

Platte, S. D., Dec. 17, 1906.

Mr. Ralph Le Coq,  
Macalester, St. Paul.

Dear Friend,

Without explanation or apology, I would simply say that I have determined to write to you now. I was much interested in your letter, received early in October. You have surely now been acclimated, after nearly a whole term. You undoubtedly have vacation next week.

From your respective accounts, I conclude that your ways are diverging, even though you are all lodged in one room. Frank has turned modern and you have joined, or rather continued with, the ancients. Well, I am Darwinian enough to accept adaptation and natural selection as guiding principles to determine what is to be and what we shall be. I just wonder, though, how you keep peace in your family without proselyting each other. But probably Harry can explain and justify the situation on a theory of opposites, which attract, etc.

I was pleased to learn from your letter that in Greek you are advanced beyond the requirement of admission. I was very anxious that in the entire course you should be creditably received in any good college; it appears, then, that the efforts have not wholly failed. I understand, at least, that your average attainment was considered adequate to enter. In algebra, I anticipated a slight deficiency. This should be pursued during two years in the academic course. Arithmetic ought to be regarded completed in the eighth grade. Thus the four years could be devoted entirely to algebra and geometry. Was any credit granted for work in astronomy in connection with physics? In this latter department, again, more could be done, if common geography were "eliminated by substitution" of, at least, physical geography.

In general, however I trust that a seeming preponderance of literary studies may in the end prove desirable. You have, I presume, detected the scientific tendency; but they will need words.

You have chosen a literary course, still you appear not to have decided what you ought ultimately to choose. If I may be permitted to venture any opinion upon so very delicate a matter, I would most honestly say that you have strong qualifications for the "ministry of the Word". It seems comparatively easy for you to speak, and you possess the rare desirable element of wit, which is an admirable antidote against the dark melancholy of the preacher's prevailing mode and burden. We must have happy earnest speakers in our pulpits.

The very fact that your father's intention, — I assume with your youthful preference, — was to have you enter a military career points in the direction I advised. The military, in the common meaning, is not the career of the future if we may hope a progress in civilization.

And a great need is evident of men for this calling. This much, and no more, I may express. These are the objective facts in the case.

The subjective aspect of your personal inclination toward this particular honorable and useful vocation, I dare not touch.

I think the external call to you is plain. the internal may not be, as yet, so distinct.

You have time to decide. By all means, persevere in a complete college course.

"There's a divinity which shapes our ends  
Rough hew them as we may"

Only as you form your plans think of the men of the Bible, of Samuel and Elisha and of the heroes in the founding of the Christian Church. And above all: Ralph meditate much the human career of the Son of Man, and endeavor to interpret in your individual case what the general command to all his followers means "Follow thou me."

There is nothing eventful in my situation aside from an occasional circuit via Harrison, Ceresca, and Grand View on classical appointments. Hoping that you may enter upon the joys of a New Year with new youthful ambition, I remain ever your Friend, B. D. Dykstra