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No. XX

LEARNERS AS LEADERS

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LEARNERS AS LEADERS

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED ON 26th APRIL 1918
AT A MEMORIAL SERVICE FOR MEMBERS
OF MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY
WHO HAVE FALLEN
IN THE WAR

BY

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LEARNERS AS LEADERS

TO-DAY we are in the presence of the Angel of Death. We have heard the names of those who went out to fight for us, taking with them our love, embodying our hopes. They have given themselves in glad obedience to their country's call. We see them transfigured and are ourselves uplifted.

Some of us recall the time—it seems but yesterday—when the

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words were given us : “ Lest we forget.” Henceforth we shall never forget. Those who have gone are with us evermore, their voices, out of the great silence, tell us how to live ; we are to fear not death but life misspent.

Is not the war bringing home to us the reality of life, teaching us that we are all one body, that our joys and sorrows, our manhood and our womanhood, are the bond between us, in comparison with which wealth, station, honours are as nothing ? Humanity is community. That which seems

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to each of us his very soul, his inmost feeling—the very best of each of us—proves to be just what we all have in common.

It is because these human ties have been snapped by our adversaries, because they have trodden underfoot so much that we hold sacred, that we are fighting them. Our action in the war is our effort to recover a common ground, to compel our adversaries to meet us on the level of a common humanity. Peace implies reconciliation, the restoration of goodwill. That seems to-day a far-off

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event. At present the flood is everywhere ; not until the waters are assuaged can the dove go forth to seek the olive leaf.

In a moment when mankind are rent asunder in the crash of a destruction out of which must come a new order, spiritual and social, a true instinct leads us to renew those bonds of fellowship which we most prize and those associations from which hitherto we have gained light and strength. That is the reason why we of the University of Manchester are gathered together to-day in com-

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memoration of our Founder and in proud remembrance of those of our number of whom, when we say that they have fallen in the war, we mean that they are enshrined for ever in our hearts.

A university is a community of men and women in search of knowledge, and leading for that purpose a common life. It is a life with one object, to see and know things as they are. Its principle therefore is: "If thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." Its impulse is the will to learn, its condition

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the opportunity of learning. The opportunity was given us first of all by John Owens, a plain Manchester man, undistinguished, so far as we know, among those with whom he lived and worked. Yet his gift has made him a name as memorable, associated with as great a service to his country, as that of any Englishman of his day. It brought into play the activities of countless others, who have swollen its volume and increased its potency until the stream has become a great river, whose power is transmuted into the light that illuminates a whole community. The story of Owens

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College, of its founder and of those under whose care it grew until it became the University of to-day, was told you a year ago by him who best knows it, the present Master of Peterhouse, so long our Head, so long our representative in the great city of which the University is the spiritual centre. I need not repeat what is fresh in your recollection, nor recall the familiar names on which he dwelt. I think you will wish me, as one who was long a student here, in whom your call to address you to-day appeals to a life-long love and awakens a strange pride as

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of a high, undreamed-of honour, to touch on the inner life of our Society, upon its work and upon the spirit that breathes in that work.

My first thought is of him who addressed you last year. In 1867, when I first entered the old College at Quay Street, the subjects of history, of the English language and of English literature were piled together upon one Chair, of which the immense labour had but a year before been entrusted to Adolphus William Ward. His lecture-room was

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crowded. Nowhere was the College life more vigorous, for he had the power to draw young men to his subject and kindled in them the fire with which he himself glowed. The inspiration that came from him stirred generation after generation of students. He was from the first and has ever been the master of my allegiance. And there has come to me no happier realisation of a youthful aspiration than that I was privileged after fifty years to be associated with a part of his historical work. That he was able to address you at your first Commemoration was indeed a

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consummation, for no man has better impersonated the spirit of our University. I am sure that I fulfil your wish in taking advantage of his absence to-day to express the honour in which we hold him.

A cherished memory of those old days, so far away and yet so near, is that of a master of many languages, Tobias Theodores. He left behind him no published works. His life passed into his pupils. His achievement was that those he taught a language knew that language. Can there be a more perfect fulfilment?

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Men like these made our community, by striking a note to which the students responded. Thus the College life was a good life to which the students contributed their share. They had that comradeship, that impulse to mutual help, which is the mark of a corporate existence.

I dare not squander the time by throwing open the flood-gates of reminiscence, but I will recall three names, chosen not at random, not simply at the dictates of personal affection, but as types. Some of you will remember

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Charles Sheldon, who like Plato's young men was in love with all knowledge—so much so indeed that he attended all possible courses of lectures and collected degrees—in those days they were London degrees—much as boys collect postage stamps. His ready sympathy and genial influence during the six or seven years of his studentship did much to preserve the moral and spiritual health of successive annual classes of Quay Street students. His life was spent as a teacher remote from his early friends; many of us cherish his memory as that of a shepherd of souls.

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Some of the best of my contemporaries felt their calling to be the advancement of knowledge, and not a few of them fulfilled that mission in other universities. Of these there was perhaps no fitter example than John Henry Poynting, whose modesty was equal to his ability and who was loved by all who knew him.

An exponent of the public spirit of the College was Charles Hughes, with whom I think originated the idea of that Society of Associates which was the germ of our present

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Convocation. I well remember his share in the work of the Committee which, under the brilliant chairmanship of Richard Marsden Pankhurst, organised that Society. The public spirit which moved Charles Hughes as a student breathed in him to the end. His peculiar distinction was that, without neglecting his own or the public business, he cultivated with success a field of literature, in which his work has left its trace.

In the forty-five years that have passed since I went from Owens College to Oxford I have

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from time to time come back here, sometimes as a student, and sometimes as a lecturer. Every time I have been astonished at the growth, first of the College and then of the University. Some idea of this growth may be gathered from two figures. In 1880, when the first University Charter was granted, the Associates of Owens College, whose status corresponded as nearly as may be to that of the graduates of a university, numbered 207. To-day the number of those who have graduated since 1880 is between five and six thousand. Every year you seem, literally, to

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add a new room to your great house. Almost every year you seem to create a new Chair. I lately spent an evening studying your *Calendar* and was amazed to find that the mere list of your scholarships and fellowships fills about a hundred pages. These are the good works of your benefactors and governors. But what has made a far deeper impression on me is the spirit in which your studies are carried on. Ten years ago I was invited to give a course of lectures here on the subject to which I am devoted. I replied that I was unwilling to modify the course of my studies in order

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to prepare candidates for examinations. But the answer given me was that I was not asked to suit my teaching to an examination; the intention was the reverse. My students were to be the partners of my own studies, to which the examination should adapt itself. During that session I had a class of ten or twelve, half of whom were women. I knew the character of Manchester students too well to be surprised by the attention given to my lectures, but I was astonished and delighted to find, as the examinations enabled me to do, that every one of the class

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had fully grasped the main current of my thought, and that the class as a whole had absorbed it completely. To my mind there could be no better evidence of the spirit of this place. That year's work was brought back to my mind when, in reading in the *Calendar* the Roll of Honour, I saw the name of him who both in power and in acquirement was easily the first of the class, Mark Hovell, who in after years carried on here the work in which I was once associated with him and whose history of the Chartist Movement, completed and edited by Professor Tout, reveals to us what he sacri-

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ficed when he gave his life for his country. All of them gave all that they were and all that they might have been.

I return to our effort for education and to its meaning in the school and in the university.

The distinction between the two depends not merely upon the age of the learners. The school imposes a discipline from without. Its purpose is to accustom the growing will to the habit of attention, and to form or inform the

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growing mind by helping it to take hold of the common stock of human knowledge. The school-boy creates his mind by tracing over the patterns of thought which have been worked out through countless ages by the efforts of a long succession of explorers. The growing youth leaves school familiar, at least in outline, with the results of humanity's long endeavour to understand the universe. He knows the chief results that have been attained, the elements of the sciences of number, of space, of matter and of life. The history of our race has passed in outline before him.

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He is in some sense aware of the meaning of law, of government, and of the common bond between us all which we call religion. He has learned some speech other than his own and thereby the better appreciates his mother tongue. He has tasted the fountain of literature. Unconsciously but none the less truly he has been humanised by absorbing the best thought of the best of mankind. Imperceptibly he has acquired a great inheritance. We have but to consider for a moment the gulf which separates at sixteen or seventeen the world as it presents itself to the mind of the

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untutored savage and to the mind of the boy or girl who leaves an English secondary school to realise the infinite value of the work done by our schoolmasters and to know the duty of the State to honour and adequately to reward their devotion.

To encourage and to honour the teacher of the young is of all national duties the most vital, for the upbringing of our citizens must always fall short of what it should be, unless the impulse comes from the best soul of the teacher and appeals to the best

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soul of the pupils. There must be scope for the personality of the teacher. In this matter let us beware of bureaucratic autocracy, and let us remember that, if our schools become mechanical, our children, in spite of all their lessons, will fall behind the savage in the spontaneity of their lives.

The university aims at a discipline not from without but from within. It offers not a restraint but the guidance of the light, as we are reminded by our motto: "Arduus ad solem." The effort

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of study is an uprising to the sun. The university teacher is an explorer: his pupils are the comrades of his exploration. And the essence of university education consists in this comradeship; what is communicated, or rather what is vital in the communication, being not results but a motive and a method. The attempt to understand is the real activity of the mind, for the mind at rest is nothing. Its true gymnastic is reached only when the spirit begins to grapple in its own strength with a new problem all its own. He who depends upon the props and stays of the

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judgment of others has not yet reached the full stature of a man.

For this reason the ideal university receives its student prepared by the school with a general view of the field of knowledge, so that he can choose the sphere to which he is drawn. In apprenticeship to one who is enlarging the bounds of knowledge in that sphere, he can then become a competent workman in that master's craft and in due time himself a master. The purpose is to enable the mind to develop its wings.

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The university has fulfilled its function when it has turned out men and women able to see the world with their own eyes, and possessed of that freedom which consists in the power to think their own thoughts. Only such men can be leaders, and it is leaders above all else that a nation needs.

You may perhaps wonder that here and now I should dwell upon what may seem a well-worn theme, the ideals of school and university education, but in no other way can I bring home to

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you the greatness of the work which we are here to commemorate. For I want to instil into you my own conviction that nowhere in England and nowhere in the British Empire is that ideal more firmly grasped and more fully realised than here in Manchester.

Our University has the great advantage of drawing its resources from a vast industrial community which it is its purpose to serve. Accordingly its government is entrusted to a body in which the interests of

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the city and its environment find adequate representation in all their aspects, a body kept in touch, also by due representation, on the one hand with those who have charge of the educational functions of the nation at large, and on the other hand with the body of teachers as well as with the body of graduates in which the traditions of our academic life are maintained. This governing body, however, has had the wisdom to give scope in the direction of the actual business of learning to the senate, representing the body of teachers.

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In the senate and consequently in the university is realised the truth that learning is an activity, not a store to be hoarded, a process rather than a result, and accordingly in the members of the senate is personified the principle that the teachers must be pioneers in the advancement of knowledge, and that by themselves learning they will inspire others. This is the essence of university education. It is a special feature of our University that examination is here the handmaid, not the mistress, of learning, an instrument and not the goal. Our conception of

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knowledge, I repeat, is not that of a mere accumulated mass to be divided and distributed, but rather that of a living and a growing tree. Here, therefore, the sap flows freely in all the branches; none of them is specially privileged, there is no golden bough.

Here, too, there is no privileged class. Women are members of the University on the same footing as men. That equality of opportunity is seen to-day to be a source of unforeseen strength. Last, but not least, by the wisdom of our Founder, conscience has

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been left free : each of us is encouraged in his struggling towards the light, to find for himself, in such communion as attracts him, that

“ . . . the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.”

It may be that in numbers, in wealth, in ancient fame, and in the fame of the schools from which it draws its students, the University of Manchester holds a modest place. I venture to assure you that in all those things that are vital, in the strength with which its roots have struck

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into its native soil, in the organisation of its government, in the common life of its members, and above all in the singleness of aim which is the source and spring of a noble life, our University is second to none.

“Spirits are not finely touched but to fine issues.” Our Founder’s impulse has laid hold of and set its mark, through generation after generation, upon an ever-increasing multitude, most of whom owe to it the best of their work, and the best of themselves. Thus one man by his good action has up-

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lifted a multitude. Thus is revealed to us how every act of each one of us sends its wave through countless other lives.

The old Greek thinker, the master of those that know, has given us the ideal—the development in exercise of our noblest faculties in a complete life—and we have come to be aware of the divine bond of humanity, that there can be no complete or perfect life unless and until it is shared by all mankind. Thus our largest vision regards mankind as one community; that is

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the ultimate goal we recognise, the kingdom of heaven which is within us, which to realise on earth is the object of all our striving. But we know too that it is remote ; the lines which point to it meet at an infinite distance. It is only by the fulfilment of duty in the lesser spheres that the larger ones can become realities. The good and faithful servant is he that has been faithful over a few things. In our actual life the larger sphere is given by our country. We are Englishmen and our duty is to England. To the service of our country our University is dedicated, and

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its mission is to quicken our spiritual life, that we may be good and faithful citizens of the land which is our home, of the nation in which we live and move and have our being.

When the world is in convulsion, when humanity is rent and crumpled like the earth in a great geological change, when states are submerged and empires strained to the breaking, only those nations, those institutions and those men can expect to withstand the shock that are knit together by forces stronger than the elements of

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destruction. What force in nature is more indestructible than that uprising towards the light—*arduus ad solem*—which is the very essence of life itself. That is the instinct on which our country must rely. That impulse let each one of us here to-day make his own and become its impersonation.

The duty laid upon our country is to win the victory for the cause which is recognised as the true ideal of mankind. The mark of nationhood is Leadership, the secret of Leadership the will to

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learn, the single eye. In that spirit we shall forget self and shall live or die—it matters not which—for the new England that is to be.

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