

## TRADITIONS AND BASIC IDEALS

BY HARDIN T. MCCLELLAND

**M**ODERN conditions of life are demanding more and more attention to detail, artistic expression and constructive ability. We are forced by sheer circumstances to consider our problems and give what exercise of faculty we can to their solution. It is inevitable that we be often overwhelmed with the trampling march of unconscious cosmic processes, stunned by the occasional bludgeonings of chance, and toil-worn with the struggle against a ruthless natural world. But we are fortunately given the aids and comforts of an elementary education, if not a heritage of sturdy character. With these we can feel somewhat at home in the Universe and go forth to the daily economic grind with the courage of common-sense, if not the zest of inspiration and enthusiasm.

The foundation of our present civilization rests on many new departures and discoveries, revolts and reformations, to be sure. But the main sanction and support of our modern culture and achievement are still to be found in the venerable traditions, virtues and moral maxims of the past. These were the treasures of our forefathers, the garnered fruit of their long years of toil and tribulation, meekness and meditation. And they are still to be noted as the basic elements in all our own current notions of what constitutes a truly liberal, that is, a complete and symmetrical education. They are leading factors in determining the noble characters of the men whom modern educational methods produce. Mere alphabetical prefixes and suffixes do not guarantee that any particular educational process has been a success. The true credentials are supplied when people who have enjoyed the academic atmosphere for a few years show in themselves and in their actions some of the dignity and discretion of such educational contact.

The proper business of education is not to turn out specialized fools and worldlying wastrels, nor yet mediocre philistines and fash-

ion-mongers. Such as these miss entirely the true benefits of the cultural aims and exhortations; they go to college for the fad and frolic, not to learn how to think and work and live nobly. There should, however, be no serious question as to the fact that character is the ultimate aim of any honest educational ambition or program. Even with all our anxiety for technical training and professional specialization we still hold to this first basic ideal—that in order to be really educated and get the best (if not the most) out of life it is the prime requisite that one should be morally and spiritually as well as intellectually and physically fit. Not only make honest efforts at intellectual and physical development, which does, I know, entail a concurrent degree of moral and spiritual development, but also make conscious and *intentional exertion* of all one's higher faculties, those nobler impulses toward generosity, heroism, love and justice especially; for I truly believe that a certain degree of just such promising qualities of character is necessary before there can be any honest effort of any dependable sort.

Perhaps one of the most exalted purposes, and surely one of the chief glories, of American tradition, is our democratic ideal of justice and equal opportunity for all who have the desire and energy to take advantage of a free public instruction first and then a low tuition college course. It offers high hopes and best chances to anyone having the necessary genius and industry to compete, but it withholds these from the fickle fools, the nouveau riche or the poor galoot who thinks a university is a pleasure resort. No, in our more serious moments we know that the true educational process aims at nothing mediocre, it feeds no morbid class consciousness and succors no group-prestige or caste system. The democratic ideal of a modern university holds forth the vision of a common morality for states as well as for individuals, for all corporate as well as private business; it presents an ideal aim in public education which demands a worthy character as the ground of talent and ambition in all who seek its benefits, that they shall respect and support all those great truths which are eternal in all social welfare, good living and straight thinking. Any community maintains its unity, order, honor and power of self-advancement only so long as it maintains in its people that delicate adjustment of inner integrity to balance the outwardly diverse functions and capacities of its life and growth. This integrity then, is the great concern of all honest educators; it is one of the chief basic ideals of education as the culture of character, and in either a person's own life or the larger life of the community, state or nation it cannot

help but find expression in the nobility of public duty and private thinking, in courage, zeal, devotion, justice, love, heroic sacrifice, toleration and peace.

I cannot see that we can greatly improve on those staunch and lovable characters of yester-year, those heroic souls who used to be such loyal friends, such noble citizens, such wise counsellors and connoisseurs of the good. They were the highest symbol of spiritual communion; they were the exemplars of a devoted tradition which never bored its patrons and never failed to lend a lasting basis to life's highest aim, the culture of noble character. Their maxims hid no theoretical rubbish and their precepts masked no selfishness behind a sophist ambiguity. Their schooling may have been elementary as Nature compared with ours, but it was no sham animal veneer; it was stern and just and inexorable as Nature herself. Their post-graduate life was no cheap ten-dollar clerkship either, seeking to manipulate its urban artifices somewhere within the limits of that sumptuous salary, for they made early friendship with Nature's laws, and like them, lived with wise provision and sedate demean, making their action-patterns likewise simple and austere, just and inexorable, and like her also in having no sham ideal of personal power, industrial leadership, economic mandates or material perfection.

Some such a reversion to the simple upright life, or at least some sort of a refuge from the maddening world by way of a spiritual rejuvenation, is another aim of honest education. We are thoroughly in need of a different perspective along the line of moral development as a part of the modern educational program, and this perspective will bring out the actual proportions and relative distances of human life, both social and individual. But not to have the kindly aid of those who can and would like to give us this refuge and this perspective is indeed to miss the major portion of one's early training, for it is by example from one's friends and teachers, as much as from the instruction of text books, that we obtain all that goes into an education. There is also the ceaseless though varying contact with life which gives direction to our desires and impulses, and if we do not take good care (or at least be well guarded by those who do take care of us) we are all too likely to miscalculate the measures of life and give premiums to folly, extravagance and disease.

It is then largely in the mellow light of our venerable traditions, our love of Nature and the friendly counsel of sages drawing attention to exemplary things, that we see the basic ideals of true education. The unfolding of consciously directed spiritual development,

the gradual persuasion and desire for the good things of life, the nobler expressions of mind and heart in actions not motivated by selfish guile or gain, the ever-enlightening love of Nature, books, friends, music, art and work, and that invaluable concomitant of these functions, the ever-widening sense of justice and security in the world and of honor and generosity in one's private life. The supreme achievement of any educational method, like the ultimate ground of its procedure, is to realize its moral aim in *the social efficiency of both individuals and states*. And this means that it shall basically aim to develop that vigor and loveliness of spiritual character which always differentiates men and women from fools and fashion-plates, and always allows fathers and mothers a noticeable prestige over ivory apes and peacocks. In view of these great aims, purposes fully as devout and sincere and promising as were the traditions of an inspired past, no individual talent or capacity should be mistaught, misdirected or obscured, but should be generously recognized and intelligently guided toward complete and balanced development. The individual is not only thus benefitted and set higher in the scale of life, but the community also will be thrust forward just that much; nay, more; its common habits of thought and life and work will thereby be given new inspiration and encouragement to grow, find expression and partake of divine things at their very source in the human soul.

The proper purpose of true education then is the complete and balanced culture of one's whole nature, the expansion and liberalization of one's power to think, feel, work and love. It should always hold uppermost the very worthy aim of all our spiritual tasks and social service—the nobler destiny of man as a perfect instrument of intelligence and creative meliorism in the world. A school, college or university is supposed to function as a guide and counsellor to growing youth, giving generously of their wisdom and inspiring example so that the torch of civilization may be carried further along the perilous path of human evolution. An education is essentially instruction in the true values of life; it means that a certain intellectual contact has been made with life and that a certain spiritual understanding has been derived from the past history and present events of human experience. But if the period of schooling has been wasted in pleasure-seeking, fad-following or mere physical interests, it is very probable that the resultant spirituelle is in a sad plight and ranks little more than an utter failure.

Friendship with scholars and philosophers should be appreciated enough to give pattern or impetus to our own activities; and if these

are in the line of constructive, intelligent social work then we cannot be said to have wasted our early years, for our friendships and serious studies will always leave a lasting influence on our post-graduate lives. These always tend to enrich and broaden our minds, they help materially to render our personalities cheerful and lovable, they aid our social ambitions and comfort us in times of sorrow or adversity. Life is a success only when the mind and soul have been tested and no pettiness or defect found therein; yet it stands but meagre chance of ever being a success if we have passed over the years idly and irresponsibly, trusting to luck for results which only follow serious thought and sturdy character.

It is with great comfort and expectation that we hear of the definite plans that have been just recently adopted by the Character Education Institute at Washington. These plans were formulated by nine Iowa educators led by Prof. Edwin Starbuck. With these plans effectively put to work in all the schools and colleges of the country a future citizenry of admirable mental power and moral decision will give human life a new meaning and civilization a higher significance. There is thus a goal soberly set for all public and private systems of education to achieve, and this goal is the production of all-round geniuses, persons with all their various powers, faculties and functions proportionately developed, with mental discrimination, moral determination and æsthetic appreciation; persons who are fully aware of their social obligations and have the spiritual energy and intelligence to meet them with generosity and heroism; persons who know how to be friends, love Nature, books, and art, revere truth, respect law, observe facts, be industrious and keep faith in all those deathless dreams and traditions of humanity at large.

#### INTELLECTUAL POWER AND MORALITY.

The growth of intellectual power may be marked off into six main divisions: sense-perception, comparison and systematizing, inference of casual order, practice in the co-ordination of experience, courage to face the facts honestly, rational and effective expression. When an educational method aims to follow this course in making brains grow to intelligent maturity, it is worthy of every honest student's attention and allegiance. Nay, it is a procedure worth while, even for all the adults who are supposedly already quite satisfactorily educated. But I think we are too often satisfied with what meagre capacities or talents we have, and do not take time or interest in exhortations to further educational effort. Thus do we remain static souls, having lost the dynamic urge to greater power and personality. How

then do we feel entitled to a grudge against our fate or the adversity of a turbulent world when nearly everyone is just like we are—mediocre minds, hectic hearts and stingy, selfish souls?

I do not believe that anyone, however aged, can still claim to be grown wise so soon and hence beyond the need of constant reminders and examples of truth, beauty, virtue, wisdom, duty and honor. These, being never allotted as unearned increments to the first callow investment of youth, are not exactly the invariable concomitants of venerable old age, nor do they necessarily follow in the wake of cold intellectual lucubrations of things known empirically or fancied from the postulates of common sense. But they do have great concern with those few noble souls who have grown erect by virtue of their own efforts and the grace of God, those staunch and lovable personalities who have stern powers of character, keen minds and generous hearts, those all too rare geniuses who look so kindly upon the face of Nature and recognize a kindred spirit of simplicity and innocence. They concern an exclusive clientele of heroes, saints and sages, lovers, dreamers and those more humble resigned souls who never draw proud paraphs on life's sacred testament. Such as these few happy souls really know what it is to be educated; they have a truly wholesome understanding of life, a symmetrical spiritual outlook and a sympathetic power to see clearly into subtle things, the self-same power which enables them to open magic doors and find the treasure of the humble. Education for them is no sham artifice of cap and gown, no cheap veneer of fashionable manners, no passive encyclopedic knowledge nor inert satiety of curious faculty; but it is a determined rectitude, an inward sobriety and integrity, and unerring insight and insatiable thirst for wisdom. They make more out of an education than the pinch-penny fool who thinks it is only a training in how to make an easy living, because for them it offers spiritual advantages far more to be treasured than worldly prestige or vicarious exploitation. By both instructive word and virtuous example they show that a training in the effective power for dynamic concord, in the creative function of mind and soul in all that a person aims to do or think or wish, is one of the chief items in any really critical program of education, that it is perhaps the only aim which should give us permanent motive for either preferential interest or adjusted discipline.

Without some degree of intellectual power, however, no one can be even sensible of what is best for him to do, nor can he take the data of experience in such a way as to draw just and useful decisions from what he has theretofore done only by chance. How then can we ex-

pect him to be prudent, courageous, devout, generous or lovable? I do not believe that these qualities fully develop except as one has first had the good sense to be considerate of cause and effect, the good nature to be generous and tolerant toward others, and the good fortune to find opportunity now and then for their expression. In other words, a person must have some degree of intellectual power before he can see the Good or devise means of bettering himself or the conditions of life about him. Another point is that there is no intelligent habit-formation except when some degree of morality and intellectual power can be brought to bear on the circumstances and routine of one's life. The realities of existence are so obdurate anyway, that we cannot wish them out of the way or different, and ever find our vanity so easily satisfied. So too, in civilized life we must take care to choose intelligently and with some sense of social responsibility between those most awkwardly diverse passions, impulses, sentiments, fears, hopes and ambitions which present themselves in our turbulent emotional life. Permanent motives become so through habitual practice, and we do well in seeing that we develop those which are honest and worthy instead of those which are vicious and ignoble.

Spiritual expression demands a certain honesty of intellect as well as an unswerving integrity of soul. It is no slap dash hedonism, no irresponsible jazz-mania, no sophist opportunism nor quondam feature-film of rechauffé comedy; it is too serious-minded and sincere for any of these, and it certainly offers no emotional vicary to cover the hysterical suggestions of cowboy dramatics or erotic unrestraint. Spiritual functions require original impulses, inspiration, development and education the same as any other phase of our active life; otherwise they remain mere rudiments and do not even find weak or atrophied expression in attempted deeds of valor. Man's soul is as much in need of precision and practical common sense as his science; His moral judgment presupposes delicate intellectual discriminations and is as much in need of creative ideals to spur his conscience as of good taste in the æsthetic appreciation of art or religious anagogy. And who denies that soul-culture is the chief individual aim of education? Apart from the complete and symmetrical development of man's social sense and a recognition of the responsibility of ethical relationship with his fellows, education is (or at least should be) primarily concerned with giving a person a staunch and lovable character, a quiet and intelligent spirituelle; in fact, it aims to give him a clean bill of health in every structure and function of his being, that he may fare forth into the world honorably prepared

to be a man and do a man's duty. Truly educated men then do not think loosely nor perform their work without demonstrable accuracy of judgment, first because it is not in the line of their acquired habit so to think or act, and secondly because they have too much respect for the training which precludes just those defects. But if one's thoughts are loose or vulgar, if one's work is done without accuracy or good taste, then we can only draw one conclusion: those who do such fallacious thinking or such stupid work are not educated in the strict sense. We may well ask that they be forgiven for they know not what they do, but we can readily see that their lives will be full of miscalculations and unemployment. In the efficiency age of an industrial world it is inevitable, but at all times it is evidence of a wiser providence than we are often aware of.

Power that is intellectual or spiritual has a higher morale than the blind forces of the material world; it is intelligent and devout, reasonable and conscientious, whence it has that true superiority of strength and energy so necessary to moral conquest. The sordid and ephemeral always give place to the sacred and eternal; the vulgar and mercenary always give way to the noble and free; the foolish and extravagant always give way to the wise and provident. But to see this take place we must take proper perspective of the situation, perhaps even wait a few decades in the case of individuals, or, with nations, look down the centuries and read the whole chronicle of their history, their rise, flourishing, decline and fall. With all due apologies to Percy Ainsworth, I will say that intellectual and spiritual domination in this world demands visions beyond the world, and the men who conquer the world are men who either have this vision as the natural birthright of genius or else have been properly educated to see things clearly. One thing, it is a clear and effective expression of moral energy which accomplishes much of this conquest; and another thing is that there is a constant inspiration in such visions because they bring into play all those forces of mind and heart which have power to make telling changes in the crass material world, power to throw over the drudge-load of human toil and tragedy, power to open the magic doors of mystic truth, beauty and philosophy, power to rejuvenate the worldling cynic and put his boorish tribulations on the Deacon's Detour. Such a power, however, must be well balanced and symmetrical, it must be spiritual, moral, intellectual, physical and effective if we expect to enlighten the umbrage of slinking misanthropes or enliven the living death of debauchees and spoliators.

If there is any specific value in living an intelligent and virtuous



life it certainly results from some such intrinsic functions of soul. If there is any actual wisdom and beauty, energy and goodness in the world it must surely be a world not wholly beyond redemption, and it pleases me to think that this gradual purification and salvage of the world is accomplished by just those spiritual functions which give value and significance to man's life. If then, there is really any "higher" or truly liberal education to be had on this planet it must surely consist in giving recognition and development to these functions, so training them that there will result a spiritual hegemony in the moral aims of its students and outside devotees. Such an ideal education may not yet be personally achieved by any one man or woman, but we seem still to have perennial hopes that with the specified procedure put into devout and universal practice, an ultimate realization may be made in a more or less limited community of souls, heroic and intelligent enough to seek worthy ideals, relish beauty and truth, love their fellow men as fair products of all the toil and heart-aches of past history, and rejoice that the world is grown at least that much better than it was before. Here would be an educated community, and I know that we would find but few of its people deficient in intellectual power or moral discrimination.

#### INDIVIDUALITY AND PUBLIC SERVICE.

Value and destiny are among the chief credentials of all worthy spiritual work. They may be read as determinate results in our individual lives usually because of some intrinsic service or creative function we perform, because of something noble that we are or something worthy that we do. They are also credentials of durability and continuous activity, not only here and now, but in that sweeter, more exalted and efficient after life to which we all aspire sometime in our life; only for that they are conceived as being projected beyond the immediate region of our conscious action, externalized as taking place after we have passed on to higher and more glorious realms of life. This makes for a choir invisible right here on earth, a social harmony and cordiality which is ever the aim and inspiration of all who are wise and good. Education should take good care to emphasize those preparations which will entitle a person to some sort of intrinsic value, constructive function and progressive destiny, seeing that his whole long life really embraces existence both here and hereafter. But even in this life alone no one is so fortunately situated that he can dispense with the virtues that make an upright lovable character, neither can he dispense with those obligations and duties whose conscientious performance give his life social value and sig-

nificance. Who then will deny that a man requires other credentials than those of mere physique, nerve, cunning, aggressiveness or intellectual power? It seems to me that his very life as an individual normally desiring to give value and destiny to his thought or work, presupposes a basis of intelligent control, just decision, generous aid, good taste, broad views and devout aspirations all in an amiable and courageous personality.

In every proper educational process these credentials will be given, not in bare items of a more or less shrewd business training and character analysis, not in the ephemeral prestige of physical development nor in the naïve chronicle of a haphazard sense-knowledge, but rather in examples of wisdom and exhortations to virtue. Individuality and genius will be recognized and given effective guidance and encouragement, for they are all that ever keep the world from sinking into stagnation and mediocrity. Another good point in true education is that there is no cheap mercenary reason for such recognition of persons having genius and originality, but rather because the family or community immediate to them will soon know and benefit by their new ideas, their courage, generosity, loyalty and good taste; and also more broadly because the nation, race or world outside their private circle will soon be enriched and inspired by their artistic expressions, exemplary works and constructive achievements. Such an educational program then cannot expect to be complete and effective unless it does actually aim and strive to bring out the personality and genius latent in every student, giving aid and direction to his individual talent so that he will be somewhat prepared to take a man's place in the world, be of some worthy service to humanity, and have some chance of going higher in the scale of life hereafter. Indeed, the specific meaning of education is just this bringing of such ideals, such talents, virtues, values and credentials forward. It aims to preserve the world's heritage of tradition, to inspire youth to emulate the deeds of daring and devotion which made their forefathers' names immortal, to carry on the culture of the human soul and prove that humanity is a civilized society, not a wilderness of witless wicked men.

There is no valid argument as to why we should make war on technical or practical education in favor of a "higher" classical or liberal education, and if there was, the former would have an unequal advantage in the overwhelming majority of public opinion and fresh selection of studies to be pursued. However, these two sorts of educational approach, are not, or at least should not be, antagonistic; they are really complementary processes in the complete and

symmetrical program. The true and efficient educational method embraces them both because it takes both engineers and artists, scientists and mystics, politicians and poets to make up the balanced scheme of the world's modern social economy. The modern world requires both mechanics and mystics, toilers and dreamers; it requires merchants, inventors and industrial leaders as well as artists, heroes, philosophers and spiritual leaders to make it whole. Neither the one nor the other can be said to make up a complete humanity, and so long as it is in the course of human events that Nature makes some of us at home with machinery and others inclined to dream away their lives in contemplation of beautiful things and other intangible themes, it will continue to be the proper business of education to bring out such various genius or personality and develop it into something like a useful and intelligent power in the world's affairs.

The great end of such an educational method is to put the individual character on a solid moral footing, give the genius a clear and just conception of his responsibilities, and put all individual sources of power, discovery of creative function at work in that domain of society for which it is best suited and in which it can do its best and most effective work. Social efficiency has been emphasized only within the last two or three decades, but it is destined to take precedence over all our other partial and often fallacious efficiency programs. The vocational recognition and assistance of genius being one of the best pieces of practical philosophy that has been given us by the Twentieth Century, it is only just and reasonable to expect a new dawn to arise, an era of social service, a durable partnership between the state and the individual which was heretofore thought impossible. The general purpose is that each individual's life may thus be devoted to his own chosen work and yet at the same time be devoted to the most effective public service; ultimately therefore it would contribute to the happiness and livelihood of the individual at the same time that it contributed to the enlightenment and enrichment of humanity as a whole. I do not think I am far wrong when I say that everyone has some element of genius and originality, some special energy or faculty with which to make a living as well as benefit others and contribute to the advancement of civilization. There are, of course, many weeds in our garden, but they are no longer weeds when we have once found that they have some medicinal, food or fertilizer value. The educational program then, which takes counsel of this fact and makes intelligent effort to make the most of such material as it has to deal with, cannot fail to produce some appreciable results in

the way of useful citizens, men and women of genius, wisdom, industry, people who are virtuous and worthy because they have strong, courageous and lovable characters.

Even the teachers themselves in any educational institution cannot afford to be inferior or to shirk their duties, for they are responsible for the example of their lives as well as for their instruction. It is an item of merit to find a society wise and discriminate enough, determined enough, just enough, to demand that its schools shall be worth the students' while to attend his studies and learn life's lesson. But it is of greater merit to find a student with sufficient personal energy and genius to choose his studies and pursue them without the constant exhortations and reprimands of teachers. The cheap student is as bad as the cheap teacher, for both cause a great waste of educational time and effort which could have been used probably to far better advantage in placing opportunities within reach of the more worthy. And another thing, it is as disastrous to try to get along with cheap teachers as it is with cheap apparatus or insufficient housing facilities. The substantial diet offered by most university or college curricula is never rich enough to dispense with the proteids of an adequate and efficient teaching staff. But with both worthy teachers and worthy students our modern educational aims and methods should prove a success, and by success I mean that both the student and society will be benefited and a lasting impetus to peace, prosperity and happiness will be given the world.

True education takes account of conditions as they are and seeks to shape them according to the possibilities of meliorism which men of originality see in every situation. True education recognizes that anyone's individuality must find outlets for its particular interests, that personality must be respected, that character must be cultivated and that the student's whole nature must be analyzed and resynthesized, developed or transfigured; it must be given conscious aids and comforts, inspiration and guidance, so as to grow erect and become an efficient creative force in the world. The individuality of genius cannot be judged and driven by cold authority; it must be counselled and inspired by the genial confidence of friendly converse and example.

A person is not always so fortunately placed that some melioristic possibility may not be read in his situation. And in the matter of education the possibilities of any given situation usually appear as social utilities and personal preparations. Among these may be enumerated, for the first: training in some useful art, industry or profes-

sion ; an understanding of the duties and laws, relations and restraints of parentage ; inspiration toward some creative achievement, cordial good-will and civic responsibility ; and an honest guidance regarding the basic normal (religious and economic) principles of life so that there will be respect for others' rights, and piety toward God. For the society that aims to be civilized and just, these four items are indispensable to any educational success and are pivotal to every individual's life as an intelligent social being. For the second or personal preparation phase of the educational program we may enumerate: the development of a well-poised physique, healthy body, steady nerves and clean personal habits ; the ceaseless placing of good example, even the living exemplars themselves, before the student that he may benefit by the personal contact and perhaps find much that is worth emulating in their friendly aids and comforts ; training in independent private thinking and how best to give rational expression to one's opinions ; and a scientific analysis of each individual's nature and interests so as to give intelligent direction to his excess energies, his leisure moments, his play-spirit. Taking these in their full scope and interdependence is the task of modern programs of character education ; but when so taken in all serious intentions toward producing a new generation of upright people, loyal citizens and creative spiritual workers, it cannot fail to number many heroes, saints, sages and geniuses in the final chronicle of achievement.

So long as we ignore the true requirements of life, the native disposition of students, or the most effective means of getting at and developing their natural gifts, we can only expect to have a world of mediocrity and folly, mercenary motives and luxury-lust. There are doubtful values in education because it has a false prospect somewhere in its program and cannot conceal the social results of such a fallacious offering. The process cannot be all fluid nor all substantial, else it either be too dilute or too inert. True and wholesome education aims to give a solid foundation to the individual's life while it also prepares him to perform some worthy and efficient service for the rest of mankind. It is not supposed to drive rough-shod over his nature with a hit-or-miss policy and expect to leave him very much improved or enlightened by the experience. It must provide, for whatever term the course requires, an atmosphere of inspiration and instruction, a chance for exemplary fellowship, and otherwise expose the student to those phases of wisdom and virtue which will give his life value and significance, and himself a nobler destiny in the life to come. Neglect of these requirements makes for failure while attention to them insures success.