

TEACHING AS A CAREER

It is not the purpose of teaching to mold mankind into a regimented and disciplined corps of intensive activity. Rather, it is its objective to bring each cell of the rational world to the perfection of which that individual is capable. No teacher can make a master-mind out of a dullard, but every real teacher can help that dullard to self-realization, that is, to develop himself as completely as possible, with the endowments proper to himself. The stream of humanity is not to be channelled into one set groove. This was determined by Him Who gave man free will.

I'm not fated to move

In a predestined groove.

I am, therefore, a bus—not a tram.

God, with infinite design, purposely created us many races and colors: life has further complicated matters by adding many creeds. Teachers form not rigidly to a universal pattern: they plant not uniform seeds in the same soil of the same field: rather they, as it were, but spread out to the vivifying and rectifying rays of the sun the many and manifold species to be perfected. Teachers reveal, expose and guide: the pupils see, use and improve or destroy. But the educator is finite: so, too, is the educand. Both must remember that "The light that comes from the lamp of the educator does not and cannot illuminate more than faintly the facade of the Palace of Truth. At its best it only falls clearly upon the steps." Therefore it remains for God Himself to perfect His own handiwork.

What incentive is there anyway for choosing teaching as a career? St. Paul inquired of the Romans, "How shall they preach unless they be sent? If we substitute "teach" for "preach", the same holds true. In other words, teachers are born, not made. True, poor teachers can become better teachers, but simply the desire to teach is not sufficient. Certain basic qualities are requisite. These requirements, in varying order, have been repeated and para-phrased ad nauseam. So we'll brief them. Bearing in mind the prime factors that one must have a vocation to the teaching profession, that one have ordinary good health, common sense, and at least average intelligence, we shall add only three:

1. an all-pervading love for children
2. an almost infinite patience
3. a sense of humour second to none.

The bugbears of practically all teachers centre around discipline, disagreeable problems with pupils and / or parents, and slow learners. I'm willing to wager that any teacher with the above minimum equipment will lick any and all problems—instead of the pupils. When a child feels that you really love him (and he can't help feeling it if you honestly do), even the hardest will melt. Stupidity and slowness are conquered by limitless patience and kindness, or not at all. Finally, there are successful teachers who have either lost or never possessed the use of one of their five senses, but no

teacher was ever successful without that sixth and vital sense, the saving sense of humour. Without it, work, the teacher, life itself sours. With it, we laugh away the tension incident to our work and really enjoy what in a saner person would lead him to commit murder—or suicide: "Rickets is the skin around the ankles!" Thus we prove our humanity for "Alone among the animals," said Chesterton, "man is shaken with the beautiful madness called laughter."

Much has already been said elsewhere about the rewards of teaching. There are numerous trivial testimonials that urge to new endeavour—public appreciation and esteem, a sense of security long vacations, promotions, study or travel grants, pensions, etc., but in the final analysis the only reward here that a real teacher wants or at least the only one that will suffice is the knowledge of a job well done—that through her teaching, frequently only because of her teaching, children learn.

Undesirable teachers are disastrous, it is true. No matter what we teach, be it arithmetic or theology, knowingly or unknowingly, we teach our own philosophy of life. It is eternally important that the waxen years of youth be stamped with only the good, the beautiful, the true.

Now it is safe to say that all teachers in our country aim to prepare children for happiness in this world, and in the next. In order to do so successfully, the teacher himself must have a right idea of what constitutes happiness. Herein lies the crux of the whole thing. We must realize that the true happiness of the individual and of society depends upon what the individual is and not upon what he may possess. Some seem convinced that a man will be happy if he can maintain a house with the ice-box constantly full and the carpets all clean and fifteen different magazines on the living-room table and a Pontiac in the garage and a parrot on the back porch. But without habitual contact with and submission to God, these are but the symbol of a life that can bring nothing but confusions, anxieties, misunderstandings, and fits of irritation. True, art, music, and literary dilettantes can add somewhat to the void—often futility—of such a life, but they cannot procure satisfaction; only disappointment.

What shadows we are

And what shadows we pursue!

The closest approach to happiness in the lives of such is the dreams they dream in peaceless isolation. The prevalence of the belief that, in the struggle for and acquisition of all the accidentals, happiness can be found has produced in the words of Pope Pius XII, "A type of man who can not stand to be alone with himself or his God for even an hour." Happiness must have its source from within and not, like a garment, be put on, at will, from without.

Every system of education is based on a philosophy of life; all education properly so called is based on a complete philosophy of life; all true education is based on the true philosophy of life. It is in the balance of such principles that modern education has been weighed and found wanting. It is unsound precisely because the philosophies which direct and govern it are, for the most part, either incomplete or false. Recent attacks on the shortcomings of the United States' public schools have grown heavier. Our schools closely resemble theirs. Today many educationists advocate a return to the sounder educational principles which were in vogue half a century and more ago. Mr. Arthur E. Bestor, in his book **Educational Wastelands**, declares that progressive education is regressive education; that social studies have become social stew. Some of his observations are both pertinent and pungent. Another prominent educator, Mr. Robert Hutchins, has even gone so far as to state that:

"A sound philosophy in general suggests that men are rational, moral, and spiritual beings, and that the improvement of men means the fullest development of their rational, moral and spiritual powers."

Whatever else it may claim to do, modern education is failing in its trust; it is not education, for the simple reason that it is not true education at all. If it is not educating, it can not possibly play its part in the noble work of forming men of character, so sorely needed in the world today. It is granted that there are few non-Christian systems of education that can not form character with at least some good in it. But the real character that is such a deplorable need of our time is that which is not merely good in part; it is true throughout. Man is neither all spirit nor all flesh, but a union of both; he is not animal only but a child of God as well; he is born not merely for the life of sense but much more for the life of grace. He has been defined as a "horizon in which two worlds meet." It follows that man cannot be just a perfected animal—one that has learnt to talk and to walk upright on two feet. Man is an animal indeed, but he possesses what no other animal can have—the God-given gifts of intellect and will. How ridiculous the Nebular Theory which maintains that space unaccountable assumed motion and resulted in the school janitor whose very lack of motion points to a definite denial of such a basic principle.

The ideals proposed to youth will be the expression of the philosophy which guides his instructor. Since ideals play such a large role in the lives of the young, the ideals proposed are all important. What ideals is education actually proposing to our youth? It may seem ungracious to say it, but I fear that in many cases the ideal is simply not good enough: the ideal common to the greater part of education in modern Anglo-Saxon countries is simply this—the perfect gentleman. "What looks fair will be good, what causes offense will be evil; virtue will be what pleases, vice what pains.

It is detection, not the sin, which is crime. Decency is virtue." Recently at one of our Teachers' Conventions, a teacher presented a problem: how could she cure a child who steals. It seemed a major problem so an experienced teacher was summoned to answer. His solution? "Tell the child it isn't **ethical** to steal!" I thought of Cardinal Newman's "Quarry the granite rock with razors or moor the vessel with a thread of silk; then may you hope with such keen and delicate instruments as human knowledge and human reason to contend against those giants, the passions and the pride of man." Newman knew from experience the insufficiency of such aids.

It will be readily granted that the perfect gentleman can be rather a fine fellow. As Newman described him, he never inflicts pain; he is always courteous, kind and considerate: is honest, truthful, and self-respecting: just, modest, appreciative and refined. Nevertheless, something is missing: all this is not enough: the picture is incomplete. That one thing is positive religious instruction. Our modern systems of education have not as a rule, produced a class of men who can live at peace with themselves, their neighbors, and their God. In our up-to-the-minute schools, refrigerators replace religion; sex, scores, and shop supplant Sacred Scripture. "It is fatal for the education of a child if education is religious at home and non-religious in the school. Our youthful generation must not become schizophrenic, a generation of split minds and split characters." Students should not, must not, be asked to ride two mental horses at once. All right-minded individuals realize that the purely natural is not adequate. For example, the **Programme of Studies** for one of our Atlantic provinces states that "The spirit of Christianity should be ever present in our schools." Religious dogma should not be taught but rather "the exemplifying of those beliefs and the practice of those virtues which are the common heritage of the Christian world." How, may I ask, can the spirit of Christianity "be ever present" in a school unless the doctrines of Christianity be therein inculcated? Consider art, music,—any subject. I should greatly fear for the success of a course in music in which the student is permitted to view the teacher using the correct procedure, "exemplifying the beliefs and practising the virtues," i.e., the principles and techniques which govern the subject—if the student himself receives no formal instruction in it. He may learn to appreciate good music but he cannot learn to play it. No, it does not do to replace religion with ethics, nor to reduce it to the purely natural plane. Purely human inspiration will never lead the world of youth very far or very high: Lord Baden-Powell will not be our Final Judge.

So if you have the aptitude, correct standards, and a love for children that is eternal, be a teacher for

They that instruct many to justice
shall shine as stars for all eternity.

—SISTER ST. LAURENCE MARIE, C.N.D. '58—