

BIOLOGY IN OUR COLLEGES: A PLEA FOR A BROADER AND MORE LIBERAL BIOLOGY.

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WHEN it became fashionable to study physiology, histology, and embryology, the study of systematic natural history was not only neglected, but disappeared from the college curriculum, and the race of naturalists became nearly extinct. Natural history, as formerly understood, comprised geology, zoölogy, and botany, and persons versed in these sciences were known as naturalists. Geology gradually came to occupy an independent field, and is now everywhere taught separately; hence, for present purposes, it may be dismissed, with the reminder that the naturalist who knows nothing of geology is poorly equipped for his work. A knowledge of the two remaining branches — the biological branches — was looked upon as sufficient to constitute a naturalist. But the kind of knowledge taught underwent a change; the term "naturalist" fell into disuse to be replaced by "biologist," and some would have us believe that even the meaning of the word biology is no longer what it was. Systematic zoölogy has gone, or, if still tolerated in a few colleges, is restricted to a very subordinate position. Systematic botany is more fortunate, still holding an honored place in many universities, though evidently on the wane.

Is it not time to stop and inquire into the nature of the differences between the naturalist and the modern school of instructors who call themselves "biologists;" into the causes that have brought about so radical a change, and into the relative merits, as branches of university training, of systematic biology compared with the things now commonly taught as biology?

Is it not as desirable to know something of the life-zones and areas of our own country with their principal animals and plants and controlling climatic conditions, as to be trained in the minute structure of the cellular tissue of a frog? And is not a knowledge