(Wednesday, April 16, 1930)

Individuality and the English Public School

By Messrs. Hamilton Fyfe of Christ's Hospital and F. B. Malin of Wellington

President G. M. Smith:—Gentlemen, the visit of sixteen headmasters of leading British schools to Canada has a very interesting significance and for us is a very happy event. The headmasters have come, we understand, not to make an Easter holiday—speeches are not part of a headmaster's holiday—but to take back knowledge to the youth of Britain and to ask whether it is not possible or desirable for the British public schoolboy who plans to live in this country to prepare for Canadian life in Canadian universities. We are delighted they have found time in a crowded program to come to the Canadian Club. I confess we have been somewhat bewildered by the display of riches in respect of speakers. As a matter of fact, we have been a little greedy and have asked for two speeches. The subject is, "Individuality and the English School." The speakers are Mr. Malin of Wellington and Mr. Hamilton Fyfe of Christ's Hospital. I am not going to take time to call the roll or to introduce each of our distinguished guests but shall call at once upon Mr. Malin of Wellington to speak.

Mr. Malin:—Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, members of the Canadian Club, it is a very distinguishable fact that of the sixteen pilgrims here you are entertaining today there is not one who has before set foot in your country; and we are come here with a very eager curiosity to see something of that great development of your industry and commerce and of those golden opportunities which, we are told, are abounding here for enterprise and industry. But we have come mainly in order to see something that

lies, I may say, beneath the surface of your national life, something which, I suppose, one might call the soul of a nation: the traditions which it still cherishes and believes, by which it lives, and the ideals and the hopes to which it looks forward. And the guardians and custodians of these sacred trusts of these days are not, as they used to be, the churches, for it is a well known fact, that many can, if they like, avoid the influence of the churches; but they are the schools, the teaching profession, there are few people who successfully evade the influence of the schools. It was said to me once by a headmaster in England, "we are the only preachers who cannot empty our churches." Now, we and those teachers in this country are engaged in a common task of providing education, if it is possible, for the growing generation not only in England, not only in Canada, but in the wide dominions, that they shall be equipped in the years to come to make their contribution to the welfare both of the Empire and the world, and it is well that, if possible, you and your teachers here and we, who are representatives of the teaching profession in England, should exchange our ideas, communicate methods upon which we are working, tell of the difficulties which assail us and assail you, and study the methods by which you are attempting to solve problems which confront us. Therefore, it would seem worth while that I should say something about something which we regard as a danger that is threatening in England now.

There has been in England since 1902 a most astounding development of what we call secondary education. Old schools have been revived, new schools have been founded. But that has been done by the development of a very useful machine—I will not trouble you with details of it now: the machine, county councils and efficient directors of education —and we do see the danger that in this wide and efficient development of education we may lose what to many of us is the most precious thing about the English school: this is individuality and personality. Because a director of education wants to be able, without delay, to present results in easily intelligible form to the county council, and is not primarily interested in what we regard as education. Now, to my mind, in a great school there is something which is more than mere

organization—there is something which I should call personality—something which is caused by the geographical surroundings of the school, partly by the class of boy who has gone there, partly by the influence and character of those men who have served God there in the past; and then we speak of the school as the *alma mater*. I do not know if she has been a kindly mother in all cases, to some boys she has been an unkind stepmother, but she is something to love.

I went more than thirty years ago to Marlborough, on the Bath Road where there is a little town hardly bigger now than it was in Burke's days. There you have a background—a little country town which was originally remote; although matters have changed, you have the particular type of boy. Seventy per cent of the men in educational, in national biography, came from country parsonages. That was the stuff. They were boys who had the great advantage that they were not only children, for they had had their heads punched in the nursery—they never had much to spend, they had learned at home the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This is a very good endowment to take with you into life. Now, it was said to me once, in every school there is one spirit that walks. The spirit in my mind that walks in Marlborough is the spirit of Bradley who was afterwards a master at University College, Oxford. He has been known to very many generations of schoolboys for his work on Latin prose. Whether he was loved I do not know. I know an old gentleman, a very successful schoolmaster to this day. He is over seventy and when confronted with a difficult problem he asks himself, "what would Bradley have said about this?"

I went to the north where in 1525 was founded a school which was to be the Eton of the north. It had a chequered career. In the eighteenth century, it was nearly extinguished by a headmaster and in the nineteenth it was recalled to life by a great man who came from Harrow and brought the greatest English traditions. He brought with him a helpmate who was the daughter of Sir Henry Lawrence, the defender of Lucknow. Boys from the north country and boys from Scotland came to that school. He got a staff round him into which he imbued the same spirit. Being a schoolmaster to him was not a matter of so many hours

but of giving every moment of the day. Dr. Norwood said, "Education is not a matter of things that can be taught but things that can be caught." And that spirit was caught. They learned how to enjoy hardship and persevere.

Then I went to Haileybury about twenty years ago. When the Duke of Wellington was out in India he said, "you must not send cadets out here so young. Take them and educate them in England and send them in seasoning." Haileybury College trained great consuls who laid the foundations of just and honorable rule in India. Following the mutiny, the college came to an end and the government planned to make it into a barracks, a lunatic asylum or a workhouse and finally determined to combine all three. They turned it into what we call a public school. But the spirit that walks there is the spirit of John Lawrence. There is the spirit which we associate with that great service. It is the spirit of a man who on lonely and far frontiers and among alien faces carries on his job faithfully. It is the spirit of which Lord Sullivan spoke when he came from South Africa, "There, we want from you not a scholarship graduate but the boy who can be trusted to do his job when nobody is looking on." That was the spirit I used to feel there.

And at last I went to Wellington. Wellington is quite different. It is a memorial school. In 1852 Arthur Duke of Wellington died and the nation decided to honor him and raised a subscription. There is a certain touch of grim humor about that subscription. In order to endear him they stopped one day's pay from every officer and man. They did not know what to do with this money. It was suggested that a statue be erected in every market town in England but the deputation urged that a school be built for the sons of dead officers. That is what Wellington is now. It stands for discipline. Boys like discipline. They understand discipline. They enforce it themselves. They know that being slovenly is not a good thing. They brush their clothes.

I pick our four points. I am inclined to think if you put these things back of your mind you won't have a bad summary of some of the most important things which we

endeavor to achieve in our public schools—I do not mean you do not find those things elsewhere: reverence for knowledge, the spirit that endures, perseveres, that spirit that can be trusted to do its job, the value of discipline or doing a thing in the right way. These are things, gentlemen, which no regulations will ever give. Those are things which can only be caught. The wisest government is the one that chooses the best headmaster and then gives him his head.

GEORGE M. SMITH:—Mr. Hamilton Fyfe.

MR. HAMILTON FYFE:—Mr. President, Mr. Prime Minister, members of the Canadian Club, schoolmasters are a class of persons with whom you (forgive me using the expression) have all been brought into touch. Considering the amount of insult and injury that schoolmasters have heaped upon you in the past, the cordial warmth of our welcome here is like heaping coals of fire upon our heads in return for our attention in another quarter. Mr. Malin has said what I would like to say so much better than I could ever hope to say it, but I will try to do what you expect speakers before this club to do—to speak about the only thing about which I have any knowledge and that is the school where I have the privilege to be employed.

The full name is the Religious, Royal and Ancient Foundation of Christ's Hospital. It is and always has been a religious institution simply because it is an educational institution. It is royal because it was founded by royal charter, and it has never been more ancient than it is today. About the middle of the sixteenth century citizens of London were suffering from certain disadvantages owing to the recent dissolution of the monasteries. The result of that dissolution was that the people of London lay about the streets untended; the poor, young and old and maimed, and those who were described as being incompetent. Citizens of London, stimulated by Bishop Ridley, put their hands into their pockets and collected a considerable sum of money and approached King Henry VIII who, in the intervals of matrimony, somehow or other found time to attend to his monastic property. Among other monasteries which had recently ceased to exist was the Monastery of Black Friars which stood in London near where the general postoffice stands. He was persuaded to give up a small portion of that monastery and so Christ's Hospital became a Royal Foundation. It was founded by that great widower, and we succeeded at last in getting our charter signed by the boy-king Edward VI. Into this newly formed hospital or hostel or refuge, there was swept the incompetent—those who could not look after themselves. Very soon it became a school for boys and girls.

It is still a school for boys and girls, but they are widely separated geographically, to my relief. Since 1856 Christ's Hospital has continued to reveal the intention of its founder. No boy is admitted unless his parents are in need of assistance. Every boy's case is scrutinized when he is admitted and he receives education, board, clothing, books, in fact, all the needs of life, free. One or two have means and pay fees on a sliding scale of up to $200 maximum. There is no class distinction. There are boys of every social class—boys of professional men, lawyers and doctors and sons of manual workers who are unemployed. I have, at present, one boy whose father is a burglar at present in prison and out of employment. If he had been in employment his son would probably not have applied for admission

Due to the fact that all wear the same uniform, class distinctions are lost sight of and, at the same time, they coalesce in a way that is extremely satisfactory. In other respects Christ's Hospital, its ideals and methods are very like schools Mr. Malin has so well described. Among the other points of distinction about the school is the fact that we can take boys as young as the age of nine. Another distinction is that it is obviously a necessity for the boys to do some of their own chores. They clear tables and do their own beds. I had the privilege of entertaining Mr. Noxon, your Ontario representative. He came and sat at the head table and heard eight hundred boys eat. When he saw them at the end clear the table he declared that they were the only English boys he had seen doing anything for themselves. It reminds me of the story of the Englishman who said he could not come this week because there was nobody to pack his bag. It is part of my work as headmaster of Christ's Hospital to find places for all boys. You must not think that England is in such a state of decay that it is difficult to find jobs. It is fairly easily managed. I must admit I was fairly contented with my own efforts.

Since I have breathed your atmosphere and seen something of your achievements and learned something of your possibilities of the future I admit that I am anxious to get for some of these boys a stake in the future of this country. While we have been here we have learned something more than we knew before about the qualities that are necessary for success over here. We shall be able better than before to select the right boys to come to Canada. I can assure you with confidence and knowledge that those qualities exist in large numbers in the public schools of England today. It is impossible to be in a school without being an incorrigible optimist. They still have the qualities of their forbears who settled in this Dominion, the qualities of their fathers and elder brothers who fought side by side with your boys in Flanders. I do not believe that the Empire is bound by an economic tie. The only thing that makes for unity is unity of outlook and ideals. Therefore, it seems to me a good thing that more people should come from your country and share in our university education.

The boys whom I represent here are poor; so are a very large number of ten or twelve thousand boys we collectively represent. They are poor boys who cannot enter university without assistance. Such a boy in England gets to university by scholarship or grant from County Boards. I think it is possible for such a boy who wished to come here that some means might be available for his help. He cannot sit for a scholarship. He could not sit for it and it is only proper. It is our hope that some persons in England or Canada, fired by the great example of Sir Cecil Rhodes, may found a scholarship such as he founded—a scholarship to bring English boys to the Canadian universities. The Rhodes foundation was a benefit to Oxford and I think you will admit it was a benefit to Canada. I am quite sure it would be a great benefit if some of these reverse Rhodes scholarships were founded. That is what I want to see, more Canadians at British universities and more British boys at Canadian universities. Those who came from Britain to Canada would be quite free to go back, but I doubt if they would.

Since I have been a schoolmaster I have been anxious to persuade enterprising boys to seek careers overseas.

Most of the boys are willing but I cannot say the same for their mothers. The boys at the top of the school are the rulers of our microcosm. They do not want to be farm laborers or domestic servants. I hope to see some system devised, perhaps by means of such scholarships as I have mentioned, which will promote emigration from Britain to Canada not in quantity but in quality. If people agree to that on both sides, such a scholarship will be founded. I hope there are some in Toronto who will agree because I know in Toronto the thoughts of today are the facts of tomorrow.

Some people think that all boys are very much alike. There is some excuse for that, for they look very much alike. Most of them look like a cross between an angel and a doormat. That is a great mistake. Boys come to us vastly differentiating. It is not our desire to make them all alike. We have to rub off the rough corners. It is our idea simply to provide the environment in which each boy, not by our efforts, but by his own, can develop his native capacity and character into the best kind of human being that it is possible for him to be. We do not want to produce a type. I do not believe there is a public school type. We do not want to mould boys. I remember when I was a boy our sisters used to be sent to finishing school. I expect the name was well deserved. It is our desire not to finish boys at the age of seventeen or nineteen but to help them begin. Our job is simply to work the soil and sow the seed and the harvest ripens far beyond our ken. We seldom see the full results of our labors. That is perhaps why schoolmasters are such incorrigible optimists. It is our hope that some of the best of the yield of that harvest may ripen here in this land of exhilarating atmosphere, enterprise and illimitable opportunities.