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The Bird In The Bush

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NOTES and COMMENT

The Bird In The Bush

Somebody once remarked, rather cryptically, that the long-range purpose of the Liberal Arts college is "to teach the young men that the bird in the bush is worth two in the hand."

This statement could be understood in various ways, to the credit or discredit of Liberal Education. At this time of year, when hundreds of Liberal Arts colleges are re-opening throughout the Philippines and thousands of young men and women are rushing in the doors, it might not be amiss to point out some of the possible meanings.

It could mean that a Liberal Education is of no practical value and produces only impractical dreamers, that it serves only to give the students "high-falutin notions" and fails to teach them how to make a living. Thus understood, the statement of the Liberal Arts college's objective is verified in the wrong kind of Liberal Education—or in the right kind when inflicted upon the wrong students. When a Liberal Education becomes just another name for a leisurely education, it usually produces such results. So also when its liberality consists in the freedom of the students to choose their own subjects according to their whims, when the school becomes a sort of department store in which the students wander aimlessly around, buying a little bit of this and a little bit of that.

But even if the Liberal Arts college is all that it should be, its graduates will be impractical dreamers, unfit for the life they have to lead, if to begin with they lacked the ability

to profit by a liberal education on the college level. For lack of proper vocational guidance, many students go to a Liberal Arts college who should be in a technical or trade school, or actually working for their living. They set their sights on some phantom "bird in the bush," some material goal—one of the higher professions, for example—impossible of their attainment. And when they graduate from college, they are unprepared to make their living; they haven't the skill needed to grasp even a single bird in the hand—they can't earn even a chicken for the family pot.

But let us suppose the right kind of students in the right kind of Liberal Arts college. We can then place a favorable interpretation on the statement that the long-range purpose of the college is "to teach young men that the bird in the bush is worth two in the hand."

It does not mean, in this case, that the Liberal Education fails to prepare the student for worldly security and the successful pursuit of money. Such students are in the stage of remote preparation for the profession of law, medicine, engineering or some other position of leadership in their community. A complete Liberal Education is a very practical preparation for success in such fields as these; it does prepare them for the making of a living.

It does mean that the Liberal Arts student is taught not to be satisfied with the tangible things that they hold in their hands, with money, position, family, power. Their Liberal Education gives them ideals and the urge to achieve them—ideals of excellence in their chosen careers, ideals of service to their fellow-men, ideals of faith and of courage. It teaches them not to be complacent in things as they are, not to be complacent in themselves nor in the present state of social affairs, of politics, of education or morality. It fills them with a salutary discontent and gives them visions of a better man and of a better world after which to strive courageously. It does not teach them to be contemptuous of money, nor of friends, nor of family nor even of honors in this life. But it teaches the place of these things in the scale of values. It teaches that all else is to be subordinated to the pursuit of

the only goal which will ever fully satisfy their desires, the vision of God face to face for all eternity.

There are a number of tidy little maxims and proverbs which—to hear some people tell it—would seem to provide the key to a happy and secure life. Such for example is the orthodox version of the proverb, “a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush.” Some other examples are: “Honesty is the best policy”—“Prudence is the better part of valor”—“Make haste slowly”—“A penny saved is a penny earned”—“A rolling stone gathers no moss”—etc, etc.

Of course, such maxims are not bad. They are good—as far as they go. But they contain only half-truths. They are cold, they don't inspire, they don't give the young man visions and ideals. They might help a man to earn a little money, and they certainly will enable him to hold on to his money once he has earned it. But these maxims, of themselves, will never lead to real happiness. They are not the slogans of young men nor of older men whose hearts are young.

The true Liberal Education will give a set of principles by which a man can really *live* and gave him visions of intangible things worth fighting and even dying for. The “bird in the bush,” for the product of such an education, will be a real ideal always leading him forward. He will live according to the maxim of St. Augustine: “Thou hast created us for Thyself, O God, and our heart knows no rest until it may repose in Thee.”

J. J. M.

Federation of Free Farmers

The *First Report of the Federation of Free Farmers* is a document which all who are concerned with a Christian solution of our social problem will read with intense interest. The *Report* tells the history of this movement from the time when Jeremias U. Montemayor went to the Barrio of Bisocol in Alaminos, Pangasinan, and conceived the idea of uniting the farmers of the barrio in a cooperative effort to solve their