

THE SEVENTIETH COMMENCEMENT

JUNE 25, 1914

The seventieth annual Commencement address was delivered by Edmund Janes James, President of the University of Illinois. President James made a personal appeal to the members of the class of 1914 to prove themselves worthy of membership in the alumni body of the University of Michigan.

The total number of degrees was given as 1035. Of this number, 16 were honorary degrees. There were also listed in the program of the day the names of eighty-three persons who had received degrees in the period between January and May. The total number of degrees conferred between July 1, 1913, and June 30, 1914, was 1,208.

The day began officially with the bugle call, shortly after eight o'clock, and the ceremony of hoisting the flag. The procession, headed by the University Band, started promptly at nine o'clock, each department forming at its own building and taking its assigned place in the ranks, immediately following the guard of honor section composed of President Hutchins, President James, the speaker of the day, the President Emeritus, the candidates for honorary degrees, the Regents, the ex-Regents, the University Senate and the alumni, attended on either side by one hundred students bearing pennants in the Michigan colors.

The procession was headed by two buglers in white, followed by Professor H. C. Sadler, parade marshal, in his scarlet robe of the University of Glasgow. By ten o'clock the seniors and their friends, and all who had tickets to the exercises were seated in the Hill Auditorium. Following the invocation by the Reverend Henry Tatlock, the Commencement address was delivered by President James.

He congratulated the members of the class, first of all, in starting life as college graduates, for in spite of the jests and gibes at the expense of the college graduate, he claimed there never was a time in which the mere fact of college graduation came so near making out a prima facie case of desirability and efficiency as at the present time. The commiseration expressed for the college graduate who failed in life is the very best evidence that the world as a rule expects efficiency and success from the college graduate.

Dr. James also congratulated them upon coming into the great fellowship of the university trained men and women, which comes nearer an aristocracy in the true sense of the term, than any other group of men and women. Dr. James emphasized also the great good fortune of the graduates in entering the great republic of letters and science through the doorway of an American university; for in his opinion the American university is built today upon broader lines, on sounder foundations, on a more democratic plan, and has a more promising outlook than the universities of any other country, not even excepting Germany itself. The fact of their having chosen

as their Alma Mater a western American university, was also commented on. For, while at present, one must recognize the pre-eminence in scholarship and the prestige socially of certain of the historical institutions along the Atlantic seaboard, he said, that on the whole the western universities of today are working along sounder educational lines; are closer to the people in the right sense of that term, and are emphasizing the permanently important things, and advancing more rapidly in many directions than their sister institutions of the east.

The speaker also congratulated them upon the fact that they were going out as graduates of a state university.

The signs of the times are plain. Everyone can read the handwriting on the wall. This great democracy of ours is going to take into its own hands the direct control and support of a great chain of institutions, which will train its members for social service of every kind, in public and private stations and while it will welcome, let us hope always, the contributions of every public spirited individual, yet our democracy is bound to cease being dependent upon this haphazard and more or less accidental prompting of the good will and beneficence of private individuals to provide the means for training its leaders in all lines of social activity.

Dr. James also found it a great advantage to the graduates that they had chosen a great university as the place to spend their university years, for, while the small institution is necessary to answer public needs, and many students cannot flourish in these great centers of student population, yet to the young man who has strength of will and clear-sighted vision of what he wants, and the high moral purpose to make the most of his opportunities, the chances for an education in the highest and broadest sense of the term, in the midst of this great aggregation of men and women, he believed, are unrivaled.

The sense of being a part of this great pulsating organism, full of life and energy, reacts on one's nervous system like new wine, rousing every latent activity, quickening every instinct, stimulating to the highest forms of activity.

It is in the academic, as in the political sphere. I have always thanked God that I was born in the country that stretched from ocean to ocean, and have always grieved that it does not stretch from the polar sea to the gulf. There is something in mere size, when it is backed up by moral and spiritual and intellectual strength, which lifts a man out of himself, broadens his views, enlarges his outlook, stimulates his vision, quickens his energies, strengthens his arm, fires his imagination, drives him on to great achievements.

Finally President James congratulated the members of the class of 1914, because they have chosen to enter the great guild of learning through the doors of the University of Michigan, the mother of state universities, the leader in the field of state education, the greatest and most renowned institution in the Mississippi valley. He stated that the State of Michigan was the first state in the union to plan a university system which was to be an integral part of a comprehensive educational scheme, with its beginning in the primary school and its culmination in the professional schools of law, and medicine, and engineering and philosophy.

The University of the State of Michigan was the first to show how an American system of higher education can be built upon a system of public schools and if the

State of Michigan had done nothing more in the field of education than to provide an opportunity for Dr. Tappan to incorporate his ideas in concrete form, it would have been a national, even a world service to the cause of education. As Michigan was the first great American state university, so it has remained the greatest of them all, down to the present time. As it led in the procession of 1860, so it leads it still today, after a lapse of more than fifty years. I am accustomed in classifying our state universities to put Michigan in the first place, to leave the second place vacant, and to bracket for the third place, I will not say what institutions.

The University of Michigan has been conservative in the best sense; it has served the commonwealth and the nation in the best of all possible ways by advancing the confines of human knowledge on the one hand, and by training young men and young women for positions of responsibility in public and private station, on the other.

It has not shared in the more or less hysterical claims for the university that it should lead human society or guide and control the state government. It has not spent its strength in doing the work of the primary and the secondary schools, throughout the length and breadth of the state, and dignified it by calling it university work, thereby misleading the public and undertaking to do what other institutions should do, because they can do it better, and thereby leaving undone the work which it can better do than any other institution.

It has not undertaken to administer the state government, but to train those who will be qualified to do it better than any body of college professors, who, in undertaking work for which they are not qualified, neglect the work which they are appointed to do, and if they do not, will be left undone. We must never forget that if a busy college professor can really, in the odd moments which he has to give to it, run the government better than the men who are called to do so, it is only because the latter are hopelessly inefficient and not because the former is efficient. The policy of making the body of university professors run the state government, is a confession of weakness and bankruptcy on the part of the state officials. The way out of the difficulty, and I am quite willing to recognize a great difficulty here, is not to put the government in commission under the supervision of university professors, but to train up a band of civil servants and legislators and educate the people to employ them.

To make the University a mere handmaid of state administration is not to improve the latter in the long run, but to strike a fatal blow at the real service which the university may render the state, namely, the advance of science and the efficient training of its students for the highest possible work in public and private station.

Dr. James called attention to certain of what he termed serious defects in our western system of education, and in our western state universities as compared with the older historic institutions and best institutions of the old world. Our method of admitting students without examination, while it has many advantages, the speaker claimed certainly permits large numbers of young people to get into our universities for so-called advanced work who have neither the training nor the talents to make it profitable for them or for the community.

The American public high school is one of the most beneficial institutions, but we have not reached a time when the public sentiment of the community will sustain the faculty of an accredited high school in setting up and maintaining thoroughly efficient standards of work. Our high schools and college graduates who are going forth into the community in such large numbers every year should use their influence to establish and maintain higher standards of preparatory training.

Many of the graduates of our western institutions lack the fundamental thorough-going secondary training in the elements of learning and in the acquisition of culture which characterizes the German, French, or English university graduate. This is because these countries insist upon very severe preliminary training before their students are permitted to go up to the university at all.

President James urged upon the graduates two things which should be of interest to them all, no matter what career they might choose. First, they should be animated by a desire to be of service to society, to demonstrate that the state was wise in making the sacrifice involved in building up and supporting these state universities.

You owe a debt to the people of this commonwealth, which you can only return by service to the community. If you have acquired here new abilities and strengthened abilities already possessed, which will enable you to get a position of advantage in our society, and you do not use that position of advantage for the benefit of the whole, instead of for yourself, the state has made a great mistake in educating you. If you use your advantage ground simply to get a cinch upon your less fortunate neighbors, and exploit your superior education and superior opportunities, to the disadvantage of your fellow citizens, you will become a menace and a curse to society, instead of a blessing.

You ought never to lose sight of the fact that the expense of your education has been largely defrayed by the poorer members of the commonwealth. The notion that only the rich or the well-to-do contribute to the support of the government and our public institutions, is a very mistaken one. The poor washwoman who toils ten hours a day, over a washtub, can earn the money which may keep her little family together, so far she pays rent, so far she buys clothes, so far she buys food, pays her share of the expense of this institution; and the poorest and hardest worked miner in the deepest mines in the state of Michigan, is giving up some little part of his daily wage that you may have these opportunities and you may obtain this education. Noblesse oblige! A solemn and holy sense of obligation to the commonwealth, to its people, to its individual citizens, should rest upon each student in the University of Michigan. And this debt of obligation can only be paid by rendering a service to the community to which you may be a part.

The university man ought, in the second place, to do his work in the community not only in the spirit of service, but in the spirit of science. The whole world at present seems to have become hysterical. Every country in the world is going through a ferment, spiritual, intellectual, moral, the like of which we haven't seen for a century past. The wild antics of suffragettes in Great Britain, the bloodthirsty orgies in Macedonia, and Turkey, the terrific and destructive contests in Mexico, the condition of anarchy in Colorado, corresponding conditions in Italy, in France, in Germany, all seem to show that somehow or other the world has at certain points gone mad. Curious superstitions and vagaries of all kinds to which even college bred people are subject, prove how slow our progress is from that world of ignorance and superstition and inefficiency and apathy and indifference, which we call barbarism, and which we flatter ourselves lies behind us, into that condition of enlightenment to which we give the name civilization.

I believe that the greatest progress which can come to American people and to the human race in years to come, must spring from an ever wider spread of the kingdom of knowledge. It is the truth which is to make us free, and university men and women ought to feel a specially solemn obligation to regulate their conduct by the sound principles of science, rather than by the prejudice and superstition and nervous hallucinations and vagaries of all sorts. You ought to do your work, whatever it may be, in the right way, in the way that leaves things better than they were before. You ought to be concerned not only about doing the best that you can, under existing conditions, but upon improving these conditions. You should be especially concerned about helping to educate your fellow men to the idea of applying scientific standards and scientific tests to all their work, so far as it can be properly judged by such tests.

You are going out into the world, most of you at any rate, in another relation aside from that of your calling or profession in the ordinary sense of the term. You are going out into society as fathers and mothers, as bread winners, and home makers for the family. I believe that it will be true in the future as in the past, that the

average man and the average woman, whether graduates or not, can do their best work for themselves and for society in a partnership which results in a social unit, effective for social progress. And the woman who deliberately chooses this career when the opportunity offers itself, or when she makes it for herself, as every woman can if she will, is choosing a highway to social service which is far ahead of all teaching or library or legal or medical service she can possibly render to society. It looks sometimes as if our modern society were giving the honors of social recognition, an opportunity, the ease of life, to the bachelor maid instead of to the wife and mother. Just in proportion as this is done, will society surely suffer by recruiting its ranks in the long run, from uneducated and the more animal elements of our society. There is no joy in all the world like that of father and mother, unless indeed, it be that of grandfather and grandmother, or great great grandparents,—about this last I know nothing. You see your children coming on to take your place, to make good your defects, to take up your failures, to do what you have been unable to do, stand where you have fallen, to run and not be weary where you have stumbled and fainted, and to fly where you have crawled. Let no desire for automobiles or country clubs, or individual independence, for a life of sloth, beguile you from this road of sacrifice and sometimes toil and suffering, which is also one of your supreme joys, and satisfactions, as well as the highest service of your day and generation..

You are going out finally, into our society to be citizens of the commonwealth and the nation. We are looking into the future with anxious eyes and hearts, knowing as little about what is going to happen next as the people of any period in the whole history of the world. But one thing is plain, we are getting a new meaning into the old forms. We are pouring new wine into old bottles, and they are bursting in every direction. We have been explaining and defending our civilization which we have worked out, on the ground that if men did not have to starve, they would not work; on the ground that men disliked effort so much that they must either be driven to toil by scourge, if not by actual lack of food, then by prospective hunger, or else that they must be lured on and persuaded to make extraordinary inducements and attractions which would place them at a great advantage in comparison with all their fellow men.

We are putting a new meaning into the word equality today, which is just as different and as far ahead of the idea which lay in Lincoln's mind, as the notion he associated with it was different from that of Thomas Jefferson. By equality today, we mean not mere equality before the law, but equality of opportunity. And we are beginning to consider that equality of opportunity to be the right of every human being by virtue of the fact that he is a human being, and the adoption of this principle as a positive rule of action will make the society into which you are going, and which you will help to make over and change, as different from the society which we know today, as this is from the mediaeval period, or from the Roman and Greek period. Nobody knows how these things are going to be accomplished. It is possible of course, that we shall fail in our endeavor, and that our civilization will run in a brief time the course of that in Egypt and Babylonia and Assyria, and the Hittites, and Greece and Rome. It is possible that men will, in a comparatively short time, forget that we have ever lived and that that American republic ever existed. They certainly will, if we cannot succeed in solving some of these fundamental problems. It is easier for a nation to go down than to go up. It is easier for it to retrograde than it is for it to advance. It is easier for it to disappear from the pages of history than it is to find a place in the rolls of the great. Of this, however, the outcome is in the hands of God. But upon you and your day and generation rests the obligation to do the best you can in the light you have, to develop to its highest extent the possibilities of a civilization in which every human being is recognized as having certain rights which every other human being is not only bound to respect, but bound to help realize by every means in his power. Every one of you, no matter what his business may be, no matter where his lot may be cast, should feel that it is a part of his duty not to be like a dumb driven beast, drifting with the current, with no attempt to understand it, with no attempt to appreciate what is happening, but like an intelligent, free, hopeful immortal son of God, to help to do his part, in working out the problem of his civilization.

through the university catalogue and arrange the liberal subjects on one side and the technical on the other. Where does architecture belong? Surely no subject is more vitally related to the ideals and aspirations of humanity and no subject demands more rigid technical training. Where does geology belong? There are men who make geology a mere examination of paving stones, and there are others who make it a panorama of the ages, the absorbing story of the preparation of the globe for man's appearance and dominion. Where does music belong? Taught by some men, it is the interpretation of the finest moods of the human spirit; taught by others it justifies the verdict of Samuel Johnson: "Sir, music does not convey to me the ideas of other men, and it prevents me from enjoying my own." One engineer learns how to build a road and learns nothing else; another sees the connection of his little piece of macadam with the roads built by Julius Caesar and Napoleon, he sees the march of civilization from land to land, and builds his little pathway as one who is preparing the way of the Lord.

The real difference is this: The man of liberal culture is working to understand fundamental principles, basic laws of history and of life, while the man of technical spirit is working for a job. The man of liberal open mind aims to become a citizen of the intellectual world. The man of mere expertness and skill is aiming at bread and butter. The university stands amid the varied occupations of modern life to cry: "Sirs, ye are brethren." It stands for mental soundness and health, largeness or sympathy, insight into the principles on which the world of nature and the world of society are built. It stands against the dangers of a cheap and hasty vocational training. It stands for training for citizenship. But the real training for citizenship does not mean

merely instruction in civics or civil government or our country's history. It means such sense of the relation of each man's task to the task of civilization and the human race as shall usher us into the communion of saints, the fellowship of the apostles and prophets and teachers and fishermen and farmers and shoemakers, and all true men who worship their Creator by doing honest work with a happy heart.

We must see to it that each individual is taught to regard himself as trustee for the social order of which he is a part. He has no right to engage in business merely for private profit. Some occupations already have risen above that motive. If we discover that the physician thinks more of his fees than his patients, we dismiss him at once. We ask that the teacher shall teach from love of the pupils, but we permit the contractor to build the school-house merely to put money in his purse. Why should the teacher in the school-house be required to work from any higher motive than the contractor who builds the school-house? Why should the fireman who rescues our goods from the store in some midnight conflagration be asked to act from a nobler principle than the man who sells the goods in the same store? All such distinctions are artificial and unreal.

Either the teacher must adopt the mercenary motive of the contractor, or the contractor must be held to the motive of the teacher. Either the salesman in our stores will rise to the level of the fireman and the physician and the soldier and the missionary, or we must abandon society to selfish struggle. But the time is coming when every occupation shall be seen as simply a form of social service. Of course if a man renders such service effectively he will be rewarded, and he ought to be. But he does not do it for the reward, but for the sake of rendering service. This great motive