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BYRON WARREN VALENTINE

Bliss Perry's autobiography was called by him And Gladly Teach. That could as well be the title of Byron W. Valentine's autobiography if he chose to write it. For he "went forth to teach as if to a sport" as Charles Lamb required of all good pedagogues. He expressed himself through his work and thus had a zest for it which revealed his joy in it. Even the competitive spirit of a sport flavored his classes. He tried to draw into the game of learning all who entered his room.

In the more sober moments of class when it became obvious that certain members found no pleasure in his game he poked them with telling sarcasm. Most of all it matter-
ed whether we learned. To be indifferent to knowledge about how the human mind works or to be indolent in the use of its powers was to Professor Valentine a cosmic calamity. The universe was out of joint at the particular point which the student constituted. The three best teachers I ever had, one each in high school, college and graduate school, all had this fundamental prerequisite of the successful teacher.

Professor Valentine was a problem teacher. Instead of lecturing along a pre-arranged track in the hope that his listeners would be willing to ride the train of his thought in drowsy acquiescence he dictated provocative problems at

the end of each class. These were to be glared at, eviscerated, smoke-cured and otherwise rendered nutritious to the tender fibers of our embryonic thoughts. Problems made collateral reading relevant and kept class discussion from wasting itself in vacuous generalities.

To discover that one was expected to think and that one's thoughts conceivably might be worth taking seriously was a flattering surprise. He didn't under-estimate our abilities, but rather dignified us with expectations. We were driven into corners, badgered for trivial work and forced to take a stand on questions about the importance of living. The excitement of this kind of teaching made these classes short hours.

Scholarship beyond education and psychology showed between the lines. The ability to detect a Latin or Greek etymology threw light on strategic terms and shamed us for careless hours we had spent on languages. More interest in athletic sports would have pleased us then, but we told ourselves that at least he could have been as conversant with that realm as others if he had chosen.

He believed in allowing students to take responsibilities of importance. While chairman of the Faculty Club he inspired the formation of a Student Commission which was called on to make a study of the college program and report its findings to the Faculty. We spent long hours preparing

the report. Though it was received with stony stares by the administrative officials and hastily thrown out, all of us knew that the chairman of the Faculty Club had at least done his best to encourage independent student opinion.

There were foibles which added to his interest in the eyes of some, but fostered rēdicule in others. What the students called his "master model" Phi Beta Kappa key was habitually dangled in our blinking eyes, but it tolled into our subconsciousness that it was respectable to be intelligent - a major service to undergraduates. The habit of ending a clause, particularly one enumerating items in a class, with the phrase "and all those things" aroused the curiosity of the Tan and Cardinal staff. Upon publishing statistics about the rate of use per class hour to which this phrase was put, the writer was summoned to reckon for this breach of student courtesy. It was a painful conference, but the habid was broken!

When the American Psychological Association held one of its annual meetings at Ohio State University, Professor Valentine did the writer the honor of inviting him to be his guest for some of the sessions. On the program was bewhiskered Alfred Adler from Vienna, a world figure in individualistic psychology. He struggled with English idioms and accents. Probably I did not understand much of what he said then and I certainly do not remember what I

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did understand, yet the discovery that human knowledge is the common possession of all nations and languages, and that different minds meet in the same realm of scholarship was an adventure still treasured. If the minds of men find companionship their nations will find less reason to destroy each other.

A college that supplies teaching of this caliber makes a lasting pattern for itself in the fabric of human relations.

- Louis W. Norris, '28

Vice President of
Baldwin-Wallace College

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