

THE ART OF LEADERSHIP

S. M. M. '46.

On all sides today the cry is for more and better leaders. Since the number of organizations in our modern world is steadily increasing, more and more problems arise in regard to making group activity more beneficial to the members and more promotive of the common good. One of the apparent results of the lack of efficient leadership in our present day life is that the aims of individuals are very often not directed towards the central purpose of the group of which they are members. Only intelligent and conscientious leaders can correct the tendencies towards selfishness in our modern society.

The key to leadership lies in the ability to make a team out of a group, to bring their efforts together into a unified result. The good leader knows that the way to get things done is to stimulate competition and appeal to the nobler motives, as well as to show respect for the other person's opinions. The tactful leader asks questions instead of giving direct orders when he wants to change people's ideas without giving offence or arousing resentment. The way to develop the best that is in a man is by appreciation and encouragement. The leader who is prepared to move forward as circumstances demand and to contribute to group decisions rather than impose his own will upon others is sure to find response. He knows that being genuine and honest inspires the confidence of his group.

What is leadership? Leadership is the activity of influencing people to co-operate towards the attainment of some goal which they come to find desirable. It is interested in bringing people to work together for a common end, effectively and happily. There are several kinds of leadership in the popular sense, such as leadership in the field of art or in the scientific realm. Whereas commanders direct organizations and subordinate individuals to organized ends, leaders guide and develop individuals so that they may better share in realizing some aim of the group.

Great leaders do not just happen. Of course the natural capacity must be present, but real leadership is bought with consistent, tedious, and monotonous hours of intelligent effort. A leader in any sphere must necessarily be a good

worker. Thomas Edison made over five thousand experiments in perfecting the first carbon filaments for his first electric light, and, when he had attained success, he told his admirers that "genious is one part inspiration and ninety-nine parts perspiration."

Father Daniel Lord, S. J., that inspired leader of youth, affirms that the directors of youth organizations should themselves be so zealous for the common good of the members that they will naturally inspire them with an ardent determination to put forth their best efforts to attain the ends of the organization.

When life was lived essentially upon a physical basis, might was right. So great conquerors rose to places of power. For a long time the world measured success in this way. The world's heroes were largely physical fighters. But as education and culture spread to the masses, a new field for human achievement was opened up. In the Victorian Age people had the idea that to possess riches was to have achieved success. They called it progress, since it was a step from savagery; yet this outlook was unsatisfactory. Now, every thinking man or woman can see that success does not lie in what one has, but in what one is. Our lives here are but stewardships, and our success is measured by what we do with the talents which God entrusted to us for the welfare, enlightenment, and happiness of others. We must live and associate with others in such a way that we can pass life on to those yet to come better and more satisfying than we found it.

The modern exaltation of individualism, encouraged by pseudo-philosophers and accompanied by forgetfulness of the true dignity of man, has provoked the setting up of totally false values. Today as never before the world needs leaders in politics, in education, and in industry, leaders who will be able to lead the world to a just peace. In a recent radio address Monsignor Sheen said, "The basic reason why our economies and politics have failed as a means to peace is that both have forgotten the end and purpose of life."

True leadership should show us that success is not might; success is not the possession of things; success is achieving the art of noble living.