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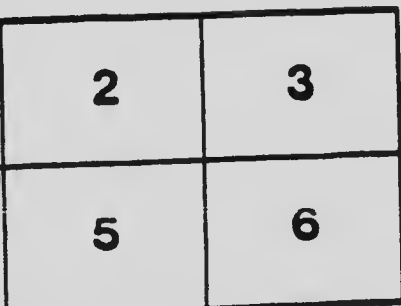
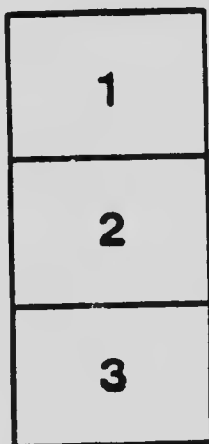
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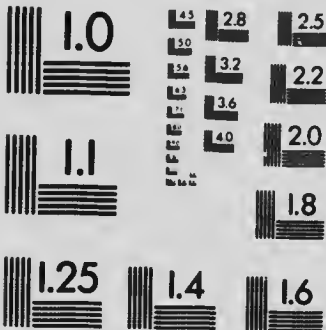
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EDUCATIONAL CULTURE FOR THE
PEOPLE OF MANITOBA

(1) An Address

AT

CONVOCATION

OF THE

University of Manitoba

10th MAY, 1912 52

BY

mp (1) JAMES W. ROBERTSON

D.Sc., D.C.L., LL.D.

*Chairman Royal Commission on Industrial Training and Technical
Education; Chairman Committee on Lands of
Commission of Conservation* 11

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fol.

EDUCATIONAL CULTURE FOR THE PEOPLE OF MANITOBA

MR. CHANCELLOR, YOUR HONOR, GENTLEMEN OF THE
COUNCIL, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :—

I congratulate the University of Manitoba upon the enlargement of the Province of Manitoba, and venture to hope that each in itself, and both together, will go on achieving greatness to match whatever growth may be revealed by areas, population and wealth. In these days, dangerous in their clamours for bigness and speed and luxury, one needs to remind himself that increase of possessions, whether of property or power, does not ensure progress in satisfactions. These come from the unfaltering pursuit and service of truth, beauty and goodness in every-day life and from helping on the happiness and prosperity of our fellows. To work in that way for the advancement of Manitoba I take to be the large inclusive aim which animates this University. Anything lower or less would not be worthy of its obligations and opportunities and would not meet the demands of this aggressive, progressive, restless people.

We are all zealous for the reputation of our community and the good name of our country—for their place of honor, influence and power. Their rank and security in these respects depend chiefly upon the education of the people. And to my mind the people of a Province, organized for government and education, have a responsibility for conditions and issues which is more than the sum total of the obligations of all its citizens taken individually. The Province is trustee for some institutions and standards which have their roots in dim, remote antiquity, and for others which were planted but yesterday. It is also the custodian of the material resources and opportunities through which its citizens may have reasonable equality of opportunity to earn satisfaction through liberty and labor. It is its business to improve and conserve the public heritage—this public heritage in the University, and to pass it on enriched by intelligent goodwill and developed by adequate, generous financial support.

Manitoba is happy in the setting of its life. The fundamental occupations which engage the large majority of its people are farming, making homes and teaching and training

the young. The farm, the rural home and the rural school together provide the opportunities and means of culture in forms which children and grown people can turn into power—power of knowledge, of action, and of character. Farming is much more than moving soil, sowing grain, destroying weeds and harvesting crops. It is taking care of part of the face of Mother Earth as a home for her children. Making homes is much more than building houses and providing furniture, food, clothing and things. It is creating a temple, not made with hands, as a place of culture for the Divine in us. Those who live by agriculture are not all of the earth earthy, and the rural home is a fine school for the soul. Teaching and training the young is much more than instructing children in the arts of reading, writing and reckoning—those flexible, useful tools of the intellect. Much of the time of the school has been consumed in these tasks; but now we come to a happier day when those arts can be acquired joyfully in less than a year and a half instead of painfully, reluctantly and with difficulty as spread over six years. The main portion of the school time will soon be devoted to caring for the health, the habits and the standards of the pupils while watching and directing the development of their powers of body, mind and spirit. I venture to look for a similar improvement in the use made of time at colleges.

These three fundamental mothering occupations in Manitoba nourish and sustain all the others such as commerce, manufacturing, transportation and the professions. By means of them, followed as well as they can be by an educated and cultured people, the province will be kept prosperous and fertile. It can be made beautiful only by radiant homes whence youth will go forth from generation to generation to refine life by their characters, to exalt it by their ideals and to improve its conditions by intelligent labor. Whatever may have been the custom in the past, there does not appear to be any need now to turn aside from the activities and labors of the present to seek discipline and culture through studies and subjects remote from the life which is natural for young people here and now. They grow with finest balance of powers and tastes by participating in the every-day life of the community. Have not our schools and colleges removed the young too far and too long from sharing, and learning to live usefully and happily by sharing, in doing work such as grown people do? Why should not the time devoted to formal education include, for the highest educational ends, well-ordered series of experiences to be obtained by young people through working as contributing earners and members of society?

The social unrest, the industrial discontent, the disappearance of the love of labor as a source of joy in life, all raise the enquiry: Are we on right lines in education for safety, for

prosperity and for happiness? Without doubt there is urgent need to transfuse the spirit of the daily task by high ideals and standards. These are developed by education. They belong to and grow out of the mood of the mind and manner in which work is done. They are not laid on from outside to be admired and enjoyed in leisure hours, but are of the essence of the experiences by which habits are formed in the growing period of youth. The influence, the sympathy, and above all the leadership by example, of the most highly and widely educated, can breathe the breath of life into the nostrils of the body educational and make it more than a collection of subjects about which information is to be acquired. We need to specialize on the nurture of a few dominating purposes rather than on learning a number of subjects ancient or modern. Perhaps there never was a time when the power of a worthy purpose in life was more nearly absent than at present. The University must help to make life worth while by great satisfying purposes in the lives of the plain people which will find their expression through efficient labor for livelihood, the love of learning and the willing service of humanity.

But someone may say if the University directs its attention towards bringing about efficiency in the occupations and activities of ordinary every-day affairs, will not that turn higher education into a materialistic marshalling of all the forces of life for money making only? It appears to me that quite the opposite will be the case. The kind of education which the University provides, both in its spirit and substance, affects the character of all educational effort in the area it serves. It often sets the direction and the pace for elementary and secondary schools. If it be true that education is a reflection of the social conditions of the time, it is no less true that social ideals are shaped by the higher forms of education. What the men and women who have been trained at the Colleges and Universities hunger and thirst after, the plain people who have had no such opportunity will eagerly desire. Just as social conditions are the product of all past experiences and experiments, particularly in forms and methods of government, so the powers, tastes and ideals of individuals are the fruits of education. It is evident that the latter will always be seeking changes in the former to better their chances to obtain what they want. Individual aims, as limited by social conditions, have determined the kind of education provided for and sought after in different ages and among different races. Take for example the Greeks. Their concepts of desirable education were based on the existence of a privileged class, fed, clothed and sheltered by the labor of slaves, and itself devoted to war, art, literature and luxurious living. The sway of that kind of classical culture was long felt. Does it fit the needs of Mani-

toba in this era of self-government and passion for equality of opportunity?

The reasons why parents seek an advanced education for their children reveal the social ideals which are the echo of the voice of the higher education of the age. Some of these reasons are proclaimed with convincing candor: That their children may escape hard work; may get through life easily; may reach a higher social position; may acquire property, with or without the negligible preliminary of having earned it. The volume and stress of those voices drown the petition of the wise few who pray that their children might have life—not things—by means of education and have it more abundantly. Education sought for those selfish ends is a delusion and a snare; and the disappointment is heard everywhere in the storm of protest, unrest and discontent which threatens society. Life and labor have not yielded satisfaction up to the expectations. Whether the discontent be due to economic conditions, whose meagre opportunities for the many it must be a chief object and privilege of government to correct, or to the quality and habits of life, which it must be a chief object and privilege of education to improve, the fact remains that it is prevalent as the experience of the bulk of our people. And such discontent or want of satisfaction has the educational result of all oft-repeated experiences; it fixes itself as habitual in the character and conduct. Evidence is thrusting itself forward with 'striking' insistence that those who do the nation's manual work, and into whose hands has come political and physical power to have their way, are losing confidence in the ability and willingness of the present forms and methods of government to correct economic conditions which breed injustice to their children. At the same time citizens generally are grumbling at the failure of the prevailing systems and methods of education to ensure the formation of habits which lead children and young people towards health, happiness and efficiency in labor.

Will any changes in our systems and methods of education bring a real cure for the ills and evils of the habitual discontent with life which is spreading? Some of them are well worth trying. First, those which lead pupils to the achievement of joy through the processes of labor as distinguished from its wages and other rewards. Every child who is given a fair chance can manage that. In this a little child may lead us. Secondly, those which produce the pleasure of working together for some end believed to be good for all. Will not school pupils and older students work themselves into social efficiency, by co-operating in productive labor, as well as play themselves into ability by means of team games? Both together are better than twice as much of either alone. Thirdly, those which yield gladness through creative work whereby each individual strives to give expression to his own concepts

of utility and beauty in concrete things as well as in words and other symbols. The insistence, by school and college, upon passive receptiveness for prolonged periods may have disciplined the mind for the perception of symbols, and the understanding of theories and rules; practice has developed the power of remembering them for repetition upon call of examination. Has not the heaping of instruction upon enforced passivity led to an atrophy of the love of constructive creative labor? Immobility in classes all day long is not goodness. That sort of thing is the one persisting attribute of the dead or nearly moribund. Every university man who actively conserves these constructive, co-operative, creative powers, and achieves joy and satisfaction through their exercise, saves himself and becomes a saving factor in his community. In doing these things he transfuses the routine of life by a spirit of trained intelligence, cultured ability and habitual good will.

Put into the language of every-day life the main steps in every complete educational experience are: Observing, thinking, feeling and managing towards and into some form of expression. It appears to me that the closer in point of time the steps are taken together, the greater the growth of power and the surer the formation of habits. Frequency of experience is what forms habits and not repetitions of instructions or information. In so far as these experiences can have close relation to the threefold activities demanded by life, so much the better for the culture of the student, even if not so complimentary to a subject or its professor. I mean the activities which we explain as those of body, mind and spirit in the individual's capacity as an earner, a member of society and a trustee in the scheme of life. No doubt this runs counter to the common notion that culture—even real culture as a process and as a result—develops and implies a certain aloofness from the practical work done by men and women to earn their living and a sweet, or sour, sense of superiority to utilitarian questions of bread and butter. But we must not forget that invigorating toil—invigorating bodily toil,—is the only known road to health, strength and happiness. Nowadays culture is becoming a term almost as elusive as education itself. Agriculture was doubtless the root, the root word as well as the fundamental process, of human culture. The man on the farm gets some light on its intrinsic nature from his occupation. To him culture stands for crops, the best in quality and largest in quantity that can be obtained, for the suppression of weeds, insects and diseases, and for the increase of beauty and fertility. Culture has no contact with idleness, indolence or sloth. These make for the corrosion of all the fibres of the physical and mental and moral nature. Culture means plowing and harrowing and sowing and hoeing. It means labor and sorrow as well as play and flowers. It means the ripping of the iron

share as well as the genial affection of the sun. Culture is far deeper than the polite polish on the skin of manners and speech. It is not gained by the mere learning of languages, living or dead, or the acquisition of knowledge, scientific or superstitious, in the poetic meaning of that word. It is the residuum, the left-over, such as it is, in character—in body, in mind, and in spirit—after every completed educational experience. From actual practice comes skill in the finest of all fine arts, the fine art of living happily together while working for some good end. Alike in school and college, on farm and in factory, in shop and office, in home duties and public affairs, that kind of life develops a quick sense of responsibility, it establishes good standards close by which are understood, it nourishes conscience and strengthens the will-energy towards further culture, better work and happier living.

At the risk of repeating myself more than once, I must again emphasize the truism that youth is the time when habits are formed. Habits of observing, thinking, feeling and acting grow out of the way in which the school and college courses are followed; they are grooved into the character according to the spirit and manner in which students work and play and live. It is not what we know, but what we become, that marks our educational progress. Every student here to-day brought to his college and to each of its classes some contribution not less influential for his profit or loss than the contents of the courses or the ability of the professors. The matriculation examinations did not disclose all the qualifications of the candidate, and even the graduate may have secured his degree without having attained the more excellent graces. I present them to you as earnestness, cheerfulness and cherishing and following high ideals. At first they are rather traits of character in embryo than fixed attitudes or habits of mind. The particular and specific disciplines of colleges are to correct softness, to promote gentleness and to develop a capacity for enduring and enjoying hardness as a good soldier of truth, beauty and goodness in every-day life. In reality, each student disciplines himself in liberty, by self-government, by diligence, by rational obedience to authority and by co-operation. The discipline which develops is administered from within; external regulations are like the finger posts to indicate the open path and also the place where trespassing is forbidden. In the choice and in the action is discipline. "Choose ye this day whom ye will serve" is at the parting of the ways every morning, and is seldom displayed in prominence at the dramatic crises of life. Habits are grown in quiet ways, like the shapes of trees and the budding and ripening of fruit. They become the destiny "which shapes our ends, rough hew them how we will." The undergraduate, the graduate and the post-graduate who lives and moves and has his being in an atmosphere of

earnestness, cheerfulness and high ideals, is ready for his best work. When such men and women leave college they go through life with open minds, with broad sympathies, and appreciative respect for all the worthy achievements and attainments of men and women, of boys and girls. Their patriotism finds its best accomplishment in making and leaving a better place, with a better path, for better children, to carry the torch of life onward and upward, clearer and stronger, because of what they have been and done.

The whole of the self-governing people of Manitoba must be an educated, cultured people. That is a high aim. Is it practicable? Certainly it is, if the experiences of the vocations and the experiences of leisure, plus the treasures of science, literature, history, art and religion be used to that end. I recognize that my time is spent and that this is not the occasion for me to discuss the details of "courses of study" as such. They have been regarded professionally as in themselves a chief means of education. Much attention has been paid to their content of information from the standpoint of conventional culture, and some of them have been regarded as possessing special values for discipline, with intentional neglect of the usefulness in later life of any knowledge acquired during the process. My plea today is for such a further reorganization and reconstruction of "courses" and "time tables" in schools, colleges and the university as will ensure to the young generally a full measure of educational culture quite as suitable for the fundamental vocations or occupations as the formal education of the recent past has been for the few learned professions. That can be brought about gradually by bringing in an orderly succession of series of experiences obtained, (1) through participating in work similar to that of the fundamental vocations or occupations to be followed; (2) through enjoying recreational play and games similar to those which would best serve the whole community, with particular attention to class singing and the enthusiasm of mass singing, and (3) through instruction in, and the study of, subjects which minister to progress in understanding, in knowledge, in ability to do, in maintaining high standards, and in co-operating with good-will—all with due regard to the age, sex and strength of the pupils. In short, I beg you to consider whether the formation of good habits (of body, mind and spirit) for work, for play and for living is not both a process and a result of educational culture.

It will cost the Province some money and much labor to attain a cultured population. Taxation for education is not tribute to a foreign power, it is not the extortion of a privileged interest or monopoly; it is the contribution of a free, self-governing people to ensure the prevalence of intelligence, the administration of justice, the sway of good-will with equality of opportunity for all to attain satisfaction through service.

And there are some sweet fruits of culture which money cannot buy, but which education can advance. Among them are healthy activities in manifold ways of body, mind and spirit. the love of labor, and the habitual exercise of intelligent good-will.

This end of an educated, cultured people, which itself is only a means toward the largest end, is worth striving for and worth living for. All life is an unceasing struggle. The point is to choose the right objects and means. In the past, humanity has been winning all along the line with an occasional set-back, such as threatens the present. Its warfare is ever against ignorance, helplessness, poverty, disease, vice and ill-wills. Education is to train individuals for that warfare. Its endeavors are most successful when the experiences which it provides for each individual are in themselves a vital part of the hard campaign. It must ever vary its strategy and tactics and weapons, as the field of operations is moved forward. Times change and we change with them. The need of the times is education to qualify us all to achieve satisfaction through labor and service and good-will.

"Build on resolve and not upon regret
The structure of thy future; do not grope
Among the shadows of old sins, but let
The light of truth shine on the path of hope
And dissipate the darkness; waste no tears
Upon the blotted record of lost years,
But turn the leaf and smile, oh smile, to see
The fair white pages that remain for thee."

