

The Student's Philosophy of Life

The need for mastery, power or creative achievement lies at the basis of much human conduct . . . It expresses itself in the urge to overcome opposition, to dominate people and things, to excel a rival, and to succeed in general. It lies behind the achievement which is most noble, as well as behind that which is ignoble. The fulfilment of this need gave us Livingstone, Jane Addams, Pasteur, Florence Nightingale. It also gave us Al Capone, Huey Long and Hitler . . .

Any university course, whether liberal arts, medicine, law, engineering or

education, should be more than professional preparation. It should help the student to sort out for himself a philosophy which will give meaning and purpose to life. He should be stimulated to ask, and to examine answers as to, the origin and destiny of the universe, the nature of man and society, man's relations to the life principles of the universe and to his fellows. He should ask questions as to how we might live in a world free from poverty, disease and war. He should try to discover the relative roles of reason and emotion in human life. It has too often

been the assumption that these subjects should be left entirely to the department of philosophy. A good teacher of law, engineering, or medicine cannot and should not avoid them.

Teaching in universities is a co-operative search for truth; it is search and discovery, or it is nothing. It is sharing of experiences between the student and teacher, and between both of them and the great minds of all the ages.

[From "The Influence of the University in Canada on the "Life of the Student." The Hazen Conference, 1941.]

—J.W.A.N.

ULTIMA THULE

by Jim Goring

"The nations had taken sides, with and against the Corsican. But now, the Corsican was safe in St. Helena. Attention was turned to the staunch little British Province which stood fast while her sister colonies revolted.

"The needs of the little province were many. Most urgently needed was a college based upon the principles of "toleration." Indeed; we possessed one college already. Modelled upon Oxford. For, their founders could not conceive of any better, or indeed any other system. All students were to be resident within the college, abstaining from sedition and dissenting conventicles.

"This new institution, on the other hand, was to have no residence. Students would be free to lodge where they pleased. The townman or the military officer might pay his fee and attend a single course of lectures without the restraints of a discipline designed for boys. It was to be a little Edinburgh, as its rival (now, closest ally), was a little Oxford.

"There are those who believed in our little college, admired it, loved it. At five minutes to the hour a bell rings. Staircases and corridors are suddenly filled with the tramp of feet and the noise of many voices, coming, going, intermingling. These tides of young humanity find their different goals. The tumult ceases. Silence reigns once more.

"For some, now the most popular class commences; and he is the favorite professor. He was always old. As he grew older he became more lax, or more advanced, whichever you please. He designedly omitted grace before meals. He had been seen of a Sabbath morning making casts in a likely pool. The fish were strangely few and hard to capture. At the same time he was always young; his mind never grew old. Humorous, droll, sly, pawky, moving from point to point somewhat heavily and slowly, he really had the secret of combining amusement and instruction. His tongue had a razor-shape edge but never were sarcasms delivered with such beaming, affectionate, paternal, contradictory smile. By no means impartial, he had his favorites and his buttes. Some few never forgave his persecutions. The vast majority admired, feared, loved him . . . He had his own quaint sayings which stuck in the memory . . . He may not have known all his students, but his students knew him. Every day he was subject to the pitiless scrutiny of a hundred or more. Not a slip, not a foible, not a weakness, not a mannerism passed without remark, comment, laugh, over dinner at Mrs.

Southey's. Moreover their judgments did not err on the side of leniency."

So wrote the head of the English department who, at the turn of the century had already gained literary prominence. His, was to tell of ships and tides and men. Of women too.

"Good looks and good clothes, subsisting on caramels, and floating gracefully through her courses. This is labelled "the college girl."

"She may be an infant of 16, fresh from school; or she may be a mature woman who may well have prepared her classmate for matriculation, or the city girl who takes a class or two because she wants to improve herself . . . She comes from the country and finds a boarding-house for herself where she exists in more or less discomfort, or so she seems to think. Her work is attending lectures; her diversions are church and the meetings of the two college societies for girls, a rare party, or a college "at home." Outwardly it is not an attractive life; but every now and then a letter from the ends of the earth, some books from the library, a picture to brighten the room, a visit of an old student to his former haunts.

"The young women sit at lectures with the young men; they read in the library and work in the laboratory together. Though they do form a decorative fringe about the classroom and though many of them become good students, the college is essentially a man's college. And the poor men! They are so placed in the classroom that they can study only the rear view of various coiffures; but the lucky professor, by virtue of his office may and must look his audience in the face, and if he dwells on the most attractive part of it, who shall blame him?"

"They are all earnest young persons who are not carried to the skies of academic distinction on flowery beds of ease. They know the meaning and the value of hard work. For truly, the college motto is . . ."

"Ora et Labora."

*The quotations are taken from the works of Archibald MacMechan, one time head of the English department of Dalhousie University.



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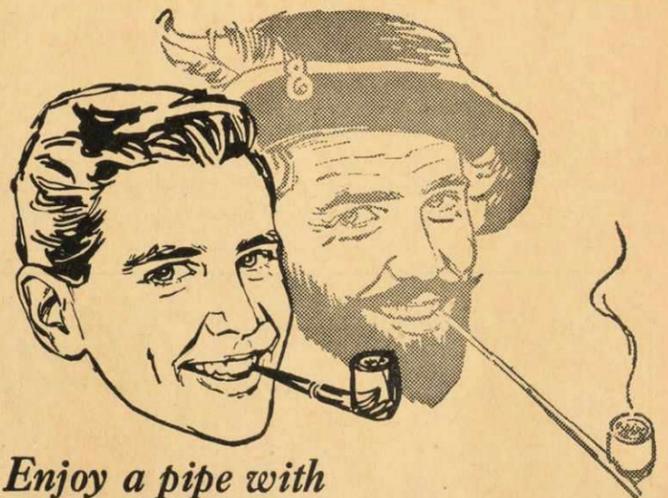
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