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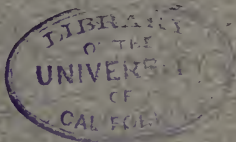


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# *Does It Pay To Go To College?*

**An Answer to the Argument of Mr. R. T. Crane, in the Form of an Address Delivered before the Graduating Class of the Evanston, Ill., Township High School by J. S. Clark, Professor in Northwestern University**



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# Does It Pay to Go to College?

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[This Pamphlet is presented with the compliments of President Schurman of Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y. in the hope that the young men who are now attending the high schools of New York State may read and carefully consider the arguments so admirably set forth herein in favor of a liberal education such as that given in the College of Arts and Sciences of Cornell University.]

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Some time last year, one of Chicago's "captains of industry," a man who has built up one of the greatest manufactures in the world, made a somewhat extensive investigation into a subject which he states as follows: "The Utility of an Academic or Classical Education for Young Men Who Have to Earn their own Living and who Expect to Pursue a Commercial Life." The results of this investigation he published and distributed very generously in a booklet of 100 and odd pages, under the title that I have already quoted: "The Utility of an Academic or Classical Education" &c. This investigation consisted of three steps; in the first place, the author addressed the presidents of nineteen prominent American colleges in a circular letter, asking, among other questions, whether, in their opinion, "there was any evidence that an academic or classical education was of any value to this class of young men." Of the nineteen college presidents, six, including the heads of Cornell, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and Minnesota Universities, did not reply. The replies of the other thirteen are quoted in part in the booklet, but they do not seem to satisfy the investigator. In fact, his investigation does not seem to have attracted much attention from the educational world, although his standing as a great manufacturer should give his opinions much weight. The reasons for this apparent indifference appear very clearly in the booklet referred to. As the author has placed his name on the title-page, and as he has issued his booklet somewhat in the form of a challenge, I trust that I shall not be charged with indelicacy if, in order to avoid clumsy circumlocutions, I refer to him by name in this discussion. The spirit in which Mr. Crane approaches the question is best manifested by quoting a few lines from the section of his booklet devoted to the replies from college presidents. He says: "It should be borne in mind that, wherever college education is mentioned herein, it refers exclusively to the so-called 'academic' course or the classical and literary department. Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon this distinction; for neglect of it is the cause of a large part of the confusion of



thought and expression on this subject which is so prevalent among even the educated. By referring to the letter of Charles W. Eliot on page 12 it appears that even so highly educated a gentleman as the president of Harvard University confounds an academic course with scientific and technical courses! The reader is urged to avoid this mistake carefully." That is to say, Mr. Crane leaves out of his discussion over fifty per cent of all graduates of American institutions of college rank; because a little investigation proves that the number of men annually graduated from our technical, scientific, and engineering schools, plus the number annually graduating in the scientific courses of the colleges proper, makes an aggregate of considerably over fifty per cent. You may easily verify this statement by examining representative college catalogues. It appears, then, that Mr. Crane concedes that fifty per cent of the young men who take a course of study in an institution beyond the high school are wise in so doing; and, to use his own language, he finds that such courses are of "utility to young men who have to earn their own living and who expect to pursue a commercial life."

But let us quote further from his booklet, in illustration of his spirit and his logic. He says: "If the facts are as many believe, these institutions are the cause of most serious error, if not of positive injury, to this class of young men." That is, instead of approaching the question in an unbiased, scientific manner, Mr. Crane follows the old mediaeval dictum of the schoolmen, and tells us, "First learn what is to be believed." Continuing, he says of the replies received from the college presidents, "It will appear how little light they are able to give on this subject." Later he scores President Eliot for his ignorance in including mining and engineering under the head of business; and of all the replies he says: "I leave it to the public to judge whether the heads of these institutions have a proper appreciation of the importance of making accurate statements on this subject. There is nothing in their letters to show that they have made a systematic effort to ascertain the true condition of the question; in fact, it is doubtful whether they have made any effort at all in this direction. It certainly would not do for a business man to conduct his affairs in this way. He must at all times be in a position to defend the quality of the goods he produces; and if he makes false statements about them, he very soon finds that it has a disastrous effect on his business." It appears then, that, in Mr. Crane's conception, the work of a college instructor is exactly parallel with that of a maker of iron castings or other merchandise. On the whole, as you see, he considers the college presidents rather a bad lot. More than once he challenges the common sense and veracity of these and of the other classes of men from whom he takes his data. But let us draw a parallel. Suppose, for example, that the head of some labor union, say the stone-cutters, should address

a circular letter, with stamped envelope enclosed, to the nineteen most prominent artists in the United States, and should ask them to inform him whether, in their opinion, there was any thing of practical value about their occupation. Is it likely that more than thirteen of the nineteen would reply? Please do not misunderstand me. They would be entirely unjustified in declining to reply on the ground that the work of an artist is more honorable than that of a stone-cutter. Any such false idea of life cannot be too strongly condemned. As a Chicago business man said the other day, "It is just as honorable to pound steel and iron as it is to pound the pulpit." And, as I had occasion recently to say, It is better to make a good shoe than a poor ship or a poor sermon or a poor picture or a poor legal brief, or a poor medical diagnosis. No; these artists, if they declined to take the stone-cutters' circular seriously, would do so because it was obvious that the stone-cutters' point of view was such that it would be quite impossible for him to understand their point of view. And so, if the educational world has paid little attention to Mr. Crane's pamphlet, it is because of the blankly material ground on which he bases his inquiry. Doubtless the six college presidents who declined to answer his letter stand in the same relation as did that famous courtier of the old king of Siam, who tried in vain to convince his royal master that water ever exists in a solid form, and who lost his head for insisting that it sometimes does.

But let us be more considerate toward Mr. Crane than he is toward the college presidents. Let us assume, for the sake of the argument, that he is more accurate, more logical, more honest, and more consistent than are Presidents Eliot, Hadley, Angell, Jordan, Wheeler, Draper, Harper, and the rest. Let us take his argument on his own low material ground and within the narrow limits set down in his booklet. His second step was to address another circular letter of inquiry, with stamp enclosed, to 1,593 young men who have been graduated within the last seven years from Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia, Cornell, and the Universities of Chicago, Rochester, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Nebraska, and California. For some reason, the University of Michigan, perhaps the most fairly representative institution of the whole country, was omitted in this second step in the investigation. The nature of this circular to college graduates appears from two of its questions:

1. "Has your college education been of benefit to you in the performance of your duties and in securing advancement?"

2. "If you had your life to live over, would you take a college course in preference to starting in business that much earlier?"

Of the 1,593 letters sent out, 129 were returned undelivered, and no replies were received from 909. Out of the 555 replies received, 490 were from graduates who had taken up a professional or technical line of work or who stated that they did not come within the scope of Mr.

Crane's inquiry. This leaves only 65 letters from the class that he desired to reach. Observe how very narrow is the basis of his conclusions. He first eliminates that vast number, fully fifty per cent, of the college men who have taken technical or scientific work, tacitly admitting that a college education for them is a good thing, even if they enter mercantile life. Then, of the remaining fifty per cent, he eliminates all but 65 out of 555. That is, reduced to percentages, we have 11 per cent of 50 per cent, or a total of about five and one-half per cent of the whole college output as a basis of inquiry. Now, accepting as correct Mr. Crane's conclusions that about five and one-half per cent of academic college graduates go into business, in his definition of business, what does he find? Let me answer in his own words: "Sixty out of the sixty-five say that, if they had their lives to live over, they would take a college course" [p. 27] . . . "The question whether a college education has been of benefit to them in the performance of their duties and in securing advancement is answered in the affirmative by fifty and in the negative by seven. The others gave no information on this point." [p. 26.] It appears, then, that, taking the five and one-half per cent of the classical or academic graduates who go into business, 7 out of 65, or a little over 10 per cent, tell Mr. Crane that it does not pay to go to college; while 50 out of 65, or over 73 per cent, tell him that it *does* pay to go to college.

But what of the other question? Let me again quote Mr. Crane [p. 27]: "Even those who admit that they would be better off financially if they had never gone to college, claim that whatever they lose in this respect, is more than compensated for by the college experience and the increased capacity it has given them for enjoying life." An extreme instance of this is seen in the case of one of these young men, who states that upon leaving college he had neither pull nor capital; that he thinks his college experience was of no material or direct benefit to him in securing a position; that he finally drifted into the cattle business out West, in which he was unsuccessful, and that he is now out of a position. Notwithstanding all this, and admitting, as he does, that, had he continued in business instead of going to college, his financial condition undoubtedly would have been better than it is today, he says: "I think I am safe in saying that, if I had the decision to make over again, I should take the college education. It may not make great returns on the investment in actual money; but to the man who has taste and determination, it makes, I feel, adequate returns in the enlarged field he is given for the pursuits of his life with happiness to himself and with benefit to those about him." This, remember, is Mr. Crane's awful example—what he himself calls an extreme case; the worst, obviously, to be found among that ten per cent who replied that it does not pay, financially, to go to college.

In the first place, we may fairly ask, what reason is there for



believing that this extreme case would, as he thinks, have been better off financially if he had never gone to college? He says that, upon leaving college, he had neither pull nor capital. I wonder if Mr. Crane realizes that that phrase exactly describes the condition of the great mass of young men who are graduating from American colleges this month. I have known personally over one thousand such graduates; and I am sure that less than five per cent of these have had, on graduation, either pull or capital. The simple fact, well known to every observant college instructor, is that, taking the colleges as a whole, large and small, and including only those of respectable rank, nearly if not quite one-half of the students there are largely or entirely dependent on their own resources—they work their way through by all manner of manual and other labor. Moreover, this extreme case says that he “finally drifted into the cattle business out West.” Again, we may fairly ask, Does the young man who merely drifts ever amount to much anywhere, in business or out? This “extreme case” of Mr. Crane’s is a type exceedingly familiar to every college instructor. He used to be well portrayed by the Rev. Dr. Payne, who was once a university president and afterward the educational secretary in charge of the benevolent educational work of a great church. As he went about lecturing and trying to raise funds to help a noble army of young men who were doing so much to help themselves, the good Doctor was frequently met with some such remark as this: “Well, what is the use of giving money to send boys to college? Look at young So-and-so, who lives in this town. He’s a college graduate, and he can’t earn his salt; he hardly knows enough to go in when it rains; he never has amounted to anything and never will.” “Well,” said the good Doctor, “when I met such a statement, I used to say: ‘Brethren, do you remember how, when Moses, the great law-giver, came down from the mount, where he had communed with the Almighty and had received the tables of the law, he found that, during his absence and with the apparent consent of Aaron, the people had made a golden calf and were bowing down to it—do you remember how Moses’ anger waxed hot? and how he took Aaron to task for the great sin of the people; and how Aaron replied—“‘Let not the anger of my lord wax hot; thou knowest the people, that they are set on mischief. For they said unto me, Make us gods which shall go before us, . . . And I said unto them Whosoever hath any gold, let them break it off. So they gave it me; then I cast it into the fire and there came out—this calf.’” “Well,” said the good Doctor, “Brethren, it *does* sometimes happen that way. It is true that, now and then, some generous parent or church or relative does cast in gold into the college treasury and there does come out—this calf.” But does that prove that it is not wise for a boy to go to college if he is worth sending? Does Mr. Crane’s “extreme case” prove that it does not pay to go to college? Please remember that, out

of sixty-five academic graduates, fifty informed him that it does pay, financially, to go to college; while only seven said that it does not.

In commenting on this extreme case, Mr. Crane shows that he is laboring under a misconception as common as it is unfortunate. A college is not a brain factory. No college president or professor of any common sense has ever maintained that a college would give to a man the raw material of brains and character. A college is not a granary, whence each graduate is to go, bearing his big or little basket full of facts, which he is to dispense and apply during the rest of his natural life. Not a bit of it. A college is a grindstone. It is a place where men and women go to sharpen up what mother wit they may have obtained by inheritance or environment or both. Now you can't sharpen a cabbage, and you can't sharpen a pumpkin. But if a boy has a fair endowment of brains and a real desire to succeed in the world, either in business or in any other occupation, it is as unwise to say that a college education does not pay as it would be to say that a lumberman, going into the forest to fell trees, should not wisely hold his axe against a grindstone before going to work, but should take the chances of getting a good edge on his axe by the accidental hard knocks that it will get against the rocks among the trees. You can't put an edge of much permanence even on a piece of soft iron. But if a boy has a bit of true blue steel in his make-up, it surely pays to sharpen it against the mathematics, the science, the language work, the philosophy of the academic college course.

And there is another fact, obviously not known to Mr. Crane and not known to the general public, yet very well known to every observant college instructor, and that is this: as a rule, the strong men in any college class do not go into business. There are exceptions to this rule, it is true, but they are relatively few. The strong men in any college class—those who have learned to think; who have made their mark in the college work; those we expect to hear from in after life—these, as a rule, do not go into business. They go into law, medicine, the ministry, teaching, engineering, newspaper work, or some other calling that may fairly be called professional. Now I do not say that this ought to be so. On the contrary, I believe that it is very unfortunate for this country and for society in general that it is so. Yet the fact stands. And it is not difficult to explain. We have obviously inherited from our European ancestors that false idea of life which for a thousand years has pervaded England, Germany, France, and the rest of Europe, that somehow the work of a professional man is more honorable than that of a merchant or a manufacturer. We all know of the superciliousness with which even an ordinary Englishman is accustomed to speak of those whom he calls "tradespeople." Now I hate this kind of foolishness. I think it grows out of a false, silly view of life and of the dignity of all honest work. But I say the

fact stands that, as a rule, the strong men in any college class do not go into business. To a college man this statement is self-evident. But to substantiate it I have made, in preparing this address, a careful examination of the alumni records of two colleges, one in the East and one in the West. Each of these colleges is recognized as of high rank, yet neither has acquired, through wealth or age, such a degree of social prestige that it attracts men who are *sent* to college primarily because of the social distinction that attaches to degrees from certain institutions.

We all admire and reverence what we call the old "salt water" colleges. There are strong men there, both teachers and pupils. Yet every frank observer familiar with the facts must admit that at each of these old and wealthy institutions there is always a considerable percentage of men who do not really *go* to college; at least, they do not go there to sharpen their wits. They are boys who, as Mr. Crane would say, have both pull and capital; and they are *sent* to college primarily because of the social prestige that attaches to graduation from any one of these old colleges. It is right here, by the way, that, as I believe, one or two eminent presidents of these old colleges have recently made a mistake in the data on which they have argued for a shortening of the college course. If you read their arguments carefully, you will discover that they have taken their statistics too largely from the colleges giving social prestige and not from a fair general average of student life in the United States as a whole. And so I think that my investigation, made from the alumni records of two colleges without this social prestige, gives pretty fairly the average facts. Each of these alumni records gives, concisely, the life-history since graduation of its alumni. In the Eastern college, out of 1,147 men who were graduated during the 46 years from 1852 to 1898, inclusive, only 71, or a little over six-tenths of one per cent, went into a business life. And the record clearly shows that, while a few of these 71 maintained a high rank in college, they were not, as a class, among the best or even among the second best students.

In the Western college, the alumni record shows that, out of 677 men graduated during the 43 years from 1859 to 1902, inclusive, 130, or about 27 per cent, entered business life. These Western graduates show a higher average rank while in college; but their number includes few of the best men in the respective classes. You see that this 27 per cent is a much larger ratio than the five and one-half per cent shown in the returns that Mr. Crane obtained from letters addressed to graduates of seven old Eastern and five Western colleges. And this is what might be expected; for we have, at least in the Central West, much less of that supercilious attitude toward a mercantile life and toward honest manual labor than they have in the East. There is reason to believe, then, that the 65 men who had gone into business,



out of the 555 who answered Mr. Crane, do not represent the fair average ability of the American college graduate. We have ground for thinking that while, doubtless, some of them did strong undergraduate work, such was not the general rule. It should be stated that a remarkable change in these statistics appears within the last three years. President Elliot reports that of the last Harvard academic class, about fifty per cent proposed to enter business life, while statistics gathered from the great Western universities show a similar sudden change.

As a result, then, of the first two steps of Mr. Crane's investigation, we find that only five and one-half per cent of the academic college graduates go into business; and that, of these, over 73 per cent say that it does pay, in dollars and cents, to go to college, while about ten per cent of the academic graduates say that it does not pay much in money but that it does pay in that it gives greater happiness throughout life.

The third step in Mr. Crane's inquiry was to send a circular letter to one hundred business men, asking them such questions as the following:

1. "Have you any college men among your employes, and if so, what proportion are they of your entire force of the same class?"
2. "Is it your experience that college graduates make better help than persons of about the same caliber who have no college education?"
3. "Do you consider that there is need of more than a grammar school education in a general business life?"
4. "Estimating that it costs in the neighborhood of \$5,000 to go through college, would you advise a young man who had only this amount of money to spend it for a college education?"

Of the replies to these hundred letters to business men Mr. Crane prints extracts from forty. Most of these business men favor a college education; and some of them, like President Forgan, of the First National Bank of Chicago, state that as many as five and one-half per cent of their employes are college men. Mr. Crane challenges the sincerity of many of these replies, on the ground that these business men do not practice what they preach by giving the preference to college men in engaging help. But he forgets that, by his own showing, only five and one-half per cent of our academic graduates go into business—the identical percentage that Mr. Forgan employs. It will be seen, then, that we cannot reasonably expect business men to have a large percentage of college graduates as employes. They are not to be found. But it appears from Mr. Crane's third question that he doubts the value to a business man of even a high school education; for he asks whether there is need of more than a grammar school training, and elsewhere in his booklet he takes the same ground as is here implied. But again taking our data from his own pages, let us see what some of the business men say to the question, "Does it pay to go to college?" Mr. Dau,



vice-president of Reid, Murdoch & Co., says: "For a young man of more than average ability we are in favor of the best education and plenty of it."

Well, you all know that, as a rule, the young man who is not of more than average ability seldom gets through the high school, even if he ever enters the high school. Of course, there are exceptions, but this is the rule. The last U. S. census shows that of the 14,794,403 men in the United States over thirty years old, only one in fifteen has more than a common school education, and only one in forty-five has a college education.

Mr. Merrill, vice-president of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railway, answers Mr. Crane: "It has been my experience that the men with a college education make better help than men of about the same caliber who have not had that advantage, when they get to a point where their experience warrants putting them into advanced positions; and that it does not take them so long to get to a point where they may safely be promoted. A college education gives a young man habits of study and application which are invaluable. He learns how to use his brains to better advantage than one who has not had that training. You might as well say that an apprenticeship is of no advantage to a man who is going to follow a particular trade as to say, in the case of a man who is going to use his brains, that it is not an advantage to him that he should learn to use them logically by study. Brains are capable of development the same as muscles, and there is nothing I know of that will develop brains any faster than systematic study."

Mr. Tuttle, president of the Boston and Maine Railroad, writes: "As a general thing, we find college men capable of reaching a higher standard in the service in shorter time than those who lack the mental training that goes with education."

Mr. Harris, president of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad, says: "My impression is that college men are better trained and that they rise more rapidly than persons who have not attended college." And he adds significantly, "There is no doubt in my mind that a good education is desirable and more necessary now than ever before."

Mr. Fish, president of the Illinois Central, favors college graduates; and Mr. Welling, vice-president of the same road, writes that college men "are fitted to fill more important positions and can frequently be promoted more rapidly than men who have not had like advantages. . . . They are apt to be broader and stronger men and so better men."

Mr. E. P. Ripley, president of the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railway, answers: "I am of the opinion that college graduates are better equipped for general work, mental caliber and habits being the same, than non-collegiates. Their mental processes are more likely to

be accurate; they have generally a clearer perception of the fitness of things, and can meet the public and deal with other men upon rather a better plane than a man who has not been through college."

Marvin Hughitt, president of the Northwestern railway, says: "It is my conviction that a young man cannot get too good an education."

Mr. A. C. Bartlett, of Hibbard, Spencer & Bartlett, writes: "We think college discipline a benefit. While college graduates may not show greater *ability*, they do show mental *training*; as a consequence they advance more rapidly."

Mr. Smink, vice-president and general manager of the Reading Iron Co., says: "I am decidedly of the opinion that what Chauncey Depew [another business man, observe] is quoted as saying is absolutely true, to wit: 'Any young man equipped with a college education increases his chances of making a living and of a more rapid promotion in any line of business from two hundred to three hundred per cent, given that he possesses the requisite amount of industry, energy, and persistent application that characterize every successful business man.'"

I do not believe, personally, that Mr. Smink and Mr. Depew overstate the case. And it must be admitted that Mr. Depew's provision that the college graduate must have industry, energy, and application, is a fair condition. Of course, he must have. The trouble with Mr. Crane and with all those good people who discount a college education is that they contrast the college weakling with the energetic non-college man. As I have said; no college advertises to be a factory for making either energy or brains.

But let us make one or two more quotations. Mr. Cyrus McCormick, president of the McCormick Harvesting Machine Co., writes: "In selecting help we certainly would not avoid college men, but would rather give them the preference, believing that they would make quicker progress and show a better all-around ability than those who had not had the advantages of a college education."

Mr. Franklin McVeagh writes: "College graduates do not show greater mental ability; only more mental discipline, supposing natural abilities the same," and he adds, "I do not think you can get too much education in business life."

Mr. John V. Farwell says: "College graduates show greater ability in deciding questions and in making sales and purchases, and on that account are likely to advance more rapidly."

Mr. Thorne, manager for Montgomery Ward, says that about ten per cent of their employes are college men [nearly twice the percentage of college men who go into business]. And Mr. Thorne adds: "Persons having a college education show greater mental ability and advance more rapidly than those of about the same caliber who have not attended college."

These quotations, I think, give fairly the result of Mr. Crane's investigation of the opinions of prominent business men on the subject. Out of all the forty answers quoted, I find but one which is against a college education. One man, chairman of an Eastern railway board, writes: "I spent one year in college, and I consider it fortunate that it was not more." You see that, as in the case of his replies from the graduates themselves, Mr. Crane finds one extreme case. It is to be regretted that we are not informed just *how* this one man went to college. I have known many a young man who spent one year in college and whose instructors *also* considered it fortunate that it was not more.

Let us conclude our review of Mr. Crane's third step in his investigation by quoting from the letter of Mr. Conway, Secretary of the W. W. Kimball Co., of Chicago. He sums up the whole case from the business man's point of view very fairly as follows: "If all young men who desire a college education, and are able to attain it, returning from college at twenty-two or twenty-three, with their feet flat on the ground and a willingness on their part to begin at the bottom, working in the primary school of business with boys of fifteen or sixteen years of age, and never referring to the fact that they are college bred, but content with the consciousness that they have a good foundation and applying their energies to their business undertaking, such college graduates will stand a good chance, before middle life, of passing the boy who began his business life five or six years earlier, but without the college education."

Mr. Crane makes the most of this condition that the college graduate should be willing to begin at the bottom and to say little about his college training. And he is right. We all know very well that many college graduates do have "the big head." Our own townsman, Mr. T. K. Webster, a large employer of labor, said to me last week: "It takes about six months to wear the fuzz off a college graduate in business." We admit all that. But the fuzz is pretty sure to be worn off; and then you generally have something solid to work on. If it does not wear off, then the defect is in the boy's character and not in his education. It is much easier to cut off a stick than to make a good job in splicing it.

The case of such a young man finds illustration in the story of two lawyers who appeared on opposite sides of a certain case. One was a man of limited ability but one who prided himself on the strict propriety of his private life; while the other, though a man of great ability, was unfortunately addicted to drink. On the occasion referred to, the abler man came into court somewhat under the influence of liquor, but not sufficiently so to prevent him from presenting his case in a very effective manner. As his pious opponent perceived that his



own case was comparatively weak, he resorted to that last device of both good and evil men, sometimes, and began to substitute personal abuse for legal argument. "Why, your honor," said he to the learned judge, "I am surprised that you seem disposed to pay any attention to what this man says. Why, your honor, he is drunk—simply drunk!" and he continued this kind of abuse for some time. The other lawyer listened calmly to his opponent's tirade and then, rising slowly, thus addressed the judge: "Y-your honor, the gentleman's correct—quite correct. I *am* drunk. B-but hic—I'll get *over* that. The gentleman's a natural born f-fool, an' he'll never get over that."

Now, we admit that the ordinary college graduate is more or less conceited; but he'll get *over* that.

I have not time to quote from the criticism that Mr. Crane makes on the veracity of the business men who replied to him as well as on that of the college presidents and graduates; but let us look for a moment at his logic. He is severe upon many of his correspondents who have given him, on this subject, their impressions and convictions instead of hard facts. What he wants is "facts." Now listen to one of his conclusions. You will remember that, of the 1,593 college graduates to whom he addressed inquiries, only 555 replied; and all but 65 of these were professional and not business men. Commenting on this, Mr. Crane gives us this specimen "fact": He says: "Inasmuch as it is highly probable that the replies received represent that part of the 1,593 men addressed who are able to make the most favorable report, it may be fairly assumed that the sixty-five letters which are pertinent to our inquiry constitute the best showing which can be made on the affirmative side." You see Mr. Crane's own "facts" are "highly probable" and "may be assumed." But are they even probable? If any business or professional man sends out nearly 1,600 letters of inquiry, and receives only 555 answers, and finds that of these only 65 are pertinent, is he at all justified in saying that these 65 replies even "probably" make the best showing from the 1,600 people as a class? Again, Mr. Crane says: "In my opinion, few of our successful business men would have been anywhere near so successful in business had they gone to college." But his letters from forty business men do not give this verdict. You see he is giving us, not "facts" but his opinion.

Again, he says: "I feel quite sure that if the men who have been successful in business were asked whether they regretted starting in business at the time they did in place of going to college, . . . all would answer in the negative." He demands "facts" and then tells us that he is "quite sure" that business men would answer so and so.

And finally, he is illogical in that he bases much of his argument on one premise that a little careful examination would have shown to be wildly extravagant. In his letter to recent graduates, and re-



peatedly throughout his booklet, he assumes that the cost of a college education is about \$5,000. Moreover, he says [p. 3]: "I take the ground that a young man who goes to college not only is not benefited by it, after spending seven years in time and \$10,000 to \$12,000 in money, but is most decidedly and positively injured," etc., etc. Now it is easy to show that, taking only the colleges large and small, of respectable rank, the average cost of a college education in this country is not over \$1,500; and there is good reason to believe that it is as low as \$1,200. Doubtless there are a few men, especially in the old Eastern colleges, which attract rich men's sons because of the social prestige there afforded, who *do* spend as much as \$5,000 or more during the college course. But, counted in the mass of American college students, their number is so small as to be insignificant. In my own experience, covering twenty-two years of teaching in two representative colleges, I have never known a man to spend over \$2,500 during the four-year course; while hundreds of them have got through on less than \$1,200, and many have earned as they went nearly if not quite all of that. Pardon me if I quote further from personal experience. Mr. Crane wants "facts"; and I am not giving mere beliefs, impressions, or theories. I did not work my way through college. I paid full tuition, and my father paid all my bills. I had a good room, good board, as good clothes as the average of my class, and as much fun. The cost of the four years' course was a little less than \$1,200. True, we did not spend much money on flowers and carriages and fancy balls; and it was a blessing to us that we could not. Yet 95 per cent of the men in that class have been heard from. That was in the middle seventies. The general cost of living is higher now everywhere; yet I will guarantee to give to any of you boys a list of at least forty colleges of good rank where you can get through the four-year course comfortably and respectably to-day for \$1,200 and for even less in many cases.

Take, for example, the University of Michigan. I think that you will all agree that that is a college good enough for any man to attend. I believe that it is more representative of American colleges in general than is the average of those that Mr. Crane considered. If you will examine the "Calendar" of the University of Michigan, on pages 43 to 45 you will find that even to a student residing outside of Michigan, the average cost per year there for tuition and matriculation is but \$46.25. You will find, also, that you can get board there in clubs at from \$1.50 to \$2.00 a week and a room at from 75 cents to \$2.00 a week. Now, if you will take the best club board and call your room-rent \$1.50 per week—and by rooming with a chum you can get an excellent room in any college town for \$1.50 apiece—and if you will figure up the cost for a college year of thirty-four weeks, you will have a total of \$119.00 for tuition, matriculation, room-rent, and board at Michigan University. Thus, out of an average expenditure of \$300.00 per year,

you have left \$179.00 for clothes, books and incidental expenses, to say nothing of the considerable sum that almost any college student can pick up during the long summer vacation. So you see that you can get a college education at the oldest and strongest university in the Central West for \$1,200, and get it decently and comfortably. Moreover, the University of Michigan has sufficient social prestige to attract many young men of wealth. Possibly some of them spend as much as Mr. Crane's \$5,000, though I doubt it. Yet, taking them all together, rich and poor included, the "Calendar" tells us that the average total expenses of students at Michigan are only \$370 or \$1,480 for the four years' course, instead of Mr. Crane's \$5,000. Within a fortnight I have been told by a recent graduate of Michigan—a man who lived in style, and joined the most aristocratic fraternity at Ann Arbor—that his total expenses there did not exceed \$500 per year, or \$2,000 for the course. Now think of the scores of colleges less expensive than Michigan University, and you see how wildly extravagant is Mr. Crane's assumption that a man must have about \$5,000 in order to secure a college education. I can give you the names of plenty of men who have not worked their way and who have been graduated at Northwestern at a total cost of less than \$1,200 each, and have lived here comfortably and decently.

I say nothing of Mr. Crane's estimate of \$10,000 to \$12,000 as the combined cost of a high school and a college course. But let us dismiss his book by quoting from it his ideas of the meaning and value of life. We find some inconsistency in his statement here. In one paragraph he says: "I agree with President Hadley that, of two men having the same amount of money, the educated man will derive the greater enjoyment from life." We may well ask, Isn't that the whole question? In the words of the immortal Tammany legislator, "What are we here for?" Is it not to seek and obtain what happiness we may, both here and hereafter? But Mr. Crane adds: "I go further. I maintain that the college graduate will not make as much in business as he would if he had never gone to college." And later, in summing up the whole question he says: "If money is not the whole thing, I think it is safe to say that it is probably 75 per cent of the whole thing."

Now I ask you, Is that a sane, sound view of life? Do you want to conduct your life on such a theory? If this view of life is correct, then let us throw away all our literature, our art, our music, our religion,—everything that does not aid us in heaping up the almighty dollars, and let us heap them up as fast as we can and as long as we can. And when we must quit heaping, let us direct our executors to place what is left of us here in such a magnificent coffin as you may see in the window of an undertaker down on Wabash Avenue. It is a

sumptuous coffin—all made of carved rosewood and satin and velvet. It must have cost thousands of dollars. Well, if money is 75 per cent of life, let us be placed in such a receptacle, and let our executors pack in by our sides all our stocks and bonds and securities, and then — But why continue this mockery? You *know* that such a view of life is not sound. You know that that old grey poet, Joaquin Miller, told a tremendous truth when, standing on an Evanston lecture-platform a few years ago, the old man raised himself to his full height and exclaimed in a tone that those who heard can never forget, "There are no pockets in shrouds! There are no pockets in shrouds!"

But let us return to the low material plane of Mr. Crane's argument. Does it pay, financially, to go to college? You will remember that one of his prominent business men, Mr. Smink, general manager of the great Reading Iron Company, said: "I am decidedly of the opinion that what Mr. Chauncey M. Depew is quoted as saying is absolutely true, to wit: "Any young man equipped with a college education increases his chances of making a living and of a more rapid promotion in any line of business 200 to 300 per cent, given that he possesses the requisite amount of industry, energy, and persistent application that characterize every successful business men." But Mr. Crane easily disposes of Mr. Depew's statement with this bit of characteristic logic: "The views of Mr. Chauncey M. Depew, which Mr. Smink endorses so warmly, must be an extract from some after-dinner speech at some college banquet, where the genial Chauncey, having dined and wineed well, naturally felt drawn to say all the nice things he could think of about college graduates."

But let us see. I hold in my hand the latest and most authoritative statement on this question. It represents figures verified by the Federal Bureau of Education, and it bears the endorsement of Dr. Harris, our United States Commissioner of Education. Mr. Crane bases his conclusions as to the financial value of a college education on an investigation of 65 or at most 555 cases; and he expresses at the outset the strongest kind of bias in favor of one conclusion. This investigation is based on a careful examination of the United States census records from 1800 to 1870, and it covers the cases of over 10,000 men. Moreover, the figures have been verified, not by a man with a preconceived prejudice in favor of one result, but by the clerks in the federal bureau of education—men who have no interest whatever in any particular result of the investigation; for their salaries are paid just the same, no matter what is the result. Now, what does this unbiased investigation of over 10,000 cases show? In order to establish some generally accepted definition of success, the compilers of this statement take the men named in the well-known reference book, "Who's Who in America" as typically successful men. As you



doubtless know, this reference book is not one of those in which men's names are placed because they agree to buy a copy. It has demonstrated its freedom from any such taint. Doubtless this book omits some names that should be included; but I think that any one familiar with its pages will agree that it represents very fairly the selection of those Americans who have attained eminent success. On its first and second editions the criticism was perhaps justly made that it had too small a percentage of men of affairs—business men, the class of which Mr. Crane writes, and which he himself represents. But this error has been abundantly corrected. In the third edition,—that on which the federal bureau figures are based, we find a large percentage of the names to be those of successful business men. Now, what do the figures show? Let me read from the circular:

In the year 1900 there were, in the United States, 14,794,403 men over thirty years of age. Of these 1,757,023 were without education, 12,054,335 had only a common school training; 657,432 had a high school training added; and only 325,613 had a college education. Now, how many men from each of these classes became sufficiently notable in any line of "usefulness or reputable endeavor" to attract the attention of the impartial editors of "Who's Who"? The federal investigation shows that, of the one and three-fourths million uneducated men, not one attained such eminence. Of the twelve million with only a common school education, 1,368, or one in 8,812 became eminent; of the 657,432 who added a high school education, 1,627, or one in every 404 became eminent; while of the 325,613 college men 7,709, or one in every 42 was so successful as to be named in "Who's Who." To put the case more graphically: the federal investigation shows that, from 1800 to 1870, the uneducated boy in the United States failed entirely to become so notable "in any department of usefulness or reputable endeavor" as to attract the attention of the "Who's Who" editors, and that only 24 self-taught men succeeded. It shows, further, that a boy with only a common school education had, in round numbers, one chance in 9,000 of becoming eminent; that the boy with an added high school training had one chance in 404; and that the boy with a college training had one chance in 42 of becoming eminently successful. And, what is most significant of all—this unbiased examination, based on 10,000 cases, shows that the A. B. graduate, the very man whom Mr. Crane so discounts, was pre-eminently successful.

Let me repeat. It appears from this unbiased investigation, based on over 10,000 cases, that the boy with only a common school education has but one chance in 9,000 of becoming eminent, while the man with a college education has one chance in 42. Now, 42 is contained in 9,000, according to my arithmetic, about 215 times. It thus appears that when Chauncey Depew declared that a college education increases



a boy's chances of success from 200 to 300 per cent, he was talking, not the flattering compliments of a man who has dined and wined well at a college banquet, but hard common sense, based on hard statistics and viewed from the standpoint of a broadminded educated business man.

I have not time to analyze Mr. Crane's absurd statement that the colleges are mainly patronized by the rich. A brief examination of any dozen college registers will show that the great majority of Freshmen come from farms and from simple village homes. Nor have I time to refute his equally absurd statement that "college-bred men are seldom found to be conspicuous in the great moral questions affecting the welfare and happiness of mankind." In "Who's Who" you may find hundreds of men whose brief biographies disprove this statement. As a recent conspicuous local case, take our own John Hamline, a graduate of Northwestern, honored throughout the land as the father of civic reform in Chicago.

On page 98 Mr. Crane tells us that "the college is a kind of sheltered nest, where the young man grows his wings, protected from storms and the rude jostling of the crowd, and where he breathes an atmosphere of tradition and sentiment altogether foreign to that of the world of affairs." I wonder, if Mr. Crane had been one of the hundred young men who, during the last ten months here in Evanston, have shoveled coal and ashes, and tended furnaces at four o'clock in the morning, and shoveled snow from our walks before daylight with the mercury below zero, and groomed horses, and mowed lawns and waited on table and done a score of other kinds of honest but hard and menial labor in order to earn their board, and then have started out to spend the summer as book agents or farm laborers, in order to earn money for their tuition next year—I wonder if Mr. Crane had been one of this type, so common in every college town, if he would still feel sure that a college is always "a sheltered nest," etc., etc.

But, in closing, let us look at the question in a broader way. Does it pay to go to college? Does it pay to look at life through a key-hole when we may view it from a mountain-top? Does it pay to live at the bottom of a well when one may live on the top of a noble hill?

You all know the old fable of old Aesop about the frog who lived at the bottom of a well. But I want to repeat that story, with variations. And in making my variations I have no especial reference to Mr. Crane but rather to a general type of man. There was once a frog who lived at the bottom of a well. The well was just three feet in diameter. Now this frog was a very successful frog. He had made the most of all his opportunities, as he saw them. He had built up a vast business, and had accumulated great wealth. He was, withal, a generous frog, and he was universally respected by the frogs who lived also at the bottom of the well and by most other animals also. And he knew all about

what was going on in the bottom of the well. There wasn't anything that you could tell him about frog business that he didn't know. Of one thing he felt very sure. The universe was just exactly three feet in diameter. He knew that; for he had looked at it a thousand times through the top of the well, and had pondered on it. Now, please don't discount this frog merely because he was a frog. A frog is in every way as respectable as an elephant or any other animal, so long as he makes the most of himself.

Well, one day a lark who lived in a tree on a neighboring hill-top, becoming thirsty, flew down into the well and fell into conversation with this very successful and very eminent frog. Soon the lark began to talk about the wondrously great and beautiful universe that existed outside of the well, with its trees and flowers and hills and mountains. At first the frog listened respectfully but incredulously. But soon he grew impatient, and said to the lark, "Who are you anyway? Haven't you any eyes? Look up there. Can't you see for yourself that the universe is exactly three feet in diameter? Oh, you theoretical fellows make me tired. Who are you, anyway? What are you worth?" "Well," said the lark, "I am a member of the bird family. I haven't very many of this world's goods, though I manage to make a comfortable living. I pay my debts, and educate my children, and give a lift, now and then, to the bird who hasn't had such a good chance as I have had. I enjoy good books and music and pictures, and I travel some, and try to get the most out of life." But the frog continued to be incredulous and contemptuous. "Why," said he, "according to your own statement you have made barely enough to bury yourself. You're a doctrinaire, you are; you're a theorist. Why don't you drop all this twaddle about trees and mountains and all that and get down into the mud here and do business?" And then the lark flew up into the sunshine among the trees and the hills, and the frog returned vigorously to his business. And to this day that frog honestly believes, in the bottom of his heart, that the lark was a dreamer and that the world is just three feet in diameter.

Does it pay to go to college? Does it pay to have that new birth that comes through familiarity with a foreign language and literature? Does it pay to enter into intimate friendship with the great souls of all the ages through a wide acquaintance with our own literature? Does it pay to acquire the ability to make an absolutely logical and unanswerable chain of reasoning—that power, which, as Abraham Lincoln discovered, can come only from training in the higher mathematics? Why, if Mr. Crane had ever enjoyed a good drill in geometry, he would have been incapable of making the illogical argument that he has made. Does it pay to think the great thoughts of the great philosophers?

Does it pay to go to college? Does it pay to form the most intimate, lifelong friendships with the choicest spirits of your own generation? Thirty-one years ago next September five country boys found themselves in the same freshman class in an Eastern college. Three were the sons of farmers and two the sons of mechanics. For four years, in the same class, the same fraternity, and the same boarding-houses, they lived and worked and played together. And for thirty years they have held together more closely than most brothers of the same blood. Through all these decades they have corresponded continuously, and each has stood by the other through thick and thin. One of them now holds, perhaps, the finest position of its kind in America—professor of botany at Columbia. One has been for many years practically the head of a great Eastern high school. One has filled some of the best pulpits in the State of New York. One made a brilliant success as a physician, and then was graduated into the school of the hereafter, and the other is now speaking to you. And everyone of us knows that through all these thirty years this friendship has been the deepest and most blessed and most inspiring of his life. Does it pay to form such friendships as this? Does it pay to go to college?

Mr. Crane prefers boys with only a common school education as employes in business lines because, as he says: "They are cheaper, will last longer, and are more easily reduced to mere cogs in the business machine. A college man," he says, "knows too many other things." But do you want to live and die as "mere cogs in a machine," not knowing other things?

But you say that there are business men without a college or even a high school education who have developed a wide knowledge of literature and art and science and of all that broadens and ennobles life. I admit it. I have known two such men; and by far the most striking example lives right here in Evanston—a man who, with but a common school education, has developed, unaided, a large business, and has at the same time so cultivated a natural literary gift that he has produced several volumes of very creditable verse, and has won an enviable name among local writers.

But how many such cases do you happen to know of? Just count them up and see how many thumbs and fingers it takes. Why, they are as rare as white blackbirds. The exception proves the rule, so positively established by the figures from the federal bureau of investigation, that a man with a common school education has one chance in 9,000 of becoming eminent in any line, while the college graduate has one chance in forty-two.

But I hear you say, "Some of us can't go to college." I suppose that that is so. By all means *don't go* unless you *want* to go. No college, however thirsty for students, wants boys and girls who are merely *sent* or who go for the fun to be found there. Most faculties make



short work of such cases. They send them home to their mammas. But most of you can go if you really want to. I know of but two classes who can't go; those whose health is too frail to stand the strain of study or possible self-support and those who have aged or infirm relatives dependent upon them. Even some of these can go. I have known more than one young man who worked his way through college and supported an aged mother at the same time. But for the very small percentage who cannot go I have a word of encouragement. As I have said, not all the liberally educated people have been to college. If you will devote yourself systematically and persistently to the best literature, you will become liberally educated; never doubt it. A word as to where you can go. Of course, you can't all go to Yale or Harvard or Princeton. But don't make the tremendous mistake of despising the small college. If there is one striking fact in American history it is this: the large percentage of our most eminent men who have come from colleges insignificant in size and wealth. James A. Garfield is a typical case. Who ever heard of Hiram College till it suddenly became famous as this man's alma mater? Or, if you want a case brought right down to the present time and place, take Charles S. Deneen, a graduate of one of the smallest church colleges in the Central West. No, boys and girls. The great big question is not *where* you go to college but *how* you go to college. I once heard an eminent bishop say to a group of high school boys in Eastern Tennessee, who seemed saddened because so few of them could go to the great colleges: "Boys, it doesn't matter so much where you fill your own quart cup; whether you fill it out of the Charles river at Cambridge or out of the Tennessee river here. The great question is do you get your cup full." Does it pay to go to college? Jesus once said of his disciples: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." And so, I think, the American college comes to-day to every ambitious boy and girl in this broad land, and says, in all reverence, "I am come that *ye* may have life, and that *ye* may have it more abundantly."





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