... COLLEGE EDUCATION FOR MEN OF BUSINESS
College Education

FOR

MEN OF BUSINESS

A Familiar Essay

BY

JOHN A. BROADUS

1913
This essay was written by Dr. John A. Broadus in 1875, in response to the need then beginning to be felt for bringing together the world of letters and the man of affairs. It is almost startling to see how intimately his counsel bears upon our situation today.

At the time of writing, Dr. Broadus was living in Greenville, South Carolina, where for eighteen years he was a part of the educational staff of this State.

Written for Richmond College, Virginia.
Those sprightly, growing boys of yours, what are you going to do about their education? Let us talk a little upon that question. Even if your mind is partly made up, there is no harm in listening to the notions of a man who has spent his life as an educator; of course you will decide for yourself all the same.

You have been looking about for now a good many years, and have pretty much concluded that it is desirable for those who are to be professional men to go to College. But your son will not enter a profession; he is going to spend his life in business. I ask,

**How Do You Know?**

You may have a very definite purpose on the subject, and so may he; but how can you be sure? Inquire concerning the men who have succeeded well in the several professions, and it will be very curious to see how small a proportion of them, at the age of sixteen or eighteen, had any notion of spending their lives in the professions they finally adopted. Parents and teachers often err egregiously in their judgment, as to what a youth was born for. It is said, that when Mr. Moody first spoke in a prayer-meeting, his pastor advised him not to attempt that again, as he had evidently no talent for public speaking; and now, let the crowds that hear his preaching tell, and the thousands of converts. And the lad himself will often err likewise. At one period of my own boyhood I read Cooper’s novels, of which my father was very fond, until I became enamored of Indian life, and fully resolved that as soon as I became “a man,” I would go to the Missouri territory (as they used to call it) among the Blackfoot Indians, get to be a great hunter and fighter, marry a squaw, the daughter of an old chief, and succeed him as chief of the tribe, and live and die in paint and feathers. Would any sensible father and mother
have said, The boy has got his head on that, it shows the native bent of his genius, and so there is no use in sending him to boarding-school? How do you know, then, and how does your son know, though he may have no such silly fancies as the boy just mentioned, what is his destined calling for life? And especially is this true as to the ministry of the gospel. If a man must be divinely called to this work, that will often happen much later in life than the proper time for entering college.

I am very glad you hold that the professional men of the future ought, in general, to be thoroughly educated. Even in the past, the most eminent men have much more frequently had this advantage than most persons imagine. Of the leading Baptist ministers in America a hundred years ago, quite a number had been to college, and nearly all the rest were laborious students. Or take our statesmen. America has been the Paradise of what we call self-made men. In every calling such men came to the front, and in politics there was long a decided advantage in being a self-made man. The fraction of Americans who have been to college is extremely small; how large, in comparison, is the fraction of leading statesmen who were college bred, even in this “new country,” with a prejudice in favor of the other class. Look at Congress, or the Virginia Legislature, at any time during the last hundred years, or at the present day, and the comparison of these two fractions will be very suggestive. And then we must stop calling ours a new country. Things are rapidly changing. In medicine and law it will, in less than fifty years, be required by public opinion here, as it is now in Europe, that the acceptable practitioner shall have a good general education and a thorough training in his profession. The editorial profession, which is looming up into such importance, greatly needs thorough education, in order to breadth of view and sympathy with all truth, in order to correct handling of the ten thousand subjects which journalists have to treat, and in order that they may cease butchering the English language and shocking literary taste in the frightful fashion to which, with few exceptions, they are now accustomed. And teachers, what profession is more important than this? What greater need is there among us—except the need of Christian morality—than of really well-qualified
teachers? Everybody believes in schools for children. But education has to work from above downwards. Where shall we get educated teachers, unless people more generally send their sons to our higher schools? As to our ministers, I think the Baptists have been quite right in encouraging some uneducated men to preach. It was a necessity, else the masses would never have been reached; for well-educated men were too few, and the illiterate could often command a fuller sympathy. A like necessity will still exist, but it will be constantly diminishing. An increasingly large proportion of our ministers must be thoroughly educated men, or Baptists will not keep pace with the times.

But coming back to your son,

**Suppose He Does**

spend his life as a man of business, an agriculturist, merchant, manufacturer, or the like. I earnestly urge that in such a business life, higher education, or what we commonly call college education, will be of great advantage to him. So many doubt this, deny, even ridicule the idea, that I beg your special attention. Good and generous men, all over the land, are even giving their money to endow colleges to educate other people’s sons, and then entirely failing to send their own sons to them. Now, I think there is no little popular error about this something we call education, partly due to the wrong methods pursued and wrong ideas put forth by some professed educators. Pray consider, then,

**What Do We Mean by Education?**

This term is generally used among us in quite too narrow a sense. Thus, we hear a great deal about “educated men” and “self-educated men.” Now, in one sense, every man is self-educated who is ever really educated at all. It is only in the voluntary exertion of his mental powers that he gains development and discipline of these powers. John Randolph said, “Put a blockhead through college, and the more books you pile on his head the bigger block-head he will be.” A man has to educate himself, no matter how numerous and advantageous his
helps. And then, in another sense, no man is self-educated. Even those who never have a teacher, if they really become educated men, have been educated by books (teachers who, being dead, yet speak), by the men with whom they converse, by the events which lead them to think, which draw out their powers into active exercise, by the ideas which are abroad in the atmosphere of their time. There is, then, no such broad difference between the educated and the self-educated as many suppose.

Now, when can we say that one is an educated man? My answer would make something like the following points: 1. An educated man is one whose mind is widened out, so that he can take broad views, instead of being narrow-minded; so that he can see the different sides of a question, or at least can know that all questions have different sides. 2. An educated man is one who has the power of patient thinking; who can fasten his mind on a subject, and hold it there while he pleases; who can keep looking at a subject till he sees into it and sees through it. If anybody imagines it easy to think, in this steady way, he has not tried it much. 3. Again, an educated man is one who has sound judgment, who knows how to reason to right conclusions, and so to argue as to convince others that he is right. 4. And finally—not to speak now of imagination and taste, important as they are—an educated man is one who can express his thoughts clearly and forcibly. Now, if this be a roughly correct description of an educated man, there are many among us who deserve that name though they never went to college, and some of them went little to school. Look at our really successful business men. You will find that in most cases their minds are widened, so that they can take broad views. How grandly comprehensive are often the views of a great planter, merchant, manufacturer, or railroad man! Also, that they can keep thinking of a subject till they see into it; that they can judge soundly, and reason and argue, reaching just conclusions themselves, and convincing others that they are right; and that they have command of clear and forcible expression. These, then, are really educated men.

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But notice. They gain this education, in the school of life, very slowly in most cases, and usually cannot be called educated
in this sense, until they have reached or passed middle age. Now is it possible to select certain branches of knowledge, and combine them into such an apparatus of mental training, that by putting our young men through this we can, to a great extent, anticipate the discipline which would be slowly gained in the school of life, can give to the young man of twenty-one or twenty-five much of that accuracy of thought, soundness of judgment, and command of expression, which otherwise he would not have till he reaches fifty or more. Of course this cannot be wholly done, for some kinds of mental training can be gained only by experience and by slow degrees; but can it be done to a considerable extent? Wide and varied experiment has shown that it can be. And precisely this is the main object of all wise educational processes. The knowledge gained may or may not be directly useful in subsequent life; the main thing is to educate, to give the young man, in a few years, much of that development and strengthening and discipline of his principal faculties, that use of himself, which, otherwise, he would have only when almost an old man. And remember that if, in certain respects, we cannot anticipate the lessons of the school of life, in other respects we can prepare the young man to learn those lessons to better purpose than would otherwise, for him, have been possible.

See, then, how unwise people are when they keep asking, "What good will Latin and Astronomy and Metaphysics do a business man?" and keep saying that our youth must study only those branches of knowledge that will be "useful." What can be so useful to a young man as to improve his sense, to give him greater power of thinking closely and soundly, and of making other people think as he thinks, and do what he wants them to do? You wish your son to be a practical man, but you do not want him to spend his life as simply a day-laborer. Well, if he is to rise above this, is to acquire property, and control the labor of others for his advantage, it must be done by sense. Not even industry and saving ways will suffice, unless he can see into things, and judge wisely about complicated questions, and talk sensibly to those with whom he deals. No doubt these powers depend partly on natural endowment; but, then, they can be greatly improved by education, and I
insist that to improve them is the main object of all wise educational processes. In fact the method of education is even more important than the material. A superior teacher could, to a great extent, educate a superior pupil with almost any branch of knowledge. But certain subjects, suitably combined, are found to have much greater educating power than others, and on this principle we select and recommend. If some of them are also of practical utility, that is of course very desirable. But in very important respects the mind may be better enlarged, invigorated, disciplined by subjects of study which have little to do with practical life; and I repeat that the effect on the mind itself is the principal matter.

Results of Success in Business.

Besides, you do not simply wish your son to prosper in business, to accumulate property. Think of the good he is to get from his business success. He will wish to have a home, a bright and sweet home. Wealth alone cannot make this. I am not speaking now of the one thing that is needful, but consider how much culture contributes to the happiness and highest well-being of a growing family. Almost every man who has financial prosperity aspires to this. Some succeed, notwithstanding the lack of early advantages, but very few under such circumstances attain true and high culture. Many a worthy gentleman of middle age, fondly watching his growing children, and longing to inspire them with a relish for the delights of history, poetry, and popular science, to see them bathe their young minds in the sweet waters of literature, resolves winter after winter that he will read upon certain subjects—buys a number of books, begins, and next summer remembers that he has done almost nothing, and mourns, again and again, that he did not acquire reading habits, and a basis of literary knowledge in his youth. And sooth to say, many of our girls are now receiving a pretty fair education, and women are so quick in picking up and turning to account a knowledge of general literature, that our young men must get a better education than has been common, or they will in many cases find themselves unpleasantly inferior to their wives.
Still further, as to your son, think of the good he is to do in life. Success in business will give him influence in some respects, but how much more influential he will be, and how much more useful as a member of society, if he had in youth a good education. You have known here and there a man, prosperous, intelligent and of high character, who in a country neighborhood or a town was worth as much as a school—he seemed to lift up the whole community. In our current politics one of the great wants is that of intelligent leading citizens. There is much humbug now-a-days about reading and writing. Some of our new-light philosophers seem to think that if we can only teach everybody to read and write, then the masses will always vote wisely and do right. But what do they read? The fact is, the masses need, and always have, leaders, to tell them what to do; and the only question is whether they shall be led by low demagogues, or persons not much wiser than themselves, or by men worthy to lead, qualified to lead wisely. So, too, in our churches, the most crying need at present is for an educated membership. We have heard a great deal about educating our ministers, but educated private members, of both sexes, are just as necessary. These, where they do exist, give interest to Sunday schools and prayer-meetings, diffuse correct ideas of Christian benevolence, and give sympathetic appreciation and moral support to an intelligent and active pastor. These can meet in conversation the subtle infidelity which is spreading its poison through all our society, which the pastor often declines to preach against lest he merely advertise instead of curing, and which is seldom mentioned to him in private because its advocates do not really wish to have their errors corrected. O how much we do need a larger number of thoroughly educated and truly devoted men and women in all the churches!

Difficulties in the Way of Higher Education.

You say you are very willing to send the boys to school, and want the teacher to do the best he can for them; but when they are pretty nearly grown, you find they generally want to go into business, and you think they are about right—go to school while they are boys, and get to work as soon as they are men.
But consider: We have agreed, have we not, that the mental conditions most important for business success are breadth of view, power of patient thinking, sound judgment. And I have insisted that the great object of wise schemes of education is to train the mind in these respects. Now these powers cannot be trained till a person is nearly grown, for the excellent reason that not until then have they any considerable natural development. In a little child, the leading faculty is imagination, and the chief means of teaching it is story-telling. Everything must be put into that form, or at least must be sweetened with a story. If we do not tell the children stories, they will make some for themselves, and tell them to each other. At the age of ten or twelve, the leading faculty is memory. That is the time to store the mind with knowledge of facts, explaining where it is not too difficult, but aiming chiefly to lodge the facts themselves permanently in the memory. But judgment, in any high and broad sense, analysis, generalization, abstract thinking, reasoning, these are as a rule not much developed until the age of eighteen or twenty. Of course, then, it is not until that age, as a rule, that we can begin to give those high mental powers any effective training. A great many efforts have been made of late years to have boys anticipate the studies proper only to comparative maturity. Children of a dozen years are found toiling over Evidences of Christianity, Rhetoric, English Syntax—subjects which they cannot possibly understand. All this is a grievous mistake, though it is a well-meant effort to supply a felt want. These things ought to be learned, and others of the same sort; but they can be learned, not at the beginning, but only at the end of “the teens.” Now see what happens. Our boys and girls go to school, and perhaps learn well during the period when memory predominates, get a useful knowledge of facts (though this might be much better managed than it commonly is), but just when they reach the age at which we could begin to give them education in the highest, broadest sense—education that would really prepare them for the duties of life, they break away—the boys plunge head foremost into business, and the girls—well, they quit school! Here is an evil, most lamentable and wide-spread. Who trains horses that way, or builds houses, or railways, or raises crops—labor—
ing a long time with the mere preparations, and stopping short just at the time when the consummation of the undertaking comes within reach? What we call "higher education" is really the most practical part of the whole process; and yet our restless youths and our thoughtless parents neglect it, just because, forsooth, they are so anxious to be practical.

But, you ask, do we expect all the young men of the country to go to school until they are twenty-five years old? No, and we do not expect all the young men of the country to be highly successful in business, or highly influential and useful, as citizens or as Christians. Higher education is, of course, not possible for all. Besides, if College studies now keep many till the age of twenty-five, this is usually because our preparatory schools, and our general methods of training children have been, for the most part, so poor and unsatisfactory. When better ideas are diffused throughout society, when a larger number of good teachers are trained, and more good schools are established, then most of our competent young men will be able to complete a fair course of higher education by the time they are twenty-one or twenty-two.

You remind me of another difficulty, that there is need of some early training for business itself. Certainly, one who is to be a farmer ought to work on a farm in his early teens, watching every detail with a boy's sharp observation, and learning how to do all kinds of work himself; and he who is to be a merchant ought, while still a boy, to hop counters and tie bundles, to keep accounts, and observe the quality of goods and the tastes of customers. But this can be managed by putting such boys to work on Saturdays and in the greater part of vacation; and perhaps, also, it might be well, somewhere between thirteen and seventeen, to keep them at home a year, and make them buckle down to steady labor. I could tell you of men eminently successful in their callings, who were trained in just this way, with advantage to their health, and certainly no damage to their mental improvement.

And yet another difficulty occurs to you. It doesn't look reasonable that young fellows so different in turn of mind, and in their proposed callings, as the students of a college are, should all be put through exactly the same course of study.
But remember, that the object is to develop and discipline faculties which all intelligent youths possess to some considerable extent, and which have to be exercised in all callings alike. Special training for particular pursuits may be distinct, going on partly at the same time with, and partly subsequent to this general training, which will contribute to success in any and every kind of work. Besides, most of our colleges are beginning to provide for a change of the course, by making certain studies elective, or even by making the whole course elective, so that the studies of each youth may be more or less adapted to his peculiarities of mind, preparation, or destined pursuit.

**Objections to College Life.**

But there is no use in talking, you say, about your son's going to College. It is too expensive—you can't afford it. Colleges are just intended for rich men's sons, or those that get their money easy in some way; you made your money by hard work, and can't afford to spend it so fast.

Why, the very object of College endowments is to cheapen education, for the sake of those who are not rich. If your son were to get instruction from a single one of these select Professors, with his talents and high scholarship, it would cost him twice as much a year as his entire College fees. Rich men could employ several such instructors if they chose, but you and I could not. And if our sons can have the privilege of being taught by these Professors, it is for the reason that a large part of their support is drawn from endowment; and usually it is a support most meagre and unworthy, when we consider their choice abilities and severe labors. In fact, College education is one of the cheapest things in the country; and we who are comparatively poor, get a great bargain in it, a first-rate article for one-third the cost.

Ah! but you didn't so much mean the tuition, it is the other expenses. Yes, and you begin with counting all that is spent for clothing, and forget that the fellow would spend money for clothes if he stayed at home. And if it be said that at home he would only need a Sunday suit, and could wear plain and cheap clothes all the week, I answer, so he can at College. If a student's general appearance and personal habits are good,
if his hair and his hands, his boots and his linen, are always scrupulously clean, and the rest of his clothing, however cheap and even coarse, is well brushed and free from stains and spots, then, with good manners, he will be accounted a thoroughly genteel young man, by all those whose opinion is worth regarding, young ladies included. Thirty years ago, two young men entered the University of Virginia, paying their way with money saved from teaching, and during the first winter wearing plain jeans coats all the week, among those aristocratic and dressy youngsters from the Cotton States. Both found hearty welcome in the Professors' families, and formed choice friendships among the students, besides gaining unsurpassed academic honors; and one of them is now among the most distinguished educators in Virginia. And today there are students in great number at our Colleges, who spend scarcely a cent more on their clothing than they would do in a country home, and yet make a good appearance, and are respected and well received in society.

As to the board, it is already very cheap at many Colleges, and can be made cheaper still, if students choose to abstain from mere luxuries, and set their heads on economizing. A rapid and salutary change is going on among us. It used to be the case that College fashions were mainly set by rich fellows, who went to College simply as a thing proper for a gentleman's son to do, and so others were ashamed to show their poverty by living plainly. I hope to see the day when, as in the German cities, a student can live on as few cents a day as he pleases, and it will be nobody's business; when not only those of moderate means, like your son, but the very poor, can work their way, by hard struggles and various helps, and God's favor, through a College course. So it was centuries ago in Europe; so it is now in Scotland, in Germany, and to some extent in New England. The present head of one of our most important Baptist institutions stated in my presence that at one period of his student life he lived on bread and molasses for a considerable time. Kingman Nott, when at the academy, lived some months on bread and milk, and when prices rose, then on bread and water, and bought them with money made by sawing wood. Some English noblemen are remembered in history only by the
fact that, when students at Oxford, they got their boots blacked by a charity student, named George Whitefield. Ho, for the poor young men! Look them out; call them forth where they have brains, and cherish vague, wild longings after an education which seems far on the other side of an impassable gulf; help them if you can, show them how to help themselves, and stir in them by encouragement that high resolution, which in the young and gifted laughs at impossibilities, and conquers the world.

But after all, your son is not utterly poor; and when you come to think of it, College education may be so managed as not to be very expensive. If, through his own good sense and your good influence, he is disposed to economy, he will assuredly find plenty of students at the present day to keep him company; and students who stand high both in the lecture-room and in society. If once you made up your mind that it was really and exceedingly desirable for him to go to College, you know very well that you could manage to provide the means. And how else, O thoughtful and loving father, can you use the same amount of money so much for his advantage? Pray, think that over. A College education, or a thousand dollars in land or goods or cash—which would be most profitable to him as he enters upon active life?

There is another class of objections which some make. I know not whether you agree with them. They say that at College the young man is very apt to form vicious habits and evil companionship. Now I have spent most of my active life in connection with, or in the immediate vicinity of colleges, and I beg to express the full conviction that a young man is safer, as to companionships and temptations to vice, in any good college than in the average home. Of course, there are a few exceptional homes; I speak of the average, of the general rule. Some young men will get into bad courses wherever they may be. All the good influences at College cannot prevent it—nor, if they stay at home, can father and mother and sister and pastor and sweetheart, all combined, keep them out of bad company and vicious practices. But in general, I repeat it earnestly, the morals of the average student are safer at a well-conducted College than at home.
Some think this might be so if the College were at a retired village, but not when it is in a city; they tremble to think of the temptations of a city. But really there are no Colleges now at retired villages. The railways that bring the students can bring all the apparatus of vice, and keep the students in easy and speedy communication with the cities themselves. Well may we tremble at the temptations to which our boys are now everywhere exposed; but when they are nearly grown, repression and seclusion are no longer possible; we must try to train them to sound principles and right habits from childhood, foster in them vivid recollections of a home where they are loved and prayed for, and let them fight their battle. Remember, too, that if they may meet evil companions at College, they will assuredly meet many among the noblest young men of the land, who will set them an example of true manhood and gentlemanly bearing, and draw them, if they be worthy and willing, into the bonds of high and inspiring friendship.

Others are afraid the young fellow will come home with “city airs.” Perhaps he may, if he was born a simpleton, in which case I do not urge sending him to College. But if he has good sense, he will only get something of refinement, of graceful bearing and social ease, and power of agreeably entertaining others—will become more of a gentleman in his manners and tone; and will not that be an advantage to him?

A grave objection with many excellent people, and one having the appearance of good ground is, that if you give young men a College education, they will “get above business”; they will want to engage in one of the professions. Now, something of this sort has frequently happened; but there are several things to be considered about it. Sometimes the young man is right in turning away from what he and his friends had contemplated, for he has become intelligently conscious of being better suited to some other pursuit. In other cases it is the effect of those wrong notions of which we have been speaking, and which I hope you will use your influence to correct; he thinks as so many do, that College education is of no use to a business man, and perhaps foolishly imagines business pursuits to be less honorable, and less worthy of his intelligence and cultivation, than some profession. But the principal reason for
such occurrences is that we have hitherto had a very inadequate supply of well-educated teachers and other professional men; the young man sees this, and his sense of the value of education makes him seek more directly to propagate it. When high cultivation becomes more common, and correct ideas more generally diffused, this evil will be for the most part corrected.

"But suppose my son doesn't want to go to College, what then?" If he needs it, if you see that he would be greatly profited by it, what is your duty? Argue with him, I should say, exhort him, plead with him, and if he is still unwilling, make him go. What, you cannot control a boy of sixteen or eighteen! Then you haven't trained him properly, and it is all the more important that you should get some professors to help you train him, before it is too late. Yes, make him go. And the time shall be when he will come to you, in your old age, or perhaps come and stand by your grave, and tell his gratitude that you did not leave him to the follies of his youth, that by all the power of parental love and parental authority you constrained him to that which has been such a blessing to him through life. Oh! the dear memories that come up in saying this of a father who did not need to constrain, but who broke up a pleasant home, and spent his last years in most uncongenial employment and amid pecuniary losses, solely that his son might receive the education for which he had not dared to hope. How that son thanks him more and more every year—how he thanks God for such a wise and noble father!
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In Charge of PROF. GEO. McCUTCHEH

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Courses in economics, banking, law, bookkeeping and accounting, insurance, public finance, and corporation finance are offered in combination with courses in the languages, history and the sciences, with the aim of providing a university training for business life.

Upon completion of the regular four years' course the degree of A. B. is conferred. Also a special course is offered students of suitable preparation for which a certificate is given.

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