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NOTES
OF
MR. DURANT'S SERMON
ON
"THE SPIRIT OF THE COLLEGE."

BOSTON:
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1890.

THE SPIRIT OF THE COLLEGE.

COL. ii. 3: "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

The Wellesley College plan of education may properly be made a lesson for the Sabbath day, because it is religious throughout.

It asks the co-operation of teachers and students in that revolt which is the real meaning of the Higher Education of Women. We revolt against the slavery in which women are held by the customs of society—the broken health, the aimless lives, the subordinate position, the helpless dependence, the dishonesties and shams of so-called education. The Higher Education of Women is one of the great world battle-cries for freedom; for right against might. It is the cry of the oppressed slave. It is the assertion of absolute equality. The war is sacred, because it is the war of Christ against the principalities and powers of sin, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Wellesley College desires to take the foremost place in the mighty struggle. All our plans are in outspoken opposition to the customs and the prejudices of the public. Therefore, we expect every one of you to be, in the noblest sense, reformers.

It is difficult in the midst of great revolutions, whether political or social, to read rightly the signs of the times.

You mistake altogether the significance of the movement of which you are a part, if you think this is simply the question of a college education for girls. I believe that God's hand is in it; that it is one of the great ocean currents of Christian civilization; that He is calling to womanhood to come up higher, to prepare itself for great conflicts, for vast reforms in social life, for noblest usefulness. The higher education is but the putting on God's armor for the contest.

We have no time now to discuss woman's mission. One fact only as we leave it: there are three hundred thousand women teachers in the United States. Who is to govern the country? Give me the teachers.

If we are to have a higher education for womanhood, we must have five great essentials:—

First: God with us.—No plan can prosper without Him. The one vital question of the morning is, GOD FIRST IN THE HIGHER EDUCATION OF WOMEN; GOD FIRST IN WELLESLEY COLLEGE. But to see the question in its proper harmony, we must group it with other great truths, which may be considered at some later day.

Second: Health.—No system of education can be in accordance with God's law which injures health. Our war-cry here is the old proverb, "*Mens sana in corpore sano.*" We seek freedom from the physical chains which enslave women. Health is a religious duty. This wonderful human form God calls the temple of the Holy Ghost; and the physical ideal of womanhood is a noble, beautiful form, healthful, vigorous, graceful,—not pretty, not a confused compound of vanity and sentimentality and shams. Remember while you live, that the most beautiful woman is the one through whose face shines

the pure, noble soul, the educated intellect, the brave, true, unselfish, unsullied radiance of lofty purpose. Trample in the dust forever the old loathsome ideal of the gushing story paper and silly novel, with the baby face and the small waist and the small brain and the small sentimentalities. Shake off those poisonous, false ideas which make girls destroy health for show, and be reformers and preachers of the new evangel of health.

Third: Usefulness.—All beauty is the flower of use. Make war against the old sham notion that women are to be trained only in accomplishments,—to become the toys, the trifles, the amusements of their lords,—to shine outwardly, not to be filled with inner light. That has been for centuries the ideal in old Circassia. Let us have education with a purpose, for a purpose.

Fourth: Thoroughness.—Be reformers against the lies and frauds of easy, slipshod, smattering, so-called education. Girls are trained to say, “We hate mathematics,” and to choose easy studies.

Fifth.—The one great, true ideal of higher education which the noblest womanhood demands; viz., *the supreme development and unfolding of every power and faculty*; of the kingly reason—the beautiful imagination—the sensitive emotional nature—the religious aspirations. The ideal of the highest learning in full harmony with the noblest soul, graced by every charm of culture, useful, and beautiful because useful; feminine purity and delicacy and refinement giving their lustre and their power to the most absolute science; woman learned without infidelity, wise without conceit; the crowned queen of the world by right of that knowledge which is power, and that beauty which is truth.

“A perfect woman, nobly planned
 To warn, to comfort, and command;
 And yet a spirit still, and bright
 With something of an angel light.”

But, as has been said, the one great question for the morning is, whether, in this new crusade against darkness, chaos, and old night, we are going out to the war with God on our side or not. Is it a victory planned and organized in the Holy of Holies up yonder, or is it a failure and a dream?

Distinctly, positively, without any intention of compromise, without fear of defeat, we plant ourselves upon the Rock of Ages.

No plan for the higher education of woman can make head against ignorance and sin and darkness, unless it is shaped according to the great laws of God; and therefore, if it is to be according to the laws of the Creator and Sovereign of the Universe, that Creator, that God, must be Sovereign in the plan; or, as we love to say, God must be first in everything in Wellesley College.

Now, this is right athwart the currents of popular prejudice, of indifference to God, calling itself liberal, and of the surface froth and foam of the newspapers. The cry is, “Education is secular! Religion must not be mixed up with it. The two are in essential nature separate and distinct!” Mr. Facing-both-ways, the politician, with a crooked eye turned over his shoulder for votes, is very positive that education is secular, and that it is sinful to read the life of Christ in the presence of an unfledged voter who has been told that the Pope is Christ’s Vicegerent. Mr. Blind-as-a-bat, the infidel, who publishes an infidel newspaper preaching the gospel of Tom Paine to

all the world, is indignant at the bigotry and fanaticism of teaching children to ask God to bless our God-given bread, and to bless our enemies, in the sublime anthem of the Lord's Prayer. The modern self-styled "educator" agrees with them, and propounds, with looks unutterably solemn, that in all true, scientific plans of education, it must be forever divorced from religion.

Now, it is a great luxury and comfort and joy to maintain right in the face of this unreason and prejudice, that education without religion is a rayless night without a star,—a dead world without a sun.

Let us reason for a moment about this.

First, then, if education means anything, it means according to its etymology (from *e-duco*) to lead out, to unfold, to develop, the great, God-created, God-given powers and faculties of this immortal somewhat beneath the flesh garment that we call soul, mind, intellect, God-likeness. To take the unformed, ignorant child and unfold its noble powers into the glad sunshine of truth; to waken the dreaming bud and develop it into the rounded, proportioned, harmoniously perfect flower,—that surely is education.

Its true purpose is to prepare this God-given, immortal creation for living, working, creating, if you will; for being somewhat and doing somewhat in this our God's world. That is the purpose of education, unless we are all fast asleep, dreaming drearily.

Now, religious truth is, in one word, the knowledge of God's laws for man. To state the whole question in one form then, it would be this: Is a God-created child to be educated for living, being, and doing in God's world by keeping it in ignorance of God's law?

You may hammer away at these adamantine links of logic until you are weary, but no answer is possible. Religious truth is knowledge of God's law. More than all things else I must and will know this truth. Everything else is small beyond comparison. I must be on God's side; I want Him as my friend; I must know His will, His truth. I am to live in the world. I am to be something in the world. I am to do something in the world. All true unfolding of my God-given soul, all true preparation for living in God's world, demands, must have, the knowledge of God's law—religious truth.

But let us consider objections. "There are a great many denominations; there are different beliefs about religion; liberty of conscience demands that varying religious opinions should be respected."

Well, there are six hundred or six thousand religions in the world besides Mormonism, Spiritualism, and the worship of the golden calf, and pious cannibalism, and impious Tom Paine-ism. What of that? There is only one true religion.

Take an illustration from Mathematics—that pure reason—those inevitable, unanswerable laws of God—that magnificent training for the human mind. "God always geometrizes," says Plato; and God's laws in Mathematics can't lie. There is one truth in every problem. There may be ten million crooked lines between two points; but there is only one straight line, and that is the shortest distance between them. What would you say to the mathematical professor of tender conscience who should teach, "There is, to be sure, one great truth in the problem; there is but one true answer; God who made our thinking brains, God who made

Mathematics, will have but one true answer. But we must be tender to human frailty, with its ten million false answers; we must have a loving charity for the ignorance and slothfulness and stupidity which will not see the one, great, plain, inevitable truth. And we must not insist too strongly—we must not teach *that?*” “We must be charitable; we must not be bigoted: all roads lead to Rome; all rivers run to the ocean.” Yes; so do all foul ditches and common sewers. What of that?

But how are we to know the one true religion? Seek for it as you seek for all truth; just as you seek for the real truth in your languages, in your Chemistry, in your Physics, in all science. Seek for it and teach it earnestly and fearlessly.

“But others will believe and teach differently.” Well! Twenty years ago the world believed in William Tell and the tyrant Gesler, and the story of the apple. To-day it is an exploded myth. Will you fear to teach true history because China and the North Pole still believe in William Tell?

We follow Him who prayed, “Sanctify them through Thy truth.” We must have the highest truth in education and religion, and the truth shall make us free.

“But making education religious, infringes on liberty of conscience.” That idea arises from false notions on the subject. Liberty of conscience is, indeed, the very daystar of Republican institutions. It produces political freedom, and political freedom produces it. The philosophy of history is God working out freedom in conscience and politics through human agencies. But does freedom of conscience mean that the teacher must be dumb about religious truth? The whole false reasoning

on the subject which has arisen out of the debate as to the use of the Bible in the public schools, is based upon the illogical political principle, "Every one must have liberty of conscience; therefore the Bible must not be taught in the public schools." The Eliot School case may be remembered here. The obscurity lies in not distinguishing between worship and instruction. The error of friends of the Bible is, in insisting on compulsory prayer. No one can compel me to an act of worship. I am free to worship or not. That is liberty of conscience. But religious instruction is not worship, and teaching religious truth does not infringe upon the sacred rights of conscience.

The great question, however, whether God is to be first in education, reaches far beyond whether the Bible shall be taught in the public schools. There are thousands of schools where the Bible is read, but that great question does not enter in. Let us take one step onward, then. Religious truth is to be taught. Let us be fearlessly radical. What is religious truth? Not heathenism; not Mormonism; not Romanism; not sectarianism; not theology in the ordinary and accepted signification of the word. If not these, what? What answer can there be but *the great Protestant faith!*

We are students of history: we are learners from the past. We are to be teachers because we are learners. And if there is any true religion in the world; if God has declared the truth to man; if man's conscience is to be free; if government is to be free; if property and life and conscience are to be safe in a home; if woman is to be elevated and to elevate,—is it not under the great Protestant Faith, which is the battle-cry in the world's warfare against tyranny and sin?

We have nothing to do with denominationalism, but we have a great deal to do with religion. And there is one central truth which is our only hope. Without it the world is a vast charnel of despair under a godless sky. That great central truth is the one which the fearless monk of Augsburg stood forth alone against the world to teach,—stood forth alone with God to proclaim: *Justification through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.* Unless God's Bible is a dream and a lie; unless we are living in a Christless, hopeless world; unless the dead sun hangs in a dead heaven,—that is the one hope of a sin-cursed world. And history proclaims it. Whenever and wherever Justification through Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ has been taught and believed and lived, there has come a steady growth of personal freedom, safety of home and property, equal and just laws, elevation of the poor, sanctity and elevation of woman, advance of knowledge and civilization. These are the signs of the times to-day, which let him that runneth read.

This is the religion of Protestant America to-day, and this is the religion of Wellesley College. Strip it of all outward forms, take away all denominational distinctions, separate from it all human creeds and metaphysics, and you have the religion that teaches "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin."

Gather around it all wisdom and all knowledge. Bring to it the light of all science and all truth. Study over it; pray over it; live in it; love in it; suffer for it.

It grows brighter and more bright. It draws around it by divine attraction all truth, all love, all joy; all that is great, and noble, and pure; all the sanctities of the

Holiest of Holies ; all the sweet charities of home ; all suffering, and chastening, and living ; all that is unselfish, and all that is beautiful and fair. It is the bending blue sky over all, the everlasting arms beneath, the victory that swallows up sin and death.

This religion is to be taught in Wellesley College in various ways. We are taking one great step in our daily Bible lessons, which are more far-reaching than we are accustomed to think. But this is only a single way of enforcing the great truth. It is to be taught in Philosophy. One of the extraordinary aspects of modern thought is the apparently hopeless wreck of Mental Philosophy. I am going so far as to say that no true Psychology is possible, no Philosophy of the mind is possible, no Philosophy of our inner spiritual life is possible, if God is left out. Let us state the situation as it appears, if we believe in God at all. Young people are to learn the laws of the God-created inner life which we call soul, spirit, intellect, reason, emotion, will, imagination, all that which is created in God's likeness, and God is to be left out ! This is not to be the method of Wellesley College. God is to be first in its Philosophy, and so in other studies.

That He is first in everything in this institution is to be shown practically by Sabbath-keeping ; by the formation of character through discipline and obedience ; by leading you to oppose frivolity, show, and worldliness, and to seek usefulness and opportunities for self-denial. The system of domestic work, we believe, will contribute to this. Your interest will be sought for the causes of temperance, of missions, of moral reform, in vital harmony with the great advance of the age in Christian

methods. We shall look to you for opposition to extravagant dress, to theatres, to promiscuous round dancing, to indiscriminate novel-reading, and to doubtful amusements in general.

And now let us summarize. Our religion is a religion of love. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." Let us go up with Christ to the mountain-tops of love for God and man.

It is the religion of unselfishness, of self-sacrifice. It is to be shown in our daily lives.

Our strength is to come from union with the Lord, who said, "I am the Life." There must be a personal sacrament. We must have God *within* our lives. The great need of our country, of ourselves, is consecrated lives. I appeal to your inmost consciences, to the very heights and depths of your souls,—is not this the religion you need? Will you not accept it?

Dante wrote at the beginning of his record of that sacred love which guided him to God, "*Incipit Vita Nova*" ("Here beginneth the new life"). Will you not write that inscription, in all its noblest meaning, at the beginning of your course in Wellesley College, thus making it also the beginning of the beautiful ideal life?

RESULTS—LESSONS.

1. You are reformers in a great and noble cause.
2. Teachers to lift the child America to God.
3. Faith in God your battle-cry.
4. Everywhere, in everything, God to be Sovereign.
5. God is Love. (Flower Sunday.)
6. Faith that worketh by love.

7. Without bigotry, without controversy.
8. But steadfast, immovable, lifting up your hands
to God.
9. God first in your own souls.
10. The Holy of Holies.
11. Motives for conversion.

“Incipit Vita Nova.”