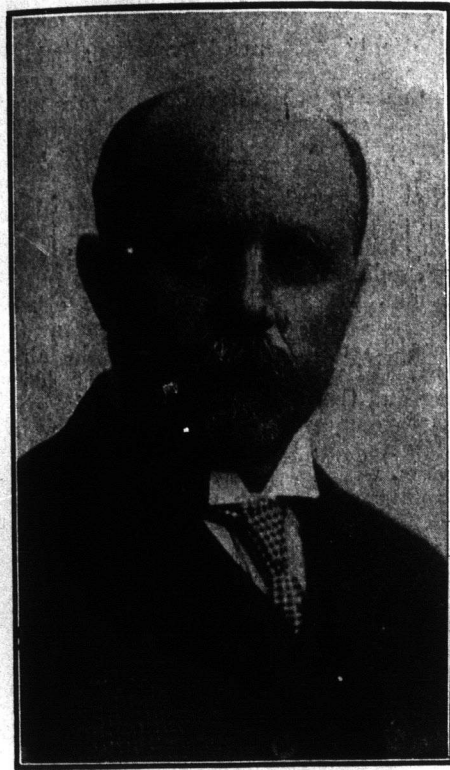


A Christmas Wish for the Educators.

By W. A. McIntyre, B.A., LL.D., Principal Normal School, Winnipeg.

I have been asked to express a Christmas wish on behalf of those engaged in education. Instinctively I find my mind reverting



W. A. MCINTYRE, B.A., LL.D.

to those words uttered by Him after whom the day is named—"I have come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly"—and my wish is that everybody concerned with education, whether it be parent or teacher, or school trustee or officer of the department of education, may adopt this motto as the all-sufficient ideal of effort. For the aim of education can be nothing less than developing power to live and live more abundantly.

After all what a nation primarily requires is not material wealth, but life—life abundant in the individual, the home, the vocation, the church and the state. It is a crime to think of anything less than this, more especially in a land so full of opportunity. Look at that stately elm tree. It is a thing of beauty because it lives. It reaches its roots down into the soil, grasping for nourishment and it reaches its arms into the air still grasping; but the real beauty of its being consists in that it transforms what it receives into leaf and blossom. It manifests its life in the service it renders. It takes from the soil and the air but it returns glad beauty in its form and color, and helpful sympathy in its kindly shade. Even so is it in the life of man. Life is not receiving, but receiving in order to transform and transmit to others. Anything less than this is undisguised selfishness. Life consisteth not in the abundance of things a man hath but in the capacity for useful and happy service. What a man is and does, and not what he has, is the measure of his being. And so my best wish is that everybody, everywhere, will aim at nothing less than the enriching of the lives of the children to the end that they may be more socially efficient.

Yes, I am aware that the acceptance of such a view would at any other season of the year be scouted by some parents, but perhaps at this, the children's season, they may consider it for just a moment. Has not any child who is born into this world a right to realize to the full his possibilities? Has he not a right to all the culture, the refinement, the happiness that can be thrown into a life that is trained for service? Life is not this—getting more land, to raise more wheat, to get more dollars, to buy more land, to raise more wheat, and so on forever. No, No. It is something much higher and better than this. It is getting into touch with all that is true and beautiful and good so that it may be transmitted to others—so that accurate knowledge, pure feeling and right action may be common in a world of men.

So when the children go to school the aim of the teacher must be to make each life as efficient as possible, and to cause all lives to act together in a friendly manner. This will mean that emphasis must be laid upon some things that are now granted scant recognition in a programme of school activities. For in the first place there must be attention to bodily health. Sufficient light, good ventilation, proper seats, abundant play—these are not of minor importance. Yet, frequently lives are hopelessly ruined because of failure on the part of somebody to expend a few dollars in attending to these very matters. Why those red eyes? Because the trustees would not supply blinds. Why those headaches? Because no provision is made for ventilation. Why this outbreak of fever? Because there is no proper school well. Why these stooped shoulders and hollow chests? Because the seating is bad and because the teacher thinks of subjects of study rather than of the sacredness of life.

In the next place this conception of life-efficiency means defini-

te instruction in knowledge, in beauty and in conduct. Nor can any one of these be neglected. It is as necessary to know the truth and follow it, to discern the beautiful and adopt it, as it is to appreciate the right and do it. It is impossible for life to be worthy if it is based in ignorance and superstition, it is impossible for it to reach its full fruition if its habitat is the ugly and deformed and unsightly. Above all it is impossible that it should be god-like, efficient, and a blessing to other lives, if its choice is the impure, the unholy, and the bad.

Nor is this all. Life to be truly serviceable must be guided by right ideals—ideals of honesty, industry, generosity, frugality and the like. It was this devotion to ideals that made life among our fathers so full of beauty. It is the preservation of such ideals that will make beautiful our lives to-day. And we are in danger just here, for there is a tendency, in practice at least, to magnify the importance of material wealth and to minimize the value of those old virtues without which life can be little better than a burden and a curse. Ideals—yes! and these must be worked out in habits and tastes and disposition, so that life is sweet and helpful and gracious.

But every efficient life must be something more than even all this. It must be productive. The man who counts in this world is the man who can do things. And so this idea of doing, or expressing one's self in some definite way becomes a necessary part of education. Hence the cry for hand-work, in the elementary schools and for vocational training in the secondary schools. Schools must be places in which pupils can study. They must also be places in which they can play, and in which they can use hand and eye and brain in the making of things.

Above all the school must develop a right attitude to social life, and must foster those qualities that are necessary in the socially efficient individual. Therefore hearty co-operation must take the place of selfish individualism. The spirit of the school must be that of a community in which each member feels his responsibility to all and in which each benefits from the labor of all. In other words the school must be a miniature ideal world. Only when this is the case can it make for permanent national greatness.

Surely it is worth the while to picture children more intelligent, more beautiful and more righteous than we have been, to think of them as beautiful in their physical strength, as possessing true ideals which influence their every action and attitude, and as working together for the realization of a mightier and better nationhood than any the world has yet known. It is such a dream that makes it worth while for teachers to live and for parents to labor.

Nor can this dream be realized without an expenditure of love and labor and money. Ay, it means an expenditure of love, not only on the part of teachers but on the part of parents, and it means labor in the school and in the home. And as for money—let those who have children not be grieved when we urge that under our present system we can never get the results we hope for. We say our tax is exorbitant now. Well that depends. We pay thirty dollars a year for the education of our children—and we spent thirty-six dollars a year in cigars. We give the school thirty dollars for thirty hours' service a week for our children and we give our preacher fifty dollars for his little service to ourselves—and no doubt he is worth it all. Yet it should be true that where a man's treasure goes, there goes his heart. Perhaps, after all, our children are not so dear to us. Perhaps even some of us have to be harshly treated in order that we may not exploit them for selfish ends.

Listen to the story of the Roman mother. Somehow these mothers knew where to place the emphasis. In the hour of her country's need when men were pouring their treasures into the public coffers, this noble matron had nothing in material wealth to bring, but yet she brought more than all, for taking in her hands, the hands of her two beautiful sons, she led them forward saying: "This is all I have. These are my jewels." And when the time comes for us to lay down our burdens may we be able—not only to point to our rich fields and our wealthy cities, but may we be able to lead out from our homes and our schools all our little children, saying "These are my jewels."