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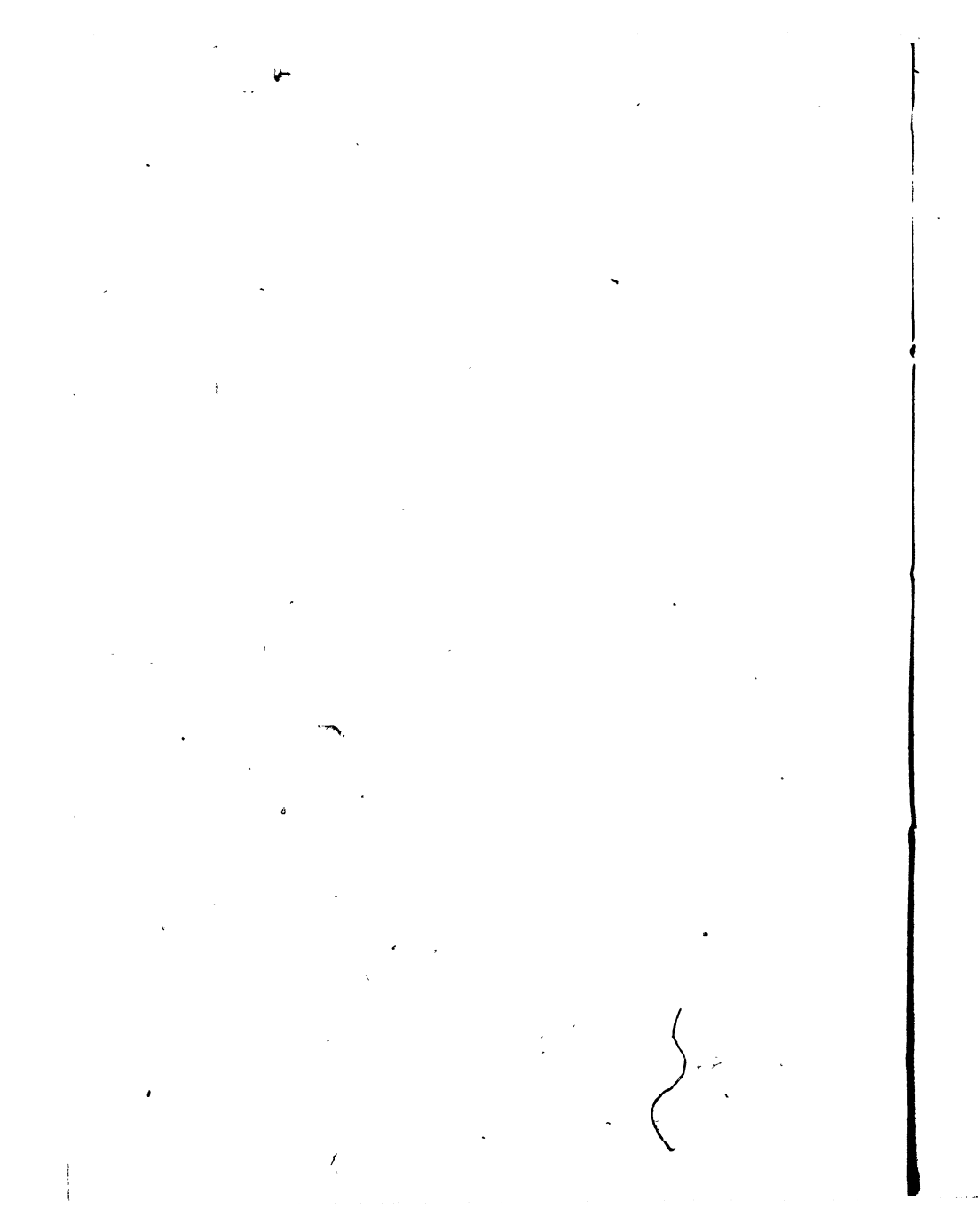
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*To Sir. W. Laurier.
from R. Simpson, Head of the S.S.P.*

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY

MRS. SIMPSON TO HER PUPILS,

AT THE DISTRIBUTION OF PRIZES

ON THE 25TH JUNE, 1868.

MONTREAL :

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VALEDICTORY ADDRESS.

25th June, 1868.

MY FRIENDS AND PUPILS :

The ceremonies appointed for this morning are now complete, and it only remains for me to address to you a few parting words.

Simple and unpretentious, the events of this day are of extreme importance to my young pupils ; they will have a lasting place in the memory, and in future years be looked back upon amongst the choicest recollections of their youth.

To me the result of the year's work is one of unqualified satisfaction. As my eye passes over the faces and forms of my children, I recall many a lesson, many an effort, many a victory besides those which find place in the examination papers ; and I am very thankful, even while the grateful thought is crossed by the consciousness of the

imperfection which enters into our best and most successful endeavours.

With this day closes the first decade of my school experience in Montreal, and I am now able to count twenty years spent in the work of education. As in a panorama, scenes and persons pass in review before my mind, and I feel impelled on the present occasion to ask your indulgence while I bring before you a few thoughts suggested by the period at which I have arrived.

In the course of the ten years, two hundred and ninety-nine young women have had their names and ages recorded on the school books; two hundred and ninety-nine young women have been submitted to a discipline of mind and body of which I have been the organizer, head, and superintendent. In my work I have been well assisted by ladies and gentlemen of attainments as diverse as the departments under their direction, and while they have given me the respect and deference due to my position, I cannot too heartily or too sincerely declare in this presence, that to the co-operation, fidelity, honesty of purpose, and self-devotion of my fellow-workers, I owe the success of my enterprise, and the good name which this school enjoys from one end of the Dominion to the other. New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, the Northern and Southern States have sent us daughters. From Red River Settlement, from Gaspe,

and even from the West Indies, young girls have come that we might train them for their duties in life. But these wanderers were but few in number ; Upper and Lower Canada have furnished the great majority of our pupils. Of the two hundred and ninety-nine, twenty-six are married and six are dead. To six the school experience terminated the experience of life. Those who loved them were permitted only a glance at the budding beauty of the souls which opened their fair flowers in the pure atmosphere of Paradise. Sad retrospect ! telling of vacant places and disappointed hopes. Bright anticipation ! full of comfort, joy, and peace.

“ Far better they should sleep awhile,
Within the Church's shade,
Nor wake until new heaven, new earth,
Meet for their new immortal birth
For their abiding-place be made,

“ Than wander back to life, and lean
On our frail love once more.
'Tis sweet as year by year we lose
Friends out of sight, in faith to muse
How grows in Paradise our store.”

But early death is the exception, not the rule, in God's providence. Two hundred and ninety-three of my pupils have entered or are entering upon the duties of life ; and whether my mind reverts to my lost children, or goes forth to the young women called upon to exercise their talents

in the home and in the world, I am impressed almost to faintness with a sense of responsibility. My work affects so many, is so arduous, so varied, so dependent, that I am tempted to put before you the aim of my profession, that I may gain your sympathy and co-operation in my difficult task, so far as your opportunity permits.

The business of my life is to educate, to draw out and train the minds of my pupils, in order that they may be fitted, as human beings, to fulfil the purpose of God concerning them.

No lower aim is worthy of the term education, which I use here in its widest sense, applying it at once to the severer studies, and to the accomplishments which are the ornaments of the intellectual structure. We must teach our pupils to trust, to obey, to respect us. We must require them to be industrious, unselfish, merciful, and just. This must be effected not by preaching, lecturing, punishing; but by tasks allotted according to ability and opportunity, leaving the pupil as much free-will in the performance of them as her natural character permits.

To expect an inexperienced child to portion out her own work, to allow the selfish and querulous to avoid companions who cross her wishes and try her temper, is to foster sin, to tempt the feeble by leaving her unprotected and alone, at an age and under circumstances when she has a right

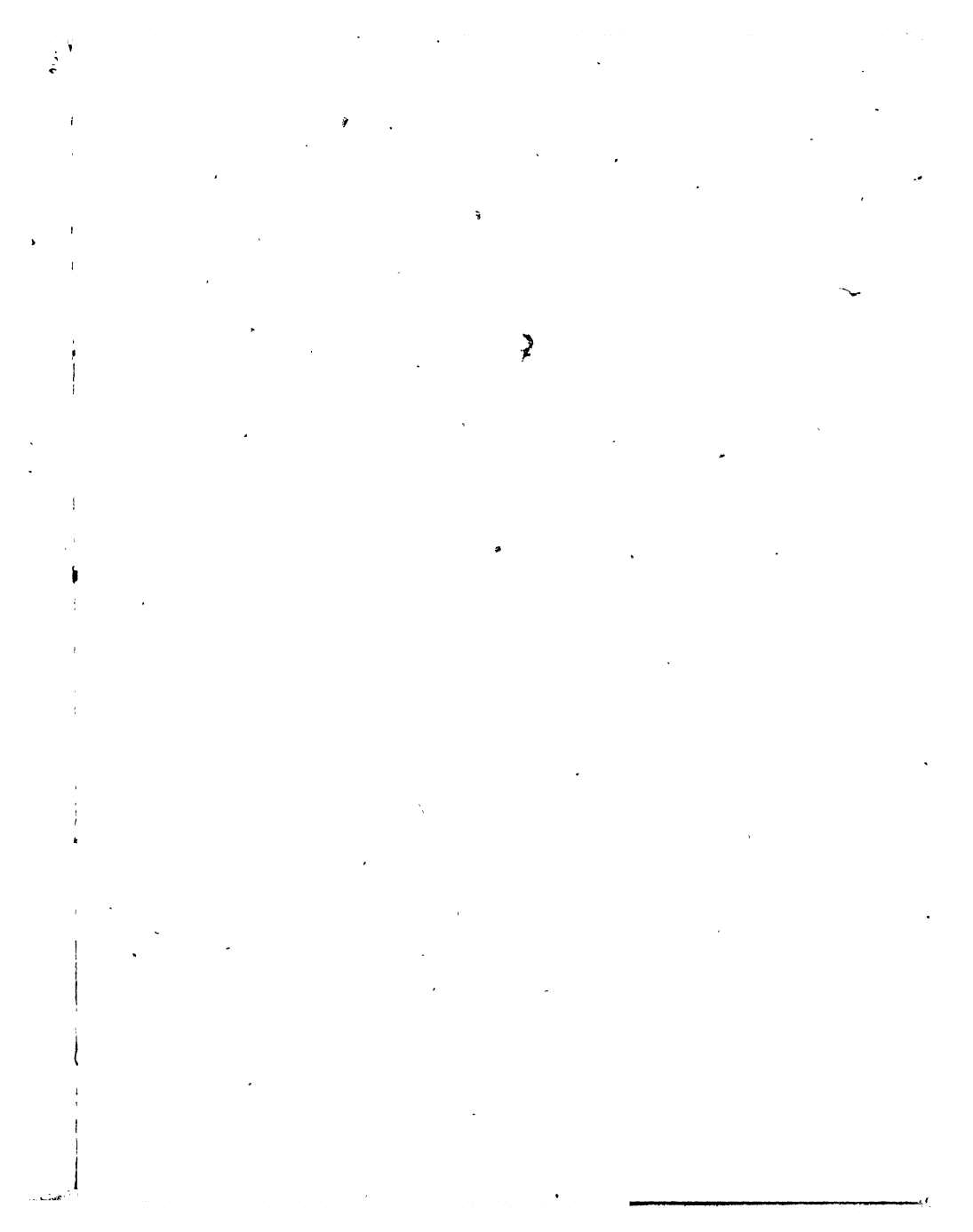
to our stronger sense and preventing judgment. I would rather give the dear name of daughter to a girl of limited intellect, who was obedient, faithful and true, than to a fitful genius, on whose brilliant talents no reliance could be placed, and who might or might not do her duty according to the chapter of chances.

We do our best, I and my assistants, to secure for our charges that which each requires. We must abstain from over-anxiety and be cheerful, hopeful, and happy in our work. We did not begin the education in any single case, and we shall not end it; but we have generally the most important part committed to us, just when the character matures, and the child becomes a woman. If the woman were an isolated individual, if she exercised no power for good and evil beyond herself, our task would be comparatively light. But in this sense no human being is alone. In the home, in the family, in the world, everyone leaves an impress more or less distinct. Each one is placed by the Lord God in a garden to dress it and to keep it, and He will require that it be lovely and rich with the fruits of sound sense, usefulness, beauty, and good taste, or will judge if it be overgrown with the weeds of idleness, ignorance and folly.

The pupil leaves the school with habits formed, and character defined, to depend henceforth on her

own judgment, to be her own law-giver, to transmit the lessons of her youth, through the influence of her womanhood, from generation to generation, far beyond the limit of human calculation. Who dares sit down quietly to consider the result of his individual influence, to muse on the effect of his actions and words upon those with whom he comes in daily contact? Certainly not the teacher. He would be overwhelmed, and crushed, and tempted to throw up the business of his life in fear and despair. Rather must he take refuge in the avowal of his own insufficiency, and, closing his eyes to the world, open them to the light of Christ, that he "may perceive and know what things he ought to do, and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil the same."

What position in life requires a greater diversity of powers than that of the Principal of a school? He must be "all things to all men." We are told that it is impossible to please everybody, and no one disputes it; yet the schoolmistress must adapt herself to everyone, so far as she can, while, at the same time, she strives to maintain individuality and decision of character. She must endeavour to meet the wishes of parents, even though they should know nothing of practical education; she must meet also the theories of the amateur educationist, who very frequently has no knowledge of teaching at all, not even that derived from the





parental instinct. She must guide, restrain, comfort, and encourage her assistant teachers, sympathize with their personal difficulties, and help them to help themselves. She must adapt herself to all her pupils, young and old, clever and dull, be interested in their amusements and protect them, as well as their teachers, in their mutual relations. In a word, she must govern, and govern well, or the public, her master, will soon bring her to a sense of her mistakes.

That same master does not spare. Our faults are seldom allowed to pass uncensured. It is the way of the world, and why complain? I do not complain, but I desire to *explain*, and also to apologize humbly and affectionately for much that is contrary to your wishes, yet quite unavoidable. I know that things often seem unkind and unreasonable which proceed only from want of thought or want of knowledge. The public is a gentle public if fairly treated, and I, at all events, have been so happy in my professional career in Canada that I have lost all homesickness, and desire nothing better than to end my days in this my adopted country. While my present sphere of work and usefulness remains open to me I shall try to do my duty in it, with advantage to the public as well as to myself. The two things are not antagonistic, on the contrary, they are one. When I am broken, miserable, dis-

pirited, my school will be of value to no one. I am only one woman, not ubiquitous, and not omnipresent. I superintend my household of forty persons as well as my day-school of fifty more. If I superintend, of course I direct others. I direct, they work. Like a banker or a merchant, I am responsible for the actions of my subordinates, but I never attempt to do all the work myself. I teach, three times a week, subjects requiring careful thought and constant study, and I make myself generally acquainted with all that goes on around me. I am frequently weary in brain and tired in body, and when my teachers can do nothing without me, or when the public, my master, requires a life's bondage by accepting nothing that is not the fruit of my own personal labour, I shall forsake my calling if I can, and if my poverty obliges me to submit, at least, I will not go down to the grave of a slave without a hearty protest. Happy, healthy, wealthy teachers, how very few you are !

Still I desire—am very anxious to do as much *personally* in my school as I can. It is both for my interest and in my will to do so. I am not always, not often at liberty the very moment I am asked for, but I am very glad to make appointments with all who wish to see me, and to receive them without appointment if I am able. I like nothing better than to talk with the pa-

rents of my pupils. We have interests in common, and are never at a loss for subjects of conversation. I speak by reports formal and concise, yet the result of information and deliberation. When all goes well nothing further is required ; but when the attendance is irregular, or the lessons imperfectly prepared, some response ought to come from the parent, that by friendly conference we may discover where the trouble is, and endeavour at once to overcome it. This is particularly necessary in the case of day-scholars. They study at home, and we are, for the most part, unacquainted with their habits and opportunities.

Give us then, friends in the cause of education, the support of your sympathy and your prayers. Bring to us the mighty assistance of a wise nursery discipline, whereby the child comes to school with good habits already forming, and comfort us with a sense of your kind patience with our necessary shortcomings and unwilling failures.

But I have a parting word to address to you, my children, who this day close your school career. An important part of your life's experience is ended. Henceforth you will be your own tutors and governors, shape your own purposes, and discipline your own minds. How well you will be able to do this depends, in no small degree, upon the use you have made of the opportunities you have had here. I know that it too often happens that

intelligent girls, who should know better, wilfully thwart the desires of parents and teachers, and throw away the seed-time of the soul ; but a retrospect would serve no practical purpose now, and I prefer to invite you to dwell upon some thoughts which will link the past with the future.

This is an April day of the affections. Tears and smiles alternate. The thought of home, with its pure joys and hopes, sends the heart bounding out into the future ; and the thought of the present parting with dear friends who have shared our pleasures and our pains for months, and even for years, sends that heart back into the past, until it is wrung with conflicting feelings. The school-girl who can turn away from the place where her mind was nursed, and fed, and strengthened, without a single regret, must be deficient in some of the higher faculties of our nature. I do not believe there is such a girl listening to me now. Can I speak to you of nothing which will move you to loving, tender thoughts of your school-time ? The difficulty, if one there be, is that of choice. Recall the fact that you have met, morning and evening, day after day, as members of one family, and knelt in the presence of the Great Father to ask His blessing on you all. Remember the Sunday lessons, the week-day services, when, as sisters in Christ, in the same House of God, you offered the Common Prayer. The word *Communion*

is full of sacred thoughts and hallowed associations for some of you now about to leave us, which will bind you to your school as long as you live. The text-books you have studied, the music you have heard, the songs and hymns you have sung together, are so many keepsakes, as it were, which can neither be destroyed nor lost. Three years ago, a dear girl who had been but a few months at our school lay dying at the very time we were enjoying our closing ceremony. In that, her last hour, in her distant home, her thoughts were with us, and she begged her mother to sing the hymn she had been used to hear at school. But no one could gratify her. No one knew what she longed for. The sounds she craved never fell on her ears again. The softer, holier music of Paradise had left her nothing to desire, before the first of her school companions reached the place in which she resided.

Believe me, my very dear pupils, your school-days will have a high, bright place in your memories. The lessons you learned, the friends you made, your prizes, your successes, your amusements, your pains, and even your punishments, will, in time, become mental treasures to be dwelt upon in the secret communings of your own minds, or spread out to enlist the sympathy and interest of those to whom your girlhood shall be matter of history.

For myself, let me assure you that the thought of my large family does not oppress me. The more I love, the more I am able to love. Sometimes one and sometimes another, claims for a while an individual interest ; but in my schemes for your improvement, in my plans for your welfare, in my prayers, and in my heart, I think of you as a whole. Do not imagine that I am indifferent because I cannot make of each dear pupil a personal friend ; do not think I forget you because I cannot accompany you to your homes, there to share your joys and sorrows ; rather compassionate the infirmity which forces me to fall short, even of the standard I set up for myself, and believe in the spirit, which constantly prays that I may meet my children again, and find in them a crown of rejoicing. I can spare none of you. I shall want you all in that day when we must stand before the throne of God. I hope to hear the loving Saviour claim you for His own, and in accents akin to those in which He commended the faith of her who washed His feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head, I hope to hear him say to each one of you, as well as to me :—" She hath done what she could."

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