

THE LATE DEAN WALLACE SECCOMBE, D.D.S., F.A.C.D.

An address delivered by Sir Robert Falconer, K.C.M.G., D.Litt., LL.D., D.D., D.C.L., F.R.S.C., President Emeritus of the University of Toronto, at the Funeral Service in Convocation Hall, January 18, 1936.

Of late, sad gaps have been made in our University circle. It was just a week ago that we took farewell of all that was mortal of our friend Dean Frank B. Allan: now we meet to fulfil the same duty, our hearts filled with sorrow, for Dean Wallace Seccombe. As I look back upon the active life of this University for nearly 29 years, these men, who have been called away, I think of as they were in their younger prime. They grew into their full stature by my side; to me they seem to have departed before the full tale of their years was told. But their completed work we see to be greater than one realised it was, as it was shaping from day to day. Like busy workmen they bent over their task of laying bricks tier upon tier: and now looking on what they built, we see a commodious and well proportioned edifice.

The Faculty of Dentistry is recognized as one of the best schools of Dentistry on this continent. Its foundations were well and truly laid and much of its structure raised under the oversight of that pioneer master-builder, the late Dr. Willmott, who was Dean of the College of Dentistry for 40 years. He gave it the character which it still has. He was succeeded by Dr. Webster, who was Dean from 1915-23, and who is still with us, I am glad to say. Dr. Seccombe, whom Dr. Willmott had trained, followed Dr. Webster. It was natural that he should be chosen to carry on the tradition. The new building has been a development from and fitted into what his father in Dentistry had established so firmly. In the year 1925-26, the School of Dentistry of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons, after long and careful consideration, became the Faculty of Dentistry in the University of Toronto. It was hoped that the teaching of Dentistry, which was of high standing, would be greatly furthered, and that research would be promoted if the School, then causing a strain on the financial resources of the Royal College of Dental Surgeons, could be associated with the University and receive material assistance in a variety of ways. Dr. Seccombe was one of those who were most eager for this move, and he became the first Dean. The adjustments, necessary in fitting the departments and curriculum into the conditions required by the University, demanded great industry and tact, as well as appreciation of the ideals of education within a university with long established standards in old faculties. A spirit of co-operation and constant vigilance were needed. Dr. Seccombe brought these qualities to bear on the situation. He ever kept in mind, as I know from many conversations with him, the rapid improvement that was taking place in Dentistry, and he was bound that, as far as in him lay, the new faculty would keep its place in the fore-front as regards both teaching and research, and be worthy of its place alongside the older faculties.

In the post-war years the numbers of students had shot up so rapidly that the College had much difficulty in providing for them. Then came a period after it became a faculty when numbers fell fast at the same time as standards were rising. The faculty raised the matriculation, lengthened the course and established a new degree, the B.Sc. in Dentistry, while research was being pressed forward. Thus, much greater financial demands were made on the University just at the time that revenue from attendance was falling. This gave anxious thought to the Dean. But progress was continued. The teaching of Pathology and other subjects was strengthened by co-operation with the university faculties of Arts and Medicine, as well as research. The library was enlarged and made more accessible to the profession. Dr. Seccombe endeavoured to keep graduates in touch with the faculty, and to help the profession by providing opportunities for refresher courses on recent technique, and by carrying extra-mural lectures and clinics to dental societies throughout the province and beyond. I am safe in saying, that all this faithful effort brought Dean Seccombe his reward in the approval by the profession as a whole of the creation of the faculty and of the manner in which it was being developed. Moreover, I can affirm that Dr. Seccombe would have been most eager to disclaim that he had accomplished all this by his own energy for the most part. He often spoke to me of the high quality of the band of skilful, scientific and hard-working colleagues with whom he was associated. He was their wise and co-operating head, whom today they sincerely mourn. He gave credit to others, particularly for the quality of the research being done, the self-denying labours of the instructors and the rising character of the students. But he had an open mind and was willing to discuss deficiencies frankly, nor did he flinch in his courage to face them, and to do all in his power to make the faculty earn its right to take its place, without challenge, alongside the faculties of the professions with longer histories. Also, he sought to bring the skill and knowledge of the faculty to bear on the health of the city and country. He was a humanitarian, who believed that Dentistry should be not a money-making business, but a profession.

His standing in the Dental profession of this continent was shown by his being chosen chairman of a committee of five to administer and direct a fund of \$20,000, increased by later grants to \$45,000, set up by the Carnegie Corporation to make a survey and analysis of dental education. By his frequent meetings with the leaders of his profession, he kept himself fully abreast of what was going on, and was accepted as one of its influential members.

Dr. Seccombe was well suited to perform the duties called for by the entrance of the College into the University. He was an excellent man of affairs. He knew the details of the faculty, understood where prunings might safely be made, and was expert in the use of the funds at his disposal. Alert, ready to grasp a situation, with unruffled temper he faced his problems and solved them with no small success. He has deserved well of the College, the Faculty, the Dental Profession and of all who desire to see it improve the health and comfort of our people.

But Dr. Seccombe was much more than a skilful dental surgeon and the capable administrator of a professional faculty. He was a man who lived a full life, with beneficent interests. He enjoyed the company of his fellow men. He was kindly, genial, co-operative. He lived in deep affection in the midst of his own family, to whom our sympathy goes out today. He was devoted to his church and was himself a religious man. Life for him was more than a mere succession of atomic duties, a kaleidoscopic, even if often beautiful, intermingling of circumstances. Through all the passing phases an inner personality was developing. Events and duties seem to us, so often in our moods of doubt, to be but shadows that flit across our earthly scene; and how quickly they sweep over it. Really, they are the dull skies, sunshine or rain-bearing clouds which give fertility to our permanent being during the passage of the lengthening years. I remain myself through them all; but changing so fast, that I am full of hope for what I may become in the long reaches of time. There is one other Person Who has been beside me throughout my journey, and Who will continue to perfect that which concerneth me, the Father of us all.

Valedictory remarks of C. N. Johnson, L.D.S.,
M.D.S., D.D.S., A.M., LL.D., on the same occasion,
(i.e., at the Funeral Service in Convocation Hall,
on January 18, 1936.)

My friends: I have never spoken those words with a deeper or a more abiding sense of their significance than I do at this moment.

You have assembled here to do reverence to the memory of one of the great men of the profession and of the world, and it is not for me at this time to lift the veil and peer beyond the sacred portals of the fireside and home.

Sir Robert Falconer has portrayed for you in logical sequence the outstanding events in the career of our departed friend, and it merely remains for me to touch briefly on certain of the qualities that most appealed to men and made Dean Seccombe great.

His executive ability was known to all. He had a firm grasp of the essential things of life, and he was always possessed of the sublime courage of his convictions. Yet he was infinitely kind and most considerate of the opinions of others. In this he was really superb.

His reputation spread to the utmost corners of the earth wherever dentistry was known. I saw today a telegram from a leader of the dental profession of the United States which said that Dean Seccombe was one of the greatest Deans in the domain of dental education.

His vision was very broad, and he was farseeing to a remarkable degree. He was always--to use his own characteristic expression--"a couple of jumps ahead of the regular procession." In this lay his undoubted claim to leadership. He blazed the trail, and was seldom called to follow the beaten path. With all of this, there was no assumption of superiority in his demeanor. He was modest to a deep degree, and most unobtrusive. If anyone had ever had the temerity to charge him with arrogance, he would merely have met it with an indulgent smile.

He was most amenable to the opinions of his fellows, and was willing to grant to others the fundamental right of self-expression. He was the essence of charity, and consideration, and herein was found the radiance of his lovable personality. He was generous above all things, and never counted cost when the issue meant the succor of a soul in need. He drew his friends from every walk of life, and was highly endowed with what is called the common touch. He was cosmopolitan in the broadest sense.

And then there was still another quality that always seemed to me to represent one of the most outstanding characteristics of Dean Seccombe's life and work. This was his great and unbounded tolerance. In this there was a lesson for all mankind to learn. His example was one of the greatest legacies that he could leave and in the sum total of what he did and what he was we see envisioned for future years the consummation of a great and noble life.

My friends, in this presence, and at this hour, I dare not trust myself to speak of the more intimate things that bound my friend and me together and linked our very lives.

The Executive Committee of the Council of the Faculty of Dentistry records the sense of loss of the Faculty in the passing of its Dean, the late Wallace Seccombe, on Thursday, January 16, 1936. His efforts for the good of the Faculty and of the profession of Dentistry since his appointment as Superintendent in 1912 and Dean in 1923, his comprehension of others' viewpoints, his vision in adopting policies and his energy and perseverance in carrying them out, as well as his personal characteristics which endeared him to his friends, have not only left an enduring memorial to his life, but an impelling incentive to his associates to rear a suitable superstructure on the foundation he laid so well.

With this sense of loss is mingled deep sympathy for his wife and children.