GALLOWELL has abolished the Degrees of Ph.B., B.S., and B.L., and has coalesced the four general courses into one leading to the degree of A.B., all work in that course being elective during the entire four years.

It is indeed a surprise that Cornell should abolish all prescribed work in the departments of the humanities and pure sciences. It is true that colleges and educational institutions throughout the country are tending more and more toward a free choice of subjects on the student’s part, but few, indeed, go so far as to do away with all prescribed work in the Freshman year. And, truly, the disadvantages of such a “liberality,” as it is called, seem to outweigh its advantages. The student entering college is on the average seventeen or eighteen years old; too young, in most cases, to make an intelligent selection of subjects, many of which are entirely new to him. He is among strangers, and the methods and customs of the institution are unfamiliar. Though he wish to choose as advantageously as may be, his age and previous experience prevent such a choice. And if, on the other hand, he is one who is looking for “snap” courses, what an opportunity is open to avail himself of his perfect freedom to elect an easy schedule. How many men of that stamp there are in college to-day is appreciated only by one who has seen and met them in college life. But there is another disadvantage in the system. In a prescribed course of study new subjects are brought before the student; he perhaps takes no interest in them beforehand and yet may find something exactly suited to his temperament which he can follow out further on elective lines. Many a man’s life-work has been determined by prescribed work at college.

And what is to be gained by thus indiscriminately throwing open all of the departments? It is said that they will be relieved by having in them only the students whose “native bent has brought them to the respective classes.” Very true; those who have discovered their native bent will get on excellently, but a very large proportion of the Freshmen have not yet discovered their native bent, and these will not fare so well. While the age for entering college remains as immature as it is at present in America, the attempt to turn colleges into universities cannot succeed.