

Is there room for Colleges and Academies whose distinctive purpose is the Development of Character rather than the Discipline of the Intellect?

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Part I.

The problem that first presents itself in the consideration of this question, is not, it seems to me, one of definition, for the subject is sufficiently self-definitive, but one of application. That is, do the words of our subject apply to existing conditions or to conditions that ought to exist?

Are we to discuss a practical situation or to present a theory?

Are there institutions now in our land whose distinctive and pivotal purpose is the development of character? or must we seek to prove the necessity for their future existence? I have answered the question from the standpoint of the present and the practical. Undoubtedly we have Colleges and Academies whose central purpose is to develop the ethical rather than the intellectual, the spiritual rather than the physical. Such surely is the character of the four or more of the denominational schools in this country. Founded by Christian men whose aim was to provide Christians (with emphasis on Christian) education for young men and women governed by Boards, two thirds or all the members of which must be Christian men, officered by faculties consisting for the most part of avowedly Christian teachers, having the church and the Young People's Societies as their constituencies, these denominational institutions certainly emphasize in their tendencies and teaching, in their influence and ideals the supreme value of a character which will manifest itself not primarily in an intellectual but in an ethical and religious activity.

No one questions, I think, the value of the work which denominational schools have accomplished in the past for education in this country. They have been pioneer forces which advanced boldly into the wilderness and opened it in behalf of truth. Undaunted by difficulties which to any but men with hearts of faith and wills of steel must seem unsurmountable, the founders of our denominational institutions have planted schools, which have grown and flourished. From these schools for the most part have come the men, who have made this country great and glorious. All this is true and yet the question is forced upon us, Are these denominational schools still a necessity? Have they not accomplished their work which now may be carried on by other agencies? May we not look on them as a primary stage in the progress of education in this country, which now must give place to a wider and higher development? This is practically the position of President Angell of the University of Michigan and other prominent educators, connected with our state institutions who argue that the *raison d'être* of the strictly denominational school has ceased to be, and is now being done, and better done by colleges supported by the state. The claim is made that as far as intellectual work is concerned, the state school is and must be pre-eminent, and that the religious advantages upon the value of which denominational schools insist so strongly can be splendidly conserved by the college Young Men's Christian Associations, which it is said are doing a grand work of character building in the State Universities.

This argument merits a careful consideration. It is not denied that the State Universities are rendering effective and valuable service in the development of the intellect, perhaps even better service on the whole in that respect than the denominational schools are giving, nor is it denied that the Y. M. C. A. is a great power for good in university life but even with these concessions we believe that the schools whose primary purpose is the development of character, occupy a place which cannot be filled by any other institution whatever.

In the first place, the statement that the college Y. M. C. A. can do all that is necessary in the line of character building for the student, is seen on close examination to rest on a very slender foundation. As a matter of fact the Y. M. C. A. in State or any other University exercises directly but a limited influence. It reaches for the most part a class of young men who already have fairly well developed Christian character, and here the value of its work cannot be overestimated, but as a character forming influence, using the word character in its highest sense, the Y. M. C. A. cannot compete with the denominational schools. For while the character forming influences of the Y. M. C. A. is effective for a limited time and upon a limited number of students, the sum of such influences proceeding from the ideals, policy, government and the very atmosphere of a Christian school is operative throughout the whole college year and upon every student. But the main problem is not as to the relative values of the Y. M. C. A. and the

Christian college as aids in the development of character, but are the ideals which the Christian school represents of sufficient value to society to make its continued existence a necessity? As before stated such schools stand primarily for the development of character rather than the discipline of the intellect.

Is this a correct position? Is it the logical position for a school to put character building or anything else in fact before the discipline of the intellect. Should not the latter be the aim and object of all education?

There are many who will answer emphatically no, to this question and tell us that true education is not the development of one side of a man's nature, but rather of all sides. Schools do not or should not exist to make intellectual giants and moral pygmies or vice versa, but they exist to help man to attain a higher, truer, nobler, richer life. The purpose of education is not conserved surely, when there is thrust forward as the representative of the higher learning, a being who has become a mere machine to register facts, instead of a man with soul enlarged to comprehend and assimilate truth. Education then to be truly serviceable must be symmetrical. But it may be said, is not this argument from symmetry directly antagonistic to the position of the Denominational schools, which in opposition to the State College go to the other extreme and place the development of character before the discipline of the intellect? Are not in fact both systems wrong because unsymmetrical and unsymmetrical because unequal in respect to the over importance which they attach on the one hand to character development and on the other to intellectual training?

But is not this a misconception of the word symmetrical? A tower to be symmetrical does not need to be of equal mass all the way from top to bottom, but to be symmetrical its parts must be proportionately arranged with reference to its centre of gravity. A symmetrical educational system does not necessarily mean one in which equal emphasis is laid upon the physical, intellectual and moral development of the students, but rather one in which proportionate emphasis is placed upon these, in other words where each element of personality receives that attention due to its importance in the life of the individual. Is then the denominational school right in placing the development of character before the discipline of intellect? Is it thus paying due regard to the laws of symmetry and proportion in education. We believe so and for the following reasons:—

1. The development of character is fundamental to, or a necessary prerequisite to the discipline of the intellect. It may be well to say that the word character is used here in the highest sense to designate that in man which may be called the outcome of ethical endeavor. It is the residue of righteousness or holiness left in his nature from a long continued habit of doing right. Character is the mark which obedience to moral law sets upon a man, or it is an obedience of moral wholeness or soundness.

Finally we may say that character is the result of the continued efforts to answer the question of ethics, "What is the good" rather than the question of the intellect, "What is the true." Which then is the fundamental question for us? The question of the intellect, or the moral nature? Without doubt the latter! For those acts and objects denominated good certainly bear a much closer relation to the welfare of the individual than mere questions of fact, because the good touches the will, the source of action, but the true not necessarily. The true has a general interest, or as we may say an intellectual interest, the good a vital, practical and personal one.

The striving of the individual toward the good, preserves, conserves and perpetuates life, but the attainment of fact does not necessarily secure this end. Now life is fundamental and that problem which deals with the conservation of life is also fundamental. Such then is the ethical rather than the intellectual.

This truth is illustrated in history. It has always been lack of moral rather than intellectual development which has weakened and destroyed nations. The Greeks emphasized the intellectual in their social and natural life. They failed to emphasize morality and they perished. Their intellectual development was not an evil, but their failure to seek the more important and fundamental development of character was fatal. So has it been with other nations and will ever be. According to a recent writer who has devoted a whole book (volume) to the elaboration of his idea it is not a high intellectual, but a moral development which will determine the question of the survival of races. That race will endure and thrive and bless the world which seeks for the highest type of character, rather than that race which is content with brilliant intellectual achievement alone.

Again development of character is seen to be fundamental to the discipline of the intellect, from the fact that the character of the individual determines his thinking to a great extent. He thinks as he is inclined to, by some force within. A whole system of philosophy in fact is built on the assumption that not intellect but will is the primal and fundamental fact of personality.

"The wish is father to the thought," says the old

proverb. How necessary then to have good or right wish as their intellectual progeny may be worthy. For if in the long run we are to have good thinking, it must be through good living. This is the soil from which the truest and noblest intellects spring. This same truth is expressed by Christ himself in the words, "He that doeth His will shall know of the doctrine." It was from the righteous, obedient life that knowledge was to come, and that knowledge it may be added was to be in proportion to the righteous doing. On what realm then should development be regarded as fundamental? Surely in the realm of the ethical which in the last analysis is determinative of thought.

The fundamental nature of the Ethical in man is seen also from the fact that while a disciplined intellect may be regarded as an instrument of personality enabling the individual to secure truer and greater results, yet character cannot be so regarded. For character is the man himself in a sense in which the intellectual processes cannot be. Like the sharpened axe the polished intellect can cut its way through tremendous obstacles when welded by the force of a purposeful character. Is it safe however, think you, to put the gleaming tool of a disciplined intellect in the hands of characterless men? Does it not then become a weapon of destruction cutting through the faith of the weak and bringing the hopes of multitudes to the ground? That education is to be commended surely which seeks to develop manhood; to make men first before it invests them with accoutrements of man's estate, which with knowledge also seeks to impart wisdom, which first develops character and then puts in its hand the sword of a disciplined intellect.

2. We believe that the denominational schools are right in emphasizing the ethical side of education also for the reason that the development of character is an urgent demand of modern life. It is the demand in the sphere of politics. The words "political" and "corruption" alas, run naturally together. But the conscience of the nation, ever growing more sensitive, will not tamely rest under its disgraceful charge, that its greatest, most corporate, most important acts are vitiated by bribery and other dishonesty. What is it that we need in Congress, in the Senate in our legislative and judicial assemblies? Is it men with the sharpest intellect? Yes, but we need more, men of righteous lives and incorruptible characters. Give us political morality and we are sure that political acumen will not be wanting.

Just as the nation at large is calling for a higher and truer development of character, so the city, growing under mal-administration, wasteful and dishonest expenditures, is calling loudly, almost despairingly at times for men who will not alienate her franchises without compensation, who will not barter away her privileges for bribes and bleed her treasury for their own self aggrandizement. The city wants men of ability, financial and legal but more and above all men of sterling character on her aldermanic boards.

As with the nation and the city, so with the corporation, so with the church, so with the home. Whatever may be said to the contrary, Christian character is respected, is in demand, will be the coming power in our country. Character in fact is so esteemed, so much in demand, that everywhere in society a constant struggle is going on among men, consciously or unconsciously, whose object is to discover each other's real character. There is a universal search for worth, for value in life and thought. It is the work of our schools to supply this demand, to send forth men in whose eyes blazes the light of truth, in whose faces is the divine stamp of righteousness before whom wrongs shall go down, and lies shall wither and corruption shall cease. This work our Christian schools have done and are doing today. Every year thousands of young men who have been taught the glory of a struggle toward the good, the worth and beauty of Christian character, go forth to fight the long hard battle in the direction of the ideal. All honor, not only to the men who thus live with faces towards the heights, but to those institutions which have preserved for us the ideals of faith, of righteousness, of duty and of Christian character. They are doing a work, which the state, the nation and the world cannot do without.

(Continued next week.)

Influence of a Great Idea.

One of the truly great men of this age is Thomas A. Edison. Years ago a great idea took possession of him. As he developed it, it developed him. Success upon success has followed each the other. That idea has lifted him out of obscurity and linked his name to fame.

But it has also narrowed him. Its outworking has made him silent and abstracted, it has taken from him inclination for companionship and isolated him from men. Sometimes he is oblivious even in the presence of most cherished loved ones. He is, therefore, in some respects to-day less a man than he was twenty-five years ago.

But it is otherwise with the great thought of world wide missions. It enlarges every attribute of man's