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The Educational Crisis in China.

BY REV. LORD WILLIAM GASCOYNE CECIL.*

ADDRESSING a special meeting of the Canadian Club, on "The Educational Crisis in China," the Reverend Lord William Gascoyne Cecil said:

Mr. President and Gentlemen,—It gives me great pleasure to have this opportunity to speak to you on this very important subject, a subject whose importance, perhaps, you do not altogether realize, and I am deeply grateful to you, gentlemen, who have taken the trouble to give me this opportunity of giving you the message, which originates from the old Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and which I hope will find a responsive echo in the young and vigorous countries across the Atlantic.

The message is this, gentlemen, that a change is pending in this world, which has hardly any parallel. That vast continent—I will not call it a country, because it is something bigger than a country—China, is in the midst of a great intellectual revolution, which contains unbounded possibilities and at the same time dangers too terrible even to contemplate. I am happy to say that, at present, we may speak in an optimistic spirit; but when I say, at present, I do not mean for a

* Rev. Lord William Gascoyne Cecil is a son of the late Marquis of Salisbury, and a member of a most remarkable English family. The Cecils have made notable contributions to the statesmanship of Britain for generations past, and are represented by notable figures in Parliament at the present time. Lord William Gascoyne Cecil, however, chose the Church as his field, and has labored with great zeal and unselfishness in the mission fields of China for many years.

moment to say anything that may tend to relax your efforts to make that optimistic expectation a certainty.

Now, let me describe the situation. China was an old, conservative country. China boasted that she had passed, not only hundreds, but thousands of years without any great alteration in her civilization. When the first Anglo-Saxon was with difficulty writing the first book, China knew of printing, and she has remained since that day a thoroughly civilized race, and she would, as far as I know, have remained in her conservatism up to this time, except certain great events have shocked her great esteem for herself, and she suddenly realized that great forces were moving in this world, which would destroy her if she had not changed.

There have been two causes for the changes—two causes quite different—one great and obvious, one not so obvious, but, I think, even greater. The great and obvious one is the great political changes which have taken place. China, enclosed in her self-esteem, did not think there was a foreign nation equal to her in power. Her self-esteem received a great shock. China is such a vast country that she did not realize what had happened. But, at last, Western civilization began to make her realize her power. To begin with, over the whole of China spread that net-work of wire which enables the thought of one race to reach another, and there are not districts in China so hidden away that they do not know what is happening, and, further, the events that followed were such to awaken any race from its lethargy.

First, China went to war with Japan. China, with her four hundred millions, more than quarter the population of this world, why should she be afraid of fighting a race like Japan which has only forty or fifty millions. Yet, after the first battle they realized. Standing on a hill, the Chinese general attempted to direct his armies with a fan, for he conceived the battle to be such a small affair that you could direct it with a fan. But what could that vast, ill-equipped horde do against the trained fighting forces of Japan? When the Japanese array advanced and put to flight that Chinese army, China realized then her powerlessness.

Then, after that, came the siege of Peking. I have not time fully to detail the whole causes of that Boxer movement, which led to the Legations being besieged in Peking, and to their relief, and can only call your attention to the fact that again the Chinese self-esteem received a rude awakening. They were unable to resist the powers of European forces and Western civilization. When Peking was put to the sack, they rea-

lized, yes, perhaps then, in a cruel way the power of the West.

Yet, they were not ready quite to learn. They wanted one further stroke of the rod of adversity to convince them that they must change, and that stroke came upon them in the Japanese-Russian war. I am often asked by people, and I have been in Russia, whether the Russians were not very humiliated by being defeated. My answer is that I do not think they cared very much. They regarded the war as a colonial war. If they were angry with the generals, they were pleased with their armies. Russia and Japan went to war; their countries were opposite one another. Matsumai is opposite Vladivostock. It was quite easy for the Russians to invade Japan and equally so for the Japanese to invade Russia, but instead of that they selected a Province of a country with which they were both at peace, Manchuria, and fought out the war in that Province. The war was fought out, not in Japan, not in Russia, but in China, in the Province of Manchuria. I do not think the history of the world has any parallel to those events. Fancy what you would feel if, for instance, France and Germany went to war, and instead of fighting it out in Europe were to send their armies and to fight it out in one of the provinces of this Dominion!

The culminating point was reached when it became obvious that the crowning battle of that war, Mukden, was to be fought literally over the site of the tombs of their royal ancestors. Anybody who knows the position in which the Emperor and the Son of Salvation stands in China, anybody who knows the respect with which ancestors are regarded, will recognize the thrill of horror that went through China when she realized that that sacred spot was to be the site of this titanic struggle. But what could China do? She sent diplomatic missions both to St. Petersburg and to Tokio, asking that every effort should be made to preserve those tombs from desecration, and I think it speaks well for the discipline both of the Japanese and Russian armies that, as a matter of fact, only three shells fell in the sacred enclosure of those tombs.

After that battle, China realized that there was one alternative before her, that she must accept the Western civilization or submit constantly to humiliation. She asked Japan how it was that she conquered Russia, and Japan made answer, "Through a thousand instructors scattered wide and far throughout the civilized Western nations." Japan said: "We have conquered Russia, the great military power of the West. We have subdued her mighty forces, because we learned from

the West the secrets of their military power." Can you wonder that China has made up her mind from that moment to learn the Western civilization, to understand it, to assimilate it and to make it part of her national life? That is the first and great result of the triumph of Japan over Russia, and that force will compel China never to cease till she has acquired a great part of Western knowledge.

But there is another force at work, not so obvious, but even still more effective, the force which the world too often despises, but the force which in the end has often proved the greatest that the world knows. Through China have been scattered far and wide devoted missionaries. No body of men have equalled them in devotion, in heroism. They have faced death; they have faced torture; they have faced disease in every province of China, and the result of their work has been a growing Christian body, which, if it was not very numerous, compared to the population of China, was intense in the reality of its Christianity. That body came into conflict with the opinion of China in the Boxer outbreak, which was a great persecution. Hundreds of white men were killed in that persecution, but also thousands of yellow men.

Now, you know there is an old saying, which is a true one, "That the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church," and so it proved. After their persecution was over, instead of the Christian body finding itself shrunk and powerless, it has covered itself with strength and vigour. For every man who was killed there were more to fill his place. The old story had come true. It is very hard to see how it comes true to the man who is merely a rationalist, but to the man who believes, the thing is obvious. Never is the power of Christianity so clear as when it is seen face to face with death and torture. Never do men realize more profoundly its effect upon mankind as when they are seeing the martyr die. Thus came the other movement, the movement which is not nearly so notorious or so obvious, which you will not hear of so much, but which, none the less, is written indelibly in the fleshy tablets of the heart of the men in China—the great Christian movement. That movement has many manifestations of its force.

I have been to China twice, once several years ago to the Shanghai Missionary Conference, when I went across China from Peking to Hangkow. Then I saw a sight you will never see. I saw fields of poppy, altogether unlike your beautiful fields of clover and growing grain. It was like some fairy scene, these fields of pink and white specimens. Then, I went to China again last year, and I covered the same ground, in

fact from one end of the country to the other, and I could not see a single poppy. When I arrived back to a certain point, I said to a man: "I must see if there is not some fraud about this. Perhaps they are cultivating the poppy where they do not think it will be seen by the people." I decided to take a journey, say for twenty miles with the purpose of finding out within a certain area whether they were still cultivating the poppy. So we went twenty miles. We walked that distance, and at last we found one tiny patch of poppy, not nearly so big as this room, and that was all the poppy I saw growing in China. Now, gentlemen, I ask, could you do anything like that in our lands? Say, for instance, the liquor traffic, could we abolish it like that? Make no mistake, there is a stronger power at work, the power for good. It is a great world force which is moving, a force which politicians may know nothing about, a force to be reckoned with sooner or later, the force of moral right, the force which has been called into existence by the preaching of the gospel by those heroic missionaries.

Well, now, these two forces have coalesced. The great force of the instinct of self-preservation and the great force which has its origin in the instinct of moral right, these two have coalesced and are forcing China along. What is our duty? Are we as Christian men, as sympathetic human beings, to do nothing? Can we keep the great knowledge of the civilized Christian races and say we will not allow China to know the great mysteries of Western knowledge? Or, shall we, in a generous and altruistic spirit, in the spirit which we have learned from the religion for which those people have died, do our best to help them along and say to them: "We will give you light as you ask for light."

Gentlemen, I think that no one who has considered the problem can doubt that it is the duty of the West to help forward China in her need by giving her the best that the West can produce, which is her knowledge and her education. Now, I know that there are a great many difficulties in our way. Can you tell me of any big undertaking in which there were not difficulties? Difficulties are made to be overcome, and the difficulties that lie in the path of something that is essentially right are things that we should overcome. We have, gentlemen, a scheme from the old universities of Oxford and Cambridge which solves in a way the giving of higher education to China. We do not propose to give to China something that she does not want. We are not going to foist upon her an education which will not do her any good. We hope to incorporate in the scheme the good points of the West and the good points of the

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great truths of our science and philosophy, will end in those truths coming back to us, adorned and beautified by being reflected on the Chinese mind.

But I have one more reason why I will commend this project here, and it is this. This age we speak of as an age of progress—that we are advancing. Now, do you not think we all ought to do something to advance, and that after all is the greatest department of human activity—understanding one another? Is it not miserable, the warlike spirit that keeps nations apart? Can anybody be proud of the misunderstandings which rends asunder religious communities, denominations and nations? Would it not be far more beautiful if the great nations co-operated with one another?

Now, I have no panacea for this ill, but the way is to bring the good men of all nations together. Let them know and understand one another. Let them work together in some common philanthropic object. Let them take some great cause which demands generosity and nobleness, like the cause of giving to China the greatness of our Western education. Let them work together in a matter like this, that they understand, and in every nation there are men noble and good. They will then learn to trust one another and the world may step forward more to altruism, to peace and to happiness.

Yes, gentlemen, I have done now, but I will commend this cause to your most careful thought, for if you had passed, as you came to luncheon to-day, one man in misery, and you had hardened your heart—I do not care whether he suffers or not—you will not be happy now. What would it be, if you realized in the great hereafter that you have not passed one man, but a nation of four hundred millions, oppressed with ignorance, subject to every form of suffering, because they wanted knowledge, and you have passed them by and have not given them that which they asked and craved of you? What will it be, if, when this world passes, we look at the facts as they are and realize that if we have done our best, we have made happy, not one man, but thousands, nay millions of men who are now in the misery that comes from misery and darkness?