

Is College Education Really Worth While?

THE value of a college education has been prominently discussed during the last few years, with some writers casting doubts on the benefits received from the time spent in academic training.

This question was discussed, and answered, with unusual clarity by Dr. W. B. Bizzell, president of the University, in the annual convocation address delivered to faculty and students shortly after the opening of the new school year.

Speaking on *The Enrichment of Life Through Knowledge*, Dr. Bizzell conceded that many brilliant men have declared their college life to be barren of worthwhile results. But he added that this attitude is explainable by the probable failure of the critic to use his time wisely while a student.

"Perhaps the most satisfactory explanation of why many men and women are inclined to discredit the benefits of formal education in later life is that the perspective that years bring causes them to feel more and more that they neglected many opportunities to enrich their lives while in college," Dr. Bizzell said.

"The consciousness of misdirected effort and a false sense of relative values drives us to despair if we acquire a larger viewpoint for self-appraisal."

The fact that more young people than ever before are enrolled in colleges today is another answer to the disparagers of higher education.

"Never before in history have young people been so willing to make great sacrifices and endure indescribable hardships in order to attend these institutions," Dr. Bizzell pointed out.

Although such scholarly men as Henry Adams, Lincoln Steffens and Vincent Sheean have questioned the value of higher education, one has cause to wonder whether or not they would have won their pre-eminent places in literature if they had never attended Harvard, the University of California, or the University of Chicago.

"It is the tendency of most men who have won success or fame to discredit the importance of outside influences upon their lives," Dr. Bizzell commented. "It is a natural tendency of most of us to take personal credit for our achievements and to place blame for our failures upon the shoulders of others."

Wise use of time while in school is the most important problem of the student, Dr. Bizzell declared.

"Prescribed courses and fixed hours for instruction have proven almost disastrous to many students in college. They come

to feel that they are not expected to accept any other benefits of college than those prescribed for them. I think this is the reason that students do not attend lectures by distinguished visitors, ignore the opportunity to hear great artists sing or play, and never visit the library for an hour's casual reading.

"As a result of this situation, students often go through college who have no appreciation of classical music and who could not name a single great musical composer. They finish their courses and go out into the world without having seen a single fine painting or piece of sculpture and without knowing the name of even the most famous artists of the world. If you should ask them to name one of a dozen great books of the last year, they could not do so. This means that students are not getting that breadth of knowledge that enriches life and gives the most abiding satisfaction in later years."

DR. BIZZELL then summarized what he believes every student should possess at the end of his college career:

"I believe that when your college days are over you should have some appreciation and comprehension of the scope of knowledge. This is what we call a perspective of the learning field. Of course, it will be impossible for you to acquire more than a limited amount of the resources of knowledge that are at your command; but you should have your horizons greatly extended as the result of your work.

"You should acquire ability to use some field of knowledge for profitable utilitarian ends. This is the vocational objective of education; and while I have not emphasized it in this discussion, I thoroughly believe that no man should get out of college who has not developed skill or technical knowledge that will enable him to follow some vocation or profession successfully.

"You should acquire some knowledge that may be used for unselfish social ends. This is the avocational objective in education. A man does not live by bread alone. Avocational education is peculiarly the obligation of state-supported institutions, for those whom the state helps to educate should be qualified to serve their communities in helpful ways.

"As the result of your years spent in college, you should acquire a genuine interest in some field of knowledge for its

own sake. The time will come in the lives of most of you when your vocational activities will not give all the satisfaction that you desire. If you have acquired a genuine interest in some intellectual pursuit, it will help to keep life from becoming monotonous and deadening.

"You should develop in college those social instincts that will enable you to find satisfaction in the companionship of others. This is the enrichment of life through social intercourse. No place in the world gives such large opportunity to develop unselfish interest in others as in college, and you should take advantage of it.

"You should develop habits of discrimination in appraising human values. Discernment is one of the tests of the educated mind. William James said in a notable address that the test of education is the ability to know a good man when you see him. That statement is true and you should acquire the intellectual quality which will enable you to do this.

"You should develop habits of discrimination in appraising facts. There is a relativity in the value of knowledge that the educated mind appreciates. One of my colleagues said to me recently that there is one great difference between the students of the long term and the summer term. He said that when he walks into his lecture room during the regular session and says 'Good morning' to the members of his class, they greet him with appropriate salutations; but when he walks into his classroom during the summer session and says, 'Good morning,' the students immediately grab their pencils and write his words down. The good student will learn early in his college career to appraise facts on the basis of their importance. This is one of the tests by which you can determine whether or not you are getting an education out of your experience here.

"You should acquire ability to make the great forces of life—work, play, love, and worship—contribute to your happiness and contentment. This means that you should proportion your time wisely between them.

"You should develop a genuine appreciation of, a love for truth, beauty, and goodness.

"Finally, out of all these objectives, you should be able to formulate a sound philosophy of life based upon the proper evaluation of both knowledge and conduct. This is the objective of rational living and the ultimate test of what an adequate education really is."