

AN ADDRESS BY CHANCELLOR
ANDREWS.

Chancellor Andrews delivered the opening address before the students of the University of Nebraska at Memorial Hall Saturday morning, September 21st. It was as follows:

Colleagues and Pupils: We are permitted today to begin the work of another academic year. Back again from the lake-shore and mountain-side, from home and home friends, refreshed, invigorated, ardent, all of us are in condition, I trust, to take up with avidity and success the labors which await us here.

It is no small part of the art of living to know how to discharge one's duties with cheerfulness. What kills is irksome work. If we can learn to be joyful in all we do we shall flourish upon toil the most assiduous and exacting.

It is possible for a right minded man to view with complacency his lot in life whatever it may be, easier or harder, noble or common. If the business is honest and he can do it—do it apparently better than anything else and more conveniently than his neighbors can—then he may say: "This is my due contribution to the general weal. What my hands can find to do, how onerous soever, I will do it with my might." That not only can be, it ought to be, one's sentiment, even if one's place in the world's workshop is in itself unpleasant.

But there are paths where obligation and delight walk hand in hand: tasks intrinsically charming; callings in which, if they are rightly apprehended, interest prompts to best exertion at the same time with duty. The pursuit of education at universities seems to me to be one of these.

A chief reason why it is so is the fascination of that mental mastery which it is our duty and privilege here to achieve. Metaphysicians say that the most fundamental attribute of ultimate being is activity. The latest thought fully justifies the old theologians who called God "actus purus." And man is god-like in this; he joys to be active; that is his property. We err in conceiving of rest as in the strict sense a desirable goal. "In life," says Pascal, "we always think that we are seeking repose, while in reality, what we incessantly seek is agitation." Our meaning when we sigh for quiescence is frictionless and calm action such as Aristotle denominates the highest good, "a perfect activity in a perfect life."

But no kind of bodily exertion is worthy to be compared for the delight it yields with mental exertion and achievement. To think, to learn, to perceive new relations among things, to widen the spirit's horizon—this, to all persons capable of enjoying it, is a fortune indeed. Every one of us, I believe, shares the mind of Lessing, who said;

"Did the Almighty, holding in his right hand truth and in his left search after truth, deign to tender me the one I might prefer, in all humility but without hesitation I should request search after truth."

Well, search after truth is in this place our express vocation.

A richer zest is communicated to the pleasure of mental acquisition when it is carried on by many students in association. It is not in the class room alone that we teach and are taught. Each of us instructs and molds his friends, and this is most precious university influence. Youth from one section meet youth from another, the man from the mountains debates with him from the plains, the representatives of different parties, sects, tendencies and grades of culture confront and jostle one another mentally. These are among the most advantageous forms in which education can be communicated. To be four years in a university like ours, which is not so populous that the individual is lost and yet is enough so to embrace pupils from widely remote sections and circumstances, has much the same cultivating effect on a man that travel imparts. No one of us can live and work here for four years without receiving from this association an invaluable broadening and purification of the views with which he came.

Again, if our purposes in university work are right, we can feel as properly as men can anywhere that what we do is destined to promote humanity's welfare. The training of a young person's mind is no merely personal matter; it is a great public concern. If well done it fits the subject of it for his sphere in society, rounding his character and developing his faculties. Both learning and teaching are, in the phrase of political economy, forms of "productive" labor, as truly as weaving cotton or extracting ore. They swell community's wealth. Not instantly or directly, it may be—and the same is true of much physical labor which every one would call productive—but none the less really, all correct discipline of mind puts mankind in a way to be better off, even as to its strictly temporal estate, than it otherwise could be. Mental wealth it of course advances.

To me this consideration is highly inspiring. To know that human existence has eternal meaning, and that your activity, hard and humble, perhaps, is genuine part of the force which enables human existence to go on—such assurance keeps toil from being drudgery and makes life worth living.

Learning "for its own sake," in the strict sense of this phrase, meaning that we learn without any reference whatever to any good either to ourselves or to others to be had thereby, is a contradiction. If such a course were conceivable or possible it would still be irra-

tional. But let us be convinced that we are vital members of society; that our mental cultivation will count in furtherance of human progress, that our fellow-men are to be made happier and better through the training which we are giving and receiving; we then see it to be reasonable and good to exert ourselves to the utmost. Only under the stimulus of such a view, I believe, can thoughtful persons permanently do their best.

The mere fact of its utility lends, to be sure, no special glory to educational work as distinguished from much else which men are doing; but there is an aspect to the good of education which peculiarly exalts it. It is more vitally important than aught else, save character, to the perfection of civilization. Mere material resources do not constitute or create fine civilization. Wealth unaccompanied by what is higher, breeds Philistinism, which can only degrade a nation's character. Things can never take the place of men. Trade, commerce, business, industry—these are important factors in human culture, but by themselves they have in no case yet made a nation great.

While it cannot be said that the school of learning is the sole nursery of the sublime temper necessary to splendor of civilization, it is certainly a most important, even an indispensable nursery.

Very much of this higher life of the spirit connects itself with literature and religion, and every observer of men or reader of history knows that both these are closely dependent on schools. Very few literary celebrities are there who are not children of the schools, and these not children are, at least, grandchildren. Religion has an affinity with organized learning not a whit less close.

But coming down to the material basis of civilization, those aspects of it that fill men's minds, alas, mostly to the exclusion of the higher phases to which we have been adverting, civilization in its practical efficiency is in the last analysis totally dependent on the work done at the centers of learning. Nearly all the great advances in industry which make goods cheaper and life happier, involve principles which have been carefully wrought out in the study or the laboratory. Edison or Tesla could do little but for the science of physics, which less practical men elaborated and made ready for their use. Physics, in turn, depends at every step upon the higher mathematics. All the path-breaking physicists, the men who are making the forces of matter the levers of life, incessantly cry that if you would join their ranks you must come prodigiously equipped with mathematics. No others need apply. It is an appeal to the university classroom. Similarly based in university teaching and research have been nearly all those