

A TRUE IDEAL OF EDUCATION.*

Mr. Chairman, Members of the Faculty, Fellow-Students and Friends,—I am to speak to you to-night on a true ideal of education. Does this topic seem threadbare and worn with age? Then let the great importance of the subject be the plea that will justify its choice.

Looking back along the line of history, I find that in every nation that has attained to any prominence in civilization, there has been an educational system of some sort. Even in Egypt, which was one of the oldest if not the very oldest of the ancient empires, there was an educational system so thoroughly organized that it could be said of Moses, 1,500 years before Christ, that he was trained in all the learning of the Egyptians; and when God wanted a statesman to give laws to His people, it was not some wandering and unlettered shepherd but this Egyptian-trained lawyer, whom He appointed, ordained and commissioned to assume the office and perform the task.

I find also that those educational systems were centered about certain ideals to which the systems themselves were conformed, and for the securing of which the educational methods were directed. A few examples will illustrate:

In the Confucian system, which prevails to-day in China, the whole aim of education is the Civil Service. There is no country where students are more diligent or painstaking, or where a larger number present themselves at the tri-annual examinations, but the one thought of each and every candidate is that the obtaining of a degree will be the passport to one of the many offices in the gift of the government.

The system of which Buddha was the founder had in view not the uplifting but the annihilation of the individual. Life, according to his teaching, is only evil continually; and the supreme purpose of all effort should be the blotting out of personality and the sinking of existence in undisturbed Nirvana, absolute quietude, and self-effacement.

The Grecian idea was more material and more practical. There the State was everything and the citizen existed only for

*Founder's Day Address at McMaster University, 1895.