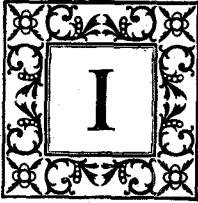


“Under Glass”

BY PERCY MARKS



LEANED back in my chair, smiled my most genial now-boys-we're-all-among-friends smile, and addressed the first man, alphabetically speaking, in the class.

“Why,” I demanded, “did you come to college?”

He replied with unexpected promptness: “I didn’t want to come; my father made me.”

There were twenty-nine men in that class, and I asked each of them the same question. I received only one other definite reply. That came from the most brilliant man in the room. He flushed a painful purple and stuttered:

“I—I don’t know why I came.”

The other men—and they were good students, all of them—evaded with vague generalities. One man said that he had come to get an education.

“What do you mean by education?” I asked.

“An education is—er, an education is . . .” He was getting very red. “I guess that I don’t know just what I do mean by it.”

After that reply no one said that he had come for an education. However, another man said that he had come to college to improve himself. Of course, I did not miss the opportunity.

“Just what,” I asked amiably, “do you mean by improving yourself?”

The class waited. The class wanted very much to know. So did I.

“Why, to make me better generally.”

“I don’t quite understand. Can’t you be more specific? I’m not sure what you mean by better. I take it that you don’t mean it entirely in the moral sense.”

“Oh, no! I mean—well, just to round me out. I think an education does that for you.”

“Just how?”

He grinned. “I don’t know,” he said

frankly, and his grin added: “You knew I didn’t, too.”

A few of the men thought that a college education “did a lot for a man socially,” but they were hazy about what they meant by socially. Oh, not lounge-lizarding or tea-fighting, or anything like that; but it sort o’ got a fellow into things like—oh, into things generally.

And so it went. They had a few fine phrases, such as: “A college education is of great value in the business world,” or “A college education is a social asset,” or even, “A college education is now a necessity.”

Not one man was willing to admit that he had come to college because he thought that a degree would help him to make money. All of them said that that was undoubtedly true, and that was one reason why they had come, but none of them was materialistic enough to give that as his sole reason. There were other reasons—but they didn’t know what they were.

I was teaching at Dartmouth College at the time I asked that question, and that class was the best one I have ever had in a good many years of teaching. There wasn’t a real dud in it, and several of the men were truly brilliant, not only in my work but in all their classes. It was an exceptional group of twenty-nine undergraduates—and not one of them knew why he had come to college.

I have known hundreds, thousands of undergraduates, but I cannot think of one who actually had a clear idea of why he had come to college. I hasten to make two exceptions. Engineering students know that they have come to learn to be engineers, but they know that they must learn something more than that—and they don’t know what that extra something is. The other exception is the youthful materialist. I met one of them last year. Our conversation went something like this:

“You think,” I said, “that you will

make more money as a result of your college education?"

"Yes; of course."

"Just why?"

"Well, a college man has a better chance than other men because he has had better training."

"The word training," I said, "is significant. You have come to college then, I take it, to be trained as a business man."

"Yes."

"What courses are you taking?"

"English, biology, history, French, and economics."

"Well, where does the training come in?"

He hesitated, made a few false starts, and then admitted that he did not know. He looked rather disgusted, too, and was visibly wondering if he hadn't made a mistake in coming to college.

Of course, that lad was getting some training for business, even if he didn't know it, but what he suddenly realized was that he was spending four years of time, several thousands of dollars, and a great deal of effort to get something which was of no "practical" value at all as far as he could see.

What I am getting at in a rather round-about fashion is this: Nearly *every* undergraduate, materialist or dreamer, is doing just what my young materialist was, spending four years of time, several thousands of dollars, and a great deal of effort to get something—and he doesn't know what that something is. Neither do his parents. The father and mother talk proudly of giving their boy an education, and ninety-nine out of a hundred have only a vague idea, if any at all, of what they mean by the word.

And, indeed, why does a boy, or a girl, go to college? I am talking now of why he *goes*, not of why he *ought* to go. There are several reasons. His father wants to give him greater opportunities than he himself has had. (Most college boys do not have college-bred fathers.) The father knows that he has missed something, that his contemporaries who went to college have "the bulge on him" in a good many ways. He feels, perhaps, that he might have made more money if he had had a college education; at any rate, he would have had more "drag." He real-

izes that friends made in college often prove valuable in later years. And he feels, too, that a college degree gives one a certain, if undefined, social standing. All this, you will notice, is "practical." He has, however, one other motive: He guesses that his boy is as good as any other boy, and if Billy Jones and Jack Smith can go to college—well, he'll be damned if his Ferdinand can't go too.

The boy himself? Well, the boy is only eighteen years old and he doesn't think much about it. He may spout grandly about "the advantages of a college education," but he really isn't interested in those advantages at all. I am talking about the average boy; of course, there are boys, especially those who are putting themselves through college by hard work, who feel that an education is a serious business and that it must be taken seriously. But even that boy, who is working twice as hard as his high-school classmate who is "out in business" making money, does not clearly understand the reason for his own effort. He wants "to get ahead," and he knows that that is the best way to do it.

The average boy is fascinated by the glamour of college life, and well he may be. He wants to get into the so-called activities; he wants to make a fraternity; and—I hasten to admit it—he wants to do well in his studies, partly because he feels ashamed if he does badly, and partly because he wants his parents to be proud of him. Rarely, very rarely, indeed, does he see any real value in the studies themselves. The faculty tells him that there are certain subjects that he has to take—and the faculty probably knows what it is talking about. At any rate, it ought to, and if it doesn't, who does? Certainly the undergraduate does not pretend to know. He chooses his electives by reputation; that is, if the instructor is known to grade easily, the course is a good one; if the work is said to be very light, the course is a good one; if the instructor has the reputation of cutting classes regularly, the course is a good one; and if the course demands no final examination, it's a great one. It's a *darb*! Of course, an undergraduate occasionally chooses a course because the subject happens to interest him, but almost invariably the crowded courses

are those known as snaps. It is a rare junior who will elect a hard course with subject-matter interesting to him in preference to an easy course with subject-matter to which he is naturally indifferent.

None of this is meant in condemnation of the undergraduate. Far from it. He is the salt of the earth—and I am the first to sing his praises in public and swear at him unmercifully in private. He is human, our undergraduate, and very young. Nobody has told him what he is supposed to get out of college. His parents urge him "to do well in his studies and write often"; and his high-school principal has patted him paternally on the shoulder and told him "that the old school is expecting him to make it very proud." Both admonitions have embarrassed the boy—and that is about all the effect that they have had.

When he gets to college, he is lectured at by the members of the faculty, the dean, the president, the president of the student body, and the football coach. (I have arranged the various notables in the order of their importance to the freshman; the most important comes last.) Out of all the many opening lectures he gets just two things: he must attend to his studies, and he's got to get out and work like hell for the team. Maybe somebody tries to tell him why he is in college, but if anybody does, the effort is wasted. The freshman is too excited, worried, homesick, and thrilled to have any clear idea of what all the shootin's about.

And, pray, just what *is* all the shootin' about? Just why does a boy spend the four most wonderful years of his life going to college? Why are so many hundreds of thousands of parents making sacrifices, real sacrifices, to give their sons the so-called college education? The question is important. What is the answer?

I am reminded of a dinner at the Engineers' Club in Boston several years ago. Mr. James Phinney Munroe, a member of the Corporation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was host to the English department, of which I was at that time a member. After we had made away with the excellent dinner, the talk, naturally enough, concerned itself with matters educational. The purpose of a college education finally became the cen-

tral topic. A good many things were said, some of them foolish probably, some of them wise, but none of them to the point. The discussion was lost in a fog of phrases and, I am afraid, pedagogical platitudes.

Mr. Munroe is not a pedagogue; he is a successful business man. I do not know whether we were professionally smug or merely exasperatingly vague. However, I do remember that something excited Mr. Munroe. He banged his fist on the table and exclaimed earnestly:

"A man does not come to college to learn to earn a living; he comes to college to learn to *live*!"

Nothing happened. Nobody got up and shouted, "You said a mouthful," or even, "That was a most extraordinarily thought-provoking remark." No, nobody was slangy or pedantic; the talk simply continued. I do not know how the other members of the department felt about it, but I was deeply impressed by two things: first, something intelligent had been said after a stag dinner; and, second, a question that had been troubling me for years had been settled with a sentence.

I never asked Mr. Munroe whether the idea was original with him or not; I really did not care. I believe that Nicholas Murray Butler said the same thing a few years later, and I do not know whether the idea was original with *him* or not, but I do know that Mr. Munroe said it first—and that, to speak unprofessionally, he said a mouthful. In fact, he said about all that needed to be said. Unfortunately, however, he said it only to the English department of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and not to the hundreds of thousands of American undergraduates—and their parents.

Please remember that I am writing about undergraduate institutions when I mention colleges—and that Mr. Munroe was talking about Technology, which does actually train its men to earn a living. As I understood him, Mr. Munroe felt that that training was of only secondary importance even at an institute of technology. Certainly it is of even less importance at an ordinary college which does not even pretend to train its men.

I wonder how many fathers realize

that. I wonder how many of them understand that the colleges largely ignore the so-called "practical" phases of life. (I use "so-called" deliberately. Whether those particular phases really are the most practical is debatable.) And I wonder how many of them would hesitate longer about sending their sons to college if they were better informed about the college curricula. Very few would hesitate at all, I believe, because they know that a larger proportion of men who have gone to college are successful than those who have not gone. Statistics say so!

The idea is, of course, that men are successful because they have gone to college. No idea was ever more absurd. No man is successful because he has managed to pass a certain number of courses and has received a sheepskin which tells the world in Latin, that neither the world nor the graduate can read, that he has successfully completed the work required. If the man is successful, it is because he has the qualities for success in him; the college "education" has merely, speaking in terms of horticulture, forced those qualities and given him certain intellectual tools with which to work—tools which he could have got without going to college, but not nearly so quickly. So far as anything practical is concerned, a college is simply an intellectual hothouse. For four years the mind of the undergraduate is put "under glass," and a very warm and constant sunshine is poured down upon it. The result is, of course, that his mind blooms earlier than it would in the much cooler intellectual atmosphere of the business world.

A man learns more about business in the first six months after his graduation than he does in his whole four years of college. But—and here is the "practical" result of his college work—he learns far more in those six months than if he had not gone to college. He has been trained to learn, and that, to all intents and purposes, is all the *training* he has received. To say that he has been trained to think is to say essentially that he has been trained to learn, but remember that it is impossible to teach a man to think. The power to think must be inherently his. All that the teacher can do is help him learn to order his thoughts—such as they are.

A man isn't trained in college to earn a living, for two reasons: first, there isn't time, and, second, it isn't of sufficient importance. That second statement, I know, sounds heretical, but a moment's thought will convince the reader that it is plain common sense. One cannot be a lawyer, a teacher, a doctor, or an engineer without special training, but one can be, and usually is, a business man without that special training. True, there are now graduate schools of business administration, and the college graduate who can afford the time and money to attend one is to be congratulated; but the graduate who cannot get the training such schools afford need not be downcast. He can be a business man, and perhaps a good one, without it. It may take him a little longer—that is all.

The colleges take graduate work for granted for those men who intend to enter one of the professions. Those men must be trained, but that training is not the business of the college; it is the business of the graduate school. The college must educate the man, and that brings us to the problem of "learning to live."

I cannot solve the problem of learning to live, but I can give you some idea of what the undergraduate must become conscious of if he is ever to find any satisfactory solution for himself. And the making of the undergraduate conscious of those things is, as I see it, the purpose of a college education.

Much has been written about a college education, and most of it is ponderous and unreadable. Even such essays as Cardinal Newman's on a college education and Matthew Arnold's "Sweetness and Light," which, strictly speaking, is about culture, magnificent as they are, are deep-sea swimming for the average freshman—and he is as yet a very feeble swimmer. Arnold tells him that if he would be cultured he must learn the best that has been thought and said in the world. That is, of course, supremely true, but it is very difficult to make it seem more than a well-put statement to the freshman—and every man should be made deeply conscious at the very outset of his college career that it is his business to learn the best that has been thought and said in the world. The freshman will quote Ar-

nold glibly in his final examination—and then cheerfully forget him. All of which is very human when one is eighteen, and very unfortunate.

Furthermore, the freshman does not see the relation between the best that has been thought and said in the world and himself. To him that best is merely information, information that is hard to get, harder to retain, and of no practical importance at all. He doesn't see what the facts about the neolithic age, the distance of Arcturus from the earth, the Congress of Berlin, Aristotle's theory of poetics, and the history of philosophy have to do with his life, which at the time is concerned with things very different indeed.

Our freshman realizes well enough that his life is the most important thing in the world, but, like the man who was given a whale for a present, now that he has it he doesn't know what to do with it. Ask him what he wants above all things, and he will reply, sensibly enough, happiness. Every young man is essentially a hedonist, and as a rule he is a healthy, wholesome hedonist. He wants to grab happiness with both hands, but he wants the rest of the world to have at least a fingerhold at the same time.

The thing that he must be made to see, of course, is the relation between his happiness and the best that has been thought and said in the world; in other words, he must be made to realize that the past is significant to *him*, that *his* life is a continuation of all the history that has gone before, that every discovery of science has affected and will affect *him*, that every philosophical thought that has ever been expressed in enduring form has helped and is helping to create his own philosophy, and that all the poetry of the ages, whether in verse or prose, is *his* as his natural birthright, a gift of all mankind to him, and one too great ever to be received in its entirety, and too beautiful ever adequately to be appreciated.

To put it more simply, it is the business of a college education to help a man find himself in relation to the world—and I use "world" in its broadest sense. Our freshman has a life to lead, and that life of his must thread its tortuous and difficult way through the mazes of a very complicated social system. More than

that, he must, if he is going to find even a little of that happiness which he so eagerly desires, acquire some understanding of himself. "Know Thyself" was the motto over the doorway of the temple of the oracle at Delphi, and, being the motto over the doorway of a temple, it quite properly expressed an ideal; that is, something unattainable.

Thomas Carlyle once wrote: "The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it. 'Know thyself': long enough has that poor 'self' of thine tormented thee; thou wilt never get to 'know' it, I believe! Think it not thy business, this of knowing thyself; thou art an unknowable individual: know what thou canst work at; and work at it, like a Hercules! That will be thy better plan."

True enough! We shall never know ourselves. I think that we should probably go mad if we ever did, but the knowledge that we can never succeed will not stop us from trying to know ourselves. And to some extent we must succeed—or go mad. Above all things, the freshman is eager to gain some understanding of himself, of his ambitions, his limitations, his abilities, his passions. And his college education, if it is of any value at all, helps him to gain some comprehension of that strange being with whom he must always live, himself.

However, Carlyle was right when he said that we must know our work. But what work? That is what the undergraduate wants to know. What is he fitted for? What does he want to do? He feels that there must be some work for him somewhere, but what is it? How can he find that work without some clear understanding of himself—and find it he must. Certainly the varied curricula of our colleges at least give him some idea of his likes and dislikes, his ability to do certain things and his lack of ability to do others. His four years at college are a breathing space while he marks time looking for his goal, that goal which seems so attainable while he is in college and so unattainable afterward.

But bigger than his work, bigger than himself, is the man in relation to his world and his God. Above all things, the undergraduate must gain some knowledge of

that relationship, so sharply defined in many ways, so tragically vague in others. He must, absolutely must, find a philosophy of living. That philosophy will change as it adapts itself to the experiences of life, but without it to begin with the college graduate is as helpless as a blind man in the traffic of Times Square—and he is in about as dangerous a position.

You must understand that the average freshman has no philosophy of living. He has a code, which is a very different thing. He has been told that there are certain things that he can do and that there are certain things that a "real man" or a "regular fellow" does not do. Some of the undergraduates want to be "real men"—and some of them want to be "regular fellows." It really makes very little difference as far as any philosophy of living is concerned which our freshman wants to be; under any circumstances, his code is very simple, very positive—and very easily broken. No man can quite live up to his code, least of all a man only eighteen or nineteen years old, and the breaches that an undergraduate makes in his code seem to him very large and very serious.

Sometimes they are large and often they are serious, and they play an unnecessary havoc with the boy's life. I have known undergraduates who were tragically unhappy because they had done something which conflicted with their codes. They could not think around the infraction; they could not view it except as an infraction. In other words, they had no ideas; they merely had rules—and life is too complicated, too involved to be lived by rule; it must be thought about from many points of view.

There is no middle ground to the average undergraduate: a thing is either right or wrong, good or bad, glorious or utterly debased. Life is either all black or all white. He hasn't learned, as he must learn, that it is practically never either black or white, that it is usually some shade of gray, and that it is his business to learn to distinguish the shade.

The same thing is true of religion. Again, he comes to college pitifully equipped with ideas. In fact, as a rule he hasn't any. He has been, usually carelessly, instructed in some school of

theology. It has not been his to reason why. He has accepted what he has been told—and let it go at that.

But when he comes to college he is just at the age when he wakes up, when he wants to know, when he begins to question. What is the result? Usually he throws away the theology he has been taught and is left spiritually stranded, worried, and miserably unhappy. His efforts at thinking are pathetic. He has no knowledge and no ideas. He has been told, as a rule, that he should take the Bible as a revelation of God, but he doesn't know anything about the Bible. I do not exaggerate; he doesn't know *anything* about it, not even the popular stories. I tried last term to get the story of Joseph out of a class of nearly forty—and only one man knew it. Practically none of them has ever read either Testament. They may know a few of the stories, but as far as the *philosophy* of the Bible is concerned, or any other philosophy, they are totally ignorant.

The colleges do not give a man a religion. That is not their business; but they do give him ideas and knowledge, and it is up to him to take those ideas and that knowledge unto himself and evolve from them at least a working philosophy of living in relation to this life and whatever may come after it.

I have said, quoting Mr. Munroe, that a man comes to college to learn to live, and I have tried to give some idea of the things he must learn. Now I am about to announce in loud, raucous tones that he won't learn them. He will never learn them. No man does. It is impossible to gain even a small idea of the best that has been thought and said in the world; culture is an ideal, not a possibility. A college does not educate a man; it merely gives him an index to an education. What use the man makes of that index in later life will largely determine his success or failure.

The senior on his graduation day is not an educated man; he is an ignoramus. However, if he has learned enough to know that he is an ignoramus, some day he will probably attain something like culture, have enough knowledge to be called educated—as education in this world goes.

I have said nothing about the joy of learning, the pleasure that knowledge *per se* brings. I have tried to be strictly "practical," but I cannot resist a parting word in favor of the "impractical" value of college life. There the boy comes in contact with beauty, with the most exquisite expression of the noblest thoughts ever produced by man. He has, if he is worth teaching, been thrilled by the splendor of the past and made conscious of the gorgeous pageantry of the present. Perhaps he has learned that that thrill is as true and as fine as any he can get from, say, a financial *coup*.

If when a man graduates from college he has learned the work he is fitted for, if he has gained some ideal of beauty, if he has delved deeply enough into himself to have even a vague knowledge of his own soul, if he has learned enough of the past to understand to some small degree the present, and if he has gathered unto himself enough ideas of life to have a workable philosophy of living, he has begun at least to learn to live. He can count his years in college well spent. He has the rudiments of an education. If he continues to work, to think, and to learn, he may, by the grace of God, become a man.

Ignition

BY VALMA CLARK

ILLUSTRATIONS BY O. F. SCHMIDT



STRANGE look of triumph was on Mrs. Prunner's face as she drew up at our gate to stare across at "that foreign woman." Rhona Cabrals sat listlessly on her door-step and smoked a cigarette; and though the cigarette was her one remaining vice, it alone was sufficient to brand her in Stonyville.

Then Mrs. Prunner came on, bearing down upon me with a ponderous dignity that augured some tremendous piece of news. "Where's your mother, Raz-zles?"

Politely I stopped the lawn-mower to inform her that she would find my mother by following the very audible clattering of the supper dishes to the kitchen. Mrs. Prunner was to our family special intelligencer and exponent of public opinion. Through all the twenty years of my life she had been bearing down upon us in this way, with choice bits of scandal. Now as she swept by, ignoring me, I felt the old prickle of resentment against her

and the old stirring of curiosity. Mrs. Prunner persisted in treating me like a small boy, and I persisted in responding to the treatment.

Beneath the pantry window, where the noise of dishes had suddenly stopped, I discovered that the mower needed oiling. "Look at her—the brazen piece!" came Mrs. Prunner's voice. Clearly she was pointing out Rhona Cabrals, who drooped motionless, all dark, from the rusty black of her cotton dress and the olive dusk of her profile to the intense gypsy blackness of her amazing hair; a still-figure study in darkness, she sat there waiting—waiting as she had been ever since that night nearly eight years before, when the flame in her had been quenched as abruptly as a firebrand thrust into water.

"Well, Mary, murder will out! They've found his body at last, down in the old Shipman quarry."

"*Pedro Cabrals's* body?" breathed mother. "After all these years——"

"They've been pumping out the water, you know, this last week and to-day they came upon the body sticking head down in the bottom of a hundred-and-fifty-foot