

MABINI'S MESSAGE TO THE YOUTH

VENANCIO TRINIDAD

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I believe that, in these trying days and particularly on this occasion, it is most fitting and proper for us to reflect upon, and draw fresh inspiration from, the life of the Sublime Paralytic, of the "brains of the Philippine Revolution." The life of Mabini as a boy, as a student, and as a citizen is a far cry from the life of the boy, the student, and the citizen of today. We all know that Mabini was born poor. But without a groan, he struggled against poverty and its attendant disadvantages. He performed all odd duties at home and on the family farm, and deprived himself of much of the pleasures of boyhood life. He even served as a servant of a tailor for his board and room so that he would be able to attend school. Many a boy and specially many a student of today would shun to do much of the work that Mabini did because they will think it is undignified and degrading. Mabini's life is truly an object lesson in industry, in sustained work, in the dignity of manual labor.

Perhaps because of the difficult circumstances under which he lived, Mabini was humble, simple in his ways, unaffected in his speech. He saw things in a calm, serene light, and was not inclined to quarrel with others. He wanted to be at peace with his fellow beings, yet he was always ready to stand up for the rights of the

oppressed and defend them against unjust impositions.

Although he himself was in need, yet he was ready to help others and did not expect returns for his services. He felt highly rewarded with the satisfaction that he had been of some service to his fellows. Very few men of today would, in like manner, deny themselves of the profits of their labor. On the contrary, we hear of many men today who bleed others even for little favors. We hear of men who would not render the services for which they are paid unless the people entitled to such services come across with a bribe or "pabagsak." Indeed, in these critical days, we hear of men who, in their desperate desire to amass wealth and to gain power, completely disregard the welfare and interests of others. They throw to the four winds all known tenets of morality and human decency simply to satisfy their selfish ends. Disservice and not service to their fellow beings seems to be their guiding principle in life. Certainly we are far below the norm of social service which Mabini so clearly exemplified in his life.

Unlike other boys of his age, Mabini did not have many enjoyments. He could not wear expensive clothes because he realized that the money to buy them would come from the life and blood of

his mother who sweated it out, so to speak, selling the little that their farm could produce just to send her son to school. He shied away from social parties and assiduously devoted himself to his studies. If he had any leisure hours, he used them wisely. His self-abnegation was indeed a striking contrast to the tendencies of some of our modern youth to squander on luxurious clothing the hard-earned money of their parents who, for their thoughts of their children, go to the extent of slaving in the fields, in stores, in offices, and in other places of economic pursuits. Boys and girls of today are easily carried away not only by the current of extravagance but also by the tendency to consider their studies lightly. There seems to be an over-indulgence on their part in regard to parties and other forms of recreation that often prove detrimental to themselves physically, financially, and morally.

Mabini's was a life of long and bitter struggle against poverty and even humiliation. Under the stress of these handicaps, a man of weaker sort would have given up. But in the case of Mabini they only served as a strong urge to him to attain his goal. His privations combined to develop in him a spirit of self-help and self-reliance. Wishing to realize his life ambition with the least sacrifice on the part of his mother, he worked his way through school, serving as a teacher, as a clerk, and even as I have said as a **muchacho** of a tailor. And believing that a man should be sufficient unto himself, Mabini detested the idea of accepting aid from others. Today, we are facing the gigantic problem of rehabilitation and re-

construction, of rebuilding our country from the wreckage of the last war. As a people, now free and independent, we cannot expect others to do this task for us all the time. By the force of his example, Mabini has pointed to us that we alone should solve our personal and social problems, and that for us to survive as individuals and as a people, we must develop a strong spirit of self-help and self-reliance.

It was Mabini's belief that a man must be good, and to be wisely good, a man must have knowledge. He therefore wholeheartedly devoted himself to his studies. Yes, the present youth of our country are athirst for knowledge as shown by the increased enrollments in both public and private schools and colleges. The urge on their part to acquire knowledge is so strong that not a few of them go to the extreme of seeking the line of least resistance by enrolling in an educational institution which could guarantee them promotion even if they did not exert much effort. What is to be deplored is the fact that at times they are tempted to use whatever knowledge they have thus acquired for purely selfish ends and not for the common weal. How often have we heard or read about young men who have received formal education in school or college but who are misguiding, hood-winking or swindling the gullible ones! Grafts and corruptions have been the brainchildren of masterminds who, in some cases, are the products of educational institutions, notwithstanding the efforts of our schools to develop useful, upright, and patriotic citizens. Mabini would have a man acquire knowledge,

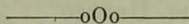
not for knowledge's sake, and much less for evil ends. He would have a man acquire knowledge so that he would be wisely good and be a useful member of the community.

Mabini's idea of true patriotism should serve to correct our common notion about this virtue. Mabini says: "He alone possesses true patriotism who, whatever the position he fills, be it high or low, strives to do for his countrymen the most possible good." Those of substantial means, the men and women elected to high positions, the college-trained professionals—these do not have an exclusive claim to true patriotism. Others, no matter how humble their callings in life may be, can be true patriots also if, for instance, like the peaceful, law-abiding farmers, they constantly endeavor to stave off hunger from their midst by increasing the yield of their farms. The members of the most lowly family, too, can be true patriots if they follow the laws of the nation and do their bit in adding to the sum total of human happiness and progress. Mabini, as we know, did not come from a family that could boast of material wealth or of social prestige, yet the nobility of his character and the signal service which he, despite his physical handicap, had done for the welfare of his country and his people had made him one of our greatest patriots.

Mabini had a high concept of service to the government. When he was offered a government position, he declined it because he realized that his illness would not enable him to render efficient service. But today, it is not uncommon to meet exactly the opposite of Mabini's prototype. Nowadays, one would not hesitate to apply for a government position which requires higher qualifications than what one actually possesses. One's sole aim is to satisfy his own personal interest and not the interest of the people.

Mabini's life and ideals convey an eloquent message which should touch each and every one. I realize that not all could be like Mabini, but I know that every one in his own ways could strive to emulate Mabini's self-abnegation, his dignification of manual labor, his unselfish desire to help his fellow beings, and, above all, his concept of duty to the land that gave him birth. May all of us draw encouragement and inspiration from the career of this great leader and patriot, this "man who had made the best of himself and of his talents in order that he might better serve his God and his country."

Address delivered to the graduates of the Mabini High School, Talaga, Tanauan, Batangas, the birthplace of Mabini.



IDEALS

Every life has its actual blanks, which the ideal must fill up, or which else remain bare and profitless forever.—JULIA WARD HOWE