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## PRESIDENT A. T. HUNTER'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS AT THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY.

I HAD intended to prepare for this occasion a carefully digested and scientifically arranged lecture on the duties of a President of this Society and the advantages of your attending every Friday night, with a view to convincing you that you were vitally interested in doing something that my recollection tells me students usually do if their inclination holds that way. Now (as formerly) attendance at the Literary, like kissing, goes by favor.

I had intended to make a reasoned and ordered discourse setting forth the merits, uses and abuses of set orations, sentimental passages, exordiums, perorations, impromptu speeches (pre-arranged or accidental), interruptions, repartees, and that laziest and lowest but sadly effective form of oratory, the telling of ready-made stories. But events over which I had no control have prevented my giving an undivided attention to the composition of anything more serious than one of those short notices in the papers which cause humorous friends to wish you many happy returns of the day. The tongues of men and of angels which I have wished to summon to my aid have given place in my home to the voice of one of those Canadians who have never witnessed the humiliation of Canada.

I ask your indulgence, therefore, for a few rambling and disproportioned remarks.

### ORATORY IS DEAD.

I may say that in my belief oratory is dead—just as dead as in the days when Demosthenes was told his speeches smelled of the lamp. Oratory dies like the King. It is true, however, that it is no longer popular to begin and continue speeches with a blazing rhetorical flourish as in the days of the American orator, Everett. Indeed there have been few ages when it was commonly allowed to a speaker to make his art too patent. The safest oratory has always been concealed oratory, as with that ancient and untruthful stump-speaker, who said: "I am no orator as Brutus is." But Canadians in general, and University men in particular, need to be taught to distinguish concealment from suffocation.

It has been very much the fashion since Thomas Carlyle re-made Oliver Cromwell, to praise what are called "inarticulate men," Cromwell having had the peculiarity of making public speeches with so much spluttered unintelligibility that no one could wager on what he meant. It

is dangerous to take issue with Carlyle. One of Oliver's contemporaries, Gen. Ludlow, believed that Cromwell did not want to be understood, and was playing both sides; whereupon Carlyle called Ludlow "woodenhead." When one of us can express himself as clearly in conversation as Cromwell, and can give a military order as clearly as Cromwell, and win a few decisive battles with the same clear-sighted valor, it will be time enough to imitate his methods of public speech. If we begin by imitating his speech, we shall not become Protectors, but need them.

It is not safe to despise good speaking merely because some strong men have not been good speakers.

### THE PASSING OF THE SET-SPEECH.

Still we must admit that the good old set-speech is out of date; it has been supplanted by that carefully committed address which begins, "I did not expect that I would be called upon for a speech." Gentlemen, it is better not to deceive yourselves—the set-speech will last as long as there are prudent men alive who prefer to know beforehand what they are going to be inspired to say. Most happy-go-lucky orators, who trust to their natural flow of words, are apt to say in their haste things which may be true, but sound awkward; as the man who said in his haste, "all men are liars." We had in this province a man who established a record in Anglo-Saxon countries for long and honorable tenure of office, and who from his utter absence of natural fluency was necessarily forced to careful preparation of not only the matter but the wording of his speeches. I mean the late Sir Oliver Mowat, of whom I think it can be asserted that he never spoke a word which he had to retract, or even to seriously qualify.

Before you begin your career, I warn you that the most dangerous men in the community are those who have always one or more set-speeches concealed in their clothes. The butterfly is an impromptu, but there has been a grub somewhere with a foolscap cocoon.

### WHAT WE ARE GOING TO DO.

But let us not exhaust the whole art of public speaking. Let us return to consider what we are going to do, what subjects we propose to discuss, and how we mean to treat them. Personally I prefer that the subjects should be living, not dead, even at a risk of some turbulence of thought and boisterousness of language. It is easy to