

Excelsior - King's College - May 9th 1912 - On receiving degree of D.C.L.
(Grant and 1st page and 1st of 2nd)

It is becoming in me to first of all express my acknowledgment of the great honour that has just been conferred on me by the Convocation of King's College, in enrolling me among the graduates of this ancient foundation. It shall be my endeavour to live worthy of this privilege, and to do my best to aid the right interests of my latest foster mother.

It is perhaps only natural that old King's and Dalhousie should fraternise on Academic festivals of this kind; for there have been times we are told when they have done some flirting with each other; indeed it went so far that the gossips were talking about them; and even the lawyers were called in to draw up a marriage settlement. But whether the lawyers tried to bewilder each other, or whether sentiment were stronger than affection, or the lady were too young, or the man's morals were suspected, or whatever were the cause, the match was broken off - and, as the storybook says, they lived happily ever after. In parting the young things

ENGLISH BOND

On such occasions as this we might well ask what is the aim and what the result of all this educational work, and what we should expect to find in a college-trained man.

things promised to be brother and sister to each other, and the honour conferred on Dalhousie University today in making her President a member of this University is a symbol of that brotherly and sisterly affection. May it long continue.

I want to say a few words about the aim and result of the work our Colleges are pretending to do, and what we should expect from our graduates and college trained man.

If we take the views of people in general on the purposes of education both in high school and college, we will get two categories of answer - the one will tell you the purpose should be purely, or at least largely, utilitarian; the other that the purpose is mainly disciplinary, to train the intellect and to equip it to bear on the problems of life, utilitarian and otherwise.

It is the latter of these classes I am going to talk about; not because it is my belief that the institution which trains for the value of the mental discipline involved, is training for a higher and finer manhood and citizenship, and therefore
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for a better utilitarianism, although I do believe that; but assuming that, as any one who has gone through Dalhousie, and has got her spirit, must assume it, I wish to consider what sort of beings we ought to be, after having submitted ourselves to this training for a quarter of our natural lives.

We spend our College days in dealing with mathematical, literary, philosophical and scientific methods, where our tastes, our likes and our prejudices, our family and national and racial habits are thrust to one side, and we deal with things as they are, or of right out to be; where perhaps our sense of euphony, and rhythm, and picturesqueness, and verbal nicety, are allowed some play, but never at the expense of the proprieties of form and order; the imagination may have full scope allowed it, but still it must ever remain subordinate to the rule of honest government, and the proper dependence of part on part.

Or, we give our minds over to the study of Science, where we cast all prejudice most markedly aside, and base every conclusion on the oft- considered and repeated

repeated observation and fact, on the frequent test and experiment, and throw out every beautiful proposition which will not stand these cold methods of treatment, no matter how they may appeal to the imagination, or to the God of things as they might and ought to be; where we stand ready to throw over at a moment's warning the accepted beliefs of generations, and to hold even our laws of nature as we hold a train timetable, as subject to change without notice.

There is no need to go into more details. The Bachelor of Master when he emerges from this drill should surely be a reasoning being, and intellectually honest, and free from the petty prejudices he has taken such pains to eradicate. His mind can surely give to every problem which can arise in his future daily life, a calm hearing, a balanced, judicious consideration; and finally a judgment as sound as his natural attainments permit of his obtaining, with the mental machinery he is endowed with for dealing with the factors which determine the result. If this judgment is not infallible, at least it can surely not be tainted by prejudice and pettiness,

The greatest criticism of College education is that this is so far from the fact

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pettiness, and warped by desire or mere habit. The College-bred man must surely differ markedly from his brother, who has not been fortunate enough to have had the benefit of such a training and disciplining of the intellect; he must surely order his life on more scientific and logical bases, and act with a surer and more rational understanding.

Of course, I do not for a moment mean that all questions that arise in life should be determined by the canons of logic and the precise applications of impersonal rules of conduct; that would be to leave out of consideration some of the most fundamental stimuli of human action, the very sources of our individuality, which prevent our being mere replicas of each other, and sheer human automata - the affections, ambition, sentiment, faith, charity - which give to life its sweetness and incentive to better things. But surely in those matters where thinking is called into action, it is not too much to expect that those who have
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professedly drilled themselves in the modes of thinking, will bring to bear on the issue in hand a more efficient mechanism, and that the resulting final action will be a finer and nobler one. The intellectual effort involved will surely be properly carried through, that is, be honest; and it will be thorough - which amounts to the same thing.

Now, as a matter of mere argument, it would be hard to controvert the conclusion I have just come to; but as a matter of fact, any one would find it difficult to prove that this ideal state of things is even approximated to.

One has only to instance our attitude on political or religious subject. Is the college-bred man more apt to be an independent thinker in these things than his non-college fellow? Looked at in the cold light of simply commonsense, it seems beyond comprehension that a whole group of men will lamb-like follow the dictates of, and subscribe to the platform formulated by, and finally vote for, a man whom they know to be dishonest, contemptible, weak or worse, just because he has labelled himself

himself with the party name they have been brought up to consider theirs. This serves to point out how many factors go to determine the action of men in our present stage of civilization, besides the action of a disciplined brain. Man may be a reasoning being, but at present he can not be accused of unduly exercising that faculty. The world is surely yet young, and we have long ages yet to traverse before civilization reaches the stage that seems obviously, to our uncivilized ken, within the reach of our intellectual and moral make-up.

It seems the duty and business of each of us to make the effort needed to try to attain intellectual honesty. (One of the many reasons why I would advise the study of Physics by every person who goes to College, is that there is no other subject of study which demands intellectual honesty to the same degree; other sciences approximate to Physics, but do not require as continuously the application of pure logic, and impartial experimental test and trial.)

Closely associated with intellectual dishonesty is the seemingly less glaring fault of a lack of intellectual thoroughness. This permeates our whole modern intellectual atmosphere to an extent we are not in the habit of admitting, and is one of the factors militating against the intellectual progress in civilization to be expected of our age.

It would be difficult to say how this present tendency to intellectual slackness, slovenliness, and shallowness - and worse, is to be best fought against; but if one keeps in mind the fact that it exists, he can make an effort to guard against it.

It is certainly accentuated by much of the material in the daily newspaper and the weekly and monthly magazine. I wonder if the mind of a man who reads cheap magazines steadily and indiscriminately for a year or two, is worth saving. Might it not require at least a surgical operation?

There is a wholesome honest ring about the phrase "master-mechanic," for which in intellectual activity we have no equivalent; we once had school-masters and Masters of Arts; we now have just school-teachers

teachers and M.A.'s.



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