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TRADITION AND THE FUTURE

(continued from page 8)

it has become sadly evident that the collapse was not due to lack of material machinery, but to lack of educated intelligence in managing and steering the machine.

The confusion and incompetence of governments, local and national, throughout the world resulted naturally enough from our failure to apply to human problems the same grade of intelligence we demanded in handling machinery in industry. "Government has been creaking under the pressure of powerful forces with which it was never designed to cope." We scrapped our mills and machines almost as rapidly as we builded them, and substituted new ones, or new methods of handling the old models. Yet in political and in social affairs, we have been frightened and loth to change. "In government, the weight of tradition has been heavily felt, and proposals for change have been identified with treason to the state." (Prof. Meriam on recent social trends.)

Here, if anywhere, is your first duty as citizens when you reach the age of suffrage. How better can you young people immediately justly the labors of your four college years, than by becoming active, intelligent voters, guided by principles, rather than by inherited prejudices? The new epoch demands it. Elmer Davis: "We are done, we fondly hope, with the so-called statemen who have regarded all controversial issues as clased by the infallible pronouncements of a party platform."

The proper guidance of the machinery of state demands intelligence of a higher grade than it takes to pilot an automobile. Yet we supposedly educated folk avoid the polls, and step aside from the ballot box to give place to men whose training, and native or constructive intelligence scarcely qualifies them to chauffeur a wheel-barrow. And then we complain when we are badly governed!

I do not mean that we must sacrifice the democratic principle. Like the great ideals of justice, brotherhood, liberty,Christianity, we wonder what would come if it were seriously and completely attempted. We fail to recall that democracy is not simply a unique form of government, it is, or should be, an ideal. As an applied principle it has been far short of success when we consider, as one recent writer has pointed out, that "the right to cast a ballot is of little value to a man who is utterly unable to find a job. There are still millions of them today, and to them, political democracy must seem a horrible illusion."

To justify its continued existence in the new world, formal education must be active in teaching the virtue, a daring participation in public affairs, not founded exclusively upon slavish traditionalism, or dedicated primarily to a bolstering up of the idols of the past.

I suggest now, that more than ever the perplexing problems about us demand a clarity of vision far in excess of that demanded by the epoch whose end we are witnessing. That vision is not simply the vision of the dreamer. We demand of you young social engineers in whose hands we place ourselves that you have,

1. A vision to see the mistakes of the past.
2. A vision to see the inadequacies of the present.
3. A vision to apprehend the necessities of the future.

We demand of you a well-reasoned, integrating purpose, for yourselves and for the world.

We demand of you an unparalleled audacity to question and to experiment.

In a proper understanding of what the past has been and has brought you should appreciate that the old order was largely, if not entirely, a product of slow and unconscious growth, unplanned, and the result of experience rather than of logic. Unplanned as it was, it inherited many hampering bonds, many inadequacies, much social injustice, and an untold amount of human suffering. If ever the time has been when we should profit by the mistakes of history, of which God knows, there are far, far too many, this is the hour.

In studying to achieve a proper vision of the inadequacies of the present, we must recognize, as we see them about us every day, these unfortunate results of the casual, haphazard, and unplanned course of the past. We have now no precedents in history for recovery from this debacle. In America, and in the world abroad, even within this last few weeks, history has been so busy with new things that it has had no time to repeat itself, and no previous example by which to guide. New Plans are demanded for these unprecedented situations; and for years yet to come, when you young people here before me are sitting, as I hope you will, in the high places of the state and nation, this will still be true.

Your vision of the past and of the present will be fruitless unless you join to it a proper vision of the future. By the future I do not mean alone a decade, or even a generation. I mean that you must catch a view of the long, long struggle upward, through the slow progress of the centuries which you and your children must bend to your beneficient purpose.

We demand of you that you have ever before you an integrating purpose, which must be, simply and plainly, the firm establishment, by conscious effort and proper planning of a new order; an ordered society, not designed and presented by the unconscious workings of what we vaguely call destiny, but builded consciously, established by the unremitting labor of men consecrated to their vision.

That purpose must be

(1) To obliterate and renew the injustices of the outworn economics, inherited from the now dead doctrine of laissex-faire. What will be the ultimately acceptable theory, I cannot venture to say.

(2) To re-establish at higher levels the ideal of responsibility of the state for the welfare of the individual as a citizen, not merely as a tax-paying "contributing" capitalist.

(3) To recognize that we have a patriotism higher than that of any single creed or nation. When this has come, wars will have taken their horrid memories to the limbo of forgotten things. The romance of armed combat is fading rapidly. Pray God it may never again come to stunt the intelligence of our youth, and lure them to blood and death. "Inordinate ambitions are the soul of every patriotism," said the philosopher William James a few years ago, "and the possibility of sudden death, the soul of all romance." Is there not romance in the war against injustice, against inequalities of economic opportunities, against ignorance, against disease, against graft, corruption and bribery, against poverty against low ideals and cheapened morals? Agaist bigotry and prejudice, against the narrowness of mind and vision which sees in no man a neighbor or friend unless he dresses as we do, or speaks the same language? I remind you that the most highly civilized men of the three great ages of the world were more than patriots at home. They were world citizens; Plato, the crown of the Classical era; Dante, the greatest mind the Middle Age produced; and in our Modern centuries, the world-visioned Goethe.

When we have determined for ourselves the scope and direction of this integrating purpose, we will see that passion and self-interest will perforce have to be subdued by benevolent intelligence, which will vision, through the increasing multiplicities of our contacts and the complications of our affairs, a real goal, achievable if we draw our plans aright, and dedicate ourselves to their fulfillment, through the discipline of adequate education.

The third thing I demand of you young social engineers today is that you possess an unbounded audacity to question and to experiment. This is no new challenge. From one of the South's beloved poets, Sidey Lanier, I take this word, given on an occasion similar to this, before a student body in the South, in 1869. Lanier said:

"Question unceasingly, question audaciously, all history, all science, all philosophy. Be content with no half answers. Be bold enough to accept any truth. Be wise enough to preserve from improper distortion, and to classify in proper relation, every fact. Beware how quick intuitions hurry you on to erect isolated instances into general principles."

If that was true philosophy in the day when the South lay stricken, how much truer is it today, when the whole world as we know it, is panting ardently for recovery!

It cannot be denied that the old conservatism, founded upon the peace established by our fathers, is gone. There is nothing that is not under question. The great foe to Liberty, as John Stuart Mill pointed out, is the hampering fear of arriving at conclusions which may be labelled social or political unorthodoxy. This must be destroyed, and it is a proper quality of the youthful mnid to destroy it.

From a recent opinion of the United States Supreme Court, written but a few months ago by Mr. Justice Brandels, I choose this sentence:

"To stay experimentation in things social and economic is a grave responsibility. Denial of the right of experiment may be fraught with serious consequences to the nation. This court has the power to do this; but in the exercise of this high power, we must be ever on our guard lest we erect our prejudices into legal principles. If we would guide by the light of reason, we must let our minds be bold."

In clearness of mind, then, let us have this vision. With singleness of purpose let us choose this central and integrating purpose. With daring and devotion let us question and experiment. Without these, comes again stagnation, "and the latter end will be worse than the formre."

Hamlet's lament is a familiar sound today:

"The time is out of joint! O, cursed spite,
That ever I was born to set it right."

Such must not be our reaction. Goethe reports that at the moment of his birth, the consellations were favorable. "Speculative critics have liked to elaborate this astrological fancy by showing us that Goethe came into the world at the precise moment which enabled him to carry out the mission with which Providence had entrusted him. But it is idle to dwell on the fitness of any particular year for a great man's birth. Might not one with equal justice claim it as a prerogative of all great men to master the Time-Spirit and making it subservient to their will, create the illusion of the fit moment."

"The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,
But in ourselves, that we are underlings."

We know not the gifts of good or of evil which lie yet in the storehouse of the future. Perhaps that is just as well. But whatever it may bring, we must have a plan to meet and master it. Robert Bridges has given us a fine idea when he says "We sail a changeful sea through halcyon days and storm, and when our ship laboreth, our steadfast purpose trembles like a compass in a binnacle. Our stability is but balance, and wisdom lies in the masterful administration of the unforeseen."

You are all citizens in training here; men and women, we fondly hope, of intelligence and promise. You can not step from here to the high places of the earth immediately. Washington College can not pretend to produce professionally trained law makers, justices, great doctors, or moving ministers, but it can and must produce men and women who will be fit to become wise makers of good laws; justices devoted to a ideal; doctors, ministers, and business men who can, all of you, share in this magnificent task of remaking on a new and better plan this stricken world wherein we have had so little of heaven and so much of hell. This is your task as it is the task of the College people everywhere. It is a huge one. The days of your preparation are upon you. They will be al too brief and you will be plunged into the hard necessities of a world beyond the campus paths and walls.

What then can your brief college years contribute to your preparation for this almost overwhelming labor? The very fact of your being here sets you apart from your less favored fellows. "To whom is given, from him much will be required." You must not fail to measure up to your full capabilities.

Do not take the burdens of the world too soon or too lightly upon your shoulders. They will fall heavily enough in due time. Study the past to discover what mistakes to avoid. Study the art, the literature, the philosophy of alien races and distant generations to appreciate the heart of man its aspirations, its cries of joy and of pain, the comedies, tragedies, tangled webs of life which hold all men in common bonds of humanity. Study sciences so as to look up understandingly to the stars, or to gaze intelligently upon the world as seen in its physical componts everywhere around you.

Study humanity as it is about you. Learn to appreciate the best in your companions without failing to amend that in yourself which is weak. Learn to respect the opinions of others without sacrificing your own intellectual integrity. Increase your mental stature by daring to stretch to the farthest horizon of your knowledge every day. Be afraid of little thoughts, not big ones.

Cultivate friendship, humaness, and that saving salt of the world, a fit sense of humor at your own mistakes. While you are looking at the stars, watch that you do not stumble over more mundane obstacles.

We must walk together in this, students and faculty joined in a common purpose presenting to the world a solid front and actuated by a unifying ideal. I like to think of the word "college" in its original sense: Collegium a body of persons asociated together voluntarily with a common purpose. In that purpose, we must live together in harmony, for the best development of the individual, in the fulfillment of our unanimously accepted ideal. In this progress upward and onward I crave your support as I pledge you mine. Possibly you can not achieve it alone. Certainly I can not. Together we may.

It is told of Dante, that in his later years of exile, a passerby in the street who saw in his face the tragedy of humanity's ages, not knowing him, but reading his countenance said "Behold a man who has been in Hell!"

'As the world has been to him, so had he been in Hell; in reality as in vision. But I prefer to recall how, with fine symbolism, he ended the last line of each of the great divisions of his master work with the same word "STARS", and how he tells that with his companion, Vergil, the symbol of human philosophy led upward by Divine attraction, they turned their backs upon the horrid shadows of human misery and imperfection "Thence issuing, we beheld again the stars."

No, the great constellations by which we shall steer have not shifted. There will be other storms for us, individually and as citizens of this intimate community we call the world. But the lode-star of our guidance is fixed, and we steer on, because we must, reckoning our course by the stars of justice, civic integrity, community purity, national and international and international harmony.

The port is not yet in sight. We cannot see the harbor. We ourselves may go into the deep before that harbor is reached for humanity. But our purpose holds, like that of the old hero.

"To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the Western stars, until we die."

Like him we can say, "It may be that the gulf will wash us down." But, Onward! Onward, to keep out inevitable rendezvous with destiny, our high meeting with the eternal fate to which we are bound, when man shall be free of his fears, loving justice and peace; devoted to a planned ideal of universal human good and betterment.

And God said unto Moses, "Speak to the people, that they go FORWARD." Is there a greater challenge than that? I know of none. I give it to you. Keep your rudder true! Have vision! Have purpose. Have daring. Search, question, Seize, if need be, the foundations of the earth in your hands, and bend them to your purpose. Walk with justice, and love, and human brotherhood, and peace, and beauty, and godly fear.

The challenge of the founders yet rings clear to the Washington College of today!

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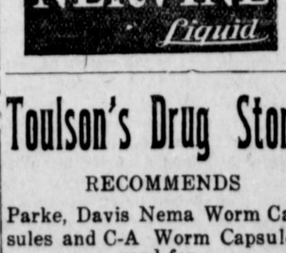
MARY L. NOLAND

late of said county, deceased. All persons having claims against said deceased's estate are hereby warned to exhibit the same, with the proper vouchrs thereof, to the undersigned on or before the 16th day of March, 1934, otherwise they may by law be excluded from all benefit of said deceased's personal estate.

All persons indebted to this estate must settle at once.

Given under my hand this 14th day of September, 1933.

CONLYN E. NOLAND,
Administrator.



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