

ally, this opposition, which is every bit as indispensable to the college student as it is to the world leaders, only seems to be partially effective. There are students who completely ignore the opposition provided by instructors, family, friends, and rivals. They drift along at whatever slow pace appeals to them, completely uninspired by the challenges they face. The opposition is there in sufficient force to provide excellent learning conditions, but too many students lack the initiative and self-respect to improve their own standing by battling the opposition.

The number of students who vacate their college classrooms before they have received a diploma is over fifty per cent of the number who entered college as freshmen. This is cause for some alarm, because the number of these students gives some idea of the number who ignore the indispensable opposition. Without leaders who recognize the importance of opposition, the continued existence of our democracy is questionable.

Superiority or Snobbery?

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AS A GENERAL rule, schools in Europe differ greatly from those of the United States in method and curriculum. Having spent most of my life abroad, I attended English-speaking schools of international character, each requiring acclimatization to environment and curriculum, and most of all to teachers. One of our English teachers was a tall, straight-backed young Scotsman, graduated B.A., M.A. with first honors from Cambridge. He wasted no time in making our imbecility apparent; everybody cringed when Mr. T. grew the slightest bit irritated. Throughout the upperclasses his reputation was notorious. It was reported, and we later experienced its truth, that he assigned sonnets, Spenserian stanzas, blank verse, ballads, term papers, and scores of other "nasty" things to be written by his poor "illiterate" students.

Mr. Ian Goodwin MacDonald Taylor was armed with a dry British wit that was usually sarcastic, often cynical, and sometimes caustic; and he made ample use of it. His colleagues (other teachers) were all too aware of his superiority. "All one has to do is walk through any section of Rome, Florence, Assisi, or Siena with Mr. Taylor, and he'll tell you who lived and died in every house for the asking," one teacher was heard to remark. This may be a slight exaggeration; however, his students were also aware of his superiority over the rest of the faculty. He loved Italy, Mozart, food, good company, good conversation, good books, good music, and himself. He had studied voice and had a pleasant baritone, more powerful in the classroom than on stage. Despite nine or ten years in Italy, he was still British in speech and manners, except when he was with good Italian friends. He had a flair for pleasing dignitaries, and a talent for getting himself invited to dinner.

He frequently came to class unprepared, but still managed to keep us awake. We enjoyed him; together we struggled through Chaucer (and before examination time many of us spoke, or attempted to speak, nothing but the English of that period, as far as the glossary provided words), Shakespeare, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth and others, and sought to write intelligible essays "avoiding the use of 'nice,' 'etc.," and other ready-made expressions."

To him 'intellectual' conversation came naturally, and yet we understood him perfectly. He scoffed and mocked our pitiful nescience, and again and again repeated: "the only thing you can do as a beginning, is to read, read, read." It depended upon us as individuals to decide what is genuinely valuable in life. All he could do was teach, he said: "It's entirely up to you." And we would feel extremely small. His natural display of knowledge and frequent digression served to stimulate and motivate us. He often emphasized that the average man on the street did poor justice to the vast vocabulary of the English language, employing only a few hundred words. Expression of the individual is of the utmost importance, and if he considers what he has to say as being worth saying, he will endeavor to do so in the clearest possible manner. "Be l-u-c-i-d," he would articulate. He favored Simplicity and Transparency, and as much Fluidity and Variety as we could possibly coax from ourselves without destroying meaning or being superfluous. Working, for the most part, through his humor, he sent more of us than he probably estimated, scampering to libraries, concerts, museums, lectures; and we were usually grateful. Mr. T. was our George Lyman Kittredge; he taught us to think for ourselves, perhaps not brilliantly, but one must admit it is an achievement.

Was Mr. Taylor a snob? Our faculty was comprised of all sorts of curious people, and I would venture to say that nearly everyone was a snob in some particular. Taylor was definitely superior, an intellectual stagnating among his inferiors. His manner was often affected, possibly because of an unconscious sense of insecurity. His erudition extended to small details; we discovered ourselves learning many things for their own sake, and gradually learning to discriminate and select. It gives one a somewhat good feeling to know that he has concluded something through his own selection, discrimination and thought, even if he never is entirely satisfied with himself. Many of us were satisfied, but some of us had quickly observed that self-satisfaction was a sign of deterioration into mediocrity, which was the very thing we were attempting to combat.

As time progressed, Mr. T. became kinder. Everyone respected and esteemed him, and we found him actually a compassionate and understanding person. A bachelor, he was asked once in class when he was going to marry, and he answered, "Like Elizabeth I of England, I find I must retain the balance of power, in this case, between the eleventh and twelfth grade girls."