

OBSERVATIONS

BY SARAH B. HARRIS

The World is Small

Students are easily excited. They are easily incited by an astute professor into active hostility against the president of the institution in which they are undergraduates. If the professor chances to be a master of the department of knowledge he is employed to lecture upon, the very nature of the relations between teacher and pupil converts the undergraduates into disciples and warm advocates of any theory the professor chooses to espouse.

There are men born to the knowledge of relationships. If they are professors in a university or superintendents of any department of a great business, they keep the idea of the whole before them. There are other men who magnify their own importance and the importance of the department they chance to be engaged in superintending. Such men admit the general fact that the part is smaller than the whole, but when they look at the department of business or education which they superintend, they see it larger than the whole. They therefore ask or demand a larger appropriation for their departments than the interests of the whole justify. This is the trouble the president of Columbia is having with Professor Woodberry.

Students have small personal experience with the president of the college they attend. They are "agin the government," whatever it is, and it requires only a hint from a professor who claims to be persecuted by the college president to incite them to reprisals in the shape of pre-Adamite jokes and cartoons of the president in the college funny papers and derisive hoots and yells directed at him personally if the students are under cover of a crowd or in any other way safely ambushed from identification and consequent expulsion.

The professor has the point of vantage. The shrewd teacher ingratiates himself with his pupils. The tyro who is learning the technique of any subject looks upon a virtuoso with awe and worship. If the virtuoso is at the same time his teacher and does something the youngster has tried to do and failed, does it with faultless precision, taste, reserve power and with the aid of his virtuoso's birth-gift of genius, the youngster is enslaved. He is bound to serve the master by an oath more irrevocable than the oath of feudalism. The youngster knows a little, the teacher knows a great deal more, but the youngster knows just enough to worship proficiency and talent in that particular branch which he has elected.

"The Jester," the Columbia university funny paper, contains a number of editorials criticizing President Butler for not allowing Professor Woodberry what share of the college funds he thinks proper for the maintenance and development of his department of comparative literature. To be sure the students, who are the authors of the editorials, know nothing about the comparative value and cost of the different departments or of the necessity of apportioning the funds equitably and in accordance with some standard of equality among them. They know only that their professor of comparative literature has been refused by the administration the sum which he considers necessary to relieve him from the drudgery of too severe labor in his department.

George Henry Danton, of the senior class, has been suspended by President Butler for writing and publishing in the "Morningside" an abusive article criticizing the president for his action in the Woodberry matter. This typical undergraduate effusion appeared in "The Jester" after Danton had been suspended and reinstated in consequence of his apology to the president: "President Butler should remember

that an attempt to gag the press is usually looked upon as a confession of wrong-doing. We do not want to be expelled, and consequently shall not say all we think; but we will say that, having branded the student and alumni petitions as a "newspaper agitation," and finding now that such was not the case, President Butler ought at least to acknowledge to those whom his expression has wronged, that it was ill-chosen.

Nothing satisfactory can be found in President Butler's laying down of the law in the Woodberry matter. He has shown an absolute inability or unwillingness to really answer the student and alumni petitions.

But President Butler was not satisfied with avoiding an answer to the petitions; his letter also gave a very false impression of them. He stated that "the university authorities have been at a loss to understand the meaning or purpose of the agitation"—which, if true, convicts those authorities of inexcusable negligence. He characterized the whole affair as a "newspaper agitation." He tried to make out that the petitions were unrepresentative—whereas they were adopted by a student mass meeting and signed by nearly every representative alumnus that ever had Prof. Woodberry."

Nebraska students "who have had Professor Woodberry" remember him as the master of an exquisite English style. They thought then he would sometime contribute prose and poetry of permanent value to English literature. Excepting the life of Edgar Allen Poe and a sonnet, "America," his early promise is unfulfilled. And they conclude that his cherished inability to get along with associates or with a superior has involved him in trouble with the president of Columbia where he has been employed for several years.

President Nicholas Murray Butler is a man of action, of scrupulous probity, and he is still controlled by a fine sense of his obligations as the president of Columbia to the interests of the whole college. He can not be hypnotized by a man who resents and frequently rejects the obligations of duty and the daily performance of services for which he is employed by the corporation of Columbia. The ideals and the performance of the two men differ essentially, and it is written that the stronger type, the man who materializes his dreams nor leaves them shaped only in pretty words, will conquer the indolent egotist who dreams fine dreams and dreaming leaves the place he might have filled in the world and in literature vacant.

President Butler's ideals and practical plans are expressed in the account of an address he once delivered to a graduating class. The class and the commencement audience expected him to make the usual emphatic appeal to travelers who have just started on a perilous up-hill ascent of a mountain to the top of which only a few have ever climbed. Instead he astonished them by asking each one in turn what he meant by the term "educated man." The answers were varied, but in substance all agreed that an educated man or woman is one who knows certain foreign languages, sciences, or who possesses certain enumerated accomplishments. When they were through with the definitions Dr. Butler said: "Not at all. I see you would not recognize an educated man if you saw him. I will point out to you the points by which you may know him. They are five; and the first is ability to use one's mother tongue—not somebody else's mother tongue—with correctness and precision. The second—those refined and gentle manners which are but the expression of fixed habits of thought and action. The power and habit of reflection constitutes the third mark—an uneducated man never

reflects. As the fourth, I will name the power of growth, lacking which one has not been educated, but stunted. And lastly, efficiency, or the power to do."

If this age means anything at all, it is action. If there are benefactors of the nineteenth and of the twentieth centuries, they are the men and women who have done something with their birth-gifts, who have thought and done, not those who have dreamed and thought and dreamed again. We may be over-material, but we are not futile. For that we are not futile and indolent, future generations will count us blessed among the men and women of all time.

As we climb the hill, which has a grave at the top or on its slopes, wherever we chance to fall, how the view changes! We see men and views from above where once we looked up at them. That which from below was a noble structure, from above is malformed; it lacks symmetry and is apparently of little use to those who are climbing the same steep we have surmounted.

* * *

"Placed on File"

Senators Dietrich and Millard sent a letter to the convention. Judging from the smooth composition, and because in the signature Senator Millard's name followed that of Senator Dietrich's, I conclude that the former senator wrote the letter. The convention was astute and worldly wise. In politics, in political utterances of all kinds from men who are not pre-eminently distinguished for their frankness and directness, there are conventional phrases and forms that mean nothing to the initiated. By this time the two senators have learned that the convention realized that "actions speak louder than words," and that the conventional forms of praise they applied to the Cuban policy of President Roosevelt were accepted by the convention in the decorative spirit in which they were written. Senators Millard and Dietrich are opposed to any bill reducing the import tax on sugar, however inconsiderable the reduction. They are known as the "insurgent senators." Senator Dietrich is one of the most prominent members of the minority in the senate which has formed a conspiracy against the president.

Mr. George Harvey, in Harper's Weekly, speaking of the conspiracy says: "The combination is one of selfish interests, partly beet sugar, partly personal, partly a union of machine politicians who are not getting as much of the federal patronage as they consider to be their due. It is a combination against the fair name of the country and its government, and is hostile to the general welfare. If the country realized the true character of this conspiracy against righteousness, the protest evoked by it and its members would be not only noisy, but successful. The daring and impudence of the senators who are proclaiming their intention to defeat any bill for the relief of Cuba, or to pass a rebate bill, which is notoriously unconstitutional, or the Dietrich bill, which would increase the price of sugar to the consumer, pass understanding . . . These insurgent senators are opposing not only the president, but the rank and file of their party."

Yet the letter sent to the Nebraska state convention was peppered with decorations like the following: "The invaluable assistance of President Roosevelt." "We have at all times been heartily in accord with the attitude of President Roosevelt on that subject." (Reciprocal trade arrangements with the republic of Cuba.) "The praiseworthy and commendable administration of our distinguished President, etc.

The communication was read to the convention and an ingenuous member from Douglas county moved that it be placed on file and that it be replied to by the secretary with the expression that the senators might soon be home to participate in the campaign. Mr. Ehrhardt of Stanton moved to strike out all after the words: "placed on file," and his motion was vociferously carried.

There is no ambiguity about the

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