

**THE AMERICAN  
BOOKS. THE  
AMERICAN COLLEGE**

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The American Books. The American College by Isaac Sharpless

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**ISAAC SHARPLESS**

**THE AMERICAN  
BOOKS. THE  
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*The American Books*

—  
**The  
American College**

BY  
**ISAAC SHARPLESS**  
*President of Hamford College*



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## BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Isaac Sharpless was born in Chester County, Pennsylvania, December 16, 1848. Graduating from Westtown School, he subsequently attended the Lawrence Scientific School of Harvard University, from which he received a diploma in 1873. His early interests were in teaching mathematics and astronomy; since then he has devoted special attention to the science of education and to the political and social movements of his neighborhood; in both these spheres he has taken a prominent part. From Westtown School he was called to Haverford College as Professor of Mathematics in 1875. In 1884 he became Dean; since 1887 he has been President.

Dr. Sharpless holds honorary degrees from Hobart College, Swarthmore College, and the University of Pennsylvania. His publications include, besides several text-books on mathematics and astronomy, "A Quaker Experiment in Government," "Two Centuries of Pennsylvania History," "Quakerism and Politics." He

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is regarded as a leading authority on Pennsylvania colonial history. Besides these books, he has published "English Education"—the result of a year, 1890-1, spent in England studying the methods of the English schools and universities. He is a member of the Council of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.



## PREFACE

THE object of this little book is to give to the general reader a fair idea, hiding neither blemishes nor virtues, of that peculiarly national institution, the American college, as distinct from the university and technological school. This college has no exact counterpart in the educational systems of other countries. It has grown up partly perhaps as the result of certain accidents of history, but mainly because it satisfied peculiar needs and conditions of American life. Its lack of fitness to articulate with schools of other grades has often been urged against it, and its extinction from the system has been prophesied and advocated. But it seems to retain its hold upon its patrons with undiminished vigor, and there are few signs of any lack of prosperity in its best representatives. It undoubtedly has had and will have a large influence upon national life and character, and while it probably would not,

just as it is, find a place in a system created anew to suit ideal conditions, it is so firmly rooted that the future tendency will be rather to strengthen it and adapt it to the new wants which are certain to arise. The American college is not likely to be crowded out of its niche between the high school and the university, though this fate may await certain of its weaker members. It has been the case in Germany that the college has disappeared, and the secondary schools keep the boys and girls till they are ready for the highly specialized work of the universities. While this may happen in America, it does not seem probable at the present time.

A sketch of the growth of the system may throw light upon its ability to resist the same tendency here.

A brief bibliography will show some of the sources from which the material of the book has been derived. The author, however, has for years been living with the subject, and has had the advantage of intercourse with many collegiate friends of better judgment and wider information than himself. He cannot hope that his statements of facts, still less his opinions, will go unchallenged, but the book may be

something of a way-mark in the history of  
a rapidly developing movement.

I. S.

*Haverford, Pa.*

*November, 1914.*