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## THE IDEAL UNIVERSITY

FROM MR. WILSON'S ORIGINAL TYPEWRITTEN MANUSCRIPT WITH HIS PEN AND INK CORRECTIONS, DATED "PRINCETON UNIVERSITY, 6 JULY, 1909," AND SIGNED WITH HIS AUTOGRAPH. PUBLISHED IN THE "DELINEATOR," NOVEMBER, 1909, VOL. LXXIV, P. 401.

THE word University means, in our careless usage, so many different things that almost every time one employs it it seems necessary to define it. Nowhere has it so many meanings as in America, where institutions of all kinds display it in the titles they bestow upon themselves. School, college, and university are readily enough distinguishable in fact by those who take the pains to look into the scope and methods of their teaching; but they are quite indistinguishable, oftentimes, in name. They are as apt as not all to bear the same title.

But practice is always the best definer; and practice is slowly working out for us in America a sufficiently definite idea of what a university is. It is not the same idea that has been worked out in England or Germany or France. American universities will probably, when worked out to the logical fulfillment of their natural development, show a type distinct from all others. They will be distinctive of what America has thought out and done in the field of higher education. Those which are already far advanced in their development even now exhibit an individual and characteristic organization.

The American university as we now see it consists of many parts. At its heart stands the college, the school

of general training. Above and around the college stand the graduate and technical schools, in which special studies are prosecuted and preparation is given for particular professions and occupations. Technical and professional schools are not a necessary part of a university, but they are greatly benefited by close association with a university and the university itself is unmistakably benefited and quickened by the transmission of its energy into them and the reaction of their standards and objects upon it. As a rule the larger universities of the country have law schools, divinity schools, and medical schools under their care and direction; and training for these, the "learned," professions has long been considered a natural part of their work.

Schools of mechanical, electrical, and civil engineering have of late years become as numerous and as necessary as the schools which prepare for the older professions, and they have naturally in most cases grown up in connection with universities because their processes are the processes of science and the modern university is, among other things, a school of pure science, with laboratories and teachers indispensable to the engineer. But the spirit of technical schools has not always been the spirit of learning. They have often been intensely and very frankly utilitarian, and pure science has looked at them askance. They are proper parts of a university only when pure science is of the essence of their teaching, the spirit of pure science the spirit of all their studies. It is only of recent years that we have seen thoughtful engineers coming to recognize this fact, preach this change of spirit; it is only of recent years, therefore, that technical schools have begun to be thoroughly and truly assimilated into the university organization.

There is an ideal at the heart of everything American, and the ideal at heart of the American university is intellectual training, the awakening of the whole man, the thorough introduction of the student to the life

of America and of the modern world, the completion of the task undertaken by the grammar and high schools of equipping him for the full duties of citizenship. It is with that idea that I have said that the college stands at the heart of the American university. The college stands for liberal training. Its object is discipline and enlightenment. The average thoughtful American does not want his son narrowed in all his gifts and thinking to a particular occupation. He wishes him to be made free of the world in which men think about and understand many things, and to know how to handle himself in it. He desires a training for him which will give him a considerable degree of elasticity and adaptability, and fit him to turn in any direction he chooses. For men do not live in ruts in America. They do not always or of necessity follow the callings their fathers followed before them. They are ready to move this way or that as interest or occasion suggests. Versatility, adaptability, a wide range of powers, a quick and easy variation of careers, men excelling in businesses for which they never had any special preparation,—these are among the most characteristic marks of American life,—its elasticity and variety, the rapid shifting of parts, the serviceability of the same men for many different things, and the quick intelligence of men of many different kinds in the common undertakings of politics and in public affairs of all kinds. If the American college were to become a vocational school, preparing only for particular callings, it would be thoroughly un-American. It would be serving special, not general, needs and seeking to create a country of specialized men without versatility or general capacity.

The college of the ideal American university, therefore, is a place intended for general intellectual discipline and enlightenment; and not for intellectual discipline and enlightenment only, but also for moral and spiritual discipline and enlightenment. America is great,

not by reason of her skill, but by reason of her spirit, her spirit of general serviceableness and intelligence. That is the reason why it is necessary to keep her colleges under constant examination and criticism. If we do not they may forget their own true function, which is to supply America and the professions with enlightened men.

I have described the university as a place with a college at its heart but with graduate schools and professional schools standing above and around the college. The difficulty about thus associating teaching of different kinds is that the spirit of the graduate and professional schools should not be the same spirit as that of the college, and that there are certain dangers of infection to which the college and the schools of advanced and professional study are both alike exposed by the association. Look, first, at the danger to the college. It is in danger of getting the point of view of the graduate and professional schools: the point of view of those who prosecute study very intensively along special lines. Their object, if they be thorough, is technical scholarship. That should not be the object of the college. Its studies, as America has conceived the college (and I am sure she has conceived it rightly), are not prosecuted with a view to scholarship. Scholarship cannot be had at the age of twenty-one, at the age at which youngsters graduate from college. They may by that time have been made to see the way, the arduous way, to scholarship and to desire to travel it; but they cannot have travelled it. It is a long road. A lifetime is consumed before one reaches the quiet inn at the end of it. The object of the college is a much simpler one; and yet no less great. It is to give intellectual discipline and impart the spirit of learning.

We have misconceived and misused the college as an instrument of American life when we have organized and used it as a place of special preparation for particular tasks and callings. It is for liberal training, for

general discipline, for that preliminary general enlightenment which every man should have who enters modern life with any intelligent hope or purpose of leadership and achievement. By a liberal training I do not mean one which vainly seeks to introduce undergraduates to every subject of modern learning. That would, of course, be impossible. There are too many of them. At best the pupil can, within the four years at the disposal of the college, be introduced to them only by sample. He can be, and should be, given a thorough grounding in mathematics, in his own language and in some language not his own, in one of the fundamental physical and natural sciences, in the general conceptions of philosophy, in the outlines of history, and in the elements of correct political thinking; and it is very desirable that he should go beneath the surface in some one of these subjects, study it with more than usual attention and thoroughness, and find in it, if he can, some independence of judgment and inquiry. Students in a modern college cannot all follow the same road, and it is not desirable that they should do so. Besides the thorough drill in a few fundamental subjects which they should all have, they should be allowed and encouraged to make the special, individual choices of particular fields of study which will give them an opportunity to develop special gifts and aptitudes and which will call out their powers of initiative and enable them to discover themselves. The college should be a place of various studies, alive with a great many different interests.

The common discipline should come from very hard work, from the inexorable requirement that every student should perform every task set him, whether general or special, whether of his own choice or exacted by the general scheme of study prescribed for all, with care and thoroughness. The spirit of work should pervade the place, honest, diligent, painstaking work. Otherwise it would certainly be no proper place of

preparation for the strenuous, exacting life of America in our day. Its "liberalizing" influences should be got from its life, even more than from its studies. Special studies become liberal when those who are pursuing them associate constantly and familiarly with those who are pursuing other studies, studies of many kinds, pursued from many points of view. The real enlightenments of life come, not from tasks or from books, so much as from free intercourse with other persons who, in spite of you, inform and stimulate you, and make you realize how big and various the world is, how many things there are in it to think about, and how necessary it is to think about the subjects you are specially interested in in their right relation to many, many others, if you would think of them correctly and get to the bottom of what you are trying to do.

The ideal college, therefore, should be a community, a place of close, natural, intimate association, not only of the young men who are its pupils and novices in various lines of study but also of young men with older men, with maturer men, with veterans and professionals in the great undertakings of learning, of teachers with pupils, outside the classroom as well as inside of it. No one is successfully educated within the walls of any particular classroom or laboratory or museum; and no amount of association, however close and familiar and delightful, between mere beginners can ever produce the sort of enlightenment which the lad gets when first he begins to catch the infection of learning. The trouble with most of our colleges nowadays is that the faculty of the college live one life and the undergraduates quite a different one. They are not members of the same community; they constitute two communities. The life of the undergraduate is not touched with the personal influence of the teacher; life among the teachers is not touched by the personal impressions which should come from frequent and intimate contact with undergraduates. The teacher does not often enough know what

the undergraduate is thinking about, or what models he is forming his life upon, and the undergraduate does not know how human a fellow the teacher is, how delightfully he can talk, outside the classroom, of the subjects he is most interested in, how many interesting things both his life and his studies illustrate and make attractive. This separation need not exist, and in the college of the ideal university would not exist.

It is perfectly possible to organize the life of our colleges in such a way that students and teachers alike will take part in it; in such a way that a perfectly natural daily intercourse will be established between them; and it is only by such an organization that they can be given real vitality as places of serious training, be made communities in which youngsters will come fully to realize how interesting intellectual work is, how vital, how important, how closely associated with all modern achievement,—only by such an organization that study can be made to seem a part of life itself. Lectures often seem very formal and empty things; recitations generally prove very dull and unrewarding. It is in conversation and natural intercourse with scholars, chiefly, that you find how lively knowledge is, how it ties into everything that is interesting and important, how intimate a part it is of everything that is “practical” and connected with the world of affairs. Men are not always made thoughtful by books; but they are generally made thoughtful by association with men who think.

The present and most pressing problem of our university authorities is to bring about this vital association for the benefit of the novices of the university world, the undergraduates. Classroom methods are thorough enough; competent scholars already lecture and expound and set tasks and superintend their performance; but the life of the average undergraduate outside the classroom and outside of his other stated appointments with his instructors is not very much affected by his studies, is almost entirely dissociated from intellectual

interests, is too freely and exclusively given over to athletics and amusement. Athletics are in themselves wholesome, and are necessary to every normal youth. They give him vigour and should give him the spirit of the sportsman,—should keep him out of many things of a very demoralizing sort which he would be inclined to do if he did not spend his energy out-of-doors and in the gymnasium. Amusement, too, is necessary. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy, not only, but a very unserviceable boy, besides, with no ginger or spirit in him, no alertness, no capacity to vary his occupations or to make the most of himself. But athletics and mere amusement ought never to become serious and absorbing occupations, even with youngsters. They should be diversions merely, by which the strain of work is relieved, the powers refreshed and given spontaneous play. The only way in which they can be given their proper subordination is to associate them with things which are not only more important but quite as natural and interesting. Knowledge, study, intellectual effort will seem to undergraduates more important than athletics and amusement and just as natural only when older men, themselves vital and interesting and companionable, are thrown into close daily association with them. The spirit of learning can be conveyed only by contagion, and contagion occurs only by personal contact. The association of studies and persons is the proper prescription.

Turn from the college, which lies at the heart of the university, to the graduate and professional schools which lie about the college and are built upon it, and you are discussing an entirely different matter, looking for different principles and methods. This right relationship to the college, moreover, is a very difficult question to determine. Both the college and the high school are trying to do two things at once,—two things not entirely consistent with one another. The majority of pupils in the high school, the very large majority, do



not intend to carry their studies any further, do not intend to go beyond the high school to college. They must get all the schooling they are going to get before they leave the high school. They must be given the best training, the completest awakening within the field of knowledge, that the school can give them, for that is to be their final preparation for life. A small minority, however, must be prepared to enter college and to go further with their studies. Majority and minority must be handled, in such circumstances, in different ways, and it is very hard indeed to arrange the courses of study in a way that will be suitable for both. The high school is clearly justified in shaping its policy and its methods of instruction to the needs, first of all, of the majority. Exceptional arrangements must be made, if possible, for the minority. Similarly, in the college the great majority of undergraduates mean to go at once from their courses there into some active practical pursuit; do not mean to go on to more advanced university studies. A minority, on the other hand,—a larger minority than in the schools,—do intend to go further, will enter the graduate schools to become teachers and investigators or the technical and professional schools to fit themselves for some calling for which a special training is necessary. The difficulty of the college is to arrange courses and adopt methods which will serve both these classes of students. It does so, generally, by offering a much larger choice of studies than it is possible or desirable for the school to offer. But the majority must determine its chief characteristics and adaptations. Its chief object must be general preparation, general training, an all-round awakening of the faculties.

It is evident, therefore, that the college, while it should be the foundation of the professional schools, not only stands below them, as their support and feeder, but also alongside of them,—would be necessary if they did not exist; furnishes the only introduction our

young men desire or need get to the wider fields of action and experience which lie beyond it. It is first of all and chiefly a general fitting school for life. Its social organization and influence are almost as important as its classrooms. It is not a subordinate school, but the chief, the central school of the university. For the professional schools it is, at the same time, an indispensable foundation. That profession is clearly impoverished which does not draw to its special studies men bred to understand life and the broader relations of their profession in some thorough school of general training. In these higher schools the atmosphere is changed; another set of objects lies before the student; his mind has already begun to centre upon tasks which will fill the rest of his life. He cannot after entering upon that discipline seek the things that will connect him with the more general fields of learning and experience.

What is called the Graduate School in our American universities is not, strictly speaking, a professional school. As a matter of fact most of its pupils will be found to be looking forward to the profession of teaching; but graduate schools of the higher type do not keep that profession in mind in their instruction. Their object is to train scholars, whether in the field of literature, or science, or philosophy, or in the apparently more practical field of politics. They carry the college process a stage further and seek to induct their students into the precise, exacting methods of scholarship. They not only carry the college process further, they also alter it. Their students are thrown more upon their own resources in their studies: are expected to enter on researches of their own, strike out into independent lines of inquiry, stand upon their own feet in every investigation, come out of their novitiate and gain a certain degree of mastery in their chosen field, their professors being little more than their guides and critics. They are not taught how to teach: there is no professional

tone in the life of the school. They are taught how to learn, thoroughly and independently, and to make scholars of themselves.

Schools of medicine, law, and theology, on the other hand, while also, when upon a proper plane, schools of scholarship, are professional schools, and have in all their instruction the professional point of view. Their object is not only to introduce their students to the mastery of certain subjects, as the graduate school does, but also to prepare them for the "practice" of a particular profession. They devote a great deal of attention, therefore, to practical method,—to the ways in which the knowledge acquired in them is to be used in dealing with diseases, with disputes between men at loggerheads over their legal rights, and with the needs and interests of men who should be helped with spiritual counsel and guidance. They are frankly and of necessity professional. The spirit of the doctor's or of the lawyer's office, of the pulpit and of the pastor's study, pervades them. They school their men for particular tasks, very complicated and very difficult, and seek to guide them by many practical maxims.

Similarly, the technical schools, the schools of engineering and of the mechanic arts, the schools of applied science, are professional schools, their objects practical, definite, utilitarian. Their students must not only know science and have their feet solidly upon the footing of exact knowledge, but must also acquire a very thorough mastery of methods, a definite skill and practice, readiness and precision in a score of mechanical processes which make of them a sort of master workmen. The practical air of the shop pervades such schools, as the practical air of the office pervades the law school. They are intent upon business, and are conscious all the time that they must make ready for it in a very thorough fashion.

In the professional schools of an ideal university nothing of this practical spirit would be abated,—for

such schools are one and all intensely and immediately practical in their object and must have practice always in mind if they would be truly serviceable; but there would always lie back of their work, by close association with the studies of the university in pure science and in all the great subjects which underlie law and theology, the impulse and the informing spirit of disinterested inquiry, of study, which has no utilitarian object but seeks only the truth. The spirit of graduate study, and of undergraduate, too, would be carried over into all professional work, and engineers, doctors, ministers, lawyers would all alike be made, first of all, citizens of the modern intellectual and social world,—first of all university men, with a broad outlook on the various knowledge of the world,—and then experts in a great practical profession, which they would understand all the better because they had first been grounded in science and in the other great bodies of knowledge which are the fountains of all practice. That is the service the university owes the professional schools associated with it. Its parts should be vitally united from end to end.

The professional schools, in their turn, do the university this distinct and very great service, that they keep it in conscious association with the practical world, its necessities and its problems. Through them it better understands what knowledge, what kind of men, what scholarship, what morals, what action will best serve the age for whose enlightenment and assistance it exists. Our universities should be "ideal" chiefly in this, that they serve the intellectual needs of the age, not in one thing, not in any one way only, but all around the circle, with a various and universal adaptation to their age and generation. America can never dispense with the enlightenment of general study, and should wish to have as many of her young men as possible subjected to its influences. She should demand that her professional schools be grounded in such studies, in order that her

professional men may see something more than individual interest in what they do. It is best, therefore, that professional schools should be closely associated with universities, a part of their vital organization, intimate parts of their system of study. That very association and inclusion should make them more thorough in their particular practical tasks. They should be the better schools of technical training. The ideal university is rounded out by them, and their roots are enriched by her fertile soil of catholic knowledge and inquiry. The ideal university would consist of all these parts, associated in this spirit, maintained always in this relationship.