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May 13, 1961

Dedication of Livingston C. Lord Library

Like President Neumaier I have had some letters from friends of this college who wish they might be here for this celebration. One comes from Anna Kurtz Oakes, now of Minneapolis, whose father, Thomas C. Kurtz, was our first Resident Director and who was herself a student here; and one is from Ethel Lord Awty, Mr. Lord's elder daughter, who sends us her greetings from New Orleans:

"To friends old and new

I was thirteen years old when this school opened with thirty students and five faculty members. The new surroundings and friends made a deep impression on me:- Comstocks, Kurtzes, Mackalls, all of whom are represented here today; and I in spirit, and so thankful, President Neumaier, that the dear school is in such good hands.

Ethel Lord Awty"

start here

" It would be possible for me to go back to the days when most of the inhabitants of Moorhead lived on what was called the Point, the bend of the river near the north bridge:- the Mackalls, the Burnhams, Mrs. Price and her son Grant, the Inishes, the Lampheres, the Bodkins among others. The Red River was regarded as a navigable stream, and I can vaguely remember the whistle of the little steamer which carried freight and passengers to Winnipeg. And am I romancing when I say that it was still possible to find, in the few tracts of unbroken prairie, traces of buffalo herds in the shape of horns or bones? But in mercy for my audience I shall not go back further than 1888 when Moorhead had spread out over the prairie and the Moorhead State Normal School opened its doors.

" It was a very different Moorhead in those days. Its population of about 2,000 was less than the number of students now enrolled in this college and Concordia. The streets were unpaved and in time of rain were deep in a mud as black and slippery as axle grease. The sidewalks were of planks laid crosswise on risers, leaving a space beneath where rabbits and other little creatures could take refuge; and I can still hear in my mind the rattle of those planks, if the nails had loosened, as we rode

over them on our bicycles. Because many of the residents came from New England or the Scandinavian countries and felt the need of trees, box-elders and cottonwoods lined many of the streets. Vacant lots grew high with weeds and wildflowers. A number of vacant lots lay to the north and west of the new normal school, and the cows staked out to graze in them were sometimes spirited enough to alarm a student hurrying across lots and eager to be on time.

" To the south and east of the School stretched the farmlands, devoted almost entirely to the small grains - wheat, oats, barley, flax, - dotted here and there with buildings, but not many, for the farms were, on the whole, large. Those were, of course, the days of horses - horses drew the plows, the reapers, the wagons gathering bundles from the fields for the threshing machines that moved from farm to farm in the fall, and hauling the threshed grain to the elevators. A grain wagon, loaded to the brim with wheat or oats and drawn by two splendid horses, was a stately sight, and gave ground for calling this valley one of the great bread-baskets of America. But at night a child might be wakened as the same wagon, loaded now with the migrant workers who thronged here at harvest time, and who spent too much of their earnings in the saloons, thundered out of town, the horses galloping and the men shouting and singing.

" There were not only the great farm horses but the quiet domestic animals that we all drove - horses that could stand anything except meeting a threshing machine on the road. There were a few thoroughbreds, too, and a race track south of town where they could be raced or exercised. No one of my generation was unfamiliar with Johnny Haas's beautiful bay pacer, Abdullah, or Jim Burnham's Davy B., or Dr. Awty's Texas McGregor.

" In September 1888 even we children were aware that something momentous was happening - marked by the presence on the outskirts of town, as it then was, of a large and handsome building, and by the arrival of a new family - Mr. and Mrs. Lord and their three children, Ethel, Frank and Inez. Each of them was a strong personality, each became quickly so much part of our lives that it is hard to imagine the subsequent decade without

them. Frank was a pace-setter, I remember, and we twelve-year-olds were intimidated at the outset by learning that he was further along in school, by a year at least, than any of the rest of us. But the Normal School itself was the power house which made a different place of Moorhead, and the power originated in the man who was its first president.

"To this day it is hard for me to realize that Mr. Lord was not primarily ours. As a matter of fact, he was with us for only eleven years, as against the thirty-four he gave to the Eastern Illinois Normal School. Yet so much is he still a part of this community that sixty-one years after he left us we are gratefully dedicating the new library to his memory. One may well ask why.

"The answer to that question is not to be found in a set of biographical data, and yet the facts of his life give some clues to the sources of his personality and character. He was a Connecticut Yankee whose first American ancestor landed at Dorchester, Massachusetts in 1635, and the following year "went with Thomas Hooker to found a new colony on the Connecticut river." It is astonishing to those of us who know the richness and fertility of this part of the world to see the stony acres on which the early settlers of New England managed to support themselves and their families. The life was hard but not sordid or lacking in hope and ambition; and Mr. Lord numbered among his forebears not only a trustee of Yale College, but the first president (rector, they called him), Abraham Pierson. (The Yale tradition has persisted in the family, and today Mr. Lord's great-grandson, Henry Satterthwaite, is a freshman at Yale.)

"Nevertheless, there was to be no membership in Yale College for Mr. Lord. In 1862 his father, enlisted in the 12th Connecticut Regiment, was ordered to New Orleans, and there he died in hospital, when his oldest son was barely eleven years old. A man said to me once that the best thing that could happen to a boy, and especially an oldest son, was to lose his father at the age of eleven - a curious saying and I do not believe it, though Mr. Lord's career might be cited to prove it. He and his mother, in the big farm house in Killingworth, were left to do what

they could to carry on the farm and bring up the four younger children. There he learned the meaning of back-breaking labor, the importance of skill and foresight, the pride given by a job well done; and also, for life wasn't all work even on a New England farm, he picked up the lore of orchards and streams, wood lots and pastures. It stood him in good stead later when he wanted to point a moral with a bit of homely, graphic detail.

"When he was eighteen he took the first step on the path which was to lead him to Moorhead. In the face of great difficulties, his mother insisted on his leaving her to manage the farm, and going away to school. It was a normal school in New Britain, Connecticut, it was a good school, and his two years there determined his vocation. In 1874, after three years as principal of the high school in Terryville, Connecticut, he married Mary Cooke, a fellow teacher, and the two set out for Minnesota, believing it to be the land of opportunity. So it was eventually, but there were some hard years at the outset. After fourteen years as principal or superintendent in the schools of Winnebago City, Mankato, and St. Peter he had gained the proficiency in his profession, the reputation among the educational leaders of the state which brought him, at the age of thirty-seven to the presidency of the new normal school at Moorhead. It was great good fortune for us, and also for him, for he had the chance to use his accumulation of knowledge, experience, ideas and ideals, in creating an institution for the training of teachers according to his heart's desire. It is in that fact, I think, that the element of luck enters into his career. More than one distinguished man has said that he would not dare to live his life over again lest the luck he had had should not be repeated. Often the luck is a matter of timing; and that the Moorhead Normal School should need to be brought into being just when Mr. Lord was ready for such a task seems to me a case in point.

"And so, in September, 1888, the building later called "The Old Main," standing in dignified isolation southeast of town, saw the birth of this college. There were, we are told, five teachers and twenty-nine students (two more, by the way, than presented themselves when Radcliffe began in 1879.) I wish I could recapture more of those early years. Mr. Kurtz,

I remember, was Resident Director. I can recall the addition to the faculty from time to time of delightful people whom my father and mother greatly enjoyed, some of whom married here and became permanent residents. I can remember the pleasure my father had in his long walks and talks with Mr. Lord, and the interest they both took in their children's reading. In my recollection it was Frank and Ethel Lord who discovered the new author, Rudyard Kipling, in a paper-backed volume which came as a kind of supplement to a magazine. They passed him on to me, and we converted our fathers, but not, as I recall it, our mothers, who found Kipling pretty rowdyish. The new normal school brought lectures and concerts here, and itself provided occasional evenings of music and recitations which were called rhetorical. One of the disappointments of my childhood was being kept away by mumps from an evening when Charlie Loring and Frank Lord were to recite the quarrel scene between Brutus and Cassius from Julius Caesar. Only in such flashes do those long-ago years come back to me. In 1897, however, having graduated from Smith College in June, I enrolled as a student and was able to see with my own eyes and test with my own experience the kind of institution the Moorhead Normal School had become.

" The students numbered then about 375 of whom perhaps a hundred were pupils in the model school. The faculty, of course, was not large, but it included two members, besides Mr. Lord himself, whose reputation became nation-wide - Henry Johnson, who was later head of the department of history at Teacher's College, Columbia, and John Paul Goode, who, at Chicago, became, I believe, the first man to hold a chair of Geography in a university. But I remember others, who in skill and vividness of personality seemed to me equally noteworthy - Miss Ford, for example, in Latin, Miss McElligot in arithmetic, Miss Kimball in art, Letitia Morrissey in music.

" Mr. Johnson in his book The Other Side of Main Street, which is surely a classic in this college and in this town, calls the faculty a mutual admiration society, says that every member of the teaching staff

was devoted to Mr. Lord to the point of worship, and declares that he has never seen such harmony in any other educational institution. I wasn't in a position then to give a name to that harmony, or to appreciate its rarity; but many a time in later years I heard myself saying that on the whole the Moorhead Normal School, as I knew it that year, was the most consistently successful educational institution of which I had ever been a part. One may qualify a little those judgments of Mr. Johnson's and mine by saying that in a school so small and with only one function - the training of teachers - harmony and consistency of success were more easily attainable than in larger and more complex institutions; but making all possible discounts it was undeniably, I think, a school hard to describe except in superlatives. Nor was that result brought about by chance, for the miracle was repeated at the Eastern Illinois Normal School. Or was it? I should like to believe, I suppose, that although Mr. Lord's great achievements in Illinois were on a larger scale and more widely known than those in Minnesota, that last decade of the 19th century here in Moorhead had a special radiance for Mr. Lord himself, for his students and teachers, even for the teachers who followed him to Charleston. That wishful thinking of mine was confirmed a little only two years ago when a man who had succeeded Mr. Johnson at Teachers College introduced himself to me. "I know all about you people in Moorhead" he said, as if, in Mr. Johnson's reminiscences, those years in Moorhead more than half a century gone by, had had to the end a place of their own.

"Even if one grants that the school was exceptional and that its power originated in its leader, the question remains of how the result was accomplished. It was helped, I am sure, by the fact that Mr. Lord held and proclaimed certain clear and strong beliefs. In his biography they are listed as a kind of creed. He believed in truth, and the perpetual search for it. "Not who is right but what is true" was one of his maxims, and if it could be widely applied today it might solve some of the world's most serious problems. He believed in knowledge, precise and constantly to be increased. He believed in thinking as the means of digesting knowledge, and in wisdom as the product of thinking, working upon knowledge

and experience. He believed in people and their capacity for growth; he believed in work ("Blessed be drudgery" was another of his maxims), and he believed in obedience.

"I wonder if you feel as I do that those last items work and obedience ring strangely today, when labor-saving, effort-saving is a nearly universal objective, and obedience is equated with tyranny and the suppression of personality? Yet I am inclined to think that a good part of Mr. Lord's magic lay in the reconciliation of seeming opposites. The Normal School as I knew it in 1897-8 was a place of both discipline and freedom, proportioned and maintained by a mind that excelled in making clear distinctions. Feet moved briskly in that school, assigned tasks were performed with speed and thoroughness, idleness or slovenliness of any kind was dealt with drastically. But what delighted recognition of any excellence! What sympathy with any misfortune! What encouragement of originality and aptitude! The Morning Exercises exemplified in a way the two-fold method of the school. They were almost military in the precision with which they were conducted - students in their place, the faculty moving onto the platform, the model school marching in to the strains of a piano (and little Anna Kurtz slipping into the seat beside me). A hymn sung heartily and as well as possible, for Mr. Lord was a singer and knew the difference, a reading from the Bible, the Lord's Prayer, and another hymn. But then Mr. Lord read or talked and the regimentation stopped. For what variety! Bits from whatever he happened to be reading himself, prose and poetry, essays, novels; talks suggested by items in the paper or happenings in the school; it was as if for those moments each of his hearers was admitted to something like intimacy in the life of his mind. That in a way was the keynote of the school - the sharing of an experience which was respected and enjoyed by teachers and students alike. Not long ago I was talking with an eminent Oxford don who had been spending the first half year at Swarthmore College. He had enjoyed the experience, he said; he had found there teachers who liked to teach; and when I laughed he explained, "I've seen so many teachers who don't like to teach undergraduates." It seemed to me in that normal school of long ago that the teachers were as absorbed

and interested in their task as they wished their students to be in theirs.

" I realize as I look back that these happy conditions were favored by the temper of the times. It was what Henry Canby called in a book to which he gave the phrase as a title, "The Age of Confidence." The country had recovered from the disaster of the Civil War, the West had been opened up; population, wealth and power were increasing fabulously. It seemed to the generation to which Mr. Lord and my father belonged that progress could be rapid, that civilization was more nearly attainable than we find it today, and that education was the mainspring of that attainment. They died those two friends, within three weeks of one another in 1933, and one may be glad that they did not have to meet, in their old age, some of the discouragements and disillusionments of our time. I shall not specify those discouragements nor look for words to express the perils which civilization confronts today: but in this place and on this occasion there is a question we can hardly evade. The founders of this institution had a devoted and unquestioning faith in education. Was that faith mistaken or misplaced or excessive? Does education lack the transforming power in which they put their trust?

" I cannot answer that question as a historian or a philosopher or a poet might answer it, but something in the life of the man we are honoring today seems to me to have a bearing. That normal school in New Britain, Connecticut, to which Livingston Lord went at the age of eighteen changed his life. It won his respect, it fired his ambition, it gave him tools and an opportunity; and because that school acted in that way on that man hundreds and hundreds of lives have been enriched and strengthened. A power was set to work which lies at the very root of civilization. Truth, knowledge, wisdom, discipline of body, mind and spirit - to make these abstractions come alive in the experience of the individual is education. No civilization that can be called humane can exist without it; and we realize today, as they could not have realized it in 1888, that the struggle to make it prevail is nothing less than desperate.

" When I think of Mr. Lord's gallant warfare for these standards and ideals I feel as if a title should be found for him like those in

Pilgrim's Progress - "Mr. Valiant-for-Truth," perhaps. But he chose his own title, and it is engraved on his tomb: "He was a teacher." It describes him accurately, and it dignifies the profession to which he belonged.

Eda Comstock Notestein