

In all that constitutes modern civilization we are the heirs of great ideas, of the experience of mankind, of the best thoughts of the wisest men of two or three thousand years of human culture. In politics we have the ideas of liberty, law, government, the state. In religion we have the ideas of God, faith, conscience, eternal life. In education we have the ideas of scholarship, culture, liberal arts and sciences. One of these ideas, traceable at least to the Greeks, is expressed by the term "liberal education."

There is at the present day a remarkable consensus as to the importance of liberal culture, and likewise perpetual disagreement with respect to the agencies by which it may be secured. Educationists should maintain a sharp distinction between liberal education considered as an end, and liberal education considered as a means by which it is promoted. It is quite possible that the differences of opinion are not as serious as they seem, and that there may be a consensus as to the goal to be reached, if there is not respecting the route to be followed.

What end should be in view when plans are made for the promotion of higher education? What should be the product of our colleges and seminaries of learning? What should be the marks of a liberally educated man? In common with strong characters not liberally educated he should have a strong will. He should also have certain well trained and developed intellectual powers. Among these may be mentioned the power of concentration and observation, and of judgment.

The contrast of opinion in nearly every field of thought, the struggle of old and new standards in religious and social life, touch the physical and spiritual needs of the individual far too closely for us to remain unconcerned observers of the age in which we live. That we live in an age of rapid social variation can scarcely be doubted by anyone who regards attentively the world about him. It is a period of strong socialist tendencies, a time of extremes in religious faith, distrust of authority, and questioning of long established methods and institutions. The rush and whirl of the great world may not be strongly felt here, but not a few of you have seen in other countries fierce contests between labor and capital, street processions and head riots, meetings of all sorts and descriptions, religious, semi-religious, anti-religious — characteristics which seem to mark almost a decadence of social unity. And in our own land we are often brought face to face with the most conflicting opinions and the most diverse party cries. With the increase of freedom has come the increase of individual responsibility. The young voter of to-day is thrust into a maze of political problems that is almost appalling. If his "tribal conscience has any stuff in it," he feels that the problems ought not to be settled, so far as he has the power of settling them, by his own family or personal interests, or by his individual prospects of profit or loss. He