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Problems and Inspirations in the Future of Acadia.

Inaugural Address, Delivered by Rev. T. Trotter, D.D., at his Installation as President of Acadia University, Wolfville, N. S., Oct. 13.

Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen of the Board of Governors and Senate, Gentlemen of the Faculty, Ladies and Gentlemen:—

I should be wanting in sensibility, if I did not feel at this moment that a signal honor was being put upon me by my brethren. That I should be deemed worthy to follow in the line of those noble men whose careers, as presidents of this college, have been so strikingly sketched by Dr. Saunders; that a body of men so experienced as I see about me should have confidence in entrusting me with this position, is an honor for which I can find no adequate explanation either in my person or my qualification. I can but attribute its bestowal to a very generous estimate of my attainments and character, and to the hopes entertained of what I may become, rather than to the recognition of what I am. If, however, I am sensible of the honor conferred, equally sensible am I of the responsibilities imposed. Indeed, so preponderant is the latter feeling over the former that I stand before you in no spirit of elation, but rather in that of humble hopefulness that my brethren have made no mistake in calling me to this service, and that, if God's will has found expression in their action, He will make manifest the fact by the bestowal of abundant grace for the discharge of the duties I now assume.

In selecting a subject for presentation at this time, it has seemed appropriate that I should speak rather from the presidential than the professional point of view, and should deal with practical rather than theoretical topics. The subject of my remarks will be

PROBLEMS AND INSPIRATIONS IN THE FUTURE OF ACADIA

To say that there are problems in the future of Acadia is not to say that she has not already solved, and that in noblest fashion, problems of the hardest sort; it is not to hint at weakness, or to insinuate that her life and efficiency are in peril; it is but to suggest that she aspires to an expanding future, that with the growth of her attainments there has come a growth of her ideals, and that in the future, as in the past, progress must be made against difficulties which only thoughtfulness and resolute patience can overcome.

One of the problems of the future will be

THE PROBLEM OF EDUCATIONAL EFFICIENCY.

This is a problem common to all educational institutions. The great Universities, with their splendid equipment and centuries of inspiring tradition, feel it not less than the smaller colleges, though, of course, from different causes. The elaborate equipment of the great Universities almost invariably implies a curriculum which invites the undergraduate to enter upon specialized courses too early for his highest advantage. The numbers in attendance, and the largeness of the classes, while generating spirit and enthusiasm, necessitate the adoption of lecturing rather than teaching methods in the classroom—a change by no means the best for the student at the undergraduate stage of his development—and make personal intimacy with the students, and proper supervision of them, on the part of the Faculty, an impossibility. In the smaller colleges, while the limited numbers

make the socratic method possible in the class-room, give ample scope for the personal influence of the professors, and create conditions all round favorable to thoroughness and reality, so far as the work goes, there are often the disabilities which come from lack of numbers, prestige and adequate funds. Thus this problem of educational efficiency is, as I have said, a problem common to all educational institutions.

It has been a problem at Acadia from the beginning, a problem which has constantly engaged the governing bodies, and the succession of able men who have constituted its teaching staff. It must continue to engage the attention of the governors and teachers who shall control the future.

In justice to those who have gone before, and for the guidance of the future years, it may be well to note some of the circumstances which make the problem peculiarly difficult of solution in an institution like our own.

The men who promoted the founding of the College were Christian men in a pronouncedly evangelical sense. Their thought was to secure for the successive generations of young people the advantages of a liberal education under vital Christian conditions. Experience, however, has proved that, if it is vitality and positiveness of Christian teaching and influence that you are after, this element can be secured only by the control of a body of men who are at one in respect to all essential Christian truths and aims. A governing body, composed of representatives of essentially varying schools of thought and belief, and habitually compromising and trimming out of deference to mutual prejudices, must inevitably be weak and nominal in its Christian influence. It has come to pass, therefore, that Acadia, like most of the colleges which openly assert the Christian claims, and make the Christian element real and dominating, is a denominational college. Not a denominational in the sense of prescribing denominational tests for the students, not denominational in the sense of inculcating denominational tenets, but denominational in the sense of being governed by a body of Christians, who are organized on the basis of a common faith and life, and who because of their unity can project the Christian claims into their educational work without compromise or apology, and give Christ His seat of pre-eminence in the temple of learning and intellect. In this sense, Acadia is a denominational college.

But see now what this means as affecting the problem of educational efficiency. In the first place, a college which is avowedly Christian, not to say denominational—a college which purposes to handle the great subject of religion with freedom and independence—is, in the nature of things, cut off from all rightful expectation of state support. It must depend upon the voluntary gifts of its friends. This is an elementary principle in Baptist faith and polity. If a college is not only Christian, but denominational in the sense which I have described, though its doors be thrown open ever so widely without prejudice to any on the ground of their denominational alliances, the constituency from which it may expect to receive patronage and means will be still further limited.

Such is the case with Acadia. She receives not a dollar from the public exchequer for the prosecution of her work. Did the state proffer its aid, she would be bound to decline it. And seeing that she is the property of the body of Christians called Baptists, and that other bodies of Christians have colleges which more fully command their sympathies, it is inevitable that her dependence both for students and for material support should be chiefly upon the Baptist people of these provinces.

You will see at once that this limitation in the sources of supply means corresponding limitations in the plans that may be entertained, in the number of instructors that may be employed, and, as some may think, in the quality of service that may be secured. It renders the problem of educational efficiency a very difficult one.

And then apart from limited constituency and meagre resources, there is another feature in the government of Acadia which will seem to many still further to complicate the problem. I refer to the ultimate government of the University by a popular Convention. The Board of Governors is, as you are aware, not a close corporation; not a self-perpetuating body, not a body with no obliga-

tion but to satisfy itself, or to fulfil in a general way the terms of a time-worn trust deed. The governors are chosen from time to time by the vote of the Baptist Convention of these provinces, a body representative of the Baptist churches of the country, and embracing in its delegation the old and the comparatively young, the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, the broad-minded and the narrow-minded. To this Convention every serious proposal must be submitted for ratification. Year by year the Board must report in full concerning the life and work of the institution and submit to a popular discussion and vote at every point. Imagine the amazement of Carlyle at such a democratic conception. Nor must we be surprised if many another shakes his head with an air of apprehension. It must be admitted that, in some respects, this government by a popular body heightens the difficulty of the educational problem.

From this I now pass to a second problem, a problem of a more particular sort, a problem which for some years has been in abeyance, but is now again demanding consideration, and at least a working solution. I allude to the problem of theology.

The design in this educational effort seems to have been from the first to give to the young people of the denomination, whatever their purposes in life, a liberal education under positive Christian influences. Interwoven, however, with this general design, has been a special solicitude that the rising ministry might be profited by the provision made, and might bring to the leadership of the churches informed and disciplined minds as well as devout hearts. The leaders have rightly felt that fundamental to a true culture was the discipline furnished by the general course, and there the emphasis has been put. The desire, however, to do the best possible for the ministry has inspired repeated efforts to add to the general course some distinctly theological work. Besides other less important efforts, there was in the fifties and sixties, a period of 15 years, when instruction was given in various theological subjects by the late Dr. Cramp. In the seventies and eighties, for a period of nine years, theological work again assumed very respectable proportions, under the instruction of the late Dr. Crawley and Dr. Welton, now of McMaster University.

In the year 1883 Dr. Welton was invited to a professorship in Toronto Baptist College, now the theological department of McMaster, and an overture was made by the Toronto brethren with a view to making the Toronto College the theological school for the Baptists of the Dominion. Under that proposal, theology was abandoned at Acadia; though not forever, as after events proved. Some students for the ministry have gone to Toronto for theology; more have continued to go to Newton, Rochester and Chicago; some have gone nowhere. A section of the denomination has never been happy that theology was thus dismissed, and as the result of a growing demand for its restoration, a theological course was elaborated six years ago, was ratified by the Convention, and inserted in the calendar. It was the best proposal that seemed likely to prove practicable. It has been called the Baptist Theological course. It assumes that the theological instruction given should be part of a definitely defined course. It assumes, moreover, that as a University may give the degree of B. A. or of B. Sc., at the close of a four years' course, in which the ordinary college studies or the natural sciences have predominated, respectively, so, with equal propriety, may it grant the degree of Bachelor of Theology at the end of a four years' course in which the theological element has predominated, provided that the entrance to this course has been equally high, and the requirements of it have been equally exacting. This course, I say, was inserted in the calendar six years ago. It has stood there, however, only as the record of decisions reached, and the prophecy of good things to come. The lack of funds has made it impracticable to put the course into effect.

But once more the unexpected has happened, and the handsome bequest of the late Godfrey P. Payzant, is a bequest for theological purposes. Actual work in this department is again made possible. The problem is, What shall that work be? What is the wisest expenditure of the new funds at command? Well, it is always best to conserve the wisdom and work of the past if