjects.

Drawing is a means of expression auxiliary to speech; its directness and its force are recognized more and more. As proof of this statement we have but to call to mind the rapidly increasing use of drawings in popular books, magazines, scientific treatises, advertising devices, and the daily newspapers. Often the drawings are more important than the printed words that go with them. As a means of expression drawing is more pointed and usually far more effective. The man who has power to use both drawing and speech effectively can make a double contribution to society; and his work is sure to be harmonious. Who has not been impressed with the perfection of even the simpler parts of the works of William Hamilton Gibson! Either his drawing or

¹ Johns Hopkins University has taken a notable step in this direction by requiring one year of work in drawing (three hours a week) for the degree of A.B. This may be either freehand or mechanical.

his written language would attract us, but together they become a masterpiece. The college recognizes one of these means of expression; why should it not recognize the other also?

But drawing is a means of expression and communication apart from written speech in both the industrial arts and the fine arts. In most of the industrial arts drawing is the chief means of transmitting facts of design and construction, and in some of them it is the very foundation upon which everything else depends. It is common to speak of a working drawing as a "business letter to a mechanic." We speak of it thus because it may have all the good points of a perfect business letter. It may be brief, direct, to the point, forceful, comprehensive, and clear. If more people could write such business letters to the mechanics they employ, there would be fewer misunderstandings in the world and less waste of human energy by friction between those who want things and those who make them. It goes without saying that every trained mechanic, every engineer and architect, must know how to draw; but too seldom is it appreciated how much the power to draw is needed by every educated man. He needs it as an auxiliary to speech, as a means of transmitting thought concerning the industrial arts; for every man has wants which must be supplied by these arts, and he needs it also in his recreation. More and more some form of handicraft is being taken up profitably as a means of recreation after severer mental effort. Very often the value and the degree of pleasure in such work depends upon ability to draw.

But it is in the fine arts that drawing reaches its highest level. Here not only facts of form and tone are depicted, but human feelings are expressed, and even the attributes of the Infinite Father are brought before our vision. While this highest level of expression through drawing cannot be compassed in the secondary school, the school can reach up toward it—can encourage the student on. It can also help him to appreciate the works of the masters of painting and sculpture and architecture. No one is likely to challenge the statement that in America we are in great need of a fuller and finer and truer appreciation of works of art. Next to power to create we need the power to

appreciate; and for the most of us the latter is far more important than the former. The study of drawing as at present taught in some of the best secondary schools, opens the door to an appreciation of the world's great masterpieces. To draw under the direction of a wise teacher an antefix taken from the Parthenon, is but an introduction to a study of the crowning glory of Greek architecture; to sketch one of its pediment figures or to study the composition of its frieze is to become acquainted with Phidias, and to learn of the age of Pericles. Copying the lotus flower or the winged globe may suggest a study of the religious beliefs and the colossal temples of the ancient Pharaohs; finding out the windings of a Moorish panel ornament may lure one on to the beauties of the Alhambra; designing a grille may reveal the spirit of the crafts and guilds of the Middle Ages; sketching a classmate, even, who has taken his turn as model, may lead to a critical study of the drawings of Rembrandt or Michael Angelo. Drawing does not—certainly need not and should not—stop with mere technique. It reaches out and touches history, literature, the fine arts, and religion, and becomes an important culture study.

Drawing is also a valuable means of hand-and-eye training, and as such it belongs especially in the secondary school. In the elementary school its chief value is as a means of expression; in the secondary school the objects drawn are more fully and accurately represented; technique becomes an object, and the result is more definite hand-and-eye training. Both theory and practice have pointed out that as hand-and-eye training drawing is more valuable in the secondary school than in the college. Students who have never done serious work in drawing before they reach college find greater difficulty in learning to draw than they would had they begun in the secondary school.

To summarize, drawing is a fit subject to receive college-entrance credit, not merely in cases where drawing is to be pursued in the college, but also where it is not. Drawing furnishes a means of expression which is of great practical value to the individual and to society; it is a means of culture. It is needed

in every secondary school. Every college student is the better fitted for his work for having studied it. For these reasons the college should recognize thorough work in drawing by allowing entrance credit for it.

The effect of such action upon the secondary school would be to encourage it to bring its work in drawing up to a higher standard, and to make this standard more nearly uniform throughout the country. More students would take drawing, for they would appreciate its value much more. The effect upon the college, especially where a liberal system of credit is in vogue, hardly would be appreciable. Students presenting drawing might be a little short in one or two other subjects, but with a flexible curriculum no serious difficulties would arise. Gradually the broader general preparation would be appreciated by most or all of the departments of the college, while some would recognize a distinct and definite advantage on account of it. The effect upon the individual student, which effect ought to outweigh all others together, would be to give him more universal and perfect means of expression, to increase his practical power, to develop in him a higher appreciation of the beautiful, to give him a freer and fuller opportunity to find out his own aptitudes, and thus to make himself a more efficient member of society.

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