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## College Traditions

By F. M. DENTON

**T**RADITIONS may be good, bad or silly. That of "fair play" is good, that called the "spoils system" is bad; the tradition that "all men are equal" is silly.

Traditions are formulas used without thought. Whether good, bad or silly they have the power of commands.

The traditions of a college determine its atmosphere and this inspires the attitude of its students. A man's success in the pursuit of happiness depends on nothing so much as upon his attitude.

Traditions are dear to the hearts of young people. The young like to be liked, and experience shows them that in order to be liked they must be "like." Thus they are conventional, they lack originality and they accept traditions. There is a tendency among modern educators to act as though the converse were true. Students are expected to take over the functions proper to teachers; to govern themselves; to prescribe their own courses and methods of study and to make their own traditions. The result is that much of the college life of today is silly. Students come to college not to get wisdom but to get degrees. Having established the tradition that intellectual work is a thing to be avoided they are wheedling their shepherds into the silly notion that "extra-curricular activities" are worthy of credit towards degrees.

Youth sees only the surface of things and mistakes process for reality. The power of this attitude has made the possession of a degree an ambiguous distinction. The degree may be, but need not be, a mark of education. All that it undoubtedly implies is that the graduate has passed through a prescribed mechanical routine of books, times, places, and formalities.

One of the silliest of all college traditions is that a good college must have a football team capable of arousing the emotions of the man-in-the-street. The man-in-the-street accepts and enjoys the tom-foolery although he knows well that the only excuse for games in a college is that they are an aid to study.

This tradition of college athletics was invented by students; it is carried on by alumni; it is pandered to by presidents and professors; it is paid for by hard-pressed parents. And yet it is deplored not only by the majority of good students but also by an important section of the players themselves. Unexpected success awaits those college administrators who will dare to challenge this silly tradition of college athletics.

The wearing of green caps and the collecting of firewood by freshmen are things unworthy to be called traditions; they are mere barbarisms. It is not true that they impart modesty to freshmen or inspire them with respect for their college. They are no more than marks of unmanly docility.

Respect for learning is dead, respect for teachers is forgotten. An athlete is more honored than any student, a coach more highly paid than any professor.

It is said that the work of a college is to cultivate the mind, but every teacher knows that the mind must be its own cultivator. All that a college can do is to provide inspiration which shall help the mind to overcome its own inertia, and food, in the form of knowledge, upon which the moving mind may feed. The food can be bought cheaply but no money can buy the inspiration. Inspiration is the gift which a college provides through its teachers. Thus the deep traditions of a college should grow out of the inspirations which teachers have given, and the memories which students take away should be memories of their teachers.

Two recent examples of the so-called originality and unconventionality of youth are notorious, namely, "jazz music" and "dutch dates." And neither of these is due directly to youth. They merely are evils consequent upon the originality of parents. Filled with remorse and compassion by the sight of the sacrifices youth had made in the War, parents allowed themselves to forget the lesson of a thousand years. They forgot that the essential prerequisite of a course in self-expression is a course in self-repression. They handed over to youth the reins of life's carriage.

Youth's first act was to seek a road to happiness which should not pass through work. There is nothing original in that idea, it is merely child-like.

Music without work meant music without beauty,—for no man ever has produced beauty except through work and pain. Music without work meant music without skill, for no man ever has become skillful without labour. The result was "jazz,"—the rattling of the dry bones of a creature having the form of music but lacking its soul.

If it be true that in recent years some soul has been put into the jazz form this is evidence of the originality of musicians who, through years of labour and pain have learned to do the impossible. Youth has had no hand in it.

The other originality—"dutch dates"—is as child-like as jazz; for it also is an attempt to find pleasure without paying for it. There is no beauty and hence no real happiness in any relation of men to women which neglects the laws of their natures—their spiritual natures being far more important in the conquest of happiness than their physical natures. Natural laws are things upon which there is agreement among all competent observers. The only competent observers of man are men of experience and culture, and by the recognized best of these during past ages the opinion has been held that the proper relation of a man to a woman is that of reverence, respect, admiration, com-

radeship, help, protection, and love. The essence of the relation of man to woman which nature has ordained is expressed by the word "father," and the root of this word—buried in an antiquity beyond Sanskrit—is "pa," to feed. Shame, therefore, on the man who takes a woman out and will not feed her.

College traditions are powerful; it is important that they should be good. To leave their creation and cultivation to the student body of a particular epoch is disastrous. They should express the highest ideals of a school; they should evolve slowly and show to the world the school's character. When traditions begin to appear which are trivial, silly or bad, they must be weeded out.

Green caps, hazing, class fights, highly paid coaching, subsidized athletics, honor systems, credit for extra-curricular activities, jazz music, dutch dates, staggng at dances, smoking on the dance floor, fraternity "initiations," campus politics, secret societies, and societies with secrets, these are among traditions which should be weeded out or cut down.

It is one of the good traditions of ordinary life that every act of destruction shall have its compensating act of construction. Thus the destruction of deplorable traditions calls for the creation of good ones. This problem is worth much thought. It should be faced from the point of view of a definite philosophy of life. If the point of view be taken that man's life is an organism, the reality of which can be seen only when the artificially defined "present" is related with the past and the future, and when the indefinable "me" is taken in relation to all the "me's" of present, past, and future history, then among the crowding ideas of traditions desirable for college life are the following:

1. That one half day per week shall be set aside for solitariness and reflection. Whitehead has said, "Religion is what the individual does with his own solitariness." Certain it is that without some solitariness, religion hardly can thrive.

2. That in view of the fact that in the mutual relationship of men and women there lies much of life's meaning and happiness, the relationship shall be guided by mutual reverence and respect. A corollary of this tradition is that no publications shall be tolerated on the campus which, from this point of view, are bad.
3. That the processes of education shall be subordinated to its reality.
4. That fraternities and sororities shall be indeed such; that they shall reproduce the best sort of home life; that they shall promote study and provide for reflection as well as for entertainment, and that there shall be no snobbishness in them.
5. That college athletics shall be nothing more than an aid to study; that they shall be intra-mural; that they shall be equally available to all students and be suitable to individual needs; that they shall be controlled and directed solely by the general teaching faculty, the coaches being teachers of physical education paid on a scale no higher than that used for teachers of other ordinary subjects of the college curriculum, and finally, that no charges for admission shall be made to the public who may wish to witness athletic exercises.
6. That political control of colleges, direct or indirect, is an evil that shall be resisted.