

James H. Canfield, well known in Nebraska as a former Chancellor of the State University, is the author of a very neatly printed book of about 200 pages, just published by The Macmillan Company and entitled "The College Student and His Problems." Perhaps the first thing that strikes an old acquaintance of the author in reading his book, is that his recent "down east" environment has not impaired the tactful familiarity of his address, while it has urbanized and otherwise refined his mode of expression. The book is destined to make an important impression upon the class of our youth to whom it is addressed, both because it is so written that it will be widely read, and because it is worthy of reading.

Notwithstanding its title, the most pertinent and important part of the book is addressed to possible or prospective, rather than to actual college students, under the query, "why go to college?" The professional physician of souls and the professional physician of bodies with like persistence, prescribe their remedies as indispensable respectively, to spiritual and physical health; and the manufacturer and the merchant also advertise the supreme advantages of their wares. And so from this prince and life-long spokesman of a vast educational organization or cult, we would naturally look for at least a perfunctory plea for college education. But, as we should also expect of the man, Chancellor Canfield performs this part, and much more with both power and plausibility. His prescription, moreover, is sweeping—a college course for all young men. He makes only this barely possible exception: "Unless in some peculiar and unusual way you have positive and definite and conclusive assurance that it will be only a waste of time and effort to undertake a college course, enter some college at once—even if debt must be incurred for its expense." For, "if the choice must be made between entering upon life in the bonds of ignorance or of limited education, or in the bonds of debt, the latter is to be chosen—every time."

But the author puts the "practical" advantages of a college education foremost in his plea; and this is indicative of the radical change of public sentiment touching this question that has taken place in a comparatively few years. He does not, however, wholly neglect the spiritual or sentimental argument: "Only the mind which becomes public and large can ever enter into the highest joys of life. And only the mind which is early and thoroughly and wisely disciplined, can possibly and surely hope to become public and large. You may secure this discipline outside the walls of a college. Some men have

done this, but the surest road is that trodden by hundreds and thousands during all the past—the college."

But it is significant that these degenerate days of commercialism should have driven a Goliath champion of the college to this as a crucial test:

"The best business men of today very generally favor the graduate, preferring him to the non-graduate; and look for more intelligent effort, a wider outlook, a finer grasp, more rapid advancement than are possible to the average man, who has been denied the privilege of higher training. * * * Twenty-five years from now the young men of today must compete largely with college men. They will find themselves trotting in quite another class, and they must meet the pace or be barred. The learned professions, so-called, the technical callings, the world of literature, the avenues of production and of commerce, public life and service—all are now crowded with collegians, give preference to collegians. * * * As A. E. Winship puts it: 'It is now certain that in every avenue of competition one must face elaborately trained and educated men and women.' * * * It is entirely true that the college-bred boy must begin at the bottom, and that at the outset he appears to have lost time—wandering about among the dead languages and philosophy and the history of the past, and fine-spun theories of the present, while 'the other fellow' has mastered the elements of his business or calling, and is already well up the ladder. But the college man is destined to climb faster and higher. He does not reach the end of his tether nearly so soon as 'the other fellow,' and, all other things being equal, he soon masters the other fellow as being simply one of the incidents of the situation. * * * A few exceptional men are undoubtedly what they are because they were not trammelled by the work of a college."

But there is a great cloud of witnesses, against the author's contention that a college education helps rather than hinders a man in the competitive struggle of the commercial or industrial world, and prominent among them are Mr. Schwab, the colossus of the steel trust and many other captains of industry; and for some time, doubtless, this will be a fairly open question. The prominence which this special representative of the college system gives to the commercial argument in favor of the college education illustrates how rapidly the college spirit of devotion to ideals and to high thinking and learning for its own sake has been giving way to the "practical" commercial aim. And if Chancellor Canfield's contention that the college preparation is good or indispensable for a business career is true is it not so chiefly because the colleges too have become commercialized?

At any rate many of the collegians of middle life or beyond, who read our author's book, and are reminded thereby of the opportunities and time wasted in their earlier years of business life before they could divest themselves of ideals and ideas which were their college heritage, and were a cause of failure and a bar to worldly success; and who may be still limping because of these early shackles, will come to this conclusion. But in spite of a bias of this sort on our own part the old-time spirit asserts itself in presence of the commercial defense of a college education and we are impelled to oppose to it that noble plea of the late Joseph Leconte:

"This entire plan (of the educational course) should be centered about the ideal of the development of the individual, whom modern social organization tends too much to reduce to a mere machine. Hence, the utilitarian considerations should be rigidly ruled out of the college course. Life's business belongs elsewhere; and the social order claims its own. A liberal education must be in conscious opposition to the calls of the outer world; for its purpose is the training of the individuals who shall be strong enough to resist the crushing power of the social forces, and thereby to become the centres whence new social forces shall radiate."

For the present, therefore, ostensible discussion of the question of the desirability of a college course for the present young man is an utter confusion for want of a definition of what a college course is or should be; and the controversy really hinges on this last question. But it seems to the writer, that in the confusion of the meantime, older collegians in particular, and frank questioners in general, will find a more congenial atmosphere for their sentiment and conscience and a firmer footing for their logic, standing on the old Orthodox ground with Leconte than on the new ground with Canfield and very many of his contemporaries.

On the topic of fraternities and elective courses, the author gives many wise and timely suggestions. He apparently accepts these features of the modern college and university as having "come to stay," and therefore treats them, though half warily, from the point of view that "whatever is, is right." Though he makes no broad-side attack, he incidentally recognizes the force of the objections made against them by others. For example, he says of electives that, "they are not intended to be regarded as a collection of soft snaps, it is not expected that they will become the refuge of every weak and timid man. * * * The elective system has been misused and abused by both faculty and students, beyond question." The author also acknowledges that college fraternities tend to lead students into habits of extravagance. But a more fundamental and serious objection to the fraternities is that their gregarious club life breeds disorderly habits, and in general tends to un-domesticate the young men. The great aversion of landlords to renting houses to fraternities on account of the damage they do them, illustrates the first objection. In the thick of present insistence and concession that club life and extraordinary avocations are rapidly destroying the domestic spirit in our women, young and otherwise, how are we to conserve any remnant of the old home life unless we domesticate—or hold in the spirit of domesticity—the boys?

(The Macmillan Company, 66, Fifth Ave., price \$1.00.)