

Address to the Graduates

(Written by the Late Doctor Peter Conroy of Charlottetown and read at the last Annual Convocation of St. Dunstan's University by Dr. W. J. P. McMillan).

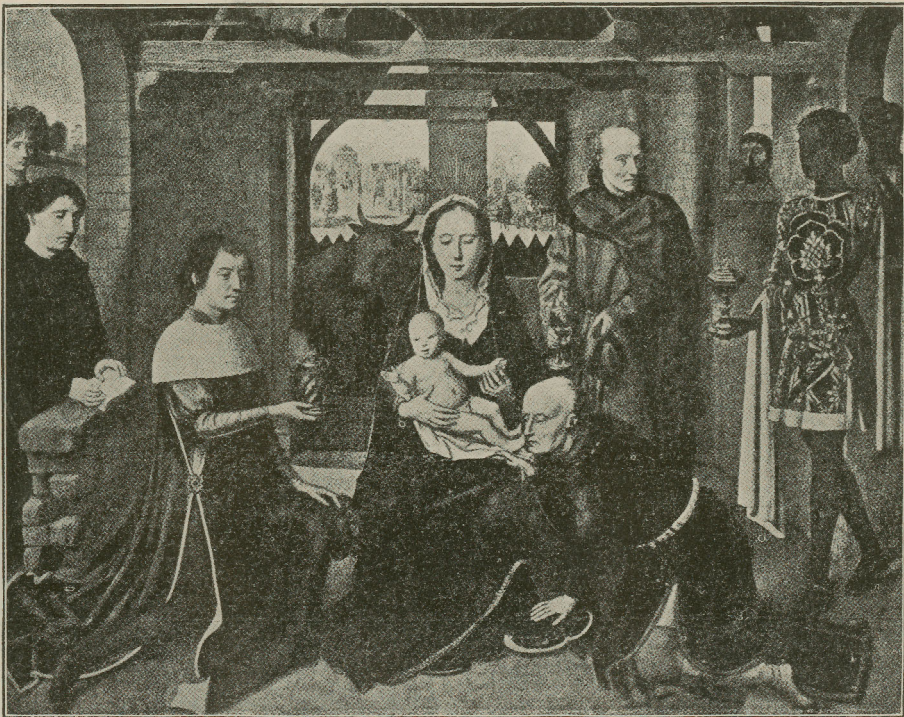
I HAVE been honored by a request from my sincere friend, the Rector, to address a few words to you the graduates of this year—the first to go forth from this institution since its elevation to the rank and dignity of a University.

I must first congratulate you as I do most heartily upon the honor which is yours today, and to express the hope that you will ever hold high the banner of St. Dunstan's University and that the standard of character maintained by each and every one of you in after life will be an example worthy of imitation by those who will follow you in the years that are to come.

I congratulate His Lordship the Bishop upon the success of his efforts to elevate the status of Education in this province by the placing of our principal educational institution upon the highest level, affording the rising generation of students an opportunity of securing the Academic degrees necessary for entrance upon professional studies without being obliged to depend upon the favour of foreign schools. To his Lordship I would say in words of an old school mate of St. Dunstan's:—

“ Long may he be spared
His attached flock to bless,
And his efforts be crowned
With unbounded success.”

In the year 1874, forty-four years ago, I had the honor of being one of six who formed the graduating class of that year. Of that number two still remain, The Rev. Dr. Walker of Rollo Bay and myself, the



others have all passed to the great beyond, leaving behind them a record of honorable endeavour, worthy of the institution that sent them forth.

I can well remember the emotion that stirred us on that eventful day when we were about to bid adieu to our old "Alma Mater".

The time for choosing of a vocation, or the taking up of the study of that profession best suited to each one's natural aptitude, brought to our young minds apprehensions and forebodings which shadowed to a great extent the joy commonly associated in the minds of young students with the advent of Graduation Day.

St. Dunstan's in those days of happy memory was not equipped as it is today. There were not then available the advantages nor the comforts now so generously supplied, but our students were, generally speaking, young men of good purpose, the professors were painstaking and devoted to their tasks and in spite of many handicaps they succeeded in sending forth excellent young men to take honored rank in every department of professional and business life. When I recall the conditions existing then and consider the opportunities for teaching and for study now provided in this up-to-date institution, I am led to wonder,

"When such things were possible in the green wood—what may be done in the dry?"

Though you young gentlemen have finished your course of study at St. Dunstan's you are not yet ready to take part in the affairs of the busy world. You have only reached the half way mile post along the road to the battle front—the roughest port of the journey lies still before you.

Most of you I presume intend taking up a profession the qualifications for the practice of which can be obtained only in one of the larger Universities. In

this new world of study matters of more serious importance than any you have yet been engaged in will occupy your time and attention. You will then be deprived of the maternal supervision that protected you in this Institution, but your new teachers although not in so close a relationship with you as those you are leaving will still keep a strict record of your worthiness and general fitness for the duties of the profession you have undertaken to follow.

I may say with almost absolute assurance of certainty that the success or failure of a young man beginning the study of a profession in a University can be judged and foretold with unerring accuracy by the manner of his bearing while a student.

The labor and difficulty of acquiring an adequate knowledge of the different subjects set down in curriculum for the study of a profession are very great and require the entire time of a student who wishes to do himself justice and to satisfy the requirements of his teachers. You will therefore have no time to waste upon the consideration of the affairs of the outside world.

Opportunities you will have for dangerous distractions to which you have not yet been exposed under the beneficent restraints at St. Dunstan's. I speak only of those with whom my life as a University student brought me most in contact, viz. students of law and medicine.

I trust I shall not be accused of heresy when I express the hope that all of you young men will not become clergymen, lawyers or doctors. Educated young men of the present day apparently see no other future for themselves excepting in the ranks of the old liberal professions. Representative business men of education are now more needed in our community

than any other class of citizens. The prosperity of every country depends upon the business activity of its people. The whole social fabric must be supplied and maintained by the producers of wealth. The great industries of the day are crying out for the services of scientific men. In the period of recovery that will follow when this dreadful war is over, an urgent call will be heard for experts to fill the ranks of the skilled in practical sciences, in the departments of civil, electrical, chemical and mining engineering. In the realm of commerce with its infinite ramifications the greatest opportunities for useful and profitable activity will be found.

The directors of great enterprises and of wealth producing industries had at the beginning of their career no greater opportunities than are yours today. Numbers of them by energy alone have succeeded to positions of influence in the world such as no member of the so called learned professions can ever hope to attain.

The apprehensions a young man feels when about to enter upon the study of the profession of his choice are for the most part needless as success depends more on one's determination to succeed than upon any particular talent or natural aptitude.

“The man who wins is the average man
Not built on any particular plan,
Not blessed with any particular luck,
Just steady and earnest and full of pluck ;
The man who wins is the man who works,
Who neither labor nor trouble shirks,
Who uses his head, his heart, his eyes,
The man who wins is the man who tries.”

To achieve a competence in life is the right as it should be the duty and purpose of every normal man, so that when his share of work has been done he may lay aside business worries and enjoy in his declining

years a reasonable measure of "otium cum dignitate". The highly intellectual or talented student unless he possesses the steadying qualities of character has no advantage in the fight with his less favored brother.

Sound strong moral character stands first among the requirements for material success, while industry, patience, business aptitude, and personal popularity all count in competition with intellectual excellence and professional proficiency.

There is no young man who has gone through a full course of studies in this University who cannot lay claim to at least some one quality which when properly developed will be sufficient for success.

Many and varied talents are sometimes the fortunate possession of one individual, this generous endowment being an evidence of special generosity on the part of the Creator. At the same time any one talent judiciously developed provided there are no vices is sufficient for average success. A winning talent may not make its appearance during school days, and may only manifest itself later in life. If none but the highly intellectual, if only those who are shining lights at school should succeed, most of us might well despair. Nature in that case would not be dealing fairly with her dependent children. The Good Lord has supplied us all with weapons sufficient for self defence. These may not be made from the finest metal, but they are suited for the purpose for which they were designed. The world will give you just what you deserve and the deserving man need not be afraid.

The Psalmist says,

"Once I was young and now I am old,
Yet I have never seen the just man go
Naked nor his seed begging bread."

The accumulation of money does not in itself signify success. Wealth is a sort of by-product in the manufacture of success. Success at the same time cannot be dissociated from the possession of at least a competence. This competence in the case of preferment signifies that good service has been rendered and recognized by adequate reward.

Wealth accumulated as the result of honest labor points to a healthy condition of living as it implies work—the handmaid of happiness and virtue, as idleness is the mother of misery and vice. The pursuit of happiness is impelling.

It is not necessary in order to be successful that one should be on the top rung of the ladder that reaches to the summit of life's lofty pinnacle. A firm stand at any height is quite as honorable and creditable. Success however is not attained by all. Many fall by the wayside and few come within sight of the castle of their dreams.

As one who has had a long experience in a profession whose purpose and object is the study of human nature in all its phases may be permitted to say without any attempt at moralizing, that materialistic happiness is a delusion.

“If happiness hath not her seat
And centre in the breast,
We may be wise, or rich or great,
But never can be blest.”

The satisfaction that comes from well directed effort in useful and honest work with the legitimate remuneration that follows as a reward of labor well done will bring one nearer to that ever elusive state called happiness than any means within the control of man.

To each one of you I would give if I may be permitted a word of advice, viz., always be on terms of

friendship with yourself. Endeavour in the first days of your University life when you undertake the study of a profession to secure for yourself a congenial companion, one of your own year, a student of good sense and character, who will be your chum and your chief friend all through the course.

Untold advantage comes to the young University student who has the good fortune of this chief companion. Great and helpful moral and educational advantage of priceless value depend upon your making the proper choice. Be friendly with everybody but familiar with none. Treat every person as if some day he might be your enemy, and your enemy as if some day he might be your friend. Cultivate in early life a familiarity with manners and customs of polite society founded on good sense—part of the educational equipment of every gentleman. These are outward distinguishing marks of a gentleman and part of every gentleman's educational outfit.

Your reputation and your fortune will depend greatly upon the opinion of your teachers and in after life these good opinions will be to you a valuable heritage. Remember: Public opinion is the greatest of all moral censors and the world will find you out no matter how you conceal your merits or how assiduously you hide your faults. The friendships you have formed at college are the most precious and the most enduring and the home of a college student is always "an open sesame" to old competitors in the class room or college campus.

As a final word let me ask you to be true to your "Alma Mater" under whose beneficial 'aejis' you have spent so many happy and profitable days. Your success will be a just cause of pride to your teachers and a fitting return for their solicitude, their labor, and their sacrifice in your behalf.