(As for the composition entitled) "The Feet of the Man of Trustworthy Words Who . . . ," (the tablets inscribed with) its consecutive sections have not been found.

(The tablets inscribed with) the consecutive sections of (the composition entitled) "Who Goes Forth against the Inimical City."

It is not impossible that this particular catalogue was prepared to list the tablets recovered from wells, where they may have been hidden for one reason or another; the statement near the end that one of the compositions has not been found, if the rendering is correct, seems to corroborate this surmise. As for the last two lines, these seem to be left hanging in mid-air, and there is no way of knowing what the ancient scribes meant by this notation.

From the point of view of the history of civilization, Sumer's supreme achievements were the development of the cuneiform system of writing and the formal system of education which was its direct outgrowth. It is no exaggeration to say that had it not been for the inventiveness and perseverance of the anonymous, practically oriented Sumerian monks and teachers who lived in the early third millennium B.C., it is hardly likely that the intellectual and scientific achievements of modern days would have been possible; it was from Sumer that writing and learning spread the world over. To be sure, the inventors of the earliest Sumerian signs, the pictographs, could hardly have anticipated the system of schooling as it developed in later days. But even among the oldest known written documents—those found in Erech—consisting of more than a thousand small pictographico-clay tablets inscribed primarily with bits of economic and administrative memoranda, there are several which contain word lists intended for study and practice; that is, as early as 3500 B.C., some scribes were already thinking in terms of teaching and learning. Progress was slow in the centuries that followed; but by the middle of the third millennium B.C., there must have been a number of schools throughout Sumer where writing was taught formally. In ancient Shuruppak, the home city of the Sumerian Noah, quite a number of school "textbooks" dating from about 2500 B.C. were excavated some fifty years ago, consisting of lists of gods, animals, artifacts, and a varied assortment of words and phrases.
However, it was in the course of the last half of the third millennium that the Sumerian school system matured and flourished. From this period tens of thousands of clay tablets have already been excavated, and there is little doubt that hundreds of thousands more lie buried in the ground awaiting the future excavator. The vast majority are administrative in character and cover every phase of Sumerian economic life. From these we learn that the number of scribes who practiced their craft throughout those years ran into the thousands; there were junior scribes and "high" scribes, royal and temple scribes, scribes who were highly specialized for particular categories of administrative activities, and scribes who became leading officials in state and government. There is every reason to assume, therefore, that numerous scribal schools of considerable size and importance flourished throughout the land.

But none of these early tablets deals directly with the Sumerian school system, its organization and method of operation. For this type of information, we must go to the first half of the second millennium B.C. From this later period excavators have discovered hundreds of practice-tablets filled with all sorts of exercises prepared by the pupils themselves as part of their daily schoolwork; their script ranges from the "first grader" to the elegantly made signs of the far-advanced student about to become a "graduate." By way of inference, these ancient copybooks tell us not a little about the method of teaching current in the Sumerian school and about the nature of the curriculum. Better yet, the ancient professors and teachers themselves liked to write about school life, and several of their essays on this subject have been recovered at least in part. From all these sources we get a picture of the Sumerian school, its aims and goals, its students and faculty, its curriculum and teaching techniques, which is quite unique for so early a period in the history of man.

The Sumerian school was known as *adubba*, "tablet house." Its original goal was what we would term "professional," that is, it was first established for the purpose of training the scribes necessary to satisfy the economic and administrative needs of the land, primarily, of course, those of the temple and palace. This continued to be the major aim of the Sumerian school throughout its existence. However, in the course of its growth and development, and particularly as a result of the ever widening curriculum, it came to be the center of culture and learning in Sumer. Within its walls flourished the scholar-scientist, the man who studied whatever theological, botanical, zoological, geographical, mathematical, grammatical, and linguistic knowledge was current in his day and who in some cases added to this knowledge.

Moreover, rather unlike present-day institutions of learning, the Sumerian school was also the center of what might be termed creative writing. It was here that the literary creations of the past were studied and copied; it was here, too, that new ones were composed. While it is true, therefore, that the large majority of graduates from the Sumerian schools became scribes in the service of the temple and palace and among the rich and powerful of the land, there were some who devoted their lives to teaching and learning. Like the university professor of today, many of these ancient scholars depended for their livelihood on their teaching salaries and devoted themselves to research and writing in their spare time. The Sumerian school, which probably began as a temple appendage, became in time a secular institution; the teachers were paid, as far as we can see, out of the tuition fees collected from the students. The curriculum, too, was largely secular in character.

Education was, of course, neither universal nor compulsory. The greater part of the students came from the more wealthy families; the poor could hardly afford the cost and the time which a prolonged education demanded. Until recently this was assumed a priori to be the case. But about a decade ago, a Luxembourg cuneiformist by the name of Nikolaus Schneider ingeniously proved it from contemporary sources. In the thousands of published economic and administrative documents from about 2000 B.C., some five hundred individuals list themselves as scribes, and for further identification many of them add the names of their fathers and their occupations. Schneider compiled a list of these data and found that the fathers of the scribes, that is, of the school graduates, were governors, "city fathers," ambassadors, temple administrators, military officers, sea captains, high tax officials, priests of various sorts, managers, supervisors, foremen, scribes, archivists, and accountants—in short, all the wealthier citizens of an urban community. Only one single woman is listed as a scribe in
these documents, and the likelihood is, therefore, that the student body of the Sumerian school consisted of males only.

The head of the Sumerian school was the uruaya, "expert," "professor," who was also called "school-father," while the pupil was called "school-son" and the alumnus "the school-son of days past." The assistant professor was known as "big brother," and some of his duties were to write the new tablets for the pupils to copy, examine the students' copies, and hear them recite their studies from memory. Other members of the faculty were, for example, "the man in charge of drawing" and "the man in charge of Sumerian." There were also monitors in charge of attendance and special proctors responsible for discipline. We know nothing of the relative rank of the school personnel, except, of course, that the headmaster was the "school-father."

If we now turn to the curriculum of the Sumerian school, we have at our disposal a wealth of data from the schools themselves, which is indeed unique in the history of early man. For in this case there is no need to depend on the statements made by the ancients or on inference from scattered bits of information; we have the actual written products of the schoolboys themselves, from the beginner's first attempts to the copies of the advanced student, which were so well prepared that they were hardly to be distinguished from those of the professor. It is from these school products that we realize that the Sumerian school's curriculum consisted of two primary groups; the first may be described as semiscientific and scholarly and the second as literary and creative.

In considering the first, or semiscientific, group of subjects, it is important to stress that it did not stem from what we may call the scientific urge, the search for truth for truth's sake; rather, it grew and developed out of the main school aim, which was to teach the scribe how to write the Sumerian language. For in order to satisfy this pedagogical need, the Sumerian scribal teachers devised a system of instruction which consisted primarily of linguistic classification; that is, they classified the Sumerian language into groups of related words and phrases and had the students memorize and copy them until they could reproduce them with ease. In the course of the third millennium B.C., these textbooks became ever more complete and gradually grew to be more or less stereotyped and standard for all the schools of Sumer. Among them we find long lists of names of trees and reeds, of all sorts of animals (including insects and birds), of countries, cities, and villages, and of all sorts of stones and minerals. All in all, these compilations show a considerable acquaintance with what might be termed botanical, zoological, geographical, and mineralogical lore, a fact that is only now beginning to be realized by historians of science.

Our schoolmen also prepared all sorts of mathematical tables and many detailed mathematical problems together with their solutions. And in the field of linguistics, we find the study of Sumerian grammar well represented; a number of the school tablets are inscribed with long lists of substantive complexes and verbal forms which indicate a highly sophisticated grammatical approach. Moreover, as a result of the gradual conquest of the Sumerians by the Semitic Akkadians in the last quarter of the third millennium B.C., our ancient professors prepared what are by all odds the oldest dictionaries known to man. For the Semitic conquerors not only borrowed the Sumerian script; they also treasured highly the Sumerian literary works and studied and imitated them long after Sumerian had become extinct as a spoken language—hence, the pedagogical need for dictionaries in which the Sumerian words and phrases were translated into the Akkadian language. (See Fig. 5.)

As for the literary and creative aspects of the Sumerian curriculum, they consisted primarily of studying, copying, and imitating the large and diversified group of literary compositions that must have originated and developed primarily in the latter half of the third millennium B.C. The number of these ancient works ran into the hundreds; they were almost all poetic in form and ranged in length from close to a thousand to less than fifty lines. As recovered to date, they are seen to consist in the main of the following genres: myths and epic tales in the form of narrative poems celebrating the deeds and exploits of the Sumerian gods and heroes; hymns to gods and kings; lamentations, that is, poems bewailing the not infrequent destruction of the Sumerian cities; wisdom compositions, including proverbs, fables, and essays. Of the approximately five thousand literary tablets and fragments
recovered from the ruins of Sumer, not a few are in the immature hand of the ancient pupils themselves.

Little is known as yet of the teaching methods and techniques practiced in the Sumerian school. In the morning, upon his arrival in school, the pupil studied the tablet that he had prepared the day before. After this, the “big brother,” that is, the assistant professor, prepared a new tablet, which the student then proceeded to copy and study. Both the “big brother” and “school-father” would examine his copies to see if they were correct. Memorizing, no doubt, played a very large role in the student’s work. Then, too, the teacher and the assistants must have supplemented the bare lists, tables, and literary texts that the student was copying and studying with considerable oral and explanatory material. But these “lectures,” which would no doubt prove invaluable for our understanding of Sumerian scientific, religious, and literary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sumerian</th>
<th>Sign</th>
<th>Akkadian Translation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>il-ri</td>
<td>📝</td>
<td>ti-il-pa-nu</td>
<td>throwing stick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ta-al</td>
<td>📝</td>
<td>ru-up-sum</td>
<td>width</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na-ga</td>
<td>📝</td>
<td>a-st-tum</td>
<td>mortar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ga-az</td>
<td>📝</td>
<td>pa-he-su-um</td>
<td>to break into pieces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>📝</td>
<td>da-a-ku-um</td>
<td>to kill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nin-da</td>
<td>📝</td>
<td>mi-tum</td>
<td>bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>📝</td>
<td>pa-ar-si-k-tum</td>
<td>a measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>📝</td>
<td>is-tudi-um</td>
<td>funnel of a seed-plow</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 3.—Extract from a Sumero-Akkadian Vocabulary

thought, were in all probability never written down and hence are lost to us forever.

While the Sumerian school was in no way “tainted” by what we could call progressive education, the curriculum was pedagogically oriented at least to some extent. Thus the neophyte began his studies with quite elementary syllabic exercises such as tu-ta-ti, nu-na-ni, bu-ba-bi, zu-za-zi, etc. This was followed by the study and practice of a sign list of some nine hundred entries which gave single signs along with their pronunciation. Then came lists containing hundreds of words that had come to be written, for one reason or another, not by one sign but by a group of two or more signs. These were followed by collections containing literally thousands of words and phrases arranged according to meaning. Thus in the field of the “natural sciences,” there were lists of the parts of the animal and human body, of wild and domestic animals, of birds and fishes, of trees and plants, of stones and stars. The lists of artifacts included wooden objects—more than fifteen hundred items ranging from pieces of raw wood to boats and chariots; objects made of reed, skin, leather, and metal; assorted types of pottery, garments, foods, and beverages. A special group of these lists dealt with place names—lands, cities, and hamlets as well as rivers, canals, and fields. A collection of the most common expressions used in administrative and legal documents was also included, as well as a list of some eight hundred words denoting professions, kinship relations, deformities of the human body, etc.

It was only when the student had become well acquainted with the writing of the complex Sumerian vocabulary that he began to copy and memorize short sentences, proverbs, and fables, and also collections of “model” contracts, this last being essential for the redaction of legal documents, which played a large role in the economic life of Sumer. Along with this linguistic training, the student was also given instruction in mathematics, which took the form of studying and copying metrological tables, with the equivalence of measures of capacity, length, and weight, as well as multiplication and reciprocal tables for computation purposes. Later, the student was put to solving practical problems dealing with wages, canal-digging, and construction work.

In the matter of discipline—and as will be seen below, disci-
the British Museum, is altogether obscure, the last two lines sum up succinctly the purpose of the school; to turn the ignorant and illiterate into a man of wisdom and learning.

As already noted, we have at our disposal quite a number of essays relating to education which the ancient schoolmen themselves prepared for the edification of their students, and these give a graphic and vivid picture of various aspects of school life, including the interrelationships between faculty, students, parents, and graduates. Following are four of the better preserved essays, which, to judge from the contents, may be entitled (1) "Schooldays," (2) "School Rowdies (The Disputation between Enkimansli and Gimishag)," (3) "A Scribe and His Perverse Son," and (4) "Colloquy between an Ugoke and a Scribe."

The essay "Schooldays," which deals with the day-to-day activities of the schoolboy as recounted by an "old grad" with some of the nostalgic details that the modern alumnus recounts at his class reunion, is one of the most human documents excavated in the ancient Near East. Originally composed by an anonymous schoolteacher who lived about 2000 B.C., its simple, straightforward words reveal how little human nature has really changed throughout the millennia. We find our ancient schoolboy, not unlike his modern counterpart, terrified to the point of coming late to school "lest his teacher cane him." When he awakes he hurries his mother to prepare his lunch. In school he misbehaves and is punished more than once by the teacher and his assistants; we are quite sure of the rendering "cane" since the Sumerian sign consists of "stick" and "lash." As for the teacher, his pay seems to have been as meager then as it is now; at least, he is only too happy to make a "little extra" from the parents to eke out his earnings.

The composition, which was no doubt the creation of one of the umma's in the adubba, begins with a direct question to an old alumnus which reads: "Old Grad, where did you go (when you were young)?" The latter answers: "I went to school." The professor-author then asks: "What did you do in school?" This is the cue for the old grad to reminisce about his school activities thus:

I recited my tablet, ate my lunch, prepared my (new) tablet, wrote it, finished it; then my model tablets were brought to me; and in the afternoon my exercise tablets were brought to me. When school was
dismissed, I went home, entered the house, and found my father sitting there. I explained (?) my exercise-tablets to my father, (?) recited my tablet to him, and he was delighted, (so much so) that I attended him (with joy).

The author now has the schoolboy turn to the house servants (it was evidently quite a well-to-do home) with these words:

I am thirsty, give me water to drink; I am hungry, give me bread to eat; wash my feet, set up (my) bed, I want to go to sleep. Wake me early in the morning, I must not be late lest my teacher cane me.

Presumably all this was done, for we next find our schoolboy saying:

When I arose early in the morning, I faced my mother and said to her: "Give me my lunch, I want to go to school!" My mother gave me two rolls, and I set out; my mother gave me two rolls, and I went to school. In school the fellow in charge of punctuality said: "Why are you late?" Afraid and with pounding heart, I entered before my teacher and made a respectful curtsey.

But curtsey or not, it was a bad day for our ancient pupil—at least as the old grad remembered it rather nostalgically—he had to take canings from various members of the school staff. Or, in the words which the author puts in the mouth of the alumnus:

My headmaster read my tablet, said:
"There is something missing," caned me.

(There follow two unintelligible lines)

The fellow in charge of neatness (?) said:
"You left your clothes (?) in the street and did not straighten up (?) your clothes (?)," caned me.

(There follow five unintelligible lines)

The fellow in charge of silence said:
"Why did you talk without permission," caned me.

The fellow in charge of the assembly (?) said:
"Why did you 'stand at ease (?)' without permission," caned me.

The fellow in charge of good behavior said:
"Why did you rise without permission," caned me.

The fellow in charge of the gate said:
"Why did you go out from (the gate) without permission," caned me.

The fellow in charge of the whip said:
"Why did you take . . . without permission," caned me.

The fellow in charge of Sumerian said:
"Why didn't you speak Sumerian," caned me.

My teacher (unnița) said:
"Your hand is unsatisfactory," caned me.

(And so) I (began to) hate the scribal art, (began to) neglect the scribal art.

My teacher took no delight in me; (even) [stopped teaching (?)] me his skill in the scribal art; in no way prepared me in the matters (essential) to the art (of being) a 'young scribe,' (or) the art (of being) a "big brother."

In despair, according to our old grad, he turned to his father, saying:

Give him a bit extra salary, (and) let him become more kindly (?); let him be free (for a time) from arithmetic; (when) he counts up all the school affairs of the students, let him count me (too among them; that is, perhaps, let him not neglect me any longer).

From here on, the author himself takes over, describing the events as if he had been there and had witnessed them, thus:

To that which the schoolboy said, his father gave heed. The teacher was brought from school, and after entering in the house, he was seated on the "big chair." The schoolboy attended and served him, and whatever he learned of the scribal art, he unfolded to his father. Then did the father in the joy of his heart say joyfully to the headmaster of the school: "My little fellow has opened (wide) his hand, (and) you made wisdom enter there; you showed him all the fine points of the scribal art; you made him see the solutions of the mathematical and arithmetical (problems), you (taught him how) to make deep (?) the cuneiform script (?)."

The author now has the father turn to his household servants, saying:

Pour for him tri-oil, bring it to the table for him. Make fragrant oil flow like water on his stomach (and) back; I want to dress him in a garment, give him some extra salary, put a ring on his hand.

The servants do as they are bidden, and then the teacher speaks to the schoolboy:

Young fellow, (because) you hated not my words, neglected them not, (may you) complete the scribal art from beginning to end. Because you gave me everything without stint, paid me a salary larger than my efforts (deserve), (and) have honored me, may Nidaba, the
queen of guardian angels, be your guardian angel; may your pointed stylus write well for you; may your exercises contain no faults. Of your brothers, may you be their leader; of your friends may you be their chief; may you rank the highest among the school graduates, satisfy(?), all who walk(?) to and from in (?) the palaces. Little fellow, you know(?) your father, I am second to him; that homage be paid to you, that you be blessed—may the god of your father bring this about with firm hand; he will bring prayer and supplication to Nidaba, your queen, as if it were a matter for your god. Thus, when you put a kindly hand on the... of the teacher, and on the forehead of the "big brother," then(?) your young comrades will show you favor. You have carried out well the school's activities, you are a man of learning. You have exalted Nidaba, the queen of learning; O Nidaba, praise!

From the preceding essay it is not easy to decide whether the faculty of the Sumerian school consisted largely of sadists or whether its student body consisted of rowdies and roughnecks. That the latter may have been true at least in part seems to be corroborated by the second of our essays, "The Disputation between Enkinduni and Gimishag." According to this document, the ancient pedagogues seem to have had their hands full trying to control pupils who took pleasure in pushing, shouting, quarreling, and cursing.

This one hundred and sixty line Sumerian essay has only recently been pieced together from seven tablets and fragments by Cyril J. Gadd, professor emeritus of the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London, and the author of this book. Two of these were excavated at Ur by Sir Leonard Woolley about twenty-five years ago; they were published in part by Professor Gadd in 1856, under the title "Teachers and Students in the Oldest Schools," as an inaugural lecture at the School of Oriental and African Studies. But these two tablets contained only the beginning and end of the essay. A fuller text is now available as a result of the identification of five pieces excavated at Nippur, one of which, a large eight-column tablet containing a whole collection of Sumerian essays, proved to be of particular importance for the restoration of the text of our essay. Excavated some sixty years ago, it is now in the Hilprecht Collection of the Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena in East Germany, and its contents were only recently made available. It must be stressed, however, that in spite of the more complete text now available, much of the meaning of the essay and not a few of its implications are still quite uncertain, since many of the passages are only partially preserved. The sketch here presented must therefore be taken as preliminary and tentative, and future discoveries may modify the interpretation considerably.

One rather unexpected and not uninteresting bit of comparative cultural information provided by our essay concerns the literal meaning and derogatory implications of the word "sophomore," which is first known to have been used as an English word in Cambridge in 1688. There is reason to believe that this word, "sophomore," is the English form of a Greek compound word "sophos-moros," which means literally "clever-fool." Now, as Professor Gadd was first to point out, our Sumerian essay contains the exact equivalent of the Greek "sophos-moros." In the course of the bitter and abusive arguments between the two school rivals which constitute the main part of the essay, one of them taunts the other with being a "galam-huru," a Sumerian compound word meaning literally "clever-fool," that is, "sophomore." The composition consists primarily of a bitter verbal contest between two schoolmates named Enkinduni and Gimishag, both of whom are far advanced in their studies; in fact, Gimishag may have reached the height of being "big brother," that is, an assistant instructor in the school. In the course of the disputation each talks up his own virtues and talents in glowing terms and talks down his opponent with withering sneers and vituperative insults. Thus near the very beginning of the document, one of these worthy addresses the other as follows:

You dolt, numskull, school pest, you illiterate, you Sumerian ignoramus, your hand is terrible; it cannot even hold the stylus properly; it is unfit for writing and cannot take dictation. (And yet you say) you are a scribe like me.

To this the other worthy answers:

What do you mean I am not a scribe like you? When you write a document it makes no sense. When you write a letter it is illegible (?). You go to divide up an estate, but are unable to divide up the estate. For when you go to survey the field, you can't hold the measuring line. You can't hold a nail in your hand; you have no sense. You
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don't know how to arbitrate between the contesting parties; you aggravate the struggle between the brothers. You are one of the most incompetent of tablet writers. What are you fit for, can any one say (p)?

To which his rival retorts:

"Why, I am competent all around. When I go to divide an estate, I divide the estate. When I go to survey the field, I know how to hold the measuring line. I know how to arbitrate between the contesting parties. I know how to pacify the struggle between the brothers and soothe their feelings. But you are the laziest (p) of scribes, the most careless (p) of men. When you do multiplication, it is full of mistakes (p)... In (computing) areas you confuse (p) length with width. Squares, triangles, circles (p), and sectors— you treat them all without understanding as if... You chatterbox, scoundrel, sneerer, and bully, you (dare say) that you are the "heart" of the student body!

Taking this sentence as a cue, his opponent begins with the query: "What do you mean I am not the 'heart' of the student body?" He then continues with a description of his talents as a keeper of accounts and ends with these lines:

Me, I was raised on Sumerian, I am the son of a scribe. But you are a bungler, a windbag. When you try to shape a tablet, you can't even smooth (p) the clay (p). When you try to write a line, your hand can't manage (p) the tablet... You "sophomore," cover your ears! cover your ears! (Yet) you (claim to know) Sumerian like me!

At this point a long passage follows which is so poorly preserved that it is difficult to follow even the shift of speakers. Finally, someone (probably the agula, that is, a monitor of some sort) became so incensed at one student—Enkimansi—that he was ready to lock him up and put him in chains, to judge from the following passage toward the very end of the composition, which in the following tentative translation reads:

Why do you behave like this! Why do you push, curse, and hurl insults at each other? Why do you raise a commotion in the school... (There follow four unintelligible lines.) The commotion has reached him! Why were you insolent (p), inattentive (p), (why do you) curse, and hurl insults against him who is your "big brother" and has taught you the scribal art to your own advantage (p)? Even the umma who knows everything shook his head violently (p) (saying): "Do to him what you please." If I (really) did to you what I pleased—to a fellow who behaved like you (and) was inattentive (p) to his "big brother"—I would (first) beat you with a mace—what's a wooden board (when it comes to beat-

-ing!)—(and) having put copper chains on your feet, would lock you up in the house (and) for two months would not let you out of the school (building).

Following four unintelligible lines, the composition closes with the words: "In the dispute between Gilimishag and Enkimansi the umma gave the verdict."

As can be surmised from the two preceding essays, the Sumerian school was rather formidable and uninviting; the curriculum was "stiff," the teaching methods drab, the discipline harsh. No wonder, then, that at least some of the pupils played truant when possible and became "problem children" to their teacher and parents. Which brings us to the third of our school essays, "A Scribe and His Perverse Son," a text pieced together from more than a score of tablets and fragments. This essay is noteworthy as one of the first documents in the history of man in which the word "humanity" (Sumerian, nāmālu) is used not only to designate mankind but in the sense of conduct and behavior befitting human beings.

The composition, which is about one hundred eighty lines in length, begins with an introduction consisting of a more or less friendly dialogue between father and son in which the latter is admonished to go to school, work diligently, and report back without loitering in the streets. To make sure the lad has paid close attention, the father has him repeat his words verbatim.

From this point on, the essay is a monologue on the part of the father. It starts with a series of practical instructions to help make a man of his son: not to gad about in the streets and boulevards; to be humble before his monitor; to go to school and learn from the experience of man's early past. There follows a bitter rebuke to the wayward son, who, his father claims, has made him sick unto death with his perennial fears and inhuman behavior. He, the father, is deeply disappointed at the son's ingratitude; he never made him work behind plow or ox, nor did he ever ask him to bring firewood or to support him as other fathers make their sons do. And yet his son has turned out to be less of a man than the others.

Like many a disappointed parent of today, the father seems to be especially hurt that his son refuses to follow his professional footsteps and become a scribe. He admonishes him to emulate his companions, brothers, and friends and to follow his own prefer-
“You who wander about in the public square, would you achieve success? Then seek out the first generations. Go to school, it will be of benefit to you. My son, seek out the first generations, inquire of them.

“Perverse one over whom I stand watch—I would not be a man did I not stand watch over my son—I spoke to my kin, compared its men, but found none like you among them.

“What I am about to relate to you turns the fool into a wise man, holds the snake as if by charms, and will not let you accept false phrases.

“Because my heart had been sated with weariness of you, I kept away from you and heeded not your fears and grumblings—no, I heeded not your fears and grumblings. Because of your clamorings, yes, because of your clamorings, I was angry with you—yes, I was angry with you. Because you do not look to your humanity, my heart was carried off as if by an evil wind. Your grumblings have put an end to me, you have brought me to the point of death.

“I, never in all my life, did I make you carry reeds to the canebrake. The reed rushes which the young and the little carry, you, never in your life did you carry them. I never said to you ‘Follow my caravans.’ I never sent you to work, to plow my field. I never sent you to work, to dig up my field. I never sent you to work as a laborer. ‘Go, work and support me,’ I never in my life said to you.

“Others like you support their parents by working. If you spoke to your kin and appreciated them, you would emulate them. They provide 10 gur of barley each—even the young ones provided their fathers with 10 gur each. They multiplied barley for their father, maintained him in barley, oil, and wool. But you, you’re a man when it comes to perverseness, but compared to them you’re not a man at all. You certainly don’t labor like them—they are the sons of fathers who make their sons labor, but me—I didn’t make you work like them.

“I, night and day am I tortured because of you. Night and day you waste in pleasures. You have accumulated much wealth, have expanded far and wide, have become fat, big, broad, powerful, and puffed. But your kin waits expectantly for your misfortune and will rejoice at it because you looked not to your humanity.”

(Here follows an obscure passage of forty-one lines which seems to consist of proverbs and old saws; the essay then concludes with the father’s poetic blessing.)

From him who quarrels with you may Nanna, your god, save you. From him who attacks you may Nanna, your god, save you. May you find favor before your god.
May your humanity exalt you, neck and breast,
May you be the head of your city’s sages,
May your city utter your name in favored places,
May your god call you by a good name,
May you find favor before your god Nanna,
May you be regarded with favor by the goddess Ningal.

If in spite of the heavy and far from exciting curriculum, the harsh punishments by his teachers, and the bitter rivalry of his more aggressive fellow classmates the ambitious and persevering student succeeded in graduating from school, there were several job possibilities open to him; he could, for example, enter the services of the palace or temple, or he could become the managing scribe and accountant of one of the larger estates which dotted the land. In the fourth of the school essays, “Colloquy between an uguila and a Scribe,” we find the edubba graduate, now a full-fledged scribe on one such estate, having an argument with the uguila (probably its superintendent), who himself was an alumnus of the edubba. The composition, which consists of seventy-eight lines reconstructed from a dozen tablets and fragments, begins with an address by the uguila which reads:

Old Grad, come here to me (and) let me tell you what my umma (the professor in charge of the edubba) told me.
I, too, like you was (once) a little fellow and had a “big brother.”
The umma would assign me work (that was even too much) for a (grown) man.
(But) I darted about like a darting reed, became absorbed in the work, neglected not my umma’s words, did not act according to my own self (ish spirit), (and as a result) the “big brother” was pleased with my accomplishments.
He rejoiced because I humbled myself before him and spoke (?) in my favor (?)
Whatever he sketched for me I made, I put everything in its place—(even) a fool could easily (?) follow (?) his instructions.
He guided my hand on the clay, showed me how to behave properly, opened my mouth with words, uttered good counsel, focused (?) (my) eyes on the rules which guide the man of achievement: diligence is the very essence (literally “lot”) of achievement, time-wasting is taboo, the fellow who gacks about (and) wastes time at his assignment has failed his assignment.
He (the “big brother”) vaunted not his knowledge, his words are restrained—and he vaunted his knowledge, eyes would “pop.”

Attend him (therefore) before the sun rises (and) before the night cools; do not turn back the pleasure of being by the side of the “big brother”, having come close to the “big foreheads” your words will become honored.
He (the “big brother”?) did not turn back a second time the fastened eyes . . . , he bound about your neck a garland (?) of man’s courtesy and respect (?)
The heart of the afflicted (?) having been soothed, he is freed of guilt.
The man (who brings) milk (?) sacrifices (?), made adequate (?) his gift; the man of wealth has pressed his knee-bent kid to his breast—so (?) must you be courteous to man, supervisor, and owner, must make their heart content.

So much for the uguila’s rather diffuse and long-winded speech. Following an introductory line which reads; “The learned scribe humbly answers his uguila,” the text continues with what seems to be a far from humble response:

You recounted to me . . . like a . . . (but) now I will let you have the answer to it; as for your ox-like bellow, you will not turn me into an ignoramus with its lack of understanding—I will answer it fully (?) (literally, perhaps, “sixty times”).
Like a puppy (your) eyes are wide apart (?) (even if) you act (like) a human being.
Why do you lay down rules for me as if I am an idler?
Anyone who heard you would drop (?) his hands in despair (?).
Let me explain to you carefully (literally, “let me put into your hand”) the art of being a scribe since (?) you have mentioned it.
You have put me in charge over your house (and) never have I let you find me idling about.
I held the slave girls, slaves, and (the rest of) your household to their task; saw to it that they enjoyed their bread, clothing, and fat (and) that they work properly (literally, “as is their way”).
You did not (have to) follow your slave in the house of your master; I did the unpleasant (?) task (?) (and) followed him like a sheep.
I have said daily the protecting (?) prayers which you have ordered; your sheep (and) your oxen are pleasing (and) bring joy to your god; on the day when your god’s boat is moored they (the priests (?)) lay hands on you (in blessing). You assigned me the breast (that is, perhaps, the high, unirrigated part) of the field (and) I made the men work there—a challenging task which permits no sleep either by night or in the heat of day.
(Yet) all the (. . . and (?)) the sons of the farmers nod (?), approval (?).

I applied the kindly hand to your field (and) folks spoke well of me; I made the ox bring in whatever filled (?), your path (?), made him carry (?), his load for you.

From my youth you raised me, watched over my behavior, treated me kindly like goodly silver, and did not . . . I (therefore) kept away (?), from you that which “walks not in greatness,” like something which is taboo for you; I kept away from you the “small winds (?),” (and) did not let them exist for you.

Raise now your head high, you who were formerly a little fellow, you can (now) turn your hand against (?), any man, (so) act (?), as is befitting.

Here probably ends the scribe’s answer, although there is no introductory line to indicate a change of speaker. The rather unexpectedly amiable response of the scribe, which concludes the composition, reads as follows:

You who paid homage (?), to me, who blessed (?), me, who brought instruction into my body like edible milk (and) fat—because (?), you stood not about in idleness I have obtained the earth’s favors, have not suffered its misfortunes. The untruth, the “word-knowers” nod (?), approval (?), tell (?), all about you in their houses (?), wherever they are (?). Your name is uttered (only) for good, your commands are well received (?). The ox-drivers (?), [halt (?),] their steeds at your sweet songs; at your sweet songs the contenders (?), will drop (?), ([their] contention (?)). The untruth pays you (?), homage with joyful heart (saying): “You who (as a) little fellow sat at my words, pleased my heart—Nidaba, the patron goddess of the edubba, has given in your hand the honor of (being an) umunia; you are the consecrated of Nidaba, may you rise heaven high. May you be blessed with joyous heart, [suffer] no heartache; may you [excel (?)] in whatever is in the edubba, the house of learning; [may] the loftiness of Nidaba bring (?) you unrivaled (?) rejoicing. At your kindly wisdom steeds [will halt (?)]; the little fellows will drop (?), [their contention (?)] in . . . . The craftsmen will utter [your name for good]; the . . . will recount [your] . . . In the song-echoing (?), street, the street where . . . , you have brought the unrivaled me; you have mastered (?), the direction of harmonious (?), conduct.”

There follows the typical closing phrase: “O Nidaba, praise!” To all of which the modern professor and teacher might well respond with a wistful and envious “Amen!”

CHAPTER SEVEN

CHARACTER:
Drives, Motives, and Values

By and large, studies devoted to Sumerian culture and civilization approach their subject from the descriptive point of view only. Usually, they proceed to break up Sumerian culture into its various aspects: social, political, economic, administrative, legal, religious, technological, artistic, and literary. Each of these subdivisions is then described with as much detail as the available data permit and the particular purpose of the study calls for. Rarely is Sumerian culture approached from the psychological point of view; that is, from a consideration of the character and personality of the people who created it. To help fill this gap, I have devoted a series of studies in the past several years to the psychological aspects of Sumerian civilization, especially as revealed in their literary documents. In a paper entitled “Rivalry and Superiority: Two Dominant Features of the Sumerian Culture Pattern,” I tried to isolate and describe one of the major motivating forces of Sumerian behavior, the drive for superiority and pre-eminence with its great stress on competition and success. In an article entitled “Love, Hate and Fear: Psychological Aspects of Sumerian Culture,” I sketched the role of love, hate, and fear as motivating emotional drives in Sumerian conduct. In this chapter, I shall try to summarize the results of these two studies. It cannot be stressed strongly enough that the conclu-

1 Selected Papers of the Fifth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (1960), pp. 287–91.