
What Price the Modern Boy? VI.

7. Inaccuracy.

"You might as well be satisfied with seventy per cent now; you'll have to get a hundred when you get out," is the way the father of one student put it. "Thou shalt get by;" was the title of the prize winning oration at an interstate contest held in Chicago last week. Getting by is as important an indoor pastime as passing the buck. "You get my drift" is the most popular peroration on the campus.

The inaccuracy complained of is not due to overheated imagination but to cussed laziness. Every effective desire for improvement is based on conviction. Where there is no passion for truth you need not expect to find energy in searching out truth. Bad spelling and bad punctuation, while they may be the expression of a picturesque mind, are usually faults of pure laziness. Accounting is a bugbear to those who did not learn accuracy in the grades; most of the failures in engineering are due to tolerated laziness in arithmetic and algebra in grades and high school.

Accuracy and imagination are not mutually exclusive; on the contrary they supplement one another. Dante's accuracy amazes scientific men; St. Francis de Sales, patron of Christian letters, charms especially by the fineness of his observation of nature and his complete application of it to a moral lesson. It is a rule of homiletics that no applied meaning be taken from Scripture unless it fits accurately the literal meaning; and St. Philip Meri used to stop a preacher in his sermon if he attempted to make an application of Scripture without first explaining the literal meaning. Our Lord's use of imagery is perfect.

Students who complain of temptations would have less to complain of were they to take time out to learn to spell and punctuate. The old Irish farmers in Indiana used to say that they could make a living farming the fence corners of the zig-zag rail fence. If one makes a resolution to farm the fence corners of his mind he will have little time for temptation. And his motive should be, not the fact that he will lose his job if he is inaccurate in big business, but that Truth is a thing to be loved -- the whole Truth.

8. Dishonesty.

Comparing college baseball recruits with those from the sandlots, Muggsy McGraw said recently: "Another phase of baseball training I have observed with surprise and disappointment is what strikes me as a higher sense of honor among the rough sandlot fellows than these players who come through the colleges. That statement sounds against all the theories that we have accepted, but I believe it to be absolutely true. If a sandlot player gives you his word about anything it is his bond. It is extremely rare for him to violate a promise, written or verbal. On the other hand, I have discovered ninety per cent of those who break their word as to contract agreements are young college players. Whether it is because they regard themselves sharp and smart in a business way or whether they lack in a natural sense of honor I do not know.

"Just the same we have had any number of instances where a college player accepted money in advance on a promise that he would sign a contract, later on only to refuse to play when the time came. And the worst of it is that many of them do not give back the money. I don't mean, of course, that all college players are guilty of sharp practice, but as a whole they run second to the sandlotters in the matter of keeping their word."

Where honesty is not a matter of ingrained principle, dishonest practices vary according to temptation. The man who is dishonest in class work because of the inconvenience attaching to honesty (hard work, for instance) hardens his conscience to the matter of honesty and may fail in more serious matters when graver inconvenience asserts itself. When selfishness prevails God is forgotten; when need presses, honesty goes.

Prayers are requested for three sick persons.