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1; I. STATISTICS
IN COLLEGES. II. SOCIOLOGY AND
POLITICAL ECONOMY. III. THE LEGAL-
TENDER DECISIONS**

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CARROLL D. WRIGHT & FRANKLIN H. GIDDINGS & EDMUND J. JAMES

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I.

STATISTICS IN COLLEGES.

By CARROLL D. ^{Anderson} WRIGHT.

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II.

SOCIOLOGY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY.

By FRANKLIN H. GIDDINGS.

III.

THE LEGAL-TENDER DECISIONS.

By EDMUND J. ^{James} JAMES, PH. D.

AMERICAN ECONOMIC ASSOCIATION.

MARCH, 1888.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
I. THE STUDY OF STATISTICS IN COLLEGES.....	5
1. Attention paid to the subject in Europe.....	7
2. Courses offered in America.....	12
3. Application of social science to the facts of life.....	15
4. Necessity of mathematical skill in study of statistics... 18	
5. Three divisions of statistical science.....	21
6. Necessity of teaching statistics in colleges.....	23
II. THE SOCIOLOGICAL CHARACTER OF POLITICAL ECONOMY.....	29
1. Organic nature of the social aggregate.....	30
2. Abstraction in political economy.....	33
3. Course of economic investigation.....	36
4. Divisions of the science.....	39
5. Utility and value.....	41
6. Process of distribution.....	44
III. SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON THE LEGAL-TENDER DECISIONS... 49	
1. Influence of the legislative and executive branches on the judicial.....	51
2. The three legal-tender cases and grounds of decision... 54	
3. The constitution and legal-tender notes.....	58
4. Intention not observed in the construction of legislative enactments.....	60
5. Debate on the legal-tender clause in the constitutional convention.....	64
6. Opinions as to the power of Congress to issue legal- tender.....	70
7. Construction of terms in the constitution.....	73
8. Decision of the Supreme Court and the result of it.....	76

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The Study of Statistics in Colleges.

BY HON. CARROLL D. WRIGHT,
United States Commissioner of Bureau of Labor.

Paper read at the joint session of the American Economic and Historical Associations, at Cambridge, Mass., May 24, 1887.

America has no counterpart to the continental school of statisticians, whose members have entered their particular field of science after special training by a systematic course of instruction. We have our statisticians, to be sure, but they have taken up their work accidentally, and not as a profession. Men engaged in the practice of law or of medicine, or in the other learned professions, enter them only after careful preparation. Our government trains its soldiers and sailors; our colleges and higher institutions of learning fit men for various special scientific and professional labors, but we have not yet reached the advanced stage of educational work in this country which comprehends administration in its broadest terms. The European has an advantage over those engaged in statistical work in this country. Many of the leading colleges and universities of the continent make special effort to fit men to adopt statistical science as a branch of administration, or as a profession.

Körösi, Neumann-Spallart, Ernst Engel, Block, Böhmert, Mayr, Levasseur, Bodio, and their score or more of peers, may well excite our envy, but more deeply stimulate the regret that one of their number,

from his brilliant training and his scientific attainments, cannot present to you to-day the necessity of copying into the curricula of our American colleges the statistical features of the foreign school. For magnificent achievement the American statistician need not blush in the presence of the trained European, for, without conceit, we can place the name of our own Walker along with the names of those eminent men I have enumerated. With all the training of the schools, the European statistician lacks the grand opportunities which are open to the American. Rarely has the former been able to project and carry out a census involving points beyond the simple enumeration of the people, embracing a few inquiries relating to social conditions; such inquiries seldom extending beyond those necessary to learn the ages, places of birth, and occupations of the population. Such a census, compared with the ninth and tenth Federal enumerations of the United States, appears but child's play.

Dr. Engel once said to me that he would gladly exchange the training of the Prussian Bureau of Statistics for the opportunity to accomplish what could be done in our country. For with it all, he could not carry out what might be done with comparative ease under our government. The European statistician is constantly cramped by his government; the American government is constantly forced by the people. The Parliament of Great Britain will not consent to an industrial census, the proposition that the features of United States census-taking be incorporated in the British census being defeated as regularly as offered. Nor does any continental power yet dare to make extensive inquiries into the condition of the people, or

relative to the progress of their industries. The continental school of statisticians, therefore, is obliged to urge its government to accomplish results familiar to our people. The statistics of births, deaths, and marriages, and other purely conventional statistics, are substantially all that come to the hands of the official statisticians abroad. In this country, the popular demand for statistical information is usually far in advance of the governments, either State or Federal, and so our American statisticians have been blessed with opportunities which have given them an experience, wider in its scope, and of a far more reaching character than has attended the efforts of the continental school. Notwithstanding these opportunities which surround official statistics in this country, the need of special scientific training for men in the administration of statistical work is great indeed. This necessity I hope to show before I close.

It is not essential, in addressing an audience of this character, to spend a moment even upon definitions. The importance of statistics must be granted: the uses of the science admitted. But it may be well, before urging specifically the needs of this country for statistical training, to give a few facts relative to such work in European schools.¹

The best school for statistical science in Europe is connected with the Prussian statistical bureau, and was established a quarter of a century ago by Dr. Ernst Engel, the late head of the bureau, probably

¹President Walker, of the Institute of Technology; Dr. Ely, of Johns Hopkins; Prof. R. M. Smith, of Columbia College; Dr. Dewey, of the Institute of Technology; and Dr. E. R. L. Gould, of Washington, have very kindly placed at my disposal information supplemental to that which was at hand.