

## STUDENTS

With the mention of "students" a rather confused, and perhaps incorrect, conception comes to the mind of most individuals. Such a situation is indeed understandable because today this innocent word is tossed from mouth to mouth with such abandon that one's idea of its meaning becomes, to say the least, slightly distorted. Some maintain that "student" applies to all who are undertaking courses of study; others that it describes only those who apply themselves to learning, an assertion that finds its basis in the meaning of the Latin root *studere*; and yet other definitions are advanced. What, then, is the proper concept of "student?" In answer to this let us say that there are three unmistakable signs by which a true student may be recognized: an absorbing desire to know the truth; an unswerving steadfastness in the pursuit of truth; and an open, honest heart, free from guile, suspicion, and jealousy.

Fortified with this description let us employ a little circumspection to determine the various grades of student. At first glance we seem to be confronted with a conglomeration of beings, each posing as a student, and each different from those about him. However, after careful inspection of these, four main groupings become recognizable; those who do not choose to seek knowledge, but who do not object if it overtakes them; those who study, but not wisely; "parrots," who do not employ their reasoning ability to any extent; and, finally, those who gradually acquire a certain independence of professors and books. To this last class only a few belong while still under-graduate students, individuals who have nurtured their mental capabilities until now they find themselves moving to conclusions from observed facts without the constant assistance of man and book. These are the four types of student we find about us on every side, the types which go to make up the student body of every college.

Now let us investigate the several classes separately, indulging in a bit of introspection at the same time to determine our own classification. To the first group belong those who study "like all the fellows study," as one student put it. Regularly, more or less, they glance over the assignments, just once of course, leaving out



the fine print, that boring, unimportant matter. These are the ones who in class seem bent on disturbing the progress of the other members; who blusteringly rise to condemn most constructive ideas advanced by those whose minds are becoming educated properly. It is they who will go forth to become our destructive critics, petty politicians, and chronic agitators; who because of their narrow outlook will become a millstone around the neck of progress. Today they study to get by; they expose themselves to lectures. Tomorrow they will do the same, living in the world only to pass muster, exposing themselves to whatever comes their way. They are training for a profession—that of society's most destructive parasite.

As we turn and cast a glance at the second group a more pleasing sight greets us—and, yet, a more pitiable one. Here we find workers, earnest persons, anxious to succeed but employing a rather unproductive method. They are like the farmer who works faithfully on his land, yet because of improper methods of cultivation comes forth with a poor crop. They read assignments faithfully day after day, discuss them in class, pay rapt attention to professors, yet miss the forest for the trees. They fail to stand back mentally and view their world of studies. They do not put their several knowledges together to give themselves a comprehensive outlook, to increase the breadth of their mental picture so that they may be able to approach broad conclusions from accumulated facts. Theirs is indeed a plight to be pitied, for they are serious at heart, and one to be remedied if at all possible. A notebook in hand in which summaries are made of assignments read would serve well as a step towards the development of a broader outlook.

Leaving the plodders, we next make the acquaintance of the feathered members of our case—the “parrots.” Most students are familiar with this class. They are the boys and girls of Memory School, transferring text to examination paper. Among these we find a number who, attempting to achieve honours, slip into the rut of memorizing, for this tendency is strong when one is attempting to gain the extra mark. The fault with this method lies in the fact that what has been learned is often not clearly understood, and consequently is soon for-



gotten, and that the outlook of the student, as in the case of the plodder, is in no way developed, and may even be narrowed.

And now we come to the true students, those of the fourth group. These are the *they* who use what is offered to them in the most advantageous manner. They employ books and professors of course—but to such students these are the supports of the baby as he takes his first few steps. When he has learned to walk in the mental world as a result of constant effort, he will no longer use them for support; rather they will be merely an aid to him in the directing of his steps, and in the surmounting of any obstacles in the path of reason. These students, we see, *think*, and for themselves. Such students are the future moulders of nations, for in them are born constructive ideas, the result of original clear thinking, the product and reward of proper study while in college.

It is the true student that looks with a certain pity upon members of the other classes. He even tries to revolutionize methods of teaching so that his fellows may do more work for themselves and, eventually, become what they now claim to be. The revolutionist cannot achieve his purpose, however, because only the so-called students themselves possess the power, dormant though it may be, to mount the mental stairway. As a matter of fact all, at first, may justifiably be classed in the first group insofar as they at first are passively receptive. Soon, however, the majority rise and, with the discovery that knowledge is both entertaining and desirable, acquire a new taste, a valuable taste. From this point onward they foster their own education.

Thus briefly have we looked around the college. Our condemnations may have been somewhat harsh, but nonetheless they were deserved. We who have the chance to become true students are, many of us, unfortunately not in the last mentioned class. Too often we do not realize this fact till the moment of "cap and gown" approaches; too often do we stumble blindly onward when a word would rend the veil. To those of you who yet are blind I say, "A true student is primarily a thinker, and thinking is the heart of education."

—Gertrude Butler, '44.