

**MICROCOSMOGRAPHIA
ACADEMICA: BEING A
GUIDE FOR THE YOUNG
ACADEMIC POLITICIAN**

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Microcosmographia academica: being a guide for the young academic politician by . Unknown

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BOWES AND BOWES, CAMBRIDGE
MCMVIII

ADVERTISEMENT

*If you are young, do not read this book; it is not fit
for you;*

*If you are old, throw it away; you have nothing to learn
from it;*

*If you are unambitious, light the fire with it; you do not
need its guidance.*

*But, if you are neither less than twenty-five years old, nor
more than thirty;*

*And, if you are ambitious withal, and your spirit hankers
after academic politics;*

Read, and may your soul (if you have a soul) find mercy!

I. WARNING

'Any one of us might say, that although in words he is not able to meet you at each step of the argument, he sees as a fact that academic persons, when they carry on study, not only in youth as a part of education, but as the pursuit of their maturer years, most of them become decidedly queer, not to say rotten ; and that those who may be considered the best of them are made useless to the world by the very study which you extol.

'Well, and do you think that those who say so are wrong ?

'I cannot tell, he replied ; but I should like to know what is your opinion ?

'Hear my answer ; I am of opinion that they are quite right.'

PLATO, *Republic* VI

My heart is full of pity for you, O young academic politician. If you *will* be a politician, you have a painful path to follow, even though it be a short one, before you nestle down into a modest

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incompetence. While you are young you will be oppressed, and angry, and increasingly disagreeable. When you reach middle age, at five-and-thirty, you will become complacent, and, in your turn, an oppressor; those whom you oppress will find you still disagreeable; and so will all the people whose toes you trod upon in youth. It will seem to you then that you grow wiser every day, as you learn more and more of the reasons why things should not be done, and understand more fully the peculiarities of powerful persons, which make it quixotic even to attempt them without first going through an amount of squaring and lobbying sufficient to sicken any but the most hardened soul. If you persist to the threshold of old age—your fiftieth year, let us say—you will be a powerful person yourself, with an accretion of peculiarities which other people will have to study in order to square you. The toes you will have trodden on by

WARNING

this time will be as the sands on the sea-shore ; and from far below you will mount the roar of a ruthless multitude of young men in a hurry. You may perhaps grow to be aware what they are in a hurry to do. They are in a hurry to get you out of the way.

O young academic politician, my heart is full of pity for you now ; but when you are old, if you will stand in the way, there will be no more pity for you than you deserve ; and that will be none at all.

I shall take it that you are in the first flush of ambition, and just beginning to make yourself disagreeable. You think (do you not?) that you have only to state a reasonable case, and people must listen to reason and act upon it at once. It is just this conviction that makes you so unpleasant. There is little hope of dissuading you ; but has it occurred

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to you that nothing is ever done until every one is convinced that it ought to be done, and has been convinced for so long that it is now time to do something else? And are you not aware that conviction has never yet been produced by an appeal to reason, which only makes people uncomfortable? If you want to move them, you must address your arguments to prejudice and to the political motive, which I will presently describe. I should hesitate to write down so elementary a principle, if I were not sure you need to be told it. And you will not believe me, because you think your cases are so much more reasonable than mine can have been, and you are ashamed to study men's weaknesses and prejudices. You would rather batter away at the Shield of Faith than spy out the joints in the harness.

I like you the better for your illusions; but it cannot be denied that they prevent you from being

WARNING

effective, and if you do not become effective before you cease to want anything to be done—why, what will be the good of you? So I present you with this academic microcosmography—the merest sketch of the little world that lies before you. A satirist or an embittered man might have used darker colours; and I own that I have only drawn those aspects which it is most useful that you, as a politician, should know. There is another world within this microcosm—a silent, reasonable world, which you are now bent on leaving. Some day you may go back to it; and you will enjoy its calm the more for your excursion in the world of unreason.

Now listen, and I will tell you what this outer world is like,

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