

July 12, 1923

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY.

HONORARY GRADUATES
ENTERTAINED.MR CHURCHILL ON THEORY AND
PRACTICE.

A DINNER to the honorary graduates who are to receive honorary degrees this morning was given in the Upper Library of the University of Edinburgh last night. Principal Sir Alfred Ewing presided over a distinguished company of guests, among the honorary graduates present being the Right Hon. Winston Churchill, Viscount Novar, Secretary for Scotland, the Very Rev Dean Inge, St Paul's; Lord Hunter, Sir Charles Parsons, Lt. Col. Sir Charles Bedford, Professor Emeritus Sir Ludovic J. Grant, Professor Mrs Henry Sidgwick, Professor Emeritus Robert Wallace, the Revs A. N. Bogle, Robert Dey, J. G. Dickson, George Wauchope Stewart, and T. C. Williams ex-Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Wales. Among the others present were Lt. General Sir Walter Braithwaite, General Officer Commanding in Scotland, Lord Alness, Lord Justice-Clerk, Professor Milligan, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, Principal Cairns, Moderator of the General Assembly of the United Free Church, Lord Constable, the Rev Dr Wallace Williamson, Sir David Wallace, President of the Royal College of Surgeons, Sir Robert Usher, Sir John Lorne MacLeod, the Hon. Wm Watson, Lord Advocate, Sir Samuel Chapman, M.P., Sir James Warrack, President of the Chamber of Commerce, Sir George Paul, D.K.S., Mr James A. Hood, Mr J. P. Croal, and Professor Gulland, vice president of the Royal College of Physicians. The croupiers were Professors Baldwin Brown, Sir Richard Lodge, Lorrain Smith, Kennedy, Macintosh, Hudson Beare, Tovey, and Wilson, secretary to the University.

UNIVERSITY AND POLITICS

The Chairman, in proposing the toast of "The Honorary Graduates," after referring to the ministers who are to receive the degree of Doctor of Divinity, mentioned the name of Mrs Sidgwick to whose services in the educational field he paid a tribute. She was a sister of their revered Lord Chancellor; he added. The University, the Principal went on, was no respecter of party labels. Party labels should be only semi-adhesive. (Laughter.) No one would accuse either Lord Novar or Mr Churchill of too pedantic a tenacity, too doctrinaire a rigidity in this regard. (Laughter.) They had known when to cast off the shibboleths of outworn creeds, and they liked them the better for it. (Applause.) Lord Novar was doing no less valuable service to his country as Minister in a Conservative Cabinet than he did when as a Liberal he was a Lord of the Treasury. Mr Churchill, he continued, deserved that degree quite apart from his achievements as a soldier and afterwards as a statesman. He deserved it on the ground of his eminence as a man of letters. (Applause.) The Principal said he had the privilege of serving under Mr Churchill during the eventful years when he was First Lord of the Admiralty, and in all simplicity and sincerity and seriousness he thanked Mr Churchill for the great work that he then did for the country. (Applause.) Mr Churchill had been the victim of many cheap sneers, but the verdict of history would be different. (Applause.) In Dean Inge they hailed the prophet, the social critic, the seer, the master of epigram, the sworn foe of complacency. His had been described as the views of one crying in the wilderness but surely it was a wilderness crowded with admirers straining their ears to catch his slightest utterance. It was a wilderness that rejoiced in his wit and blossomed in the flower of his fancy. If there was any encircling gloom—(laughter)—it only served for his searchlight and for the flash of his rapier. (Applause.)

ENGLISHMAN AND SCOTCHER HONOURS

Dean Inge said the Vice-Chancellor had spoken of him much too kindly. He passed for a man of letters amongst ecclesiastics, and as an ecclesiastic amongst men of letters. A classicist might call him a philosopher and philosophers might call him a classicist. Here he must be content to pass for a mere Englishman, a person at whose jokes no respecting Scotman ever laughs. However as he had been honoured in different ways by three of our British Universities, he hoped he might take it that he had some kind and intelligent friends on the side of the Border. English cathedral dignitaries were not to be judged as to their temperaments by the young men of certain newspapers, nor were their morals precisely such as his honoured friend, the Bishop of Edinburgh, encouraged his son to depict. (Laughter.) Perhaps the Deans of St Pauls had been, on the whole, rather unusual clergymen. Dean Collet, when he founded St Paul's School, laid down that the administration was on no account to be in the hands of any clergyman, least of all the Canons of St Paul's. More recently, one of his predecessors left a City dinner in a condition which suggested that he would have been wiser to eschew the beverage that maketh glad the heart of man and to content himself with that liquid with which horses and the electors of Dundee quench their thirst. (Laughter.) In spite of Dr Johnson, an honour from Scotland was especially gratifying to any Englishman, for they English were at present the only really down-trodden race in Europe. In the case of his own Church, they were not able to produce so much as an Archbishop without going to Scotland, and the same would be found to be true of all other professions. In all the subjects which he had studied, whether pure classics, theology or philosophy, he had found how very much he owed to the great scholars of this University. He would like to mention the name of the late Professor Hardie, the very finest Latin scholar of his time. (Applause.) In the North the air was healthy, and so were the opinions, although occasionally they showed a tendency to be deflected towards the red end of the spectrum. (Laughter.) On behalf of his fellow-graduates he would thank them all and say how great an honour he felt it to be present. (Applause.)

MR CHURCHILL'S FIRST ACADEMIC HONOUR.

Mr Churchill, who also responded, returned thanks for the compliment paid him and the honour done him in conferring upon him an honorary degree of the famous University of Edinburgh. He was like his friend who had preceded him, an Englishman. He had many associations with Scotland. He found his wife in Scotland. He found a constituency for fifteen years in Scotland, and he had the honour of commanding a Scottish battalion for some months in the line. Now the first academical distinction which he had ever received, which anyone ever thought of associating with him, and had conferred on him by the Edinburgh University. (Applause.) If there was anything which could add to the sense of gratification to the Vice-Chancellor and the Senate it was the fact that the ceremonial through which he had to pass included at no point anything in the nature of an examination. (Laughter.) He had never liked examinations. He had always preferred telling people what he knew or thought he knew, and keeping on doing it, to inviting them to find out what he did not know. (Laughter.) He was afraid that his instinct in this respect had been guided by the sound principle of war which was described as seizing and retaining the initiative. (Laughter.) He greatly regrets, looking back on the course of life—which was now beginning to be very lengthy—that he never had the advantage of a University education. When

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he compared the rough hard life of a public school with its narrowness and primitiveness on the one hand, and the action and comradeship of a military career on the other, necessarily limited in many respects, with the large, generous life of a University, with the encouragement and guidance which was given to opinion with the freedom of expression encouraged from quite young people, with the variety of forms of development which were cultivated and stimulated, as well as tolerated, he deeply regretted that he did share the advantages enjoyed by many of those who were going to receive degrees on the morrow. Proceeding, Mr Churchill said he had to follow the greatest pessimist philosopher of the present age (Laughter) He had to follow a man of whom it might be justly said that the Church had gained what politics and journalism might so easily have lost. (Laughter) He followed him as a sincere admirer (Applause) He had had the wit to discern and the eloquence and courage to express a number of extremely valuable truths or half-truths—(laughter)—which were very necessary to disturb the mental complacency of the present generation. It was only right that in the grave situation in which they found themselves on the morrow of the Great War that their fellow-countrymen on both sides of the Border should be forced to call in question many of the old accepted catch-words, subject themselves to a searching, and even a sour, scrutiny and introspection. The world could never be to this generation what it used to be. But it was right in the aftermath of our great efforts and of our great victory that we should be prepared to call all the formulas and the comfortable propositions of the nineteenth century before the tribunal of the disillusioned and stricken twentieth century, and that was the function which Dean Inge had certainly laboured industriously and unceasingly to perform.

DEVELOPING THE ART OF EXPLANATION

It had been well said, Mr Churchill added, that the pioneers of science were on the frontiers of knowledge, but all the wires were down, and they could only express themselves by gesticulations and signals, intelligible to their friends in the rear and to their colleagues at other points of the great scientific advance. Surely what was needed now in addition to all that was being done was the development of the art and science of explanation, the establishment, that was to say, of a system of intermediate stations for transmitting and translating what was acquired by those who plunged far out into expert and specialised researches for the benefit of the vast and quite un instructed public who lay behind, but whose affairs and whose fortunes were greatly affected by all those pioneers' discoveries. The same thing happened in public affairs. Between theory and practice there was a great gulf, and it was this gulf that in their modern system they had not yet attempted to bridge. They saw a great nation like the United States imagining they were going to make themselves prosperous by laying their hands on all the gold they could find in the world, and that in face of the fact that they had produced economists and financial students whose authority and profundity were unrivalled in any country. It was this link between theory and practice which needed a special study. He would like to see a great University founded, a great school of thought set to work which had no other object than to reconcile scientifically theory with practice. At the present time theory was either neglected by practical men—put on one side with a few friendly observations about its fine ideals and splendid symmetrical appearance—or else it was applied logically with disastrous effects by fanatics. What they wanted was the study of theory with the science of application as a separate section in the great development of human affairs. (Applause.) Concluding, Mr Churchill paid a tribute to the chairman for his services at the Admiralty. The Vice-Chancellor, he said, made a contribution to the affairs of the Admiralty, and to the fortunes of the State, which might almost be called inestimable, if only from the fact that it had never been recognised. (Applause.) During the war no one did his bit more thoroughly in the whole of the vast building in Whitehall than Sir Alfred Ewing. (Applause.)

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EDINBURGH'S WORK IN CONSOLIDATING THE EMPIRE.

Lord Novar in proposing the toast of "The University of Edinburgh," said it was peculiarly pleasing to a Scotsman to be recognised by one of his native Universities for they represented the culminating expression of Scotland's veneration for learning and her belief in knowledge. Further more, Edinburgh University was in a special manner the outcome of this traditional Scottish attitude towards learning, for it was founded not by a Papal Bull or by some mediæval saint or benefactor but by the Town Council of Edinburgh, that was by the representative Edinburgh burgesses of 1588, who thus early demonstrated their belief in the value and the necessity of higher education. They were also perhaps actuated by the commendable zeal to keep Scottish students from straying over the Continent to foreign Universities. If so, they would be satisfied to-day for the outward movement had changed to one which brought students from the ends of the earth to sit at the feet of Edinburgh Professors. In fact, that University seemed to have a special attraction for overseas students. They gravitated to Edinburgh in larger numbers than to any sister University. Between 1921-22 there were 460 students from the Dominions in Edinburgh compared with 262 at the other three centres of learning. There were to-day Australian, Canadian, American, and South African Clubs and an Indian Association. All this showed clearly that Edinburgh University played a useful part in the work of consolidating the Empire. (Applause) Thanks to Edinburgh Scottish culture and traditions were being carried forth by a continuous stream of her graduates, who went back to play their part in the professional, political, and intellectual life of their respective countries. It was the all-round development of body, mind and character which was the outstanding characteristic of British education, which had put its stamp on British achievement in all parts of the world and given to their young men just those particular qualities essential to those who had to colonise new worlds or to administer territories peopled by native races. They might well rejoice at the spirit of the burghesses of the sixteenth century who founded Edinburgh University, which was still a living force amongst them as evidenced by the noble gift of Mr Grant—(applause)—to found a National Library, which would be to Edinburgh what the Bodleian was to Oxford.

ENTRANCE UNIVERSITY EXAMINATION

Professor Emeritus Sir Ludovic J. Grant, who replied referred to the vexed question of the University entrance examination. He wished he could announce that a scheme satisfactory alike to the Universities and to the secondary schools had at last been devised. But alas! matters were not one whit advanced. It really looked as if the record established just about 600 years ago by Robert the Bruce's spider—(laughter)—was going at last to be broken. Four times already had the Universities Entrance Board attempted to construct with spider-like ingenuity and skill a fine-spun web of regulations, and four times had it found itself foiled and baffled in the difficult and delicate task. If a year or two hence the Board made its eighth attempt and passed the spider's total, then Scottish patriots would have to comfort themselves with the thought that the new champion was after all of the same nationality as the historical insect—(laughter)—and that the record for patient perseverance would remain on this side of the Border. Another topic which could not well be pretermitted that night was the ever present problem of the University's financial requirements. A problem of this kind was to be believed scarcely known in the United States, where the munificence of millionaires and multi-millionaires enabled the Universities in many instances to maintain themselves at the acme of perfection as regarded equipment and technical apparatus. He did not hesitate to say that it would be nothing short of a national calamity if that University which could look back upon so great and so glorious a past, and which had ever stood in the very forefront of scientific achievement, were to find itself crippled and circumscribed in its activities, or were compelled to withdraw from the pre-eminent position which it held both as a teaching institution and a centre of research, owing to the lack of necessary endowments. Unhappily Universities were quite powerless to help themselves save by appearing before the public in *forma pauperis*. It was now several years since their Alma Mater assumed the guise of flag-selling flapper, and, armed with collection box, began to wander about the highways and byways. A few weeks ago a generous benefactor did stop the beloved vagabond and did squeeze a piece of paper into her box, and on inspection the piece of paper did not turn out to be a German mark. (Laughter.) Let them hope this noble example would be widely followed. (Applause.)

The concluding toast was that of "The Chairman," proposed by Sir Charles A. Parsons.