The rise and early constitution of universities, with a survey of mediæval education

Laurie Simon Somerville
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Author: Laurie Simon Somerville

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THE

RISE AND EARLY CONSTITUTION
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WITH A

SURVEY OF MEDIEVAL EDUCATION

BY

S. S. LAURIE, LL. D.

PROFESSOR OF THE INSTITUTES AND HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

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TO MY ASSOCIATES.

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In Memoriam

Charles Edward Russe

1867-1938
EDITOR'S PREFACE.

In the history of the rise and organization of universities the student of education finds the most interesting and suggestive topic in the entire range of his specialty. For, in the history of the development of the higher and highest education, he sees the definite modes by which the contributions of the past to the well-being of the present have been transmitted. The school undertakes to endow the youth with the acquisitions of his race, or, rather, to qualify him to undertake this acquisition for himself. It therefore arms him with the proper habits of study and co-operation by discipline. It instructs him in those elementary branches of knowledge which serve as keys to the whole treasury of learning. Every study holds its place because of its claim to present an epitome of a department of knowledge, transmitting its net results—like geography, history, or grammar; or else because it gives the mastery of some art necessary to such transmission—as in the case of the arts of reading and writing or numerical calculation.
What did the ancients fix upon as the course of study in their schools? In what way have we varied from their curriculum? These important questions being answered, we wish to ascertain the practical and theoretical reasons which have prevailed and which now prevail in the selection of these branches of study in our schools. In this inquiry the university is the central theme. Its first beginnings at Athens, Alexandria, and Rome, its revival in the middle ages, and its modern expansion show us the status of this question of the course of study, and much more. They acquaint us with the history of methods of organization, of discipline, and of instruction. The epoch included between the fifth century B.C., and the fifteenth century A.D., too, is marked by the culmination of the Greek and Roman civilizations and their transmutation into Christianity, and it possesses for all Christian civilizations a supreme interest.

The Greeks first make a literature and then begin to develop science, or, in other words, to discover through reflection the forms, laws, or methods of human activity. Through the efforts of the sophists and schools of philosophy, grammar, rhetoric, and logic arise. These three products of reflection presuppose a literature as already existing, and exhibit in a systematic form the normal types of language and thought. Hence they constitute a basis for criticism, and at the same time furnish material for education. For education is inconceivable without normal types, models, or ideals to which