

ADVANCE COPY

FINAL IMPRESSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS
OF A LONG AND BUSY LIFE

Address of Cyrus Eaton
Chairman of the Board
Chesapeake and Ohio Railway
at Meeting of
Friends of McMaster
and
New York Branch
McMaster Alumni Association
April 13, 1972

(For Biographical Data on Cyrus Eaton, See Last Two Pages)

It is a signal honor to be with you this evening as the recipient of the first annual award of the Friends of McMaster to a graduate residing in the United States. My heart is warmed by this generous recognition of my abiding interest in McMaster and my efforts to promote world peace and understanding between the capitalist and communist nations of the world.

The cordial invitation to join you on this occasion set me to reviewing my days at McMaster, with their lasting influence on my long life, and to considering how vastly the world has changed in the ensuing years.

When I entered "Old Mac," as we called it, in 1900, I was going on 17 and it was 13. Enrollment was around 400, and academic emphasis was on theology, philosophy, literature and history. Then located in Toronto, McMaster was overshadowed by the University bearing the city's name and was one of a number of smaller denominational colleges there.

Canada itself, with a population that had only recently reached the 5,000,000-mark, was a small colony of England, without any influence in international affairs. Britain then claimed a vast Empire on which, it could boast, the sun never set. Germany was recognized as the center of scientific inquiry. Russia and China were backward countries clinging to old and outworn ways, and Japan was insignificant among the great powers. The United States was barely beginning to emerge as the hub of industry.

The careers of Darwin and Huxley had already closed, but in the minds of many in English-speaking Christian circles still lingered the conviction that the world had been created in the year 4009 B.C. on October 23rd at 9:00 a.m. Although Karl Marx had also come and gone, communism remained a completely unknown concept to the mass of mankind.

The four years at McMaster were busy and productive, in class and out. To my Alma Mater, I owe a debt of gratitude for helping to inculcate in me the habits of hard work, thrift and intellectual curiosity, as well as an appreciation of the importance of good health. The summer before I started college, as in subsequent summer vacations, I had the good fortune to work for John D. Rockefeller in Cleveland, and I spent Christmas holidays in the advertising department of what is now Ryrie-Birks. After getting my A.B. in philosophy in 1905, with money in the bank, I went ranching for five months in Saskatchewan, as an antidote to the years of close application to books and work indoors.

Going back to Cleveland, I embarked with zest on a career in industry and banking, and learned to find added joy in dividing my recreation time between things of the mind and the out-of-doors. For many, many years, I have spent the summers in my native Nova Scotia, and my choice of vacation companions has leaned heavily to the side of scholars and scientists.

Vast changes have occurred during my lifetime, particularly in the almost 70 years since I left college. Consider these scientific and technological wonders, now taken for granted, that did not exist at the time of my birth: electric light, telephone, aviation, automobiles, movies, television, atomic energy, space exploration.

McMaster, relocated in the thriving industrial community of Hamilton, has become a major university, with a total enrollment of some 25,000, and is foremost in science as well as the humanities. The transition is typified by the picture of our distinguished chemist-President, Dr. Thode, standing in front of the Nuclear Reactor, on the cover of the latest issue of McMaster News.



Canada, whose population has passed 20,000,000, and whose area is second only to the Soviet Union, is now a self-governed sovereign state, prominent and progressive in international affairs, and possessing a high degree of industrialization. England has truly become the tight little island, her three-century accumulation of wealth wasted in two World Wars and her future mortgaged to pay for them. Germany and Japan have emerged as advanced industrial nations. The Soviet Union and the United States are vying with each other for the position of number one world power, and China will before long be hard on their heels.

Superstition has slowly but steadily given way to the findings and teachings of Darwin and Huxley, until it is commonplace to the educated that man, in some form or another, has been on earth for millions of years. For reasons perhaps difficult for those of us who embrace capitalism to understand, half of the world's population now lives under some form of socialism or communism.

For all of our vaunted intellectual and scientific advances, we still have not learned to live in peace, as we are reminded from day to day by the unhappy events in Vietnam. Since the horrors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945, the threat of nuclear holocaust has hung over the world and made mankind increasingly uneasy. It was for this reason that I responded to the Einstein-Russell plea for world-wide recognition and consideration of nuclear hazards by initiating the Pugwash Conferences of international scientists. The first of these, in 1957, brought leading atomic specialists from East and West together for their first private postwar meeting.

Whatever time remains to me is going to continue to be concentrated on the quest for peace and on the related task of helping realize man's need to know more about himself, his world and the universe. It has been my



privilege to become acquainted with Jacques Monod, the brilliant French biologist whose best-selling book, Chance and Necessity, has raised sharp challenges to our traditional religious and philosophical tenets, and their relationship to science. I am at present collaborating with Professor Monod on the organization of a world conference, to be held in France in September, on "The Unity and Diversity of Man." We shall be fortunate if the anthropologists, biologists and chemists who participate in these deliberations shed new light on the origins and destiny of mankind, and on the structure and working of the human brain.

Having reviewed with you some of the more spectacular scientific and technological changes that have taken place in my 88 years, I should like to invite you to speculate with me on possibilities for the next 88. Conceivably mankind will find a way to harness the tides and gravity for power. Heat may well be secured from the sun. Quite possibly our little planet will be discovered by intelligent life from some remote part of the universe.

Again let me express my deep appreciation for the high honor that you have paid me, and also for allowing me to share with you some of the final impressions and conclusions of a long and busy life.

