

**EFFICIENCY IN EDUCATION:
INAUGURAL ADDRESS DELIVERED AT
THE FIRST ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
SCOTTISH CLASSICAL ASSOCIATION
29TH NOVEMBER, 1902**

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G. G. RAMSAY

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W. Kellogg

Efficiency in Education

Inaugural Address delivered at the First Annual
Meeting of the Scottish Classical Association
29th November, 1902

By the President

G. G. RAMSAY, M.A., LL.D., Litt.D.

Professor of Humanity in the University of Glasgow

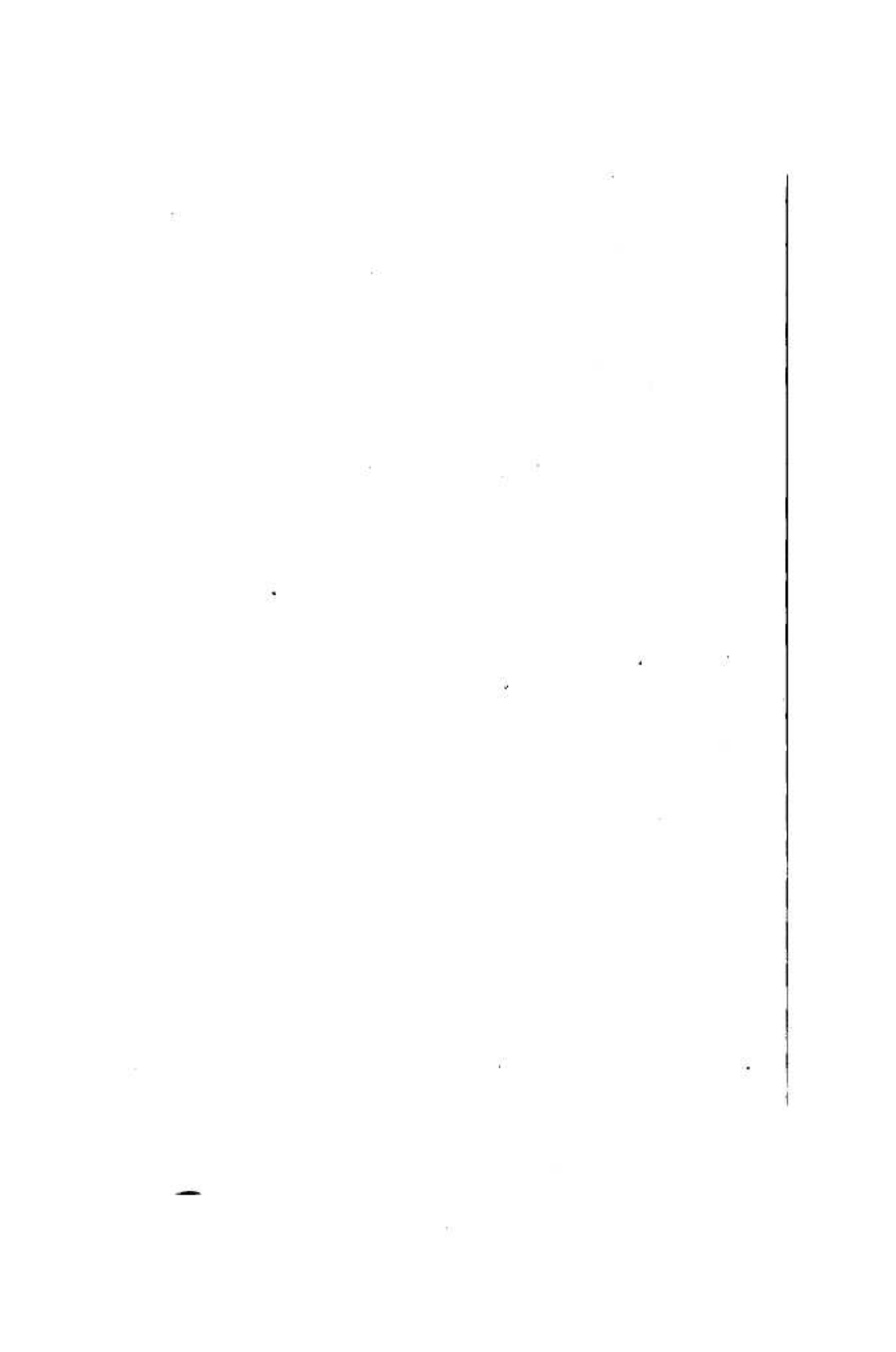


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ADDRESS.

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MY first duty and pleasure is to congratulate you on the successful formation of the Scottish Classical Association, so happily consummated to-day ; my second is to express to you my most warm thanks for the honour you have done me in electing me as your first President. This honour, I am well aware, I owe rather to the somewhat dubious merit of seniority, as the oldest Classical Professor—indeed the senior Professor of any kind—in Scotland, rather than to any special merit of my own ; but even so I accept the honour with much gratitude. I feel proud that you, the men who throughout Scotland are carrying out in the 20th century those high traditions of education upon which the intellectual life of Scotland has been based for more than 300 years, should deem me worthy to preside over this Association, and thus give me a right to work along with you in a cause which during all my professional life I have had more at heart than any other—that of the higher education of our country.

And what, gentlemen, are the objects of our Association? I am glad to say that among them is not included that of furthering, in any way, the personal or professional interests of its members. At the very outset, I received the strongest representations from teachers of the Classics,

that while they would welcome the formation of a Society for discussing the various practical questions which arise in connection with the teaching of Latin and Greek, and the place which they should hold in relation to other subjects in education, they would have nothing to do with any combination which was to afford a field for the grinding of personal axes; and I am proud to say that this point has been made a fundamental principle of our Association.

Nor have we any desire unduly to exalt our own subject at the expense of others. We are most of us workers in the teaching of Latin and of Greek; we are all of us, I take it, believers in the supreme value to the intellectual life of the nation of the preservation of classical study, as a means of the highest mental discipline, for all such as have the natural aptitude, and can afford the time needed, to turn those studies to account. But we recognise the fact that those studies, with their severe demands, are not, and by their very nature cannot be made, available for all; we recognise that with the advance of knowledge in all departments, there are other subjects which must form part of any general scheme of higher education, however high; and that there are other directions in which, if only right methods be employed, and right aims held in view, a liberal education of a really high kind can be secured.

We do not appeal to classical men alone. We look for co-operation to all who desire to see a high standard of education maintained and sound methods of education followed, whether in ancient or modern languages, in English, history, or literature; in mathematics, or in science. The danger of the moment is that under a

sudden and ill-considered demand for various new subjects, and a mistaken idea that it is possible to gather the practical fruits of education without giving those fruits time to mature, the true educational idea should be lost. We appeal to our especial allies, the teachers of English, whose subject is bound up with our own ; to those who would have French and German taught as thoroughly and thoughtfully as we desire to teach the classics ; to all who regard it as the highest function of education to develop the man, and to turn him out into the world with an instructed, and yet an open mind.

Furthermore, although the teaching of classics—as of mathematics—has this immense advantage, that its methods have been developed and systematised by the experience of many generations, it is also true that this subject, like all other subjects, has made great strides in recent years, and that the old methods of teaching it require to be reconsidered in view of modern conditions. It is not merely that new subjects have been introduced, for which a place must be found ; but also that the demand for higher education of some sort, and of the best sort available, is being made on behalf of a much wider and larger class than formerly. It is no longer a select class, consisting of those destined for professions and the higher walks of life, whose needs demand attention : the nation has at last been roused to the necessity, which many of us have been preaching all our lives as a matter of national concern, of training to the utmost the brain-power of the community, and of bringing within the reach of every capable mind, in every class, the benefits of a liberal education.

There is at this moment a boom on amongst us in this matter of higher education; and it is of the greatest consequence to the country that this boom should expend its force in the most promising directions. Booms of all kinds are dangerous things. They are not always guided by wisdom; and in this particular boom, it behoves all who have practical knowledge of the work of education, and know the difficulties of the problems which it presents, to contribute all they can to turn to good account the fresh interest which has been created in it.

Let us, therefore, who are interested in classical teaching, set our own house in order. It has long been felt among us that good would come of more close and frequent communication between teachers in the schools and those in the universities; between teachers in every part of the country, who are endeavouring to make the most of the time, often the too scant time, allotted to their subject. There are many points connected with the methods, the books, the aims, of classical learning as a practical subject, which we could profitably discuss in common: there are questions connected with examinations which concern us all. There are our Bursary Examinations, which act so potently as a stimulus to the schools, and as to which recent experience gives room for much enquiry and criticism. There are the Preliminary Examinations, conducted publicly, under Ordinance, by examiners chosen from the four Universities of Scotland, which lay down the standard of entrance to the Universities. There is also the Leaving Certificate Examination of the Scotch Education Department, which the Joint Board, representing the Universities, has the option of recognising for University purposes so long as

it is satisfied that the standard is equal to that of its own Preliminary Examination. Criticisms are often made, and information may well be asked for, in regard to both of these examinations. Are the means used at present for securing the equality of these two examinations adequate for the purpose? Are the standards of these two examinations, in different subjects, actually the same? Then again such questions as the wisdom of making all these examinations depend entirely upon unseen work; as to the unexpected evils which the adoption of this long-fought-for principle has brought with it; as to the necessity of giving more importance in the teaching of classics to History, to Composition, in Prose or even Verse—to the matter as well as to the language of the great classical writers—all such questions I hope will be fruitfully discussed among us.

Meantime, I may be permitted to-day to take a larger view of the field. In England, a great and comprehensive Bill is being carried, with unheard-of expenditure of breath, through Parliament. That Bill, for the first time in England, aims at putting higher education on a national basis; and yet, during all these interminable debates, scarcely one word of real importance has been said upon the vital question at issue. We have been deluged with debate upon political, sectarian, and administrative questions; but upon the kernel of the whole matter—what is to be taught in the schools, and how it is to be taught; what are the essential points in which, as the cry goes, our education is falling behind that of other nations; what are the elements in which the training of the national intellect is defective, and where it needs strengthening most: these topics are passed over

