
Dr. Butler Looks At The Pseudo Psychologies.

President Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University, published his annual report to the trustees on Christmas Day. It gives very sound observation with amazing naivete.

He deplored "the steady decline in the practice of good manners" of the present generation. "Carelessness and inconsiderateness in dress," he said, "in speech and in personal habits, have become all too common, not among the younger generation alone by any means, but also on the part of their elders." He added that this has been going on for a number of years.

"It is not easy to find satisfactory reasons for such changes as these," he observed, "or to fix upon the cause which would explain why it is that distinction and correctness of speech, of appearance and of manner are no longer esteemed as they once were. Unconcern for standards of excellence and overconcern for the quick satisfaction of one's immediate personal conveniences and desires have combined to undermine that very considerable respect for age, for accomplishment, for excellence, and for high standards which have long marked, and should always mark, the cultivated gentleman."

Dr. Butler then proceeded to suggest a cause for the decline in good manners, and we agree to a certain extent with his choice. He said that in his opinion "the anti-philosophies and the pseudo psychologies which are so widely diffused just now, and which are having such deplorable effects upon the instruction offered and training given, particularly in the elementary and secondary schools have, consciously or unconsciously, played a large part in effecting these changes."

And therein lies the naivete of Dr. Butler, for Dr. Butler is President of Columbia University, than which there is no greater breeding ground for antiphilosophies and pseudo psychologies. The fact that Harvard started it under President Eliot makes no difference; Columbia gave it mass production, and Teachers' College carried it into the high schools and grades. (Luther, of course, gave it beginning when he rebelled against the principle of authority, but it took a long time for the philosophy of Protestantism to catch up with its theology - and when it caught up it destroyed the theology.)

Wasn't it Mrs. Catherine Maltby Blaisdell, wife of Prof. T.C. Blaisdell, of the economics department of Columbia University, who said recently: "To introduce a small child to the idea of an Omnipotent Father may easily rob him of self-dependence"? And didn't she tell us that the professor's children are among those who are brought up without ever hearing of God or religion? Why, surely. And such gospel didn't sound a bit strange to anyone who has followed the antiphilosophies and pseudo psychologies of Columbia for the past twenty years. And who can blame the child who is denied even a look at divine authority if he chooses to disregard human authority and be a little brat instead of an angel?

Perhaps we are a bit spoiled. We are so used to college presidents who know what it is all about that we look askance at the other kind. In charity we must conclude that Dr. Butler does not know what is going on in his university; to do otherwise would be to accuse him of utter hypocrisy. But we can't help wishing he would look around. It would make our task much simpler if he, who believes in authority and good manners, were to cut off at one stroke the breeding ground of behaviourism and all the other isms propagated at Columbia, for it would give us a generation of high school teachers who would be their old-fashioned better selves, and we would be saved the task of deodorizing public high school graduates of their isms.

PRAYERS: Jos. Hogan has undergone an operation for goitre; a cousin of Jas. McKeon underwent an appendix operation this morning; John Kane's father is very ill. Mass at 6:30 Thursday in Lyons Hall for the repose of the soul of Edw. McCarthy's mother. Four Sp. Int.