

# THE LONG SUFFERING STUDENT

By CHARLES FRANKLING THWING

The college student of today, like the college student of yesterday, is a member of a democratic society or of a social democracy. But be it at once said that he is more of a social democrat than was his brother of the earlier time.

The increase in the number of individuals in the college is accompanied by a decrease in the number of individualisms. Similarities are more abounding in the present college groups than are eccentricities. Fashions in clothes are only a symbol and sign of likenesses in thought and behavior. Academic quality is in the saddle.

Today the health of students is the subject of a care more careful, and of a devotion more devoted and wiser—quite unlike the apparent carelessness and official indifference of an earlier time. Every large college

has its bureau or division of health, and every small college has its doctor.

Of course the gymnasium and the playing fields represent a permanent condition for health, equipped with competent groups of directors and coaches. The great change, however, is found in the mental health of students. For the mental ill health of students is more common, more serious, more fundamental, than is the sickness of body. Colleges are becoming far more solicitous for this complex side of the student's life. This solicitude arises in no small part from the increasing knowledge of the broad field of psychology.

Students are unconsciously adopting the biological method of intellectual growth, and consciously neglecting the method of growth by hard continuous study. The normal number of hours of

intellectual labor done in the college has in fifty (seventy) years been reduced in about the same proportion as it has in the industrial plants.

In the former time ten hours a day, sixty hours a week, was not exceptional for the student. Today the forty-eight hour week in the college would represent the higher and severer standard. Some would say that six hours a day is normal: two hours of recitation, conference, or lecture, and two hours of preparation in reading or writing for each exercise. The problem of the amount of study is, of course, both quantitative and qualitative. The intensity of mental application is at least as important as the duration of application. The question is, of course, a very individual one. It is also exceedingly complex. But for one, I do lament the decline in the hard, close, continuous working of the student.

My sorrow is made the greater by reason, at least in part, of the broader, more diverse, and more agreeable program of studies that is set before the student. A simple

examination of the catalogue of any college, a simple examinations of the courses offered in any department, provide convincing evidence that the program has become broader, more diverse, and more agreeable.

The revolution wrought in the knowledge of the natural world is incorporated in the scheme of studies offered the student — schemes covering the chemical, physical, geological, and biological sciences. The changes are fundamental. But changes hardly less fundamental are wrought in studies linguistic, economic, mathematical, historical, social. The scholastic wealth now set before the student is simply incalculable. He is made the potential possessor of riches of which his father or grandfather could never dream.

For the student this general enlargement of studies has been united with the need, a keener need indeed, of concentration: of concentration on certain subjects or groups of subjects. If the student knows less of *all* subjects than in the former time he certainly knows more of certain groups of subjects. The

relation of these groups of subjects to one another has been well interpreted and well controlled by college authorities. Intellectual breadth, which carries along with itself the peril of intellectual superficiality, and intellectual concentration, which carries along with itself the peril of narrowness, have been well adjusted to each other.

The student becomes a student in all subjects and a scholar in some. Choosing his vocation at an earlier age than did his father, he elects studies that specially fit him

to take up his professional preparation. For medicine he takes chemistry, biology, and physics; for law, history and economics; for theology; philosophy and psychology. Through such concentration he gains in power as well as in special knowledge. Knowing that all studies aid in every professional equipment, and knowing, too, that he is a citizen and an individual person, he appreciates the value of studies that seem unrelated to his future. — *Condensed from World's Work* (1928).

### WHAT IS FREE ENTERPRISE?

Some years ago, a friend of mine was invited by a Gallup poll taker to give his definition of "free enterprise."

"Free enterprise," said my friend, "is a euphemism under which businessmen conceal their thirst for profits."

There was a pause while the poll taker wrote this down. Then the poll taker said, "What's a euphemism?"

Such is the fate of words. They are measures of our ignorance as of our knowledge; they are sources of darkness as of light. But though they are elusive as the breath which bears them, perhaps we may put faith in this: that men who understand the world will be masters of the word, and men who are masters of the word have the rudiments of mastery over the world. — Burrows Dunham, *Man Against Myth*.