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EDUCATION FOR LIVING

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IT is given to few men to have the responsibility of directing the policies of an educational institution for as much as thirty-six years. Such an one has the opportunity to impose his personality in a vivid and enduring way on all with whom he has been associated, staff and students alike. It is because of the fact that Dr. Samuel Robertson did so to an unusual degree that this lectureship has been founded and that I have been honoured to be with you on this occasion. The first thirty-six years of this century were stirring years. They embraced the time of prosperity of the first decade and more, the first Great War, the period of recovery in the twenties, and the depression of the thirties, coming to a close about the time when death came to Dr. Robertson while still in harness in 1937. An eventful period, full of great issues. It gave him the opportunity to consolidate Prince of Wales College, to place it in the path of its greatest usefulness, a path which the college continues to follow to the present day. Much of significant value to Canadian education, both in personalities and in emphasis, has come out of the Maritimes. It is a great pleasure to participate in a tribute of memory to one who was in the great succession of leaders in education at a time which, to the younger members of my hearers at least, is already in the category of the faraway and long ago.

I have chosen to speak about some phases of education, for the man whose memory we honour devoted his life to educa-

tion. I wish in particular to deal with education in so far as it may contribute to the good life. For I assume that this is the objective which we all strive to attain. In my young days it was a common occurrence to hear a mother say to her son, especially when he was setting out from the home roof: "I want you to be good." I think that the mothers of today, while they may not express their inmost prayer so directly, have the same wish in their hearts that those of an earlier generation had. For the purposes of this discussion, I shall widen the meaning of the term "good" to embrace all that contributes to a full and satisfying life, in which our individual potentialities find adequate scope, and in which these potentialities are utilized to the full. To live a good life means to live up to the highest level of which we are capable in the spiritual, the moral, the intellectual and the physical realms. That is not to say that education can reach this high objective. It is to say that this is life as it should be lived; and the purpose of education is to assist to that end.

In principle there will be general agreement that education has this all-embracing function to perform. In practice, however, it is obvious that one of the four aspects of life which we have enumerated—the intellectual—has received in our age by far the greatest emphasis. Three-quarters of the time in school, practically all of the time in college or university formal studies, is given to the training of the mind. We take it for granted. This is necessary, we feel, in order that these young men and women may become responsible citizens in a world where the ignorant and uneducated find themselves severely handicapped. To read and to write, to handle figures, to have some knowledge of the world around us, to know something about people and the workings of the human mind, to be able to think independently, to be able to engage in a useful occupation—all of this is in the realm of the mind, and to all of this our educational system is geared. That is not to say that other aspects of living, not exclusively intellectual, do not enter into the curriculum of school and college. But it is safe to say that they have been treated as subsidiary. Men and women are appointed to staffs because of their abilities and their knowledge in certain subjects. They are intellectually competent to give intellectual assistance to their students. A great philosopher once uttered the dictum: "In the world there is nothing great but man. In man there is nothing great but mind." The mind of man has achieved amazing triumph. The stars, even in outer space, have been weighed and their

composition has been determined. The long story of the earth has been pieced together, and the stages of the evolution of life have been made clear. The intricacies of the atom have been disclosed, and the amazing source of power locked within the atom has been released. The world is linked together by radio, and by television, to such a degree that we are all close neighbours. And the mind of man has wrestled with the problem of life, and the problem of values, in order, if possible, to set up some guideposts to help us on our way. It is by such, and such like, triumphs of the mind that man has been lifted into a stature far surpassing that of even the most intelligent of the other animals. It is by similar achievements of the mind that he will continue to rise. In bygone days the Scottish schoolmaster—dominie, he was called—would spend much time with the “lad o’pairts”. Such a young man might go far, for he had intellectual capacity. He deserved to be specially assisted, and pushed on, if possible, to the university. There was a discovery here of latent mental ability which further education would help to develop.

The world is full of facts. They accumulate at an alarming rate day by day. They are necessary as background material for thought. There is the constant danger, in this process of intellectual education, that facts become the master instead of the servant. The memory is taxed with facts which the unfortunate student has to learn, to memorize, to reproduce in examination, and forthwith to forget. Looked at from a practical standpoint, only such facts are valuable as are needed in daily life. With that equipment one can get along, provided one has learned how and where to find other facts when the need for them may occasionally arise. I recall an illuminating experiment that I made at a western university many years ago. I took a bound volume of the examination papers that had been set for the final examinations with me to my summer cottage, and selected the subjects which I had studied as a student many years ago. With the exception of my own particular subject, which I no longer taught and in which I would have made passable marks, I would have averaged not more than ten per cent in subjects in which as a student I had made good standing. The factual information had gone from memory, and an overwhelming large part of the examination questions was factual. The disturbing thought had to be faced; is it all worth while? Undoubtedly we need facts as the material with which to think. But do we put enough weight on the thinking process. What would be the reaction of any group

of students if they were confronted with a series of questions in examination which could not be answered directly from lecture notes, but which demanded the analysing and thinking through the facts which they had written down in order to determine their significance? And yet this is the process with which we are continuously confronted in actual life. We call it analysis, or reflection, or thinking through, or what you will; it is more than knowledge. It is the fruits of knowledge.

One other experience, and from another western province. I do not want you to deduce that there is something peculiar about the West. I am convinced that these illustrations have general significance. I was asked to set an examination paper in physical geography. I acted according to rule and formulated a set of questions which could readily be answered from the textbook. But I added a final question. "In your opinion, how were the physical features of the landscape found in the district with which you are familiar?" You will, I think, agree that if the study of physical geography has any significance, it should lead to application of the principles in home territory. But, as you would expect, there were loud and violent protests. It was not in the book.

Perhaps we do not like to think. It is a hard process, and it is easier to take ready made judgments, from our newspaper, from our friends, from books. We do not as a rule question these judgments, and try to analyse what might be the prejudices or emotional backgrounds on which, rather than on facts, these judgments may have been made. We have not learned to depend on our own minds. In such a case it is easy for the propagandist with his subtle catchwords to carry us away to follow this "ism" and that. The intellectual discipline, to which we devote so great a part of formal education, fails unless it inculcates the importance of independent thinking. The system of democracy depends for its very security on men and women who can think for themselves and have the courage to act according to their convictions.

Thus far we have dealt with only one of the aspects of living for which education should lay the foundation. The care of the body has only recently been given emphasis in the school programme. To the Greeks, this was fundamental. They considered that the development of physical powers had not only aesthetic value—as seen in their statuary—but mental significance as well. And to the Romans "*mens sana in corpore sano*"—a healthy mind in a healthy body—was an important objective. For many years, both in Britain and in this contin-

ent, this side of education was left to the playgrounds and the sports field, through games organized in the main by the pupils themselves. Nowadays school and college authorities take responsibility in the matter, and see to it that physical education and health instruction form part of the daily, or at the least weekly, regime. The schedule of school sports is no longer left to the responsibility of the students alone. Staff members have, as part of their duties, the supervision and in many cases the coaching of these sports. We have come a long way in the last quarter century. It still remains to be said, however, that school games are participated in by a minority of the students, and that, as with us elders, the spectators and lookers-on predominate. It has to be said, too, that the influence of professionalism is beginning to extend down to the schools. There are many school hockey teams that have more than a loose connection with the great professional organizations. If not the whole team, then at least some of its members. While there is much to justify professionalism as such, there is nothing to say for it, or its influence, in school or university.

There is more in games and sports than the development of a healthy body. There is judgment, control and timing. The body becomes pliant to the will, like a well constructed machine. There is something more. There is a moral discipline. No one who plays a game well can play a selfish game. The game demands that the members of the team operate as a unit, and that the ball is passed to the man who has the best chance to make a touchdown. It is a profoundly important lesson for life. The man who gives another the chance which he might have taken himself, but needs it less, may not win the immediate plaudits of the multitude, but he wins a tribute of affection and regard which far outlasts temporary triumphs. It is hard to learn. He who has learned it has learned to live.

This takes us into the field of morals. There has not at any time been a clearcut way of dealing with the inculcation of moral principles. There has always been some doubt as to whether the direct approach is the sound way. Children—and grownups—resent moral preachments; or, to be less dogmatic, children beyond the tender years develop a sort of passive resistance to this kind of teaching. It seems to come indirectly. In the football field, or in the projects or enterprizes in the classroom, one learns to cooperate by cooperating. Some incident arises that shows how great importance the teacher puts on truth, and the lesson is learned unforgettably. The story of some great man's life makes clear the principles that

guided him. Biographical literature is effective in inculcating moral principles without seeming to do so. Most effective of all, of course, is the teacher. Actions count much more powerfully than words, and young people are acute observers. A great teacher can mould character, and the greatest do so with the least words. We live life; we do not speak it. There is no point in advocating democracy if young people are not permitted to handle their own organizations in school or college without interference by older people. You may recall Dickens' description of the school at Dotheboy's Hall where the spelling of the word window was followed by the command to go and clean it. The illustration is crude. The point that is emphasized is that only by the practical demonstration does the precept become effective. I do not know whether a personal experience may be taken as typical. I have learned more of the worth of sound moral principles from people whom I have known than from what may have been said or written about the good life.

There is a narrow line that separates the moral from the spiritual. The world deals with right conduct. The spiritual is concerned with the sources of hidden power. It took the experiences of the last war to make us realize that the world cannot live without religion. The tendencies in the Protestant faiths had been to separate education from religion, in schools and universities. It was feared that the dominance of the Church might interfere with the objectivity of educational aims. It was discovered, with something akin to shock, that the younger generation was growing up without knowledge of the Bible and of fundamental religious beliefs. This has led to a change in attitude. In most provinces ministers of religion are invited to visit the schools once a week to give religious instruction. The experience seems to be that, if they are skilful teachers, they do effective work. Probably the Roman Catholic Church has been wiser in this matter. It is the dictum of the Church that education and religion cannot be separated. They are parts of a single unity.

Whatever may be the better procedure to adopt—and there are solid arguments on both sides—the underlying principle is sound. Religion is part of life; and education is incomplete if the spiritual is left out. The matter has been made unnecessarily difficult by the diversity of creeds among religious people, and each group affirms, often with heat and vehemence, that there is only one true faith—that is, their own. But for

this difficulty, much more effective work in instruction at the school and university level could have been accomplished. That difficulty is still with us. What we are concerned with here is the common ground, rather than the differences in details. There were the days when science seemed to point to a world which ran as a machine, without outside power, a world that would eventually run down and would return to the stillness of death. That conception of the world has all but disappeared. There have been the newer discoveries which have seemed to indicate that there is some indeterminacy in the sequence of events. There is not the feeling of inevitableness that at one time prevailed. There are areas in life that science has not been able to elucidate. There is a growing feeling of a power beyond ourselves, and of a purpose that will carry on beyond physical death. The deep aspirations of the human heart reach out to a God that directs and plans, that gives strength and comfort in time of need, that gives meaning to the perplexing issues of life. It is this sense of the unseen that is common to human hearts everywhere, and that cannot be left out of the picture when we think of education as a means of assisting us towards the living of the good life. There is much that can help. But here again, as elsewhere, we come back to the influence of the teacher, not in words, but in personality. The man or woman who is religious, in the deeper sense of the word, cannot fail to show to others, and most of all to observant young people, that there is a faith that goes out beyond the transitory issues that have to be faced day by day into the eternal verities and the Divine powers that control our comings out and our goings in. Fortunate are the institutions that have such men and women in their midst. Doubly fortunate are the young people who are influenced by them.

We have endeavoured, in this discussion, to deal separately with the intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual aspects of our nature as human beings. But that has been simply for convenience. We are all well aware that they are not in reality separate entities. They belong to the whole personality, and the personality is not made up of these qualities added together, but is so blended that they cannot be taken apart and dealt with one by one. The medical man, in these days, knows that he must study the patient in his whole being if he is to be successful in dealing with some specific ailment. So too in education. We deal with developing personalities but developing as integrated wholes. We endeavour to stimulate one aspect

or another, as the occasion or need or aptitude may appear. But it is the total being, and not the aptitude that is affected. We know little about personality. We do not know how one man may hold an audience in his hand, and another man fails completely to get into touch with his hearers. We have failed to understand why one teacher, who may be quiet in manner and even shy, can hold a class of young barbarians, and another, who works equally hard or even harder, has his life made miserable by the same barbarians next hour. I was once one of those barbarians, but even to this day I cannot explain wherein lay the secret. What I do know is that we did not analyse qualities. We knew them in their whole being, and responded accordingly.

Yet, somehow, there is recognition of force of character. Young people see it, and are affected by it. From such a person there goes out, as it were, waves of influence. Such a person is one who has thought through his way in life, and forms his own opinions and has the courage to stand by them. He reads, he listens, and he reflects. He sees beyond the passing show and his soul is anchored to the eternal verities. He is in very truth as the shadow of a rock in a weary land, and many come to him to find refreshment and peace. It would be idle to affirm that such an one may be the product of education alone. The innate qualities which come with birth play a large part. But it may safely be affirmed that without the knowledge and without the mental discipline which come through the right kind of education, the authority and the influence which such an one exerts would have been feeble in comparison. It can safely be asserted as well that the solid foundation is in every such case the habit of hard work and the enthusiasm for the work that lies to hand. If there is a single serious word that may be permitted from one who is older to those who are younger it is that nothing worth while is attained, whether education or position or personal satisfaction, without hard work. There is no royal road.

There is a magnificent challenge confronting all who are in the field of education. In every one there are potentialities, aptitudes, special abilities. Because of these individual gifts, there are special contributions that can be made. But the potentialities need cultivation, and the wise teacher tries to discover these special abilities and give encouragement to their development. More than anything else, young people need inspiration. The spark that can set the heart aglow may cause

a flame to burn through life. One's confidence in the possibilities of great achievement that are to be found in men and women every day grows with the years. If education is rightly directed to the perfecting of the whole man—physical, mental, moral and spiritual—these potentialities will come the nearest to achievement, and the world will be a better place in which to live.

One has the impression that Samuel N. Robertson worked to that end.