Trustees

A few weeks ago the N. Y. Alumni Association of my College held its annual dinner. It has been the custom of the Committee in charge of this dinner to bring from the college the President or a member of the faculty to talk to us about the needs and the problems of the institution. You know what that means:- Talk about 1) Budget - 2) Football teams - 3) The rising generation - How to handle it - 4) The curriculum. You know how it sends you home wishing for the moment at least that you were rich for some how the visiting authorities make you feel that if you only would give them money enough all difficulties would vanish.

But nothing of that sort happened at the dinner to which I refer. The Chairman of that Committee had an inspiration. Instead of inviting a dignitary he invited undergraduates - a young woman from the Senior Class - a young man from the Sophomore Class. Asked them to come down, and as he claimed, though this may not have been the language of his written invitation, "Give us the low-down on the college as you saw it."

I confess to a certain uneasiness about what that low-down would be. I expected an arraignment of faculty and trustees and society in general, particularly of present day education.

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But to my amazement when those two young people spoke, and they did it with ease and naturalness, if with a certain diffidence, my uneasiness faded. They told us about College as it is lived, or at least as they were living it. They lamented the defeats of the football team, rejoiced over the the success of the new college theatre, ~~[illegible]~~ spoke lightly, but significantly of petting, boasted of the technique of the college chorus, told with gusto of feuds, of battles lost and won, of changes in the curriculum of which they did and did not approve, of how they voted in the recent election and how the election over they promptly found a new excitement in a college play. Laughter, indignation, hope, joy, ran through there talk.

As I listened I suddenly realized they were going through just what I went through fifty years ago - working, playing, fighting, doubting, agonizing, rejoicing, hoping, despairing, living, and they were doing all this without fear of present or future that indeed they were eager to get their young hands on that future.

I went home from the dinner with a fresh stock of courage saying to myself - the truth about us of the older generation is that we are afraid. And it is true - afraid of of this extraordinary economic and social jig-saw puzzle which we are trying to put together. We show it by incessant confused talking; by irritation; by our snapping at suggestions however silly. But youth is not afraid of the jig-saw puzzle. In fact it asks nothing better than to take our place at the

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table. A stern member of the younger generation told me bluntly not long ago that if youth could wipe out everybody over forty the pozzle would be put together in short order. Possibly. All I am sure of is that they would try a lot of things. Perhaps they would try technocracy. It would be a relief to substitute an actual experiment of that system for the present torrents of talk, providing of ourse there is enough in it to make an experiment.

Of one thing I feel quite sure they are not going to scatter the pieces of the puzzle that have already been fitted together. The great mass of them have along with courage common sense of the conservative. They will look over the pictures as of today and accept what fits and build from that. The best help we can give them is not to stand over them shouting mornings, directions.

Youth must solve its own puzzle, take care of itself. It knows it and there lies the hope that some day the picture will be put together.

So, Mr. Ely, your caution that if I talked here today I would talk about something cheerful has led me to contribute this little experience which has so refreshed and strengthened my own faith that we need not despair about the world as long as there is an oncoming flood of youth which neither pitys itself nor is afraid.

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