

EFFICIENCY, CULTURE, CHARACTER ARE THE NEEDS OF OUR SCHOOLS

The Greatest of These Is Character, Says President Baker in Noteworthy Commencement Address; Keynote of Philosophy Is Not Hitch Your Wagon to a Star But Hitch Your Star to a Wagon; How Trend of Times Makes It Necessary to Adapt Educational Aims to Civic Needs.

"Efficiency, culture, character—these three—and the greatest of these is character," were the concluding words of President James H. Baker, of the University of Colorado, in his commencement address to the graduates of the University of New Mexico at the Elks' theater, Friday night. "Educational Aims and Civic Needs" was the broad and inspiring subject of the speaker. Each of these makes it impossible to print Dr. Baker's address in full but the following extracts will well repay reading by those who were not fortunate enough to hear his address:

Universities first arose to meet practical social needs. The medieval foundations in Italy and France fulfilled the demand for educated priests, lawyers, and physicians. The early colleges of New England were largely schools for aspirants to the learned professions. The later development of higher education, corresponding to the differentiation of functions in society, has greatly increased the list of special schools and departments in the university. The purpose and character of general education have varied with the dominant thought of successive eras. The Hebrew training was religious; the Athenians aimed at harmonious development in accord with the spirit of their philosophy and life; the Spartans and the Roman instruction was practical; the English university education has been adapted to the aristocratic organization of society; the American college emphasizes general power and intelligent citizenship as preparation for life in a democracy; at first Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, each represented the prevailing religious views of its country. What are the needs of society today?

The demands of the time are efficiency, the business ideal, real culture and responsible character, and these must be made more conspicuous in the education of our youth. Perhaps we have gone far to reach commonplace conclusions, but true thought is more important than new thought. It is quite as useful to teach the validity of old truth and its application, as it is to search for new ideas. If all roads lead to Rome we may conclude it is an important city.

We have been passing through a period of marked expansion in population, enterprises, production, wealth and power. We boast of greatness, measure everything by quantity. Colleges and universities have shared in the common prosperity and point with pride to their buildings, equipment, and enormous funds. Institutions of learning rank according to income and numbers of students. No wonder, however, that in appraising the way for greater things we have first emphasized the material side and neglected for a time some of the ideals of our forefathers; that in the curriculum of courses and means of instruction in our universities, and amidst the clamor of a transition stage, we have somewhat disregarded the sacred spirit of learning; that now we are beginning to seek the quality of our possessions, are becoming conscious of a new adjustment to ideals. In the few years just past the nation has gone to the professional and frankly acknowledged its sin and weakness. In encouraging ways it has shown its earnestness and sincerity. By publicity, leadership, and the enforcement of good intentions have been strengthened and civic virtue encouraged. The schools have complained that they have worked against odds because of external evils. Now the enlightened citizens apply the test of experience to education and offer criticism of its aims and methods. The early college with its simple courses leading to a few definite results was a well-devised instrument for its purpose and was employed with a noble zeal. The problem of the modern university is to prepare in its more courses for the varied and varied functions of society and yet retain in each the spirit that should enoble learning and inspire worthy ambitions.

Assuming that the relation between educational aims and civic needs is an important one, and that we have rightly chosen the three ideals to be most emphasized today, we may try briefly to give a meaning to each, and to point out the peculiar place of the university graduate among the forces of betterment.

In this age of intense activity, restless never-ending, which gets on the nerves like a steady gale of wind, is there no retreat, no quiet nook where trees wave and birds sing, from which one can see the world's traffic go by at a safe distance? Is there no repose where one can become conscious of his soul and let the world drift in upon him, where in quiet meditation the mind may slowly develop and not be subject to hot-house forcing, where ideas and ideals and philosophy may germinate, where art and religion may flourish? Must we ever strive for the means of living and never live?

We may give a partial answer in analyzing the culture element of education, although we cannot do so with hope to the would-be dreamer. Many changes will be made in the direction of efficiency, yet culture studies must retain an honored place in our curriculum. Culture may be defined as that which is hard to define. It has often meant a superficial refinement, and now is sometimes extended to cover manual skill, however crude. I have in mind something deeper. Plant culture means of the wild shrub a tree of flowers and rich large fruit; it enlarges and enriches its whole nature. Human culture has its roots in the very spirit and essence of knowledge. It is a culture which means that one knows the scientific method and its relation to discovery and progress, in history when in its light he can interpret current events, in literature when he is inspired thereby, in music and art when he can fathom their deeper symbolism. The lawyer has not the culture of his subject until he learns that law is or should be the crystallized ethics, and that justice is the end of all legal procedure. The engineer is not cultured until he sees in mechanism and construction the expression of noble design and purpose, aims at accurate and extensive knowledge, has an artistic feeling for the beauty of his work. We are not a cultured people until we can appreciate oratorical and choral as well as ragtime, can write real literature and produce recitations of great beauty, and an artist can find the beauty of his work. We are not a cultured people until we can appreciate oratorical and choral as well as ragtime, can write real literature and produce recitations of great beauty, and an artist can find the beauty of his work.

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Character, regulate the passions, determine values, and give a comprehensive view of learning and life.

Prof. James H. Baker, in a recent address, said that the best claim of a college education is that it should help you to know a good man when you see him. We may add the implication that it should help you know a good thing when you see it and a good thing when you have it.

Character is vitally related to culture and efficiency. It means more than the usual catalogue of virtues and vices. Highly useful character is based on certain culture elements: breadth and dignity of view, perception of the best, optimism, a deep sense of the Christian code and the heroic honor which applied modern conditions, would make new standards for our political and commercial life. On the active side is the habit of choosing the best when seen; it is dignity of conduct as well as of ideas; it is force and accomplishment. Character finds its highest realization in sharing public responsibility.

Wise leaders in public affairs have appeared in the moral crisis of recent years, and they have gained an enthusiastic following. The reaction which comes so speedily with the average citizen is here already. People tire of their ideals, timidity cannot endure satire, ignorance cannot detect false logic. We see otherwise sane people, who are honest, who are strong, who cannot afford to purify business methods at the cost of a temporary financial disturbance, even to save the country from final ruin, and that present prosperity is more to be desired than honesty which gives permanent strength to a people. Men are found who from the ramparts of apparent righteousness shoot poisoned arrows at the leaders of healthy national sentiment. The country is in a state of crisis that in any other of its history periods. Will the people abide by the standard that will win the battle for a successful democracy? This is not a party question, it is a question of the people—a question of the character of the ideas, spirit and methods that shall dominate the political affairs of this country in the immediate future.

And this further illustrates our main theme, and connects a public need with educational aims. The "failure of universities in modern leadership" and denying their power for "raising the tone of democracy" are of growing frequency. No one denies the strength of the moral ideals of the educational world, but the people are demanding results, and it is not a confession of weakness, but a sign of strength, if we enter bravely upon a re-examination of our problems, and admit that our present method may enlighten science. Education has not been consciously aimed at the needs of national life, but any future analysis of it will determine its leading purposes and needs.

Have we not overlooked one of the factors that should be foremost in adjusting and attaining educational ideals, namely the college graduate of the deep-souled type, and include in this class the student who has opportunities in higher education, liberal or professional, and all to whom college life is yet a vivid memory, as well as those whose laurels are still fresh. It is to this class, the college graduate, that we look for re-education. We should carry forward the banner with new ideas, fresh courage and youthful vigor. You have been trained as the means to the highest aims of society; you are expected to advance beyond the generation who have been your teachers. You are called to the work of betterment by every consideration of fitness, gratitude and duty. State and society have educated you; if opportunity has not been met by effort, you have learned the principles upon which to base a varied practical wisdom; you can interpret education in terms of social need and social problems; you have the education you are fresh from the experience of school and are prepared to be critics of its strength and its weakness; loyalty will make you guardians of the high ideals of learning; your knowledge and your experience with them in the largest responsibilities in citizenship.

weakness and unpreparedness, if he has not a hopeful vision, he should re-educate himself. As the church with hope prays for the steadfastness of its new disciples and bids them go forth in the name of God to aid humanity, so does the confraternity of true scholars pray for their novitiates; for upon them generation after generation rests much of the hope of democracy and of the betterment of civilization. The need of our country, the need of our schools, the need of our young men—efficiency, culture, character, these three, and the greatest of these is character.

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