

CHARACTER IS IMPORTANT

All over the world the great question arises, "Who is going to build a permanent peace?" All the great powers have failed to bring us out of the spiritual depression from which we suffer. True peace rests on the moral character of men and nations. If we, then, are going to contribute our share to civilization, we must form in ourselves character. Now, there are all sorts of character: good and bad character, strong and weak character, stable and unstable character, odd character, and no character. Originally the word character meant the mark impressed on a coin, indicating its nature and value; and thus in its applied sense character comes to mean marked individuality. We can be good or bad, weak or strong without character, but that must not be our aim. Foolish would be the man who attempts to shingle the house whose structure is weak and tottering; likewise, foolish would we be to attempt to put on strength and goodness from the outside without a solid structure underneath. This structure is one which only we ourselves can build, and is called character. Father Hull says, "Character is life, comprising thoughts, words and actions, dominated by principles." The man without character is the spineless one, the man who acts on impulses. He is good or bad according as good or bad impulses rule him, or as influenced from outside by good or bad. On the contrary, the man of character is the one who has a set purpose and deliberateness about him, who can use impulses and influences masterfully. He is the one with an internal motive, an end in view. In short, his life is dominated by principles, which principles, whether good or bad, right or wrong, make him what he is.

What are principles? They are conceptions deeply rooted in the mind, elevated into standards of judgment, taste, feeling and action, and consistently applied to daily living. They are the standards upon which our mental life depends; by them we reason, act, judge, decide. It is necessary to recall here that not all principles are good, since the sinner as well as the saint may be one of principle. The difference is that the life of the saint is dominated by good Christian principles. Since sainthood must be the ambition of all of us, we need true Christian principles for the development of good character, which is "a clear grasp of right principles of living and a steadfast and con-

stant adherence to these principles in one's conduct." Principles in our life do not remain isolated things, but group themselves into a unified whole which constitutes for us our ideal, the pattern after which we shall mould our lives. An ideal, however, is useless unless we constantly apply ourselves energetically towards its attainment. We must so firmly establish the habit of acting according to the principles embodied in our ideal that it will last for life. This requires will power. Knowing what is good and noble is not sufficient; we must do what is good and noble.

Where shall we find the true and good ideal? It is none other than the living Christ as manifested to us sensibly through His Words and actions. True it is we cannot perform miracles, but even here we can act according to the "spirit" of His deeds—which is to use whatever talents and powers we possess, never for our own selfish convenience but for the good of others. In this way many things which are not ordinarily considered religious can be part of our Christ-like ideal; natural actions may be made supernatural. For instance, the little opportunities of practising thoughtfulness and courtesy in the course of the day's work are just so many opportunities for the practice of charity; industry and enterprise are the fulfilling of the duty to make the most of our talents. Those are but two examples. Thus we form the habit of looking upon life as an expression of duty and service to God, of loyalty to the example of Christ, and as an endeavour to fulfill the end for which we have been placed upon this earth.

Our ideal takes shape in the form of sound principles given to us either by formal or informal instruction through the medium of the home, school, Church and society. Yet this intellectual training must go hand in hand with moral training in the form of discipline and example. Formal discipline consists in some external restraint on freedom. We must remember that when this discipline is imposed on us, it is done to help and encourage us, in order that we may take upon ourselves the task of governing our wills. Informal discipline may consist of a certain "tone" which has gradually been built, and without any set rules can have a particular influence on individuals.

Instruction, discipline, and example taken together provide intellectual and moral training for the development of character. In education we find the combination

of the three processes; hence the need for Catholic education. In the Catholic school system, stretching from kindergarten to university, God occupies the throne of honour and His teaching constitute the code of principles. Here, religion integrates all subjects of the curriculum into a unified whole, with God, Christ, and His truths as the centre. Here we learn to love neighbour, country, and God, which is another way of saying that we are provided with the means whereby we may become citizens of true Christian character.

—S. M. '55

Nuit D'été . . . (suite)

Vous étiez là, Lise et vous savez sans doute
Ce que mon coeur disait tout le long de la route.
Les arbres du chemin sous les baisers du vent
Secouaient sur nos fronts leur éventail mouvant.

De feuilles où perlaient des gouttes de rosée,
Qui troublaient du ruisseau la surface érisée.
Et tous les quatre égrenant sans songer au sommeil,
Des heures de la nuit le chapelet vermeil.

Nous cheminions gaiement—ô bonheur éphémère!
L'âme dans le ciel bleu, le front dans les chimères . . .
Tandis que tout ravi, j'écoutais plein d'émoi
Les chœurs harmonieux qui s'éveillaient en moi.

(à suivre dans la prochaine publication)

Charles Pelletier '53

The greatest of faults, I should say, is to be conscious
of none.—Carlyle.

Some are born great, some achieve greatness and
some have greatness thrust upon them.—Shakespeare.