THE COLLEGE PRESIDENT.

About three thousand years ago there came into existence a new profession,- that of the prophet. The early history of this profession had much in common with the rise of a profession coming to be recognized as such for the first time in the present generation,- that of the College president. In the earliest days of prophetism the incumbent of that office was not infrequently termed "mad". The presence in its ranks of certain men occasioned great surprise, for it became a proverb, "Is Saul also among the prophets?" Not infrequently these prophets in their enthusiasm "stripped themselves of their clothing and fell down in a trance". At one time in th this early period we are told there were four hundred of them.

It is somewhat so in these early days of the college president. He is not infrequently treated as "mad". Very common is the phrase, "Has Jones also become a college president?" Instead, however, of stripping themselves, they labor without ceasing to strip others. The number is the same; about four hundred. The analogy between the ancient dervish and the modern college president might be pressed even more closely; but it is unnecessary.

A superficial observer will find much to substantiate the very common accusation that the college president is professionally a prevaricator. ~~Is it not true~~ Do not that members of a college faculty distinctly recall many occasions when the president has promised promotion, or increase of salary, or a special appropriation for books and equipment; promises that he has forgotten as soon as the door was closed upon the interview? Is it not true that on many occasions, students, summoned to the President's Office to meet charges made against them, have left the office wholly satisfied that these charges had been shown false, and firmly convinced that the president was on their side, only to find next day that the verdict declared them guilty rather than innocent?

How often, too, it has ~~clearly been shown~~ happened that the president in talking with one person, or group of persons, seemed to entertain a given opinion, whereas, in conversation with another person, or group, strangely enough a different opinion

on the same subject was expressed? It is reported that the president of a New England college not long since gave up his position because his statement on the same subject to different people varied so radically; in other words, because the truth as he represented it was so multiform. To be entirely just to New England, it must be added, reports of this tenor are not restricted to that section of the country.

The president of a university who succeeds at times in concealing his real thought concerning this man or that subject is politely called a diplomat. Is it diplomacy, or is it lying? or may a more euphemistic phrase be found to describe the policy which must characterize his dealing with all classes of men, if he is to remain a college president?

A closer study of the case, and the examination of specific instances will furnish evidence that the professor who thought he had been promised promotion or an increase of salary, made petition to this effect, was received courteously, and mistook courteous treatment for a business pledge. The student, it will be found, forgot that the president was was his judge. A judge is silent until sentence is to be pronounced. The student mistook that silence for acquiesence in his own statement. It is easy enough to imagine that the person to whom one talks has in his mind the thought of the speaker. The next step is easier still, actually to believe that the listener has approved the words of the speaker, or perhaps that he has spoken them.

Possible it is, to be sure, that the president in expressing his desire that such and such a thing should be, sometimes makes a statement that is open to stronger interpretation than he intended. It would be strange if he did not occasionally consent to a proposition which, upon later consideration, might appear to be impracticable; or which, however urgently he might present it to the powers that be, would fail to secure their approval. Does he likewise sometimes forget? Unquestionably; for he is human. Does he sometimes really undertake to do the impossible? Surely; and he discovers this fact to his cost. In all these cases, from the point of view of the other man, he is, in the language of the street, a liar. And yet, I dare say, he still supposes himself worthy of the confidence of his fellow creatures.

The college presidency is a profession in which a large percentage of one's time and energy is occupied in saying "no". Real risk is taken, when for the sake of variation in a small proportion of these cases, a kindly interest is shown. To be brutal may not be so good a policy at the time, but in the long run it probably pays. One of the most distinguished university presidents now living was noted during a large portion of his career for his extreme brutality. It is altogether probable that the high success which he has achieved is due in no small measure to this fact. He is said to have become greatly softened in his later years. One can afford to practice a policy in later years which would ruin him in his early career.

It is contended, with some show of plausibility, that the modern college president is, first and last, a "boss". Does he not have almost unlimited power? May he not exercise this power at his own pleasure? Does he not set up and pull down? Can he not brow-beat and threaten? Is not the life of every professor in his hands? Does he not make and break careers? Is not the administration of a college or university in these times an example of one man power? It is so maintained ~~is~~, and we must confess there are some facts which seem to favor this contention. If the existence of one case of this kind, or even of several, would warrant us in supposing that it was generallly true, the question would be settled. Perhaps there has not been known in recent years a more typical instance of despotism than that which is said to have existed in a certain State University. The writer is fully aware of the fact that this same word "despot" has been applied both good-

naturedly and ill-naturedly to his own administrative policy. But it is interesting to observe that within a few months there has been appointed the first president of the University of Virginia,- a significant fact in the history of university education, showing that the extreme democratic policy initiated by Thomas Jefferson is ~~recognized~~ regarded as a failure. It is probable that Mr. Jefferson, if living, would himself recognize the failure of his cherished idea. In these last years, has Harvard outstripped Yale? If so, is it not partly because at Harvard the president is given larger power?

To what extent is the college or university of modern times a business enterprise, requiring the adoption of business methods in the transaction of its affairs? If this point of view is assumed provisionally, light may be shed upon the question from the study of the tendency in modern business concerns. As institutions grow larger and more complex, is there not inevitably a tendency towards specialism in administration, and a necessity for organization which will definitely locate responsibility? The departmental professor in a college or university is ordinarily wholly occupied with the affairs of his own subject. The responsibility rests upon him to develop that subject as best he can. He is, to be sure, an agent responsible for the institution as a whole, and any policy that would injure the institution would be felt by his department. At the same time, the departmental interest is uppermost in his mind, and his judgment in decisions of questions of general policy is necessarily biased. Decisions made even by many persons of judgment more or less biased, and without a personal knowledge of the questions at issue, are not likely to be wise decisions.

Should not the president of an institution of learning be restricted in his power? Shall the highest educational interests of a great Republic be placed in the hands of men who may be called czars?

A close study of the situation will show that when all has been said, the limitations of the college president, even when he has the greatest freedom of action, are very great. In all business matters he is the servant of the trustees or corporation; and his views will prevail in that body only in so far as they approve

themselves to their good judgment. In educational policy he must be in accord with his colleagues. If he cannot persuade them to adopt his views, he must go with them. It is absurd to suppose that any president, however strong or wilfull he may be, can force a faculty, made up of great leaders of thought, to do his will. The president, if he has the power of veto, may stand in the way of progress, but he cannot secure forward movement except with the co-operation of those with whom he is associated. If there is one institution in which the president has too much power, there are ten in which he has too little.

The office of the college president is an office of service. Everything good or bad which connects itself with service is associated with this office. True service everywhere involves suffering for others. In no other profession, not even in that of the minister of the Gospel, is vicarious suffering more common. But one cannot be suffering for another unless he suffer also with that other. A fundamental characteristic of the president must be a sympathetic nature. He is doomed to failure unless he is able to place himself in the position of others with whom and for whom he has been called to work. In the truest sense the position is a representative one. He does many things, not of his own choice, but because he represents his colleagues. He may not do this or that thing according to his own pleasure, or his own sense of what is proper. The decision to do or not to do must rest largely upon the possible effect, helpful or harmful, to the institution of which he is head. In short, he is the slave of his environment, and must submit to the drudgery and, as well, the misery of that slavery.

And, besides, another feeling which gradually grows upon the occupant of the presidential chair is that of great loneliness; the feeling of separation from all his fellows. At certain times he realizes that in all truth he <u>is</u> alone; for those who ordinarily are close to him, seem to be, and in fact are far away. On occasions of this kind courage is needed; strength, of a peculiar character. An ordinary man, and after all the college president is an ordinary man, cannot thus be cut off from his associates and fail to experience the sorrow of such separation. The college

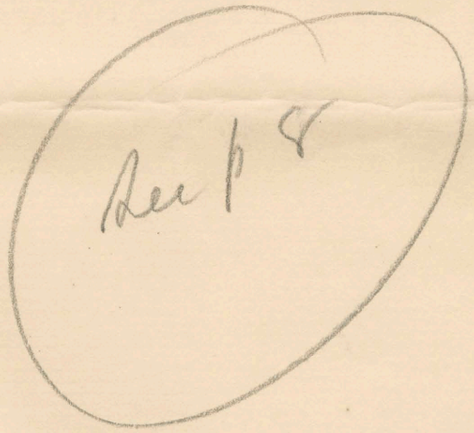
presidency means the giving up of many things, and, not least among these, one's most intimate friendships. Moreover, this feeling of separation, of isolation, increases with each recurring year, and in spite of the most vigorous effort, it comes to be a thing of permanence. This is inevitable, and it is as sad as it is inevitable

While it happens that the words as well as the actions of the president are misunderstood by those about him; even by those of his colleagues who stand nearest to him, he is indeed fortunate, if a worse thing does not come,- the wilful effort to misrepresent him. He cannot exercise the functions of his office honestly without disturbing at times some even of those whom he believes to be his friends. And when this happens, these friends, perhaps inconsciously, will cease to find back of his actions the motives which he himself entertains. It is sometimes pitiful to see how easily men will misunderstand each other, and how complacently the misrepresentations of another's thought are spread from mouth to mouth. The reader will say that such things do not happen. Let me assure him that experience demonstrates not only the possibility, but the frequency of their occurrence. Three cases of persecution throug misrepresentation which was actually malicious have occurred within a year. The names of these institutions are well known.

There come likewise times of great depression when one contemplates in all its details the bigness of the task which lies before him. In many instances this bigness becomes overwhelming, because of the exacting nature of the demands made, together with the number and magnitude of the difficulties involved. So numerous are the affairs of a great university; so heavy are they, in the responsibility which they impose; so delicate and difficult, in the diplomacy which their conduct requires; so arduous, in the actual time required for their management; so heart engrossing and mind disturbing, that there is demanded for their adequate supervision a man possessing the physical strength of a giant, and with this, an intellectual capacity and a moral courage of the most determined character. One, indeed, possessed of strength, feels himself weak, when he is brought face to face with all that is demanded; and one becomes sick at heart when he contemplales how much additional strength is needed

to enable him to fulfill his duties as his conscience tells him they should be fulfilled.

Besides all this, there is found in moments of greatest encouragement a feeling of utter dissatisfaction with one's own work. To what definite thing can the president point, and say- this is my work? / Does he not find his highest function



in helping others to do the things which he himself would like to do? Yet he must stand aside and see others take up the various details of work which in his heart he would desire to handle. The head of an institution is not himself permitted to finish a piece of work. It is his business to find ways and means by which others may be helped to do their work, and even his. Some presidents never learn this difficult art, the art of letting others do things which one wishes himself to do. And for this reason not a few men fail to fill satisfactorily the office of president. There are two common maxims which if quoted in a form exactly opposite from that in which they are in vogue, must regulate the work of the chief officer of a university if that work is to be successful. The first of these is this: One should never do himself what he can in any way find someone else to do. It is fair to presume that, with a single exception, there is no function of the presidential office that cannot better be performed by one or another member of the staff, than by the president himself. I mean by this, that for each particular function there would be found a man who has the peculiar ability to do that service better than the president can do it. The one function which may not be included in this statement is the selection and nomination of new members of the staff. Further, the president should never do to-day what by any possible means he can postpone until to-morrow. Premature action is the source of many more mistakes than procrastination. No decision should ever be reached, or at all events announced, until the latest possible moment has arrived; for how many are the instances in which new evidence has been introduced when, alas, it has been found too late to make use of it.

But there is also a bright side to the picture. How can one fail to find great satisfaction in a work which brings him into close association with life confessedly higher and more ideal than ordinary life? If in any environment idealism reigns supreme, it is that of the University. For there one is working for and with young manhood and womanhood; and nothing in all the world is more inspiring than work in such association. It is the period in human life of greatest

inspiration, of most intense enjoyment and of loftiest aspiration. The sadness of life is for the most part a thing of the future. Ambition is the key note; and affection is in its best and ~~truest~~ fairest mood. The life of a university officer is in many respects the most ideal that exists. The minister meets, everywhere sorrow and sickness and death. The lawyer struggles ~~with drudgery~~, against dishonesty, dissipation and fraud. The physician is almost wholly occupied with ~~misery~~ great pain and suffering. With the college professor and the college president it is essentially different. They have to deal with all that is uplifting in life, with the constructive and not the destructive forces of life. The satisfaction which this brings no man can describe. How does the president of a university spend his time? Largely in seeking ways and means to enable this or that professor to carry out some plan which he has deeply at heart,- a plan, it may be, for research and investigation, or for improving the work of instruction. If it is not service for an officer of instruction, it is service for this or that student whose needs, to him at all events, seem very great. If one is selfish, he grows weary of it all; but if in his heart there is an earnest desire to do for humanity the several services which in his position it is possible for him to render, he learns sooner or later that to no man in any position is there given greater opportunity for service. In a few cases those with whom one comes into contact appreciate keenly and cordially the unselfish service which has been rendered. A few, I say; I did not say only a few, because if even a few feel such an appreciation, and in proper form express it, the gratitude of these few will ~~more than repay~~ be good return one for the loneliness and misrepresentation and despondency which have been his lot. The ~~kind~~ words spoken from the heart, of even a small number, will prove to be good compensation for one's devotion to the interests of an institution. A single utterance of sincere gratitude uttered by one who has been helped will continue, through many days and weeks, and even months, to ~~serve as recompence for~~ counteract the depressing influence of words of criticism and reproach and ridicule. In no realm of life does a man feel more quickly the response to effort which he may be made, than in the realm of student life. Nowhere else, it is true, is criticism more sharp; nowhere else, is real conflict more easy. At the same time, nowhere else is friendship closer, or words of

appreciation more sincere.

The college president deserves the support of the intelligent man of modern times. His position is a trying one; his burden is heavy, and the reward is, at the best, meagre. His effort is always intended to serve the interests that make for truth and the higher life. He is not usually a "liar, or a "boss". He may sometimes seem to be too self-satisfied; one could name a few such. But, for the most part, he does his work, conscious that he has the shortcomings which mark his kind; realizing keenly that his tenure of office, unlike that of his colleagues, is quite uncertain; yet fully resolved to perform his duty without fear or favor and to allow time to determine the question of his success or failure.

William Rainey Harper

(probably not autograph; middle name should be Rainey)

THE PRESIDENT IN AN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTION

The final administration of a College or University is in the hands of an official board usually known as a Board of Ttustees, or Board of Regents. For convenience hereafter we will speak of this Board as the Official Board. This Board (1) administers the funds of the University, (2) is responsible for the general educational policy of the institution, and (3) is responsible for the appointment of ~~the personnel of~~ members of the faculty and employees.

It is not to be presumed that Trustees or Regents are educational experts. They represent, however, the body of citizens who in the last resort provide the funds for the institution, and for whose benefit the institution is maintained. They should be entirely capable of deciding fundamental ~~qualities~~ questions of educational policy as intelligent men. The faculty may desire to establish a new school or a new department. These are questions, not merely of finance, but also of fundamental policy, and an intelligent and impartial Board, such as that of Trustees or Regents, is entirely capable of deciding such questions. The present ~~organization of~~ official board of our American institutions is vested with this power or duty. Questions relating to appointment, promotion, or removal in the faculty must be decided by some final authority. All these questions come to the official board. (¶ 1. The President in his relation to the Official Board.
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The official board is responsible, for a public institution, to the State; for an institution under religious control, to the particular denomination or body which exercises that control; or if independent, it is responsible to those who provide the funds, and for the purposes containtd in the charter.

In the case of a state institution the Board of Regents are the representatives of the entire body of citizens in the State. It is their duty to administer the institution in a way responsive to the desires of the great body of citizens- in such a way as to secure the greatest possible results in education for the state and in a way consistent with the greatest economy of public funds. The institution which by its legal basis is subject to the control of some religious body will have an official board responsible to that body. They will administer the institution as a trust to carry out the purposes for which the institution is established, and for which it is conducted. In the case of an independent board the guide is always the charter or articles of incorporation. It is the duty of the official board to administer the institution in strict accord with such charter, and see to it that the funds are used as the charter provides, and that the general policy and purposes which the charter indicates are maintained. Of

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course it is entirely right for the board under proper conditions to secure by legal process a change in the charter. Such change, however, becomes part and parcel of the charter itself.

The responsibility of the official board as a representative body is very definite. At the same time, and under all conditions this board is a board of trust. They hold the funds of the institution, determine its policy, and its personnel in order to secure the purposes for which it was established. These purposes may be summed up perhaps in these two heads, the training of students on the one hand and the extension of knowledge on the other hand. Teaching and investigation are the two fundamental lines of educational activity. The final purpose, of course, in carrying out these two aims is the benefit of the entire community by diffusing education and by increasing knowledge.

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It is the duty of the President to preside at all Faculty meetings, to represent the Faculty to the ~~Board of Trustees or Regents~~ Official Board, and on the other hand, to represent the Board to the Faculty. He will transmit to the Board any formal requests made by the Faculty, and should the Faculty desire to have one of its committees have a hearing before the Board the President will arrange for the hearing and present the committee to the Board. All official communication from the Board to the Faculty and from the Faculty to the Board should go through the hands of the President.

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