

The University and the State.

Address before the Senate of Acadia University, by
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Once more the green leaf and bursting bud attest the awakening of summer. Once again the founders and friends of this fortunate University gather amid vernal sunshine to commemorate another anniversary.

Nothing pertaining to earthly affairs ever passes the stage when its right to exist is not subject to question, when the cold logic of reason is not to be applied with stern and inexorable judgment to the question of the right to be. What is a University? Why should it exist? What function of importance does it fulfil in the progress of the world and the development of the human soul, and especially, of what concern is it to the state? These are in brief some of the topics it is proposed to talk about a little bit to-night. It is quite true that many institutions of no value to the world continue to exist. It is equally true that many institutions, which would be of value, fail to get an existence in this poor material world, but we must bring, at all hazards, the best light possible to bear upon every problem pertaining to human knowledge and human growth.

The University is a branch of the great work of education. No one seems to deny, even the most practical and most materialistic, that some education we must have; that it would be a national calamity for masses of people to grow up without knowledge. It is conceded that all should learn to read, to write, and have some knowledge of numbers. But there has ever been a latent fear in the minds of the multitudes lest this immortal part of us should be trained too much, should be expanded too highly and led into paths too wide and into regions too elevated. If education is of value, if it is desirable that not only these hands, which are of use to us materially, should be trained to do things, that the eye should be trained to see, that skill in mechanics should be developed, that even some rays of light should penetrate into the immortal mind, then, why not greater expansion? Why not a fuller development? This is the work of the University.

Looking at it practically, the state (which, be it understood, is to all intents and purposes a material corporation aiming simply at the development of the best possible conditions of exterior life—peace, order, progress, development) the state recognizes that ignorance among the masses is a national evil, and a wise state makes provision at great cost and sacrifices that some knowledge is spread among all its people. It is the ambition of every civilized country to see that not one adult person of sound mind within its borders is unable to read and write. It is the interest of the state that the full aggregate powers of all its citizens should be brought into the best possible play for the development of the great, vast moving industrial progress of the country, and usually the state stops here. In this country for instance, the state carries its system of free and compulsory education up to the point of an academic course, and it extends to the masses, in all cases, the rudimentary or elementary elements of a common school course, and there the state stops.

There are several reasons for this. First, while the cost of the common school course per head for educating the masses is limited, the University course costs more. Besides the advantages of the common school education are given to all, high, low, rich and poor. But practically few can take advantage of the university course, and therefore if the University were placed under the control of the state, the effect would be that thousands would be contributing to the advantage of units. It has therefore, as a matter of statecraft, been deemed impracticable that the work of University education should devolve upon the state, notwithstanding the fact that it could be easily demonstrated that the state would derive full value for its expenditure, and that the masses, who contributed to the higher education of the few, would secure a usurious return for the expenditure.

In estimating the value of education one of the most difficult things is to keep constantly in mind both the materialistic and the spiritualistic phases of education. There is a material side to education, and it is of this that the state chiefly takes account. It is in the interest of the state that persons should be skilled to do all the varying shades of industry which are necessary to material growth. We must have men skilled to till the soil, to build houses, to make fabrics, to construct railways, navigate ships and keep the whirl of progress ever going. The importance of this material phase is usually overlooked in this country, in the framed curriculum of the common school, inasmuch as no person leaves the common school with any means at that moment of earning a livelihood. The training for this has to be got elsewhere and not in the state provided schools. From a material point of view, technical education, or acquiring the art of doing things, could be well and properly incorporated into every school system of the country, and, as a matter of fact, nothing can be clearer than that events are trending inexorably in that direction. But there is another

and greater side to education in addition to teaching the hands to do things. Its mission is to teach the mind to think, to act, to achieve. Its mission also is to expand the soul, and deal in a way which hangs on eternity with that part of us which is immortal. This phase of education belongs most of all to what we designate the field of higher education. The University has an essential value to the state in the wider intelligence it brings to bear upon all phases of material industry. It imparts skill of the higher kind and the spirit of invention, which makes great and radical improvements constantly possible. To such a degree has this higher intelligence applied to material matter gone, that he is a bold man, who would now state that anything is impossible. But after all, the greatest work of a University reaches beyond anything in which the state as a mere material corporation is concerned. When we once enter the domain of spiritual things, when we leave behind us matter and industrial progress and come to deal with human destiny as linked to a world which reaches beyond the very finite itself, it is then we are dealing with things which cannot be weighed and measured. The values cannot be ascertained. The only mathematical sign which denotes them aright is "infinity."

Seeing then that the University has a mission, although constantly keeping in mind that other avenues may open up as the world progresses to do the work the University is now doing. No less an authority than the great old Carlyle himself has said that the true University is a library of books. The time may come when intellectual culture will be so widely diffused and assume such an elevated range that it will not be necessary for formal institutions under the guidance of eminent professors to be kept up in order to guide and discipline young men into the higher paths in life. But that stage has not yet been reached. We must have our Universities and we must make them conform in the very largest degree possible to the growing wants and purposes of the race.

Another axiom which applies to all things, universities included, is that there is no such thing in this world as standing still. Progress there must be forward or backward. Institutions to maintain their existence and uphold their power must adjust themselves to the ever changing conditions of society, and this is something which Universities sometimes fail to do. Speaking in general terms the University is the home of conservatism. It is strongly allied to the past, and it clings to its old ideals and it views with jealousy the heresy of innovation. The state does not support the University, but the state has an interest in the University. The state can be indifferent to nothing which moulds the character and guides the destiny of its citizens. The state therefore is interested in having the University fill out the largest possible measure of usefulness.

It should never be forgotten by grave and reverend professors that the University is really an evolution of the monastery. The first idea of a University was a place where one or more learned recluses sat in cloistered walls and poured honeyed words of wisdom into pilgrims who came to sit at their feet. The tendency has been from that time down to the present to retain some of the mouldy odour of the cloister within the University walls. The ancient classics have been clung to as embodying the acme of human wisdom, the perfection of poetic literature. The dry outlines of logic as worked out by the painful process of the lamented Whately; the dry-as-dust annals of mediæval history, side by side with the venerable mastodon and ever present trilobite—these are the things which erudite dons love to roll under their tongues like sweet morsels. But the spirit of the iconoclast has for several generations been abroad breaking images, reforming curricula and installing that middle-some interloper—Improvement.

The good of all Universities is our aim and hope. We should like to see every institution of learning whose object is to build up men, whose business it is to guide the world in the higher regions of thought and in the higher walks of life, flourishing and prosperous, but our chief business at this moment is with this University. In what way can it best subserv the purpose for which, amid the sacrifices, the prayers and the hopes of a whole religious denomination, it has steadily worked its way to a position of credit and prominence. Where does it fall short of the best it could do? In what way can it at this moment assume a position and discharge functions that would make it a greater power for usefulness, of greater value to the state? Looking out at the great centres of the world we find mankind confronted in almost every nation with problems of the most far reaching character and many of these are new, not perhaps in generic origin, but new in their phases and applications to existing conditions. For example, that word "Socialism" unlocks to us problems that have to be faced and worked out whether we will or no. It means the unceasing struggle between vast interests locked in the hands of a few persons by means fair or foul, and the yearnings of masses who revolt at the apparent injustice prevailing in human conditions. We have a world with a few thousand revealing in everything that makes life beautiful, endless wealth, living in large, commodious, healthful abodes with every luxury that the latest civilization has been able to aggregate; sailing in yachts, visiting foreign lands, enjoying homage of the most delightful social conditions, and reveling in every comfort and convenience that the genius of man has been able yet to devise. And with many millions who have to face the problem with the rising of each day's sun where enough shall be got to eat and to drink and wherewithal shall they be clothed. In the face of such a problem it is useless to say that it is in the interest of society that some should be rich, others poor, that the chances are even in this world; that the distribution of the aggregate wealth of the few thousands among the millions would lead to but a paltry pittance to each. All these things have been said and thought and still the struggle will go on, and still under a system of popular government, where each ballot tells, governments are threatened at each moment with revolution, and the time may come when the pendulum of power, having been drawn back excessively by the extortions of the rich, may swing remorsefully towards the retribu-

tions of the poor. This is given as merely an illustration of the great life problems which are now confronting the world. The men who come out of the Universities are the men who will have to be looked upon as the leaders of mankind, not leaders in the sense that they are to become champions on the one side or the other in the great struggle on the lines of socialism, but as clergymen, as lawyers, as medical men, as engineers, as teachers, as men of science, they are to give, and are bound to give to the state in which they live, to the great world in which they move, the influence of their very best and wisest thoughts in solving these problems rightly and well.

The state is especially interested in securing the highest ideals of government. Under our system every person is a partner in the government. In a word, we govern ourselves, and our system of government can rise no higher than the source from which it springs. But experience has shown conclusively that the masses of mankind are subject to leadership, and that the history of the world is in reality the biography of its great men. The University is designed to cultivate the brightest minds and lead them to a position where their matured culture can raise them to leadership in the state. It has too often happened in the history of Universities that the finished product, while going forth erudite in certain musty mouldy sciences, and perhaps versed in the subtle essence of philosophy, have yet acquired nothing which makes them of value to the every day world. Men there are who have received the degree of Bachelor of Arts who were absolutely unfitted to discharge the duties of citizenship, or even to intelligently exercise the franchise. They were learned in certain things, their intellects had been developed in the mental gymnasium, but in working out the great world problems which surround them they were as helpless and useless as the most ordinary plodder. Materialism is not the highest thing in the world; neither is the knowledge of statecraft the most elevated science, nevertheless the state has at all times special need of leadership in the affairs of government. Statecraft is at the base of all civilization and all progress, because the conditions of peace, order, good government, the administration of justice and the recognition of sound principles are essential to the growth of civilization itself. The highest intellectual development, the greatest progress in science, are incompatible with political despotism or national corruption. It is not asked that the University devote less attention to the abstract sciences, nor give less heed to the cultivation of the finer faculties, but it is submitted that in this practical age when among the gravest problems we are compelled to confront are those which touch the fabric of human government, and when in relation to that government we are confronted with issues which threaten revolution, that our Universities should be giving us men who are fitted to contribute their share to the solution and to bring to bear upon all these momentous topics the matured and enlightened judgment which a University is bound to bestow in reference to all the higher problems of life.

If there has been any indisposition on the part of the state to assume the responsibility of providing a University education for those young men who are fitted for it and desire it, this disposition is very largely the result of the failure of the University in the past to conform its ideals to the practical needs of the state. The finished product of the University has too often been a moaning scholar rather than a useful enlightened leader. If the University can place its fingers upon a sufficient proportion of its graduates who are exercising a wide and healthy influence in relation to the greater problems of the world, then sooner or later it will dawn upon those upon whom is reposed the responsibility of government that institutions which produce such rare and valuable products should be sustained at all hazards.

One of the reasons which have reconciled religious denominations to the task of maintaining at great effort and sacrifice institutions of higher education, is that when under denominational control they can be surrounded by religious influences, and can be made to foster and propagate the special religious tenets of the denomination. No question in connection with the great educational problem of the world to-day is as delicate and occasions so much perplexing agitation as the question of the teaching of religion in the schools elementary and higher. Owing to the almost insuperable practical difficulties in the way of teaching religion, so called in the state schools the best and most enlightened minds have reached the fixed and settled policy that religion should not be taught in schools supported at the public expense, and to which children of all denominational views were either at liberty or compelled to attend. But this, while probably a sound practical view of the educational problem in this country, is by no means the final touch of wisdom in respect to the question. If by religion we mean sectarianism, if by religion we mean any man's creed, then it is impracticable, and it would be monstrous under a system of education which extorted taxes by the iron hand of the law from every man, whatever his religious views, to undertake to impose upon his children, on entering the public school, a system of theology or a series of tenets, which were obnoxious to him and opposed to his conscience. But this is not necessarily what is meant by teaching religion, and religion can be taught in schools and in colleges without in-trenching upon the creed or conscience of any one poor mortal. By religion cannot we agree that we mean a recognition that beyond the struggles of this material world, mankind has qualities and faculties higher than anything which pertain to matter, and looking to a destiny far beyond the possible achievements of this world? Can we not recognize that while energy, thrift and ambition are essential to the development of material progress, that these things should all be undertaken by the constant recognition of the fact that they are far inferior in importance to other and higher achievements which look not to the rewards of this world and find only their ultimate goal in the realms of the spiritual; to make every person brought under our system of education conscious of the fact that the qualities of kindness, of courtesy, of honor, of self sacrifice, of courage and of heroism,

were greater than to exercise authority can be taught well, in any institution of learning.

Here then is the control the destinies of four years taken life and devoted to the maintenance of the citizenship, spiritual existence of the University falls the full scope of a

As a matter of problems in such well fitted to take to-morrow. It is which are now dismissed. Free How far legislative rights in the realm not finally settled we need in this world the greater and to be upon us, and men who shall be may be. Again, our latest, and p invincible enemies. Is it too much to more materialistic world 1000 years Christian world is world? Let us into is the absorbing the Lands, houses, rain many will be developed, him ten thousand ambition which the and promising stu sion—wealth and many are trained f and none of us are material hopes an perish of atrophy would be brought i seeks for a blending this is where our even our University. It is not unworth man to look for success. The rewa animating impulse. Fortunately in the live occasions for h rare, but no life is based upon the ful sacrifice is greater that the ultimate s eye has looked its condition of that w command the goods

One of the most d the young is that th be determined by th that it is possible fo time, even in this and where the condi achieve the highest fill a large space in even abroad, and sti hands upon the pron place. Equally diffi depart from this wor without offices, with still in the judgment achieved a sublime eye of posterity, wh an enduring fame, success as an elemen progress, but it woul to the world if all life and dedicatin human endeavor cou to what the highest

It is so common in Institutions of learni pective students that cation. A practical progress is the hig highest purpose in h kind to wider horizon the first moment th practical, but it is of be tinged on all sid spiritual life.

In the midst of our in this world it is sur enters into all our th and in spite of us. Pr practical. Wherever vantage that is the spo he is bound to go and that anything belongs country with which he and yet how few of practical in the abstra devoid of this weak important function in impulses of national se prefigured by the Poe the world" may com yet in sight. Under t the aggregations of indoctrinate its citizen