IX. General Studies.

The numeral of Course IX. has appeared upon the catalog of the Institute for a considerable period, yet that course is one of the youngest of the various departments. Before 1887 there was no consistent outline of studies in the course, no adequate complement of instructors, and no definite purpose. But within the last three years resources of instruction and equipment have been provided, and the curriculum of studies has become clear, orderly, and practical.

This course is the only one in the Institute which is not chiefly technical. Starting from the basis of science-study which is common to all the departments, Course IX. substitutes for the rapidly narrowing range of mathematical and strictly technical studies, a broad and liberal training in those subjects which do most effectually provide for success in any one of a variety of important occupations.

The study of history, fortified by the cognate subjects of sociology, political science, and philosophy, and the study of economic science, of administrative and statistical science, and of finance, all illuminated by the light of history, are necessary avenues to any occupation which involves frequent professional or social contact with one's fellow-men, and which is neither wholly mechanical nor inevitably technical and isolated.

The man who looks forward to a business career, using the term “business” in its widest and most generally accepted sense,—i. e., to a mercantile career of any grade, high or low,—needs with every passing year a larger outfit of economic and political knowledge. He must be able to form an intelligent judgment concerning the influence of the national revenue laws upon the daily problems of his office desk or counting room. He needs to understand the history and the principles of national and local taxation. The study of the complicated and perplexing relations between Capital and Labor forewarns him of perils that always lurk in his path. An acquaintance with the methods and right values of statistics enables him to study market reports and financial columns with keener eyes than his competitors possess, and the Institute of Technology is one of the very few places in this country where such an introduction is offered to the student. His knowledge of the history of trade and industry should be especially accurate and extensive, if he would have the ambition to rise with his calling. Especially is this true of the future manufacturer, to whom political history and economic science should be as friendly oracles. Into his everyday life will enter the questions of population and immigration, of socialism, of co-operation and profit-sharing, of protective tariffs and free trade, of workingmen's housing and insurance, of strikes and trades unions.

In a still more specialized department of business, the banker or the broker requires familiarity with the history and laws of monetary science. He must also have sensible opinions concerning the financial policy of a municipality or even of a nation. He is expected to unravel intricate problems of financial legislation, and to help in holding the reins over great public undertakings. A sufficient knowledge for such responsibilities does not come, as Dogberry said reading and writing came, "by nature."

Again, there is a constant demand for intelligent administrators, for men with executive ability and training. The demand comes from the transportation service, from the governmental service, both local and national, from the offices of great corporations, and from the shop and factory. To much of this work a comparative study of administrative methods is fundamental. But the knowledge of mere system is not adequate unless enriched by the psychological training involved in the study of social history and institutions.