
"The Higher Yearning."

Brother Leo, F.S.C., of St. Mary's College, California, recently caught the Princeton Seminary Bulletin in an interesting typographical error: "Three hundred thousand freshmen will enter American institutions of higher yearning next fall." Catching them on the rebound, Brother Leo has this to say of the matter (in the San Francisco Monitor):

"Seriously, however, a college is an institution of both yearning and learning. And sometimes, if the learning is headless, it is only because the yearning is heartless. In plain English, we can't learn if we don't yearn; and, conversely, we can't yearn wisely if we don't learn intelligently. Next time some public speaker in search of a theme or some correspondent with the itch for writing to the editor obeys that impulse to tell the world what is wrong with our colleges, he might find a measure of inspiration in the statement of the Seminary Bulletin. After all, what IS wrong with our colleges?"

"Ever so many defects have been listed by ever so many critics. We are told that college professors are mostly fishy individuals, that too much attention is given to non-cultural activities, that the modern method of estimating a student's progress in terms of units is fundamentally pernicious, that there are too many courses and not enough unified work, that thousands of students are exposed to education but that in most cases the education doesn't take.

"For my part, after a fair number of years actively devoted to college life and college work, I am convinced that a majority of the popular objections to college have no valid foundation. For instance, the common assumption that college students are not serious and respectful and humble minded is emphatically wrong. On the contrary they usually take things too seriously - themselves included. Intellectually they are timid, conventional, conservative. They are too prone to hug their intellectual shackles; they carry the holy virtue of humility almost to excess.

"But what, in my opinion, is wrong with our colleges I find suggested in the misprint in the Princeton Seminary Bulletin. Our colleges are not as good as they should be simply because there is not enough yearning in them - yearning on the part of the students and yearning on the part of the faculty. - Yearn for what? Yearning for spiritual realities. Plenty of young men come to college because they know that a college education is likely to increase their earning capacity. Many more come because they desire the prestige which a college degree gives. They are not shirkers or loafers. They work hard enough in an uninspired, routine, mechanical way, but they do not lift their faces to the stars.

"It is much the same with the instructors. They are almost painfully conscientious. They possess scholarly backgrounds, scholarly ambitions, scholarly associations. But in practice they are hunker, rule of thumb, pedestrian. They have less 'elan vital' than a stranded codfish.... The supreme teacher, I emphatically hold, is the man who yearns and is able to arouse yearning in his students. He is a man of desires and he makes them men of desires. Religion, music, literature, art - such things are formal and dull unless vitalized by a mighty yearning.

"If you want to be pessimistic, here is an opportunity: a good many college students do not yearn at all or do not yearn after the right things. They may learn a lot; but what does yearning profit them without the grace of God?.... Blessed are they that yearn, for they shall attain unto power and peace."

PRAYERS: Con Hayes, of Corby Hall, is in the hospital with an attack of pleurisy. Leo Fagan's mother has suffered a stroke, and is in a state of coma. Four special intentions.