"THE AMATEUR SPIRIT"

by

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Mr. President and Gentlemen:

A fortnight ago or more, I had the honour to make an address before a distinguished Society in New York, in which I formally said good-bye to the people of the United States. And here I am again, in fulfilment of a long-standing invitation, speaking once more on your hospitable soil. I feel that these continued farewells must place me inevitably in the category of those temperamental prima donnas who are induced, for reasons on which I shall not dwell, to say ood-bye - not once, but rather too often.

I must say, however, that I feel very happy that my last good-bye (for such it is) is to be made on academic ground. Some of the happiest hours I have spent since I have been in your midst during the last three and a half years, have been in your universities. I have found time to visit some ~~ten~~ twenty of these as I have moved about in my study of the business and governmental activities of your country, and there are no institutions in your great Republic which are more typical of the best in American life or which are more interesting to the visitor or which give him a warmer or more generous welcome. My wife and I are very happy indeed that we are able, today, to see something of one of the greatest of those universities of the United States, which depend directly on the loyalty and generous support of the state and which minister so admirably to its needs.

I wondered what I should say to you today. My conscience pricks me when I think that this is the season of the year when serried ranks of well-disciplined and well-mannered under-graduates are exposed as helpless cannon-fodder to whatever form of visiting artillery is permitted

to open fire on them. I would, however, much rather regard you as fellow-gunners than as objects of my fire. I should like, in fact, to discuss with you, some of the forms of shell which universities use as their educational ammunition.

The shells which are fired are many and varied. The modern university can offer the world at large a diversified contribution. It seems a far cry from the task of supplying practical information direct to farm and municipality to that search in the laboratory or library which has no object but the pursuit of abstract truth. There is a sharp contrast too, between the professional training of the lawyer, or the business man, or the engineer, and that process of stimulation and enrichment which we call a liberal education. And yet all of these things are right and necessary, however different they may be.

Is there anything, however, one might ask, which the university can offer all its sons whether they study Greek or chemistry or insurance or forestry or torts, something which all alike may receive and profit by? There is one legacy, it seems to me, which the university is able to give all those within its walls. It is something of which the modern world might seem to stand peculiarly in need. For lack of a better phrase, shall we call it "The spirit of the amateur"?

It would be prudent without delay to say, not what I mean by the phrase - this will, I hope, appear later - but what I do <u>not</u> mean. The word "amateur" may, of course, conjure up in our mind a controversy in your country and mine, as to the ethics and economics of salaried effort in the world of sport. I have no intention of touching on this discussion, however remotely. It is, perhaps, a natural error to think

so literally about a subject as we do about this. As to the merits of paid athletes, or unpaid athletes, salaried coaches or voluntary coaches, we all, no doubt, have our views, but I do not intend to express mine. But It will not be improper to suggest, ~~however,~~ that in this business of the "amateur versus professional", the spirit, as in all else, is surely more important than the letter.

What, then should we mean by the "spirit of the amateur"? It is sometimes useful to look up derivations and to see the road a given word has travelled. (Incidentally, I have a feeling that if no public speaker were allowed to use any word of three syllables or more, without defining it, we might find ourselves more reluctant, on the public platform, to hurl the epithet of Bolshevik, of reactionary, or ~~isolationist~~ chauvinist or ~~of~~ cosompolitan. But this, I acknowledge, is a digression.) "Amateur", even the most verdant freshman will know, means "one who loves", one who pursues an activity, whatever it may be, con amore - "from the heart". We, of course, know what it signifies. It is not an external thing, for at bottom it has nothing to do with money. We can think of professional pugilists who have the finest instinct of the sportsman, or salaried cricketers and baseball players with a sense of sportsmanship second to none. On the other hand, I have never heard of people paid to play bridge, (to me it would be a melancholy profession), yet we have seen grim faces concentrated with terrifying earnestness on the outcome of a rubber. Again We can recall, ~~too,~~ ~~the~~ nervous tension on a tennis court or a golf course, where recreation and good comradeship should be the rule. And we can remember, too, that an attitude of mind is sometimes to be found in a college which seems less moved by the pleasures of the intellectual life than by a joyless

progress toward the degrees and diplomas which are collected like the scalps of our Aborigines. This we may agree is not the amateur's approach to life.

It may be, of course, that we are becoming more serious than we used to be, in work and play as well. Perhaps we are simply becoming more solemn - a very different thing. It is probably true to say that the last generation has seen a change in our attitude to many of our activities. A change for the better in some respects, not, perhaps, in others. There is now more play. We give more hours to recreation. The business conscience, for instance, has been ~~mollified~~ Sadly shaken by golf. There is ~~an~~ amusing irony in the fact that the most industrious of countries, Scotland, should have made such serious inroads on the working hours of North American business through this bequest. But we welcome the gift. A man's productivity is not measured by the hours he sits behind plate glass. Again, there is an increasing respect for education and the value of knowledge. One consequence of this is that a change of heart has come about in the world of commerce, which no longer regards a university education as a regrettable lapse from the serious business of life, to be lived down with luck, but a definite advantage in the sphere of practical affairs. This is only one evidence of the fact that education in all its forms is constantly gaining in the breadth of its functions and the importance of its task.

A swiftly increasing belief in knowledge, of course, may have certain disadvantages. We are never so characteristically human as when we confuse the end with the means. If the very machinery of learning obscures our vision, we lose our sense of proportion - which, may I

suggest, is one of the attributes of the amateur mind. Similarly, sport which ~~loses~~ misses its true objective, ~~which~~ and is efficient, but devoid of joy; mechanized recreation which cannot re-create; knowledge acquired for the sake of a badge - these are not of the amateur.

In the last century the amateur seems to have been thought to be no blessing. If you dip into the essays and speeches of a generation ago, both in England and in this country, you will find plenty of warnings to the youth of the day against the perils of the amateur spirit, in the sense in which it was understood. An English educationist of the time spoke with frankness of the contemporary youth: "He is no dandy and no coward, but he is an amateur born and bred, with an amateur's lack of training, an amateur's contempt of method and an amateur's ideal of life." We can sympathize with this broadside if it is directed against ~~laziness~~ slackness and inefficiency. It has always, of course, been characteristic of the young on both sides of the ocean to sit rather loosely to knowledge. The under-graduate is habitually ~~apt~~ given to ~~exhibit~~ an affectation of ignorance and a light-hearted inconsequence and detachment from the burdens of learning. There is something in the Anglo-Saxon character which is slightly suspicious of erudition. This point of view has not entirely disappeared from the modern student. It is, perhaps, related to the ancient ideal of "muddling

through". As in amateur theatricals, we feel somehow without much preparation, everything will be "all right on the night". It is perhaps not unreasonable, however, to suggest that this attitude is due, in part, to a healthy reaction from intellectual priggishness. We can respect a sturdy independence of mind - what might be called a "selective resistance" to the facts and theories with which the modern student is confronted.

The amateur in the old sense in which inefficiency was regarded as a virtue is hardly to be found today. Our reaction against amateurishness as a cult is seen in the generous extension of public education - the wide application of physical science to industry, the ~~necessity~~ demand for technical training on an unheard of scale - the divisions and endless sub-division of knowledge into minute branches. With this comes, of course, an accompanying necessity that our sense of proportion should be invoked lest a solemn and indis-

criminate respect for data and information should prove an obsession. The educationist of the present day is perhaps less likely to complain of the faults of the amateur than to ask from his students the amateur's spirit of adventure and imagination and sense of proportion. The thoughtful professor nowadays is perhaps less troubled by the amateur point of view than by the over-earnest mind which is touched with pedantry. One harrassed teacher not long ago wrote feelingly of "young men full of refinements and angles, of dreary and distinguished knowledge."

Out of our modern recognition of science and our dependence on it has emerged the expert - a new phenomenon essential to society, the product of an age of specialization, an invaluable benefactor in his true relation to the scheme of things as a whole. No branch of knowledge but now requires his services. We depend upon the expert so extensively and have so perfected his education that we seem now to assume, perhaps not unnaturally, that there is a sort of magic in training courses which, given the right formula, can produce any given result. There now can be few occupations left which have not courses leading to them - generally under the august auspices of a university. I do not know whether we have yet devised a short intensive course of training for poets or statesmen - probably the first of these is saved from this by the moral of the familiar adage that such products are "born and not made". Not only poets, however, belong to this category.

Someone has said that the expert is an "ordinary man away from home". But that dart, of course, was aimed at the counterfeit article. The real expert is essential to life. Civilization would collapse without the trained men with specialized knowledge. Their function, however, is as precise and definite as it is necessary. Possibly it has not been better suggested than by the motto of an establishment I once knew where, as it happened, erudition flowed like water from a spring - "The expert should be on tap, not on

field be electricity or gunnery or law or forestry or economics or dietetics, may find it difficult from his very specialization, to relate his particular subject to the system of which it is but a part. He has so long studied the trees that the forest may well be invisible.

It may seem hard to reconcile the attitude of the specialist with the amateur mind. The relations between them seem to suggest one of those "unseen harmonies" of which the poets sing. Lord Hewart, the Lord Chief Justice of England, in a recent book, touches on the issue as it appears in the sphere of government and tells an agreeable story by way of illustration. A distinguished Anglo-Indian civilian, a member of the Indian Civil Service, returning home on leave after a prolonged absence, passed the Houses of Parliament on his way from Victoria to Charing Cross. "What place is that?" he asked. "That, sir," was the answer, "is Parliament - the Houses of Parliament." "Really", he exclaimed, though his exclamation was in fact slightly different, "does that rubbish still go on?"

Here is the issue of the expert versus the amateur. The members of a legislature seem intensely amateurish to the trained administrator, with his workmanlike ideas of getting results. And yet where can one find the amateur spirit in the right sense better shown than in those men who can be found in every Parliament, who for pure love of the work and a spirit of public service, face the ardours of their task with sportsmanship ~~and self-effacement~~ and a zeal for what they have in hand? We have often heard the man of business commenting on the machinery of government and what he conceives as its untidy methods, its so-called "second-rate product". It is, after all, easy to contrast, on the one hand, a ~~business~~ commercial organization which is controlled ~~personally~~ by a head who can do what he likes, with a legislative body,

opinions is not only a matter of practice but a matter of duty.

The English-speaking world has been, for the most part, governed by amateurs - such is our tradition. It is true that Gilbert and Sullivan (who reflected the public opinion of their time) satirized the practice in the song in "Pinafore", with the immortal refrain,

"Stand close to your desks and never go to sea
And you all may be rulers of the Queen's navee."

But the First Lord of the Admiralty is never an Admiral and the usage followed in the Cabinets of all Anglo-Saxon countries is that the Minister should be an amateur, because with that sense of proportion which the amateur point of view transmits - he can relate the technical problems of his department to the needs of the public at large. Difficulties come when the relations are confused. For instance, Legalism is only to be found when the law is a master and not a servant, just as militarism comes when the soldier controls the state instead of serving it, and pedantry when learning is not applied to life.

There is, of course, little profit in the controversary between the professional and the amateur. It is one of those arguments where there is no right and no wrong, only two rights, and the answer must embrace them both. The professional and the amateur soldier have disagreed since history began, In the theatre the same argument goes on where actors in both camps balance the claims of the spontaneity and enthusiasm and resourcefulness of the amateur against the technical skill and experience and endurance of the professional. There can be no real quarrel between the expert and the amateur in life because their co-operation is not only reasonable but necessary. An ancient example of collaboration is to be found in the relation between judge and jury - the trained

and experienced mind on the bench and the twelve citizens at large whose function is to represent the detachment and uninstructed common-sense of the layman. But the harmony between the two points of view can be even more intimate than this. The antithesis between professional and amateur disappears, if we use each term in its proper sense. The idea of an amateur surgeon, however enthusiastic he might be at his job, would not be a comforting suggestion to the sick, but a trained surgeon with the qualities of the amateur mind, ~~his~~ with the amateur's resourcefulness and keenness of brain and passion for his work will, of course, be a better surgeon for ~~it.~~ them

The amateur spirit is to be found, of course, in both work and play - possibly leisure is its best criterion. In leisure moments, a man has the freedom to express himself. He is under no compulsion, and what he does not only reflects himself, but is himself. Perhaps we have been rather tardy in taking leisure seriously into our educational calculations. Ecclesiasticus has observed for our benefit: The wisdom of a learned man cometh by opportunity of leisure, and he that hath little business shall become wise. I am not exactly sure that this sentiment will find complete favour with the Faculty, nor do I feel that it represents that sort of advice which is likely to be offered by a well-conducted Chamber of Commerce. But we know what it means - the noise, the activity, the movement, the bustle of every-day life, place the human mind in such a state of strain as to resist impressions. It is the relaxed and reflective mind that is capable of receiving the lasting stimulus. Dean Inge has said: The soul is dyed the colour of its leisure thoughts.

Of course, it is well to distinguish between leisure and idleness; idleness is an inactive, negative thing - it represents stagnation. But leisure suggests that part of

our waking life - perhaps about one-third, in the case of most people - in which the individual is released from the mechanism of labour, and leisure need be no more negative than work itself.

It is, of course, modern life which has produced this sharp distinction between work and play. I suppose in that ideal state towards which we occasionally cast a somewhat doubtful glance, the gulf between these two will disappear, because every man would have that work which is closest to his heart and there will be no contrast between the chosen task and the labour which is arbitrary. Kipling pictures a heaven where,

" ... no man shall work for money, and no one shall work for fame,
But each for the joy of the working ... "

Much of the malaise which occurs in industrial life from time to time the world over is due, we know, in a larger proportion than we admit, to the fact that too many human beings are labouring at tasks from which they can derive no pleasure, Not only in the ranks of labour but in all occupations the real self-expression of many must be confined to the hours of freedom. But this, of course, gives even greater importance to the study of that leisure, which is now happily steadily increasing.

What can the university do? I cannot help feeling that the use of leisure is not an unfair test to apply to a liberal education. A college might be contented to be judged partly by the hobbies which its graduates acquire in after years, although I am not suggesting the creation of a Department of Hobbies in a university, nor the appointment of a Dean of Hobbies. In an earlier age, such pastimes were of course less common than now. Men who grew up under sterner conditions, a generation or two ago, had too much to do to think much about a hobby. But others acquired, under difficulties, some

and gave them something to think about when these were over. When we hear someone say, he intends "to die in harness", it may mean that, beyond this harness of everyday work, he has no resources to keep him from the boredom of idleness. Thus necessity is made a virtue. A hobby as a matter of normal equipment might prolong many lives in happiness, relieved from business cares, and might too be the indirect cause of such responsibilities falling on younger shoulders, keen, and perhaps better able to assume them.

It is, ~~perhaps~~ I think, not too much to suggest that the curiosity and keenness and imagination which are the endowment of a liberal education might lead us into an intelligent use of leisure which, to use an overworked word, is not without its creative side. A distinguished educationist has said, "Might it not be maintained that leisure was greater than work, because it was the growing time of the spirit, and that life should, therefore, be organized as much, or more, for the sake of leisure as it was for work?" It would be an agreeable task to try and estimate what contribution has been made to the world in leisure hours. (This suggests a subject for a doctorate more useful than some I have seen). One can think at random of the architecture of Jefferson or the work in physics of Franklin, or of a banker like George Grote who was an historian of Greece as well, or a statesman like Lord Balfour who was a philosopher too. I am reminded of the career of one of our great Canadian railway builders, Sir William Van Horne, the head for long of a great transcontinental system. When one could find, in a first-class mind, such as his, a love of art and a scholar's sense of it (two quite different things), a knowledge of geology and of fungi equally sound, genuine capacity as a painter, the ability to develop a new breed of cattle, real erudition in the lore of Chinese pottery, all of which were combined with a fine taste for poker - one can see something of the spirit of which amateurs are made.

~~are made.~~

But the amateur spirit is not confined to a hobby. Nor is It ~~is~~ not limited to sport or to hours of leisure. It is an attribute of mind which can ennoble everyday ~~infuse professional~~ work just as imagination can make a living thing of knowledge. A passion for the game and a carelessness of victory belong alike to counting-house and law-court and workshop as to the field of sport. Leonardo made of a dozen ~~workaday~~ crafts a religion of his own. Pasteur sought ~~searched for~~ the Holy Grail in a laboratory. It is this spirit that not only can lift sport above the level of a joyless competition, but can make an occupation into a vocation, can inform learning with life, and can bring the knowledge of the expert into the pattern that gives it meaning.

Robert Bridges in his last great poem, "The Testament of Beauty", said,

> "Hence is the fascination of amateurs in art,
> Who renouncing accomplishment attain the prize
> Of their humbler devotion ...
> Arriving by short coming, like to homely birds
> Of passage, nesting on the roofs of the workshops."

On the roofs of the workshops as well as within their walls, in moments of leisure as in work itself there is a call for the spirit of the amateur. He renounces accomplishment as he rejects the rewards of accomplishment. Some one has said that the relay race is the finest test of sportsmanship. Here there is no winning but team play at its highest; the sacrifice of one to the other to whom he passes on the "torch". Such ~~This~~ sportsmanship as this and a consuming enthusiasm and a searching curiosity, a passion for achievement, all this has the amateur, together with a sense of quality, a lust for adventure, a generous mind which is forgetful of reward, and above all a zest for life.