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True Education

MATRICULATION SERMON

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PRESIDENT

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"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

—ISAIAH 50: 4.

THE two most important things in this world are life and education.

Without life there could be no achievement, no consciousness, no improveableness. Inheritance, association, ministry, enjoyment would be alike impossible. Everything would be sterile, unresponsive and without initiative.

Without education there would be no development. Everything would remain in *statu quo*, or deteriorate. The term education from the Latin *e-ducere*, to draw out, designates the process or result of drawing out, training or developing the faculties or elements of the individual. We cannot think of any form of derived life without associating the idea of education with it. Life always manifests itself by a series of co-ordinated actions and reactions through which it is maintained and more or less modified. Every form of derived life must live, if at all, within conditions which react upon it. The life may be superior to these conditions and largely modify them, but this very act of modifying them reacts upon and modifies the life. Call it nature, instinct, inheritance, environment,

growth, development, or what you may, these modifications, whether self-determined or imposed, are included in and constitute education.

Everything which one is, which he was not at birth, is in the larger sense the result of education. Education determines the development and efficiency of one's life and is as essential as the life itself.

Our text is one of great practical value, for it describes the character of true education, defines its object, presents the ideal of culture and states the gauge for human achievement. True education as described in our text may be characterized by the one word serviceableness. "The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

The Hebrew word *lim-mood*, from the root form *law-mad*, primarily means a rod, the physical symbol of discipline. As study was largely through compulsion and the rod was much in evidence, the secondary meaning of *law-mad* is to teach, to instruct, to learn. This word is used seven times in the book of Deuteronomy, and always in such connection as to suggest the serviceableness of the education referred to. In the fifth chapter we read: "Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them and observe them to do them." The observance of them is essential to learning them, as only those who "do His will shall know of the doctrine." *Law-mad* is frequently used in other parts of the Old Testament and usually with this same suggestion.

It has a significance similar to the Greek word *manthan-o*, to learn by practice or discipline, as in Matthew, 11:29: "Take my yoke (*i. e.*, my service) upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." And again in Hebrews, 5:8: "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."

The education described in the text consists not in filling the mind with unassimilated information, nor in acquiring mannerisms or affectations. It discourages pretense of every sort, condemns selfishness and discredits all manner of shams and superficiality. It does this by requiring each one to think and act for himself, but to think and act with the most careful regard for the need of others, thus drawing out and developing his character, his individuality, his personal powers of body and mind, will and soul, through application and service. "That I should know how to speak a word in season (give appropriate ministry) to him that is weary."

The true education affects the entire personality. It is both a science and an art, calling into play not only the passive and receptive faculties but also the active and creative ones. It includes these four things in particular:

1. The acquisition of knowledge.—"That I should know."

2. Skill in expression.—"How to speak"—not learning or the acquisition of knowledge simply, but—"The tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak"—to minister appropriately.

3. The perception of facts, conditions and relations.—“A word in season to him that is weary”—his condition is to determine the what, when and how of our service.

4. It includes motive.—“That,” in order that, for this purpose, namely, that I may personally relieve human need by personal ministry. Serviceableness is the divine idea of culture and the gauge for human attainment.

It is interesting to note that this characteristic of true education, which was taught through Moses to the ignorant Israelites thirty-three and a half centuries ago, which was emphasized by Christ when persecuted and maligned, which was illustrated by Paul in his various epistles, and is everywhere insisted upon in the Bible, is a principle upon which the most advanced teachers of pedagogical science agree to-day.

Mediæval education found its aim in absorbing a certain quantity or body of knowledge, *i. e.*, in the exercise of memory by cramming facts and statements. Mr. Nicholas Murray Butler says, “It is absolutely impossible for us to identify education with mere acquisition of learning.” Mr. G. Stanley Hall says, “Love is the greatest thing in the world and to fix it upon the greatest objects in the world is the end and aim of education.” Love is always the spirit of service. Mr. John Dewey says, “The most important training for the child is in habits of serviceableness.”

Mr. Thomas Davidson in “The Education of the Greek People” says, “In so far as it depends upon conscious exertion, education is that process by which the

human being is able to transcend his original nature and be the most desirable thing that he can be. Modern pedagogics more and more strive not to make the pupil informed but to enable him to make good use of the information which he acquires."

In the elementary schools all over Europe, the ideas of training, rather than the ideas of instruction, are insisted upon, and the better schools in this country are trying to develop habits of unselfish, serviceable activity. The consensus of the most advanced educators is that "the end of all education is right living," and the school should aim at social efficiency through the development of character.

"A sound mind in a sound body" was the Greek idea; the development of the will was the Roman objective; the idea of Christian education and the problem of pedagogics is to co-ordinate and develop the functions of mind and body, will and soul, so as to secure the largest serviceableness. This is the root idea taught by our text. The objective it sets forth is personal efficiency to relieve human need.—"That I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

This objective finds its obligation in each of the three fundamental relations of the individual, and satisfies the demands of each.

I. Man's first and most intimate relation is with himself. His primary responsibility is for his own life, not for its beginning but in a very personal sense for its continuance, for its development and for its results. In this

relation, if anywhere, we might expect to find a demand, or at least a justification for self-seeking, but there is no more urgent necessity for unselfish ministry to the needs of others than in one's responsibility for his own life.

Every sane man judges the unknown by the known. The only way a person can interpret others is by himself. A magnanimous and gracious man always lives in a kindly world.

The world is exact in its debits and credits, and sooner or later balances accurately every man's account. The only way to meet one's responsibilities and discharge one's obligations is by living a life of helpfulness, that is by the enlargement of one's virtues through service, and storing one's memory with the record of kindness to one's fellows. "The only competition worthy of a man is with himself."

Life is intensely practical. Conscience, like the heart, is never entitled to a vacation, and conscience makes cowards of every derelict. Love is not a fancy, but the great transforming, constructive force of the universe. Lovableness is not an accident, but an achievement, a characteristic of the true education. Duty is more than a theory and helpfulness is not a pastime. Character is no chance nor transient product, neither is it a *non sequitur*, and destiny is not an arbitrary assignment.

What a person is determines what he can do, as what he does strengthens and develops what he is. Each person is the architect and builder of his own character, and its glory or its shame is his own personal inheritance. Every thought expresses itself in action, unless another thought supervenes and its author is responsible for its

tendency. Every action and every thought, repeated, tends to form a habit; habits constitute and reveal character, and character is destiny; for "as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he." "Whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap."

*"The moving Finger writes, and having writ,
Moves on; nor all your Piety nor Wit
Shall turn it back to cancel half a line.
Nor all your Tears wash out a word of it."*

—RUBIAYAT, 71.

As has been said by another, "Do not flatter yourself that your thoughts are under due control, your desires properly regulated, or your dispositions subject as they should be to Christian principle, if your intercourse with others consists mainly of frivolous gossip, impertinent anecdotes, speculations on the character and affairs of your neighbors, the repetition of former conversations, or a discussion of the current petty scandal of society; much less if you allow yourself in careless exaggeration upon all these points and that grievous inattention to exact truth which is apt to attend the statements of those whose conversation is made up of these materials."

"Prune thou thy words; thy thoughts control
That o'er thee swell and throng;
They will condense within thy soul,
And change to purpose strong."

—J. H. NEWMAN.

It is the glory of humanity that every person has as a part of his original endowment an essential principle which will not be satisfied with less than the best he may attain. This principle is restive with error, condemns any effort contrary to its accepted standard of right and felicitates itself upon a generous thing successfully done or faithfully attempted. Human nature and divine grace are adjusted to the development of this principle. Its universality and persistence account for the trend and attainments of humanity. It thrives by ministry and rejoices in service. Julius Cæsar said there was no music so charming in his ears as the request of his friends and the supplications of those in want of assistance. Cato, at the close of his eventful life, declared that the greatest comfort of his old age was the pleasing remembrance of the many benefits and friendly offices which he had done to others. The Christ has said, and His word is final, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." The greatest joy of living, a joy which bringeth no sorrow, is to relieve human need by personal ministry, to "speak a word in season to him that is weary." It is an investment the angels might covet. No investment makes larger personal returns.

As Mrs. Browning sings:

"A child's kiss
Set on thy sighing lips, shall make thee glad,
A poor man served by thee, shall make thee rich,
A sick man helped by thee, shall make thee strong,
Thou shalt be served thyself by the sense
Of service which thou renderest."

The opportunities are always at hand to make such investments, to develop skill and to enrich one's character.

A soul, struggling, overburdened, exhausted or discouraged, with ability and resources dormant or temporarily non-productive, may be heartened by a word spoken in season. All which that soul accomplishes forever after will pay tribute to the word which brought sympathy, counsel, admonition, reproof, suggestion, or inspiration to hope and effort in the hour of its need. No wonder the wise man said, "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver." No wonder the great apostle exhorts, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

To "know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" requires perception, that we may detect the condition and its cause; it requires resourcefulness and skill that we may command and communicate the proper ministry "a word in season." Perception, resourcefulness, skill come through leisure from one's self, love for humanity, consecration to God, and experience in service for others. Service for others is the true enrichment of self. As Mr. Martineau has said, "It is surprising how practical duty enriches the fancy and the heart, and action clears and deepens the affections. Indeed, no one can have a true idea of right until he does it, any genuine reverence for it until he has done it often and with cost, any peace ineffable in it until he does it always and with alacrity. Does any one complain that the best affections are transient visitors with him and the heavenly Spirit a

stranger to his heart? Oh, let him not go forth on any strained wing of thought in distant quest of them, but rather stay at home and set his heart in the true order of conscience, and of their own accord the divinest guests will enter."

How wonderfully Jesus illustrated the refreshment and power of service. This was His mission. Of Him Isaiah prophesied, "Jehovah hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the poor; He hath sent me to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Of Him it was testified by the officers sent to arrest Him, "Never man spake like this man."

Consider Him at the well near Sychar; He and His disciples had been journeying from Judea to Galilee, along the hot and dusty roads, through Samaria. Fatigued with the journey, Jesus sat weary by the well while His disciples went to the city near at hand to buy meat. When they returned they found Him whom they had left so weary under a spiritual tension of deepest interest. Knowing His hunger and His fatigue from journeying they urged Him to eat of the food they had procured, but He answered their solicitude with the statement, "I have meat to eat that ye know not of." What was this mysterious nourishment? The joy of service.

While resting by the well a woman of Samaria came for water; He perceived her restlessness of spirit and read in her look her hunger of heart. She, a Samaritan woman, expected scorn or contempt from the Jewish man she supposed Him to be, but was met with supplication. He

requested of her a service, simple and natural, which apparently she only could render at that time—"Give me to drink." Her surprise voiced itself in an inquiry which invited the revelation He gave her. His ministry transformed her and refreshed Him; for the passion of the sympathizing Saviour is to serve. Receptivity is His opportunity, to bring joy to the sorrowing is His enrichment, and He was the perfect man.

Every act of selfishness, every unkind word, every ungracious thought, is evidence of crudeness, unhealthfulness or deformity of spirit. Every neglect to sympathize with the suffering, to help the needy according to opportunity, evidences a thriftless spiritual life, criminally wasteful of that which is essential to the soul's enrichment.

His education has been neglected, or sadly perverted, and he is practically ignorant of the first principles of true living who is guilty of these things. God's purpose in your education is that you shall "know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary." This and this only can satisfy your obligations to yourself.

II. The second relation of the individual, and in some respects the relation most complex and manifest, is his relation to his fellows. Serviceableness is an obligation inseparable from this relation also.

"The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary."

Every person should live for others because no person can live without others. What would your life be if you

had no contemporaries, if there were not one human soul with whom you might have fellowship, not one with whom you could converse, from whom you might receive approval or assistance, or to whom you might minister? Which of your commonest or most personal possessions would be yours if you were the first and only person living? Which of your comforts or necessities or present possibilities have you created independently of what you have inherited from others? "Freely ye have received, freely give," "as good stewards of the manifold grace of God."

The argument from design finds suggestive application in the varied relations of serviceableness to ability and need. The law of serviceableness in its simplest statement is, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you (under the reversal of your circumstances), do ye even so to them."

Your development is the dividend upon such service as you render. The investment you must make before you can have the best dividends is habitually to "speak a word in season to him that is weary," thus keeping alert and in active use your every virtue, "walking circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, buying up the opportunity." The weary one may receive relief from another. Failing to render your service, that opportunity is lost to you forever. By so much your loss is irreparable and you perpetuate your spiritual inefficiency and unfitness for larger usefulness. As Mr. Chalmers says, "Thousands of men breathe, move and live—pass off the stage of life—are heard of no more. Why? They do not a particle of

good in the world, and none were blessed by them as the instrument of their redemption; not a word they spoke could be recalled and so they perished. Their light went out in darkness and they were not remembered more than the insects of yesterday. Will you thus live and die, O man immortal? Live for something. Do good and leave behind you a monument of virtue that the storm of time can never destroy. Write your name in kindness and love and mercy on the hearts of thousands you may come in contact with year by year. You will never be forgotten. No; your name, your deeds, will be as legible on the hearts you leave behind as the stars on the brow of the evening. Good deeds will shine as the stars of heaven."

It is a law of nature that a grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die to bring forth fruit, and it is a law of the kingdom that he who loseth his life for the service of God shall find it. God's patent of greatness to Abraham was, "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." God called Paul "a chosen vessel" because of the great things he should suffer for the Gospel. Jesus Christ hath a name high over all, because "He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

"No man dieth to himself." If he attempts it his unselfish ministries live on in others securing for him a fruitful and honorable life. "No man liveth to himself." If he attempts that he dies; his investments having been made in a congested, diseased, defaulting personality become non-productive. He who would segregate himself

from society by withholding seasonable service is guilty of spiritual embezzlement and faces spiritual bankruptcy. No life is or can be isolated. The glory of life is in its serviceableness. Its gauge is personal efficiency to relieve human need.

III. The third relation of the individual is the most important because it determines and makes possible the other two. This is his relation to God. "As man is a subject as soon as he is a creature, so he is a subject as long as he is a creature." The authority of God is absolute, His will is the ultimate source of all obligation, from Him we have our life, He sets its ideals, He determines its possibilities and necessities, and His approval is the gauge of ultimate success.

True education must reckon with the law of the Lord, which is perfect. "In keeping of them there is great reward." His revelation sets forth the nature, primary obligation and objective of life. "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them." The knowledge of them must precede obedience, but as the law of the Lord is a matter of revelation, how can it be known unless it is taught?

I may not discuss at this time the essential relation of the Bible to true education, both in schools and in life, but I may be permitted to say in passing, if "the end of all education is right living," a Godless school is an archaic form of social evolution, psychologically defective, a spiritual derelict, and a crime against humanity. No matter what may be the mental equipment of a teacher, nor the

extent or exactness of his knowledge of any special subject, no matter what his personality, or his reputation, if he is not a disciple of and loyal to Jesus Christ, whom the consensus of the world's best men and most accurate thinkers recognizes as the Great Teacher, he is by so much disqualified for the best work and his deficiency is a menace to the development of the pupils entrusted to him. To employ such an instructor for youth is to commit the molding of immortal souls to unholy hands.

It is inexplicable that a politico-ecclesiastical organization, which has been for a millennium and a half persistently oppressive and cruelly intolerant wherever it has had the power, should secure by subtle and insidious influences the exclusion of the Bible and general Christian instruction from the secondary and primary schools of this Christian nation; and all forsooth because it cannot have control of the state funds and dictate the religious instruction; that, too, when the percentage of illiteracy and immorality in the nations where it exists is suggestively proportionate to the strength of its political power.

There is in the essential nature of youth a responsiveness to and a demand for instruction in spiritual truth. No education is complete without it. The highest culture must include the culture of the highest. So persistent and assertive is this demand that it has come to pass without legislation, and in some cases in spite of legislation, that the colleges and universities of America contain the most Christian communities in the land.

“ Taking the young men of North America as a whole, not more than eight per cent., or one in twelve, are Chris-

tians. In 1902 a careful census was taken in three hundred and fifty-six of our colleges and universities, which shows that of 83,000 young men fifty-two per cent., or more than one-half of the student body, are members of evangelical churches.”—JOHN R. MOTT.

The objective of college education is, or ought to be, to make a life, to produce clear-headed, sound-hearted and broad-visioned men and women, virtuous and serviceable, whose lives are quadrated with God and humanity. The college stands primarily for this ideal. “All that is taught or learned should be subservient to the paramount aim—the perfecting of character.” Science, history, literature, are to be studied not as an end but as means to personal development. Whatever else one studies, if he fails to study the human heart; in whatever laboratory one works, if he fails to experiment in the ministry of sympathy; whatever may be one’s attainments in philosophical insight, if he fails to perceive the heart’s hunger and need; whatever felicity of expression one may attain, if he fails to acquire the skill “to speak a word in season to him that is weary,” he has substituted a means for the end and his education is a failure.

Our text makes two very explicit and comprehensive statements:

1. “The tongue of the learned” is the gift of the Lord God, and

2. It is given by the Lord God for a definite purpose—in order that, “We should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.”

Our obligation to God is to minister to His creatures, and He says, "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto Me," and "In as much as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me."

Because of the sovereignty of God, because of the solidarity of humanity, because of the seminal character of personal endowments and the relation of activity to development, and because love is the regnant principle of life, true education is and must be serviceableness. There is a typical significance in the book of Revelation which teaches the exaltation of service. There we see "the Lamb which was slain" in the midst of the throne, honored, worshipped, reigning, because He was worthy, having redeemed us to God by His own precious blood.

When we see one doing for others, not simply as duty, nor of compulsion, nor for self-advancement, but truly for others, we see in process the normal unfolding of a soul, the making of an ideal life, the growing of a man according to the divine pattern. "He is no fool who parts with that which he cannot keep when he is sure to be recompensed with what he cannot lose." It is the teaching of the Christ and the experience of the Christly that "It is more blessed to give than to receive." God requires for us and of us the best. Therefore, strive to attain that culture which will enable you to be serviceable, which will qualify you to give with a heart glowing with generous sentiment, to give as the fountain gives out its water from its own swelling depths, to give as the air gives its vital breezes, unrestrained and free, to give as the sun gives out

its light from the infinite abyss of its own nature. "Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, for with what measure ye mete it shall be measured unto you."

This is true education which shall secure to you the fulness of life here and an abundant entrance at the right hand of God in the hereafter.

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