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THE ORGANIZATION OF OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM.*

Mr. President and Gentlemen:

I do not think that there ever was an age when it was more important that our system of education should be of the best and most comprehensive type. Whatever view may be taken of the recent election in England—whether, with Mr. Chamberlain, we regard it as the result of temporary madness, or with the Liberals as exhibiting the determination of the people to prevent the country from rushing into the abyss—the return of fifty labour representatives to parliament shows that the working-class has at last become articulate, and is determined to have a direct share in the councils of the nation. Power is dangerous unless it is directed to wise ends, and I think we shall all agree that an uneducated people cannot be wise. What, then, is education? All graduates of Queen's know all about Plato and Aristotle—or did know all about them at one time—but it may not be out of place to remind them of the conception of education held by those great thinkers. What strikes us at once is that they regarded education, not as the acquirement of knowledge, but primarily and mainly as the development of character. In the *Protagoras* Plato points out that edu-

cation begins as soon as a child can understand what is said to him. His nurse, his mother, his tutor, and even his father, are always saying to him: "This is right," "That is wrong"; "This is beautiful," "That is ugly"; "This is pious," "That is impious"; and thus insensibly he learns to love the good, the beautiful and the holy. And when the boy goes to school, his schoolmaster gives even more attention to his behaviour than to teaching him his letters. He is taught to read the great poets and to learn their poems by heart, and his teacher draws his attention to the noble and the base features in the characters depicted, commending the one and warning him against the other. And the same thing happens when he goes to the music-master and the gymnastic-master; for by them he is taught to discriminate noble and inspiring music from ignoble, and to keep his body in sound condition, so that it may be the servant of his intelligence, and may enable him to discharge later his duties as a citizen, whether in peace or in war. The object of education, as conceived by the Greek, was, in short, to produce a good and enlightened citizen. The means by which this end was sought to be attained seems at

*An address delivered by Dr. Watson at the Toronto Alumni Dinner on February 9th.