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THE COLLEGE TRAINING OF THE CLERGY.¹

We are here to mark an epoch in a holy work. We come to rejoice at the well-earned success of Alma Mater, and to attest our appreciation of the labors which, for fifty years, have been so fruitful in the field of ecclesiastical education. Not as members of any one class are we gathered, nor as companions of one college period, nor yet as men to whom life has brought, since our college days ended, an identical experience. Whatever have been the vicissitudes of our maturer years, in the various seminaries of the world, in the many dioceses of our country, in different spheres of priestly activity, beneath unequal burdens of toil or of honor, a common bond unites us to-day; we are alumni of St. Charles' College.

Of those who were the founders and early builders of this institution, nearly all have laid down their tasks forever. Of the thousands who are named on the rolls of the college, too many have learned the last lesson. But the college itself, still young, outlives individual lives. It takes vigor from time, though time prey on master and pupil. It preserves in its growing strength the efforts of the men whom it survives. It brings to reality their fairest ideals and makes part of its lasting heritage the good things for which they hoped. To this over-life of the college, so rich in attainment, not to the success of any one man, we pay tribute. Achievement without the suggestion of limit calls for congratulation with no undertone of regret. Advance, through difficulties perhaps but unchecked by decline, warrants our confidence in the future. A jubilee we certainly keep; but its keynote is the promise of greater activity, not the invitation nor the welcome to repose.

What that activity is and what it shall be, we can best understand by noting the influences which fashion the growth of the college. And such understanding, I venture to say, is specially needful to us, who, for the most part, are absorbed in the work of the ministry. We are apt, without breach of loy-

¹ An address delivered before the faculty and alumni of St. Charles' College, at the celebration of its fiftieth anniversary, June 16, 1898.

alty or lack of interest, to think of St. Charles' as a goodly place, where life runs on in the round of the seasons—a pleasant abode where change is unknown and the spirit of unrest enters not. This fancy, in a measure, is wrought upon fact. It reflects the contrast between our student memories and the actualities that make up our life. It means that we naturally expect both teachers and scholars to be free from many disturbances of the world outside. But fancy should not lead us too far. For this very freedom subjects the college as a whole more completely to the influence of agencies which have exerted a peculiar force during the past fifty years.

To the manifold activities of its environment, the college has given a healthy response. In the number and the choice of its professors, in the modification of its curriculum, in its material equipment and in the standing of its scholars, there has been a wisely directed progress. But to appreciate this progress, we must remember that every step in advance is a means to an end, that there is a final cause which guides the entire movement, and that this too is conceived under varying forms as new and heavier demands are made upon the college. All change, all effort and aspiration for better things, takes place in view of an ideal, and this ideal is the graduate such as his teachers would have him—the finished product who worthily represents their untiring endeavor.

What the ideal graduate shall be, is a question always uppermost in the mind of the college professor. It has of necessity a moral bearing, in view of which we ask, What manner of man shall he be who graduates here? What strength of character, what power of self-control, what love of study and what vigor of initiative is he to possess? What virtues, in a word, entitle him to a place among candidates for the priestly office? To such questions no wordy reply is needed; the answer is given in the lives of those who direct the college, whose hourly example is the most wholesome element of discipline. The one great Pattern which they copy and which they propose to their disciples, is the same yesterday, to-day and forever.

Intellectual training, on the other hand, is largely relative. Its character is determined by the actual needs which it has to meet. And as these needs vary from age to age—we might

say from decade to decade—it stands to reason that we cannot come back too often to the reconsideration, perhaps to the modification, of our ideal. To do this wisely, we must remember that education here has a double purpose; it prepares young men for the work of the seminary, but it also imparts a training which the student must carry through and beyond the seminary into his priestly life. It is by preparing its graduates for their future environment, that the college shows forth its own power of adaptation, and its ideals must therefore be formed, not in any abstract fashion, but with a clear view of the conditions which its graduates are to encounter.

The most general and yet most essential of these conditions has been established by the rapid growth of the Church during the latter half of this century, in the midst of and as a part of the growth of American democracy. This means that the clergy, far from becoming a caste, have found it their duty to enter into the very life of the people, sharing their aspirations, upholding them with the strong arm of sympathy, and intensifying the love of liberty with that reasonable obedience to law which is the safeguard of religion and of government. Such was the mission foreseen by the founders of this college—by the zealous ecclesiastic who conceived the idea, and by the patriot whose generosity hastened its realization. Such is ever the purpose of their successors in this institution. The student who enters these halls has a youthful pride in his country and an enthusiasm for her success that seldom needs stimulation, and will need it less than ever for some years to come. But the student who graduates here—the ideal graduate—has gained a rational insight into the processes, institutions and ideas to which America owes her prosperity and progress—a cultivated discernment enabling him to single out the solid enduring elements of national greatness from those that are specious and passing. With such a training—the deeper lesson of history, our graduate, though by no means a statesman, is not, on the other hand, a mere spectator of political, economic and religious movements. He has learned at any rate to look beneath the surface of things, to seek causes, to detect tendencies, to forecast their issue for good or evil. In a word, he has learned to reflect, and reflection means judgment and judgment is the soul of direction.

Among the factors in our national growth there is one which, even as a student, he must reckon with, because it directly affects his college course. Withdrawn for a time from the stress and strain of life in the world, he is none the less influenced by the development of our educational system and its far-reaching results. To appreciate these, it is not sufficient that we count the schools, colleges and universities that have sprung up during the latter half of the century, that we praise the generosity of their founders or dwell with honest pride upon their world-wide reputation. The natural consequences also—a higher level of intelligence in the people at large, higher standards for teachers and students, wider knowledge of scientific principles, increasing application of theory to the solution of practical problems—these are too obvious and too general for our present purpose. What chiefly concerns our graduate is the spread of that spirit of inquiry which, with varying degrees of accuracy, measures all things and esteems all things according to their relation with the outcome of scientific research.

Now it is true that many things are said and written in the name of science, for which there is no warrant. But how is the student to judge unless he be acquainted with the methods, the principles and the net results of science? And how shall he get that acquaintance unless he be drawn out of himself, brought into contact with nature, taught to observe closely and to think accurately? Such a knowledge of phenomenon and law gained, not merely from books, but by personal experience and practical training, is, beyond doubt, compatible with the best aspirations of the ideal graduate. He may not become a physicist or a chemist or a biologist or a mathematician. His own specialty is higher. But he has cultivated habits of mind that are invaluable. He can appreciate the magical influence of science upon the popular mind and trace that influence from its source in the university to its diffusion through every sort of literary production. He knows that the spirit of inquiry awaits him at every step, and that the questionings of science must be answered in the language of science.

He need not fear that this language is spoken by those

only who are beyond the reach of his ministrations, that it is foreign to those who share his belief. Among the men and women who were once perhaps his companions and who will one day look to him for guidance and light, not a few have been prepared for their life-work by the best institutions of the country, by courses of study that are continually adjusted to the advance of knowledge, by instructors who are specialists, perhaps by personal research in some department of science. With this class of Catholics—and it is a growing class—the graduate of St. Charles' may certainly accomplish much. He will at least appreciate the difficulties and even the doubts which scientific views so often stir up in the most loyal minds, and problems that at first sight seemed only theoretical will become of immense practical import, when their solution means the preservation of sacred beliefs.

I am well aware that the great problems just referred to are dealt with in seminary courses—that their final solution must be sought in philosophy or perhaps turned over to theology. But it is also true that no one can to-day pretend to an apprenticeship—to say nothing of a mastery—in philosophy, who has neglected his scientific training. The whole development of philosophy during the past fifty years has been towards a closer union with science; the main duty of our Christian philosophy is the proper interpretation of the laws that science establishes. And while the student of metaphysics may revel in its broad speculations, he cannot detach himself from the basis of concrete fact. If he does so, he may indeed be a college-bred man, but he is not the ideal graduate.

In urging the claims of science, we must not of course forget that over and above the operation of physical law, there are products of the human mind which no system of education can afford to neglect. There is the rich inheritance of literature, in which the imagination and thought of all ages are stored and transmitted. And to this treasure, language is the key.

In the formation of the ideal graduate linguistic study has a three-fold function :

In the first place, that study itself means a development of certain faculties that refuse the more exact discipline of the physical sciences. Hence it has always held a leading place

in education ; hence the untiring efforts of philologists to lay bare the origins and the relations of the various languages. Hence, too, the constant revision of classic texts, and what is more important, the reconstruction, by historical methods, of the circumstances under which those texts were penned. The student who has not only learned the forms and the meaning of words, but has caught the spirit of the classic writers and drawn for himself a picture of their surroundings, has used to good purpose the key of language.

In the second place, this key opens to him a vast storehouse of literature, which serves both as a means of culture and as a source of information. When we consider how much of the scientific thought of our day is given to the world in tongues other than our own, it will be evident that a knowledge of those tongues is more than an accomplishment ; it is an absolute necessity for the student. It is taken for granted, when he enters the seminary, that Latin and Greek are easy reading ; and there should be no question as to his ability to handle publications on philosophy and theology that are written in French and German. When works in these languages monopolize the library dust, there is reason to believe that the ideal graduate has not yet appeared.

In the third place—for this is an ascending scale—comes that language which, as a means of culture and as a source of information, may fairly rival the classic and modern tongues of continental Europe, but which, for the purpose of expression, is unique. The college student receives instruction through many channels, his processes of thought are complex and varied ; but the one channel through which he may hope to make his knowledge of use in this country, is the English language. The power to speak and write this clearly and forcibly is the crowning feature of college education, since it enables the graduate to react upon that environment whose influences have moulded his mind.

In our ideal, therefore, we recognize as essential traits an intelligent sympathy with the people among whom he is to labor, habits of observation and accurate thought, familiarity with the languages that are to serve as instruments of research or as the means of expression.

Now this summary is open to criticism. Hasty as the outline has been, might it not all have been shortened into two precepts—put as much as possible into the curriculum, and put as much as possible of the curriculum into the student? I do not think that the professors of this or any other college would be content with such a compendious rule. For the problem of education is not solved merely by multiplying courses of study or by lengthening the time devoted to each course; but rather by giving each study its full educational value, and by so adjusting and balancing all courses that they may produce the result desired.

This is the real aim of the educational movement and of the discussions that it calls forth. This it is that justifies the special training of each teacher and that brings about a proper division of labor among all teachers. This is the warrant for improving methods, for introducing better text-books, for applying severer tests to the student's work. This, finally, is the upward and onward endeavor of our American colleges in the realization of their best ideals.

As alumni of St. Charles', we have more than a passing interest in the development of the college. Here, in great part, are trained the men who must sooner or later take up our work. Here are fostered and perfected the vocations of which we were, in a measure, the early trustees. The work of these teachers is our work; their success is our honor. It is a work that imposes seclusion and routine, a success to be attained by vigilance and sacrifice and care. It is only just that they should find in us a steady support of sympathy and interest and coöperation. The ideal graduate may, in spite of constant approximation, remain an ideal. But the ideal alumnus should be found in every man who claims St. Charles' as his Alma Mater. What that ideal is you can best define who, in gratitude and loyalty, have come to welcome in this jubilee celebration a bright omen for the future of the college.

EDWARD A. PACE.

