

STATE COLLEGIAN

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EDITORIAL

Of what value to the technical student is the study of History? This is a pertinent question brought to the surface again by the agitation and demonstrations of the past few weeks. We make no attempt to arraign either party to this controversy, but believe it is evident to all that neither side has pursued a course which can be considered entirely blameless.

The root of the trouble seems to lie in the objection to the announced intention of the instructor in History to raise the standard in that subject; to teach it so that the men would have learned something when they get through; and to place the course on a level with others in the institution. In plain words, History was to be a "cinch course" no longer. The series of events following the awakening of the Sophomore class to the seriousness of Mr. Ray's intentions are too well known to be recounted here. Let it be sufficient

to add that no man ever achieved permanent success, no matter how laudable his purpose and intentions, by antagonizing almost every one with whom he came in contact.

If this controversy has accomplished nothing else, it has at least brought out clearly the fact that it is the firm belief of a large number of the students of this institution, from Seniors down, that History is a light subject; that no man who is here studying Electrical, Civil or any other technical branch should be compelled to put two hours or more a day on something which is so entirely foreign to that which he is spending time and good money to learn something about. What has the lives of Aristides, Themistocles, Nero and a lot of other tough old guys got to do with Electrical Engineering? Why not make History optional and then if a man likes to study about these people all right. If he doesn't, let him put this time on a branch of his course that will be of some profit. These are a few of the arguments that are being advanced.

The great trouble here, and it is so almost every where one goes, is that there are a whole lot of people who cannot look beyond their own noses; a class who can see no use in wasting time and money on things which bring them no direct return in bread and butter. History was made compulsory because the Faculty know its value and efficiency in giving a man, in some small degree, a broad firm foundation. A college is no place to learn a trade. It should seek rather to give the student a good general training and culture. Any institution, particularly a technical college, which neglects to do this, fails in its most elementary and fundamental mission. It may not have occurred to some, but it nevertheless a fact that a man who graduates from a college or technical school and who knows nothing but

Electrical Engineering, Civil Engineering, or Chemistry, is in no sense whatsoever a college man. He is no more advanced, as far as general culture goes, than the motorman, the boiler maker or the dyer, who has never seen the inside of a higher institution of learning. The great technical schools of the country have seen and appreciated this fact, and to-day they are shaping their curricula accordingly.

We have had it drummed into us constantly by men who ought to know, "Learn one thing and learn that well. This is the age of specialist," is their cry. That may be all true enough, but it is possible to take such a statement too literally and carry it to extremes. The facts show that the most successful technical men of to-day are those who combine the broadest general culture with their specialty. Read the account in the "World's Work" of the life and achievements of Chas. M. Jacobs, Engineer in charge of the gigantic Pennsylvania Railroad tunnel under the Hudson River. Read the lives of any of the great successful technical men. There you will find that it pays to seize every opportunity to learn something, no matter how trivial, for one never knows when it may come in useful. In the lives of men dead and gone with which History has to deal, we learn their mistakes and how to avoid them. Ignorance has ruined more men than any other cause.

Mass. Institute of Technology now has a stiff course in History. Cornell is following her example and if The Pennsylvania State College is to maintain her reputation for turning out well trained and thoroughly equipped men, it is time we were falling in line.

The recent physical examination at Bucknell shows that the Freshman class is from five to eight percent better physically than the Sophomore class.