

ADDRESS
OF
PRESIDENT COOLIDGE

DEDICATING THE
LINCOLN MEMORIAL LIBRARY

AT THE
SOUTH DAKOTA STATE COLLEGE

BROOKINGS, S. DAK.
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ADDRESS

At the South Dakota State College, Brookings, Saturday, September 10, 1927, at 9.30 a. m., central standard time, dedicating the Lincoln Memorial Library, President Coolidge spoke as follows:

MY FELLOW COUNTRYMEN:

We are met here to dedicate another temple to the cause of learning. To reach their full effect the buildings used for educational purposes must assume the character of temples. One of our learned men has told us that "We do but go where admiration leads the way." Unless we approach our places of learning in that spirit we shall never receive their full benefits.

The South Dakota State College gives every appearance of having reached in a full measure this position. We can usually measure both the desire and the appreciation that exists for the advantages of this life by the sacrifices we are willing to make to secure them. It is evident that in South Dakota this determination has a very strong hold upon the people. While this was to be expected, for this is yet a land of pioneers who have come here in response to a desire to improve their condition, yet the progress they have made is none the less astounding. It is true, of course, that although this is a comparatively new community, it has been nurtured under all the advantages of modern science and invention, which did not accrue to the older parts of our country in their early beginnings. Yet when we remember that South Dakota has been admitted to statehood less than 40 years, that anything like a real settlement has been going on less than 75 years, that during this short period many thriving cities have arisen, long lines of transportation have been built, an adequate educational system has been perfected, a body of laws has been developed, a vast agricultural empire has arisen, a method of local and State government has been built up, the administration of justice has been made effective, and, in short, a great American Commonwealth has been established, we can not fail to stand in respectful admiration for a people whose courage and ability have been crowned with such remarkable accomplishments. But this is only typical of the growth and progress of the West, and the West is only typical of the growth and progress of America.

Perhaps there is no better example of this wonderful development than your own State college. It was opened 43 years ago to-day as a preparatory school with 35 students. Since that time it has reached the proportions of a college of agriculture and mechanic arts, with an enrollment of about 1,400 students. During this short interval it

has attained a rank as an educational institution in its field scarcely less than that which was secured by some of our eastern universities after nearly two centuries of existence. It is a mighty inspiration to realize that American communities have a capacity which is demonstrated by their record for the accomplishment of such wonderful works.

In communities such as these the cause of education has never failed to hold a very high place. Of course, the people in their daily life would give their first thought to religious worship, but in the affairs of government education has come to be predominant. The importance attached to it is signified by the large proportion of public money which is devoted to its support. In the country at large it is probable that well toward three-fifths of all local taxes are expended directly or indirectly for education. We hear very little criticism of the amount of money that is used for this purpose, but it is undoubtedly well from time to time to make a careful investigation of this very large item, not so much to attempt to reduce it as to make certain that all wastes are eliminated and that the community is securing full value in return for its large outlays. No progressive community can afford to neglect the education of its people. Considered on the basis of economics their development depends very largely on the scientific learning and skill with which their efforts are directed. The day of the rule of thumb is past. The day of the exact application of scientific knowledge by persons technically trained in all the affairs of life has come. Any neglect in this direction would mean at once stagnation, decay, and failure. It is impossible for any community to hold its place in modern society unless it is fully equipped in the educational field of arts and sciences and research. This solid and substantial institution is incontrovertible evidence of the devotion of South Dakota to these principles.

There has been a long-standing controversy over the question of what constitutes an institution of learning, especially a college. Some contend it is the trustees, others the faculty, still others the student body. I suspect that it is the combination of all of these, and the better the quality of each the better the institution will be. But there is yet another element which has come to be all-important in modern scholarship. That is the library. While the teacher is the instrumentality and the directing force, to a very large extent, for the training of youth and the diffusion of knowledge, books are, after all, the repository of learning. Without them the wide scope of modern scholarship would of course be entirely impossible, and no college would feel itself adequately equipped for the best service which was not provided with a well chosen and extensive library. Books contain not only the priceless records of the past, but they are

to a large extent the hope of the future. By means of them we have revealed to us the inventions and discoveries of science, the beauties of poetry, and the imperishable thoughts of the master minds of all the ages. A liberal education may begin in the classroom, but it will scarcely rise above mediocrity unless it is extended into the library and by that means broadened into the practical experience of life.

We are dedicating this library with its inestimable treasure of learning to the memory of Abraham Lincoln. It is well known that in his early life he had little opportunity to come in contact with books. He had almost nothing that could be dignified as schooling. While it is true that there is a very large field of education that lies entirely outside of books, yet books are the foundation of all education. It is said that Lincoln walked miles to borrow a book, and the few which he had, he studied until he had mastered them. No one could have become the great master of English which he was, the author of the Gettysburg Address, the Emancipation Proclamation, and the second inaugural address, without a profound acquaintance with many books. His place merely in the realm of literature is such that it would be eminently fitting to dedicate any library to his memory. But there is a special reason for placing his name on the library of one of the land-grant colleges of our States.

This great President had a profound interest not only in education, but in agricultural education. He delivered an address in 1859 before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society in which he said, "Free labor insists on universal education." In the same address he then set out his belief in what has come to be known as industrial education, saying that "Heads and hands should cooperate as friends," and expressed his opinion that this should be applied to the tillers of the soil by declaring that "No other human occupation opens so wide a field for the profitable and agreeable combination of labor with cultivated thought as agriculture." He also declared his belief in scientific efficiency by adding, "The thought recurs that education—cultivated thought—can be best combined with agricultural labor, or any labor, on the principle of thorough work."

Here was a man who had been brought up under surroundings where the tilling of the soil was carried on by methods which had made no advance for 2,000 years. In fact, the husbandman of the days of Lincoln's boyhood was the husbandman of the days of Abraham. The great change came with the application of machinery. When Lincoln was speaking, this was almost entirely of the horse-drawn variety, but the steam engine was coming into more diversified use and some attempt had been made to use it for plowing. The general application of chemistry to soil production had scarcely been applied to the farm. The fact that in those surroundings and under

those conditions he was able to vision agriculture as one of the learned professions is another of the many indications of his supreme greatness.

In the case of Lincoln perhaps it is unnecessary to say that this was no mere figure of rhetoric intended only to serve the purpose of platitudinous oratory, but the expression of a sound and mature conviction which he believed to be practical, and, should occasion offer, one which he would attempt to put into operation. The opportunity came to him sooner than he may have expected. During the administration of President Buchanan the Congress had passed a bill providing for a grant of land in the several States to establish educational institutions in agriculture and the mechanic arts. This bill had been vetoed. It is said that Jonathan B. Turner was the author of this measure, and that before he was nominated Lincoln had told him that if he were chosen President the proposal would have his approval. Representative Morrill, of Vermont, later Senator for many years, fathered the bill in the Congress and it bears his name. It was passed and signed by President Lincoln on July 2, 1862. Under its provisions 30,000 acres of public land for each of their Senators and Representatives in the Congress were given to each State to be used for the support of a college of agriculture and mechanic arts. Under the terms of this law the States have established these institutions, which in the past 50 years have played such an important part in the agricultural life of our country.

These grants of land have been greatly supplemented by direct appropriations from the National Treasury, until under laws now in existence the annual appropriations made by the Congress for this purpose run into millions of dollars. All of this is the realization of the vision of Abraham Lincoln, which may have come to him as he rode the circuit over the prairies of Illinois, or as he went up and down the State in the conduct of political campaigns. Its material and spiritual effect upon the well-being of our country is beyond estimation.

We should all of us remember Lincoln as the great emancipator, the President who guided the Nation through four years of internal conflict, who demonstrated beyond future question the national quality of our institutions and the indestructibility of our Union, who removed forever from our soil the stain of human slavery, and who possessed a God-given insight into the hearts of the American people. But these elements of his greatness should not be permitted to eclipse the mighty service which he rendered to the cause of vocational education by his advocacy and approval of the measure which established what are usually referred to as our State agricultural colleges. It has been under their inspiration that the amount of production for each person employed has been so highly increased and

the productivity of the soil so greatly stimulated. They created a vast agricultural empire, lying between the Alleghenies and the Rockies, which has furnished an increasing food supply to meet the demands of our growing population. So many and so varying elements went into the winning of the great World War that much caution should be exercised in assigning to any one of them a decisive influence. But I think it is entirely within reason to say that without the supplies that came from the American farms it is impossible to see how the war could have been won. Those supplies could never have been furnished without the capacity for production which is directly traceable to the influence of the American agricultural colleges. The hand of Abraham Lincoln reached over the battle fields of France and was one of the decisive factors in turning the scale of victory.

But these colleges are important not only because of the economic results which have accrued from them but even more because of their spiritual value. They are of great benefit in the domain of land and the various products of the soil, but in the domain of thought they have an even more important influence. Our whole country is yet comparatively young. We have been driven by necessity to giving a great deal of attention to subduing the forces of nature. It has been necessary to create anew on this continent all of the instruments of civilization. We have had our cities to build, our highways, our railroads, and our canals to lay out, our mines and manufacturing to put into operation, our banking and commerce, as well as our agriculture, to organize, and our political and our social problems to solve. All of these have made necessary a great supply of material resources for their creation and support.

We have been excessively busy seeking for information that could be turned to practical advantage in the matter of dollars and cents, rather than for that wisdom which would guide us through eternity. Our higher educational institutions have turned their thoughts especially to the sciences, and our secondary schools to vocational training. How important these are in my estimation will appear from what I have already said. How poor and weak and generally ineffective we should be without these advantages can be at once seen by the most casual observation of those nations among which they have been neglected.

This is by no means all that is to be expected from American education and American institutions. I can not conceive that the object of Abraham Lincoln was merely to instruct men how to raise more corn, to feed more hogs, to get more money, to buy more land, and so on in the expanding circle, as the story goes. Of course, he wanted to teach men to raise more corn, but his main object must have been to raise better men. We come back to the query that is contained in the concentrated wisdom of the ages, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

All of our science and all of our arts will never be the means for the true advancement of our Nation, will never remove us from the sphere of the superficial and the cynical, will never give us a civilization and a culture of any worthy and lasting importance unless we are able to see in them the outward manifestation of a spiritual reality. Unless our halls of learning are real temples which are to be approached by our youth in an attitude of reverence, consecrated by worship of the truth, they will all end in a delusion. The information that is acquired in them will simply provide a greater capacity for evil. Our institutions of learning must be dedicated to a higher purpose. The life of our Nation must rise to a higher realm.

There is something more in learning and something more in life than a mere knowledge of science, a mere acquisition of wealth, a mere striving for place and power. Our colleges will fail in their duty to their students unless they are able to inspire them with a broader understanding of the spiritual meaning of science, of literature, and of the arts. Their graduates will go out into life poorly equipped to meet the problems of existence, to fall an easy prey to dissatisfaction and despair. Many of our older universities were founded by pious hands at great sacrifice for the express purpose of training men for the ministry to carry light to the people on the problems of life. Unless our college graduates are inspired with these ideals, our colleges have failed in their most important function and our people will be lacking in true culture. Abraham Lincoln, who was the most spiritual of our Presidents, had a true appreciation of this principle.

In closing the address to which I have referred he expressed his belief that—

“ * * * by the best cultivation of the physical world beneath and around us and the intellectual and moral world within us we shall secure an individual social and political prosperity and happiness whose course shall be onward and upward, and which, while the earth endures, shall not pass away.”

While he did not fail to place a proper emphasis on the cultivation of the physical world around us, he thoroughly understood that this must be supplemented by a cultivation of the intellectual and moral world within us. The human soul will always rebel at any attempt to confine it to the physical world. Its dwelling place is in the intellectual and moral world. It is into that realm that all true education should lead. Unless our scholarship, however brilliant, is to be barren and sterile, leading toward pessimism, more emphasis must be given to the development of our moral power. Our colleges must teach not only science but character. We must maintain a stronger, firmer grasp on the principle declared in the Psalms of David and reechoed in the Proverbs of his son Solomon, that “ The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.”