

What Price the Modern Boy? III.3. Lack of Discrimination.

"He believes anything you tell him, provided it's not so." The great awakening (which ever comes to so many of our boys) is the discovery of the fact that people tell lies in books; that people can get publishers more quickly for error than for truth; that The Bookman has a reason for praising Geo. H. Doran books, that Harpers and Scribner have the same reason for praising the multitudinous output of their respective publishing houses; that author-critics have a way of printing nice notices about one another on the principle that "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours;" that press agents have become a part of our national economy; that advertisers have much to say about what is said in reviews; that the erstwhile book notices in the Scholastic paralleled very closely the obituary notices on the jackets of the books reviewed; that literary criticism of the honest variety is very much of a lost art today.

Can the college man weigh facts? Not until he knocks off the shackles of the press agent's canned eulogy, not until he learns to look behind an opinion for the proofs that support it, not until he lays aside passion, pride, prejudice and the other blinders that narrow his vision to the things he finds it desirable to believe. Not until he cultivates the power of observation and can really arrive at facts; not until he learns patience to wait for facts and restrains his instinct to jump at conclusions. Pick up any set of English papers, go through any group of senior theses, then look over the sources used and you will find that very few college men weigh facts, whether they are capable or not of doing so.

And when the inquiring mind does develop, it is prone to go to the extreme of questioning what is beyond question. The United States Supreme Court was established to settle certain matters, and when it speaks within its proper field, the matter is settled; yet in every college you will find young goofs who question the decisions of the Supreme Court. Our Lord told the Apostles that He would be with them all days, even to the consummation of the world, that the Holy Ghost would give them what they were to say, that those who believed them not would be condemned, and that whatever they bound on earth would be bound in heaven; yet you will find broadminded young men using what they think is a power of discrimination to choose what to believe and what to reject in the doctrines and discipline of the Church.

Every student of average mentality has a beginning of discernment which he can develop if he will. "Prove it" is a prompt challenge in meaningless discussions in rooms; and often enough the proof offered is the unsupported statement of some self-constituted authority. But the challenge comes usually not from the Inquiring Mind, but from pride, prejudice or passion, or from the ubiquitous spirit of Razz. The form is there, however, if not the spirit, and if the student will transfer the formula to the printed page he can work towards discrimination. True discernment is a difficult goal, nevertheless, for it implies deep learning and dispassionate reasoning when it comes through schooling; it calls for many bruises when it comes through experience; it requires humility and simplicity, two difficult virtues, when it comes through holiness.

The extent of the average he-flapper's discrimination is, when his sugar tells him that she's wonderful, he knows she's got some bean; and when she tells him he's conceited, he knows she's an awful egg.

May Devotions Tonight - Novena Tomorrow - Prayers.

The May Devotions begin tonight at 7:30, with a sermon by Father Carroll. Tomorrow morning the Novena for Mothers' Day starts. -- Go to confession tonight. -- The card for the Spiritual Bouquet will be sold by the agents for the Bengal Mission, the proceeds to go to the Sisters' Chapel to be constructed in the Garo Mission. -- Louis Dolozal's mother is very low. Robert Eggemen's grandmother, Father Healey's aunt, and Robert Hurley's mother died Wednesday. George Wallner's sister is very sick.