

Devoto, Former N. U. Prof., Stirs Comment by "Coed" Article

The North Shore is reading with alternating enthusiasm and rage the article by Bernard De Voto in the September issue of Harper's magazine—"The Co-Ed: The Hope of Liberal Education."

Mr. De Voto, who left the faculty of Northwestern university in June to launch a literary career independent of the teaching profession, is at present in the Cape Cod region devoting his time to magazine "pot-boilers" and the preparation of another novel to follow "The Chariot of Fire."

In his article on "The Co-Ed" no matters are minced. The writer's firm conviction that the college woman is the white hope of higher education's future and the college man probably its hopelessness, is set down candidly in "black on white."

Early in the article he asserts that nine-tenths of the truly wise people he has known have been women. Before he closes he reports that during his five years of teaching, the work of only fifteen or twenty students in his classes was at all memorable, and of these but one was a man. It is the "irresistible and over-dressed young nitwits," he remarks in closing—meaning the fair coed, who will be the salvation of the spirit of all that is lovely and admirable in the higher education of the future.

Mr. DeVoto professes to be generalizing in his comments about the average, not the exceptional student (two percent of the college student personnel). Above a certain level of intelligence, he claims, there seems to be little fundamental differentiation between the sexes, so far as their work in college is concerned. It is mass tendencies that he considers.

College, he affirms, has become a feeder for the professional school and business, primarily providing training for salesmanship. "In the mass," he writes, "young men come to college to learn how to sell. In the mass, they are not interested in the kind of education that is generally called liberal—or humanistic or cultural or intellectual. The man who comes to college today is not there to grow in wisdom, or to invite the truth to make him free, or realize his fullest intellectual possibilities, to learn the best that has been said and thought, or to fit himself to any other of the mottoes carved above his college gates. He is there to get through the prerequisites of a professional school or of business. In either case he is righteously intolerant of all flapdoodle whatsoever that does not contribute directly to the foreseen end. Anything which undertakes to make him more efficient he will embrace with as much enthusiasm as he has left over from his 'activities' which are the organized hokum of college life. Anything else—be it anthropology or zoology or any elective in between—he will resent and actively condemn. He'll be damned if he's got time to waste it on wisdom—or knowledge—or truth and beauty—or cultural development—or individuality—or any of the other matters with which the college used to be concerned."

This attitude he blames to democracy in higher education and the establishment of state universities, and claims that college administrations have gone over to the popular cause.

Women, however, still have time in their lives for the things frowned upon by the men, he avers. He contends, also, that men, rather than women, are swayed by emotional considerations; that the idea that the worth of a college is to be judged by its football team is a man-made idea; that his alma mater is supreme among colleges is another; that men look askance and with closed mind upon the new and undissidently accept tradition and authority; that, contrary to the popular prevailing opinion, youth, unfortunately, is not rebellious, and that co-eds alone are really interested in living by the higher centers of the brain.

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