

The Changed and Unchanged Acadia.

(Part of an address delivered at the N. B. Southern Association, meeting with the Lower Wickham, Baptist Church, McDonald's Point, July 5th, 1905.)

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We are wont to commend in emphatic terms the wisdom and faith of our fathers in the founding of our educational institutions. Those noble men of the long ago, devoted as they were to highest ends in living, and ever eager to promote the Kingdom of God by all means at their command, became convinced of the need of schools for more advanced education. And so heavily did this need press upon them, so imperative did it become at length, that in the face of obstacles numerous and formidable, they set themselves to the work of securing what they deemed essential to the high spiritual ends which were engaging their powers. In the judgment of later generations they achieved a splendid success.

Acadia College is not now what it was, and yet it is just the same as it used to be. The swift going years have brought numerous changes, so that in many respects there is a marked contrast between the present and the past. But piercing beyond the outward differences we reach the inner sameness in the sustained adherence to the object of fifty years ago, seventy-five years ago, when this educational enterprise of ours was in its infancy or in its beginnings. There is occasion for gratitude both on account of the change and the absence of change.

FIRST: THE CHANGED ACADIA.

To say that Acadia College and its affiliated institutions have been changing with the passing of the years, is but to say that they have been adjusting themselves, as time has run on to the changing conditions of the life in the midst of which they stand. In goodly measure we have been able, under Divine leading, to conduct our educational work so as to have it fit into the general progress of affairs in this part of the world. A half dozen buildings have taken the place of the two early structures, and instead of two professors there are now eleven. From 1843 to '53 the graduating classes did not average three members, while the average for the last ten years has been twenty-nine. In earlier days not enough thoughtful provision was made for diversion and physical exercise. I have often recalled what my sainted father, one of the first of Acadia's students, once told me of the coming of a certain devoted minister to Wolfville in that remote time, there to view our school of the Prophets. At beholding some theological students pitching quills, the good man was so pained at the sight that his grief found utterance in tears. Here were young men who were preparing to preach the gospel, and yet they had time for this godless engagement. That was an extreme case, doubtless; but it serves to illustrate that a change was needed in the views commonly held respecting seasons of relaxation. At present the danger certainly lies in going too far in athletic pursuits; for after the penulum is at one extreme it is likely to swing to an extreme in the opposite direction. Some students require a good deal of checking just here, and they are getting just what they need. Then the social life at Acadia has been decidedly improved. Not only are social gatherings desirable as means of recreation, but also for the requirement of that facility in mingling with others which has so much to do often-times in bringing success amid the relations of practical affairs. Even in my own College days I had the impression, which must have come partly from without, that ordinarily an evening spent in a social way was little better than lost, since in that time some further advance might have been made in historic or mathematical lore. Possibly the social pendulum is now a little like the athletic, causing some to wish that distractions were fewer; but the point we are making is simply this, that former defects are in process of correction. There is better realization than formerly that with man as with a tower there should be a careful upbuilding on all sides.

One other change (for we are only suggesting a few) must be referred to a little more fully. We mean the re-adjustment and enlargement of the College curriculum, whereby facilities are afforded at Acadia for more extensive courses along scientific lines. As expressed a year ago in a supplement to the College Calendar: "The B. A. course, as truly today as ever before, offers the sound course of preparation for all men looking to the so-called learned professions—the Ministry, Law, Medicine, and Teaching—and for all those having in view Politics, Literature, Journalism, or any of the general callings of life. Great changes, however, have been in progress, during recent years. The spirit of research has been intensely active, and men have come into possession of much new and important knowledge, especially in the department of the natural sciences. The application of this knowledge to the development of the practical arts and sciences, has given a great impetus to technical studies, and the field of opportunity for service in Civil, Mining, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, and similar pursuits, has been greatly evidenced. Large numbers of young men are now looking, and will continue to look towards life service in one or another of these departments of Applied Science. All this necessitates some change in

educational methods. It has seemed necessary to modify the College course proper to such an extent as to give the student, whose purposes are toward the field of Applied Science, the opportunity to shape his College course in relation to these ultimate purposes. Acadia University is seeking to meet the new situation in the best possible way, and with a view to the highest good of the students."

Two courses of study have been arranged for under this new provision. The first looks to the degree of Bachelor of Science; and the second, an Abbreviated Course of two or three years, is for men who are not in a position, or cannot be persuaded, to fulfill the requirements for the B. Sc. degree. When these new courses were outlined they were submitted to the authorities of McGill University, asking what recognition they would give these courses when accomplished by our students. The reply was quite gratifying, and was as follows: "At a meeting of the Corporation of McGill University, held on the 26th of April, 1904, it was agreed, on recommendation of the Faculty of Applied Science, to admit qualified students from Acadia University, who have completed either of the two courses outlined in the letter presented by the Faculty of Acadia College, into the third year of the Faculty of Applied Science."

You will be pleased to learn, that nearly thirty students have availed themselves at Acadia during the past year of these recent provisions. We have had during the year just closed the largest attendance in the history of the institution, and this has been partly due to these arrangements in harmony with the demands of the time. And it is confidently expected that this re-adjustment of the curriculum will continue to draw students to our halls.

Since the days when the founders of Acadia were occupied in those pioneer labors which we review with gratitude and encouragement, there has occurred among our people at large, some broadening of the conception for which the College was brought into being. Prominent among the founders were ministers of the Gospel, men who had not been favored in their youth with opportunities for obtaining a liberal culture, and who were fain to have coming preachers enjoy what they themselves had lacked and often desired. While they sought to provide as far as possible for the education of those getting ready for divers occupations, they were especially concerned to furnish the rising ministry with a good equipment for their responsibilities. Now as the years have fled the idea of the College as a place for providing those looking to the pastorate with a suitable basis for their special study and special work has been no less prominent than at first, even though there has been no corresponding enlargement in a strictly theological way; but at the same time there has emerged into greater distinctness the idea that it is a place wherein young people are to receive preparation for any and every sphere which may be allotted them. What was entertained and expressed from the beginning has subsequently received a fuller emphasis. A minister is a servant. A minister of the Gospel is one who gives his life to the proclamation of the glad tidings that there is deliverance for sinful men through Jesus Christ the world's Saviour. And yet all are to be ministers in that all are to be servants of God, some here and some there, some in this pursuit and others in that. Men are called to preach, but so are they providentially called, by circumstances and aptitudes, into agricultural life and mechanical work, into the practice of medicine and of law. And Acadia exists for the assistance of all these, exists to fit men and women to discharge aright all obligations in whatever special line their path of duty may lie.

Under the head of changes (and not among things we at present understand) mention must be made of one thing more. The report on Education, to which we listened this afternoon, called attention to a matter of which our people far and wide have been talking the past few days. I refer to the fact that Dr. Keirstead, whose early home, I am told is not far from this place where we are now convened, has just resigned the position he has long held as a member of the Faculty at Acadia, and accepted an appointment at McMaster University in Toronto. With distinguished ability and success has Dr. Keirstead served our College and our denomination, so that everywhere in these Provinces are heard expressions of regret that he is to leave us. We shall sorely miss him at "the College, as you and hosts of others will miss him too. While we thank God that we have been so long blessed by his varied services, we follow him with affectionate interest to his new field, assured that if spared he will do a great work there as he has done here among us. Nor will we be cut off from his helpful ministry by the intervening distance since after all the field is the world.

SECOND: THE UNCHANGED ACADIA.

Years ago Dr. N. E. Wood, now President of Newton Theological Institution, wrote in the New York Examiner upon "Baptist Institutions of Learning." Speaking therein of the denominational schools of his own country, he employed laudatory words regarding our founders, words precisely applicable to our own pioneers. But passing on to notice differences of him between the earlier and later days he uttered himself in a manner that has not a corresponding

fitness to what has transpired among us; and we hope, if the writer accurately represented the conditions, that a better state of affairs has since come about in his own land. "In the older time," he wrote, "instructors were earnestly alert to develop and train noble Christian character. Today, in the majority of our class-rooms, the instructor considers his work done if he has taught or unfolded a lesson. The change," Dr. Wood declared, "is startling. Once instructors sought to develop character, now they seek to develop knowledge. Once the chief goal was a trained Christian manhood; but now it is the expert mastering of secular learning. The whole conception of the purpose and work of the denominational school is undergoing a revolution which leads far away from the original design. The Christian idea in them is being supplanted by the secular. They are being removed to other foundations than those which our fathers laid."

Now I do not want, be assured, to paint in hues too roseate our situation today at Acadia. Men everywhere are but imperfect instruments, prone to mar by their wilfulness what is committed to their hands. But I am warranted in declaring, am I not, that we have had no such departure from the original and supreme purpose of our institutions as that pictured in the foregoing. If at the outset our leaders had especially before them a basal education for coming preachers, then there arose an attendant danger, perhaps, at placing greater emphasis than at first upon the idea that the College was designed to fit men to serve efficiently in all honorable vocations. Inasmuch as literary and business pursuits are more remotely connected with the establishment of righteousness than preaching, where an increased proportion of undergraduates have something besides the Christian ministry in view, the one true goal of all study and labor may not be kept quite so definitely in mind. Where the majority of students look to such things as the practice of medicine, the editing of newspapers, the building of bridges, the management of farms, and so on, less of consecration to God may be thought necessary among teachers and taught. It requires a great deal of thoughtfulness and watchfulness to hold what are called secular employments in right relation to the one Kingdom that is to gather all other kingdoms into itself, thereby making sacred all lines of activity. All too easy is it to forget that every merchant should be a missionary, every ploughman a preacher, every engineer an evangelist. Formerly there were relatively more of our students preparing for pastorates. During the past year, out of one hundred and fifty students in the College, about thirty have had the pulpit in view. But the aim now, let us gratefully publish, is precisely what it used to be, to fit our youth to serve God well in whatever situations He may be pleased to place them. Verily such an atmosphere is a desirable one in which to have young people move. One of the greatest privileges of being in a College that may justly be called Christian comes from the superior advantages there afforded for discovering just how and where one should be employed in the world that is waiting for his contribution. Many a path is there led out of an already self-chosen path into the path Divinity choose for his feet. The student there grows, or ought to grow, in a knowledge of himself, of his powers and limitations, of the world wherein he lives, of the opportunities for service that the great world offers, and, above all, of the true end of living, so that he is put in the way of more surely reaching his own appointed and appropriate niche. Perhaps Bushnell never preached a more helpful sermon than that in which he sets forth in his own excellent fashion that every man's life is a plan of God. There are not in the Divine mind chosen places for a few particularly gifted souls, while the bulk of mankind are beyond His special care, and allowed to drift hither and yon with no definite work designated for their hands. Every one, as we do well to consider and proclaim, is born into a world where a special task awaits him. Many go their own ways, of course, and miss the places appointed for them; but that does not alter the fact that the appointed places await their coming. It is only by destructive independence or by unwise counsel that the post of duty is not taken. And it is with all confidence, my friends, that I ask you to regard the schools at Wolfville—Academy, Seminary, and College—as eminently fitted to assist your young people into the very spheres God has reserved for their occupancy; as well as to help in making them ready for the obligations there to be discharged.

The Prospectus of the Nova Scotia Baptist Educational Society, which had control of our Educational work in the early years of the Horton Schools, had this clause: "It shall be the care of the Committee to provide efficient teachers, to whose moral and religious character special regard will be had; and it is considered an object in every department under the influence of this Society, never to be lost sight of, that the scholars and students while acquiring information to fit them for their various stations in life, should be led to a knowledge of the true relation of man to his Creator, and of that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, which alone can furnish a sure pledge of their good conduct in the world, and their happiness in eternity."

Now let the eye rest a moment on Acadia's succession of Presidents. The beloved Dr. Crawley, him-

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