
ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

For the first time in years Commencement Day was decidedly rainy. Fortunately an interval between showers gave enough time for the formation of the Commencement parade, which started at nine o'clock with the gathering of the various senior classes at their assigned posts on the Campus, reaching Hill Auditorium just in time. The total number of degrees conferred this year was 1,150 exactly, including six honorary degrees. In addition to this the Commencement program listed eighty-three degrees granted in the period between January and May of the present year, making a total of 1,233 altogether. Of this number ten were *nunc pro tunc* degrees given to members of former classes.

A certain proportion of the senior class was absent at the various training camps and in other forms of military service. Their degrees were given them later by special committees of the Faculty sent to the training camps for this purpose. The long line of caps and gowns in the senior procession, however, was broken occasionally by the uniform of the members of the Naval Reserves who were permitted to return to receive their degrees.

Following the organ prelude and a prayer by the Rev. Arthur W. Stalker, '84, President Livingston Farrand, LL.D., of the University of Colorado, delivered the Commencement address.

THE CRISIS AND THE RESPONSIBILITY

There has been no hesitation in my mind as to the subject upon which I should address you this morning. It is one of those occasions in a momentous period when the choice is determined by factors quite beyond individual control. It is a time when the minds of all men are turned toward one object, namely, the definition of responsibility and duty in time of national crisis.

In determining this, we are each, you and I, concerned with two overshadowing problems; first, the part which we individually shall play in the great struggle in which our country has taken its position and, second, the attitude which we collectively as a nation shall assume in order clearly to demonstrate the motives which underlie our action and in order to assure, so far as that may be possible, the preservation of those principles and ideals for the sake of which we have entered the conflict.

It is one of the inseparable accompaniments of great catastrophes that unimportant details are stripped away—that fundamental facts emerge and crystallize—that academic discussion stills and vital truths stand naked and obvious to previously unsuspecting eyes.

Such is the situation in which the world finds itself today and we in America, after more than fifty years of relative calm, have awakened with indescribable shock to realize that the supreme test of our national ideals is at hand, that Democracy is not only on the defensive, but that it is fighting for very existence, and that the forces of civil liberty and those of privilege and absolutism which for more than twenty centuries have battled now here and now there are finally locked in a world struggle for supremacy.

And as we take our places in the conflict it is well that we inspect our Americanism anew, for we have allowed to grow dim certain of those ideals upon which the nation was founded.

"Self government" was the term which described in appealing simplicity the political and religious concepts which drew our fathers to these shores. It is a simplicity more apparent than real. It is a concept formulated in a phrase which has inspired man from the crude individualistic stage of the savage up to the complex conditions of modern civilized society. It has developed contributory ideals which have themselves been the causes of conflict and have finally emerged to be accepted with assurance and complacency as self evident and good. Personal freedom, equality, the right to participate in government we regard as the unquestioned heritage of every man. But, we should remember, these principles were not formulated to meet a temporary demand.

They were History's contribution to the achievement of the common good of man. And that goal must always be the object of humanity's struggle. What we mean by the term is not difficult to express in broad outline. It phrases a condition in which human beings may live a life that is reasonably comfortable and happy, that they may share in the world's accumulated store of knowledge, that they may have freedom, within the limits of what the world agrees is right, to order their lives and callings according to their own ideas of good. Or, if this be too Utopian a condition, at least a state in which most may so live and act and in which no one shall be faced by artificial barriers in his search for happiness and well being.

What it is that determines whether or not most men shall have these things depends upon our point of view. The economist, professional or crude, will emphasize an income or wage that will insure bodily comfort. Students of religion and ethics will assert that ideals of right and conduct are the vital factors. Science will call attention to the essential part that the conquest of nature plays in the approach to the desired end. The advocate of each is right.

Wealth and ideals and right conduct and knowledge are all indispensable to the conditions which make for the welfare of man. And yet, with the essential needs clearly recognized, it is obvious that society has failed in important respects. That an intolerable inequality exists, none will deny. That the contrasts of riches and poverty, knowledge and ignorance, crime and right living are greater than reason can justify is admitted by everyone. That the separation must be diminished is obvious and it is equally clear that the approximation of the extremes must be brought about by the elevation of the lower rather than by the depression of the higher.

This is, of course, no new question that is so presented. Social and economic maladjustment has been a disturbing element since the dawn of history and probably before. Never solved, it has been dealt with in different epochs in different ways. Despotism has in local instances quieted the surface without stilling the turmoil which seethed below. Anarchy has at times expressed the brute strength of the

victims without offering an endurable substitute for the conditions against which the downtrodden cried out in protest.

Even that great, many-sided apex, profound as were its effects on Western civilization, could do no more than print in indelible lines where all the world might read the story of Society's struggle and state in unequivocal terms the factors in Society's task.

That a permanent adjustment can be effected is out of the question. Complete solution of the problem would postulate intellectual and social stagnation. It is a complicating fact that each advance in the world's knowledge serves inevitably to disturb any approach to equilibrium.

Every discovery of science, applied, as it always is, to practical affairs must unavoidably affect the economic status and thus in time react upon the social relations. We are apt to forget that both time and space may and do have a profound effect upon civic needs and upon social responsibility. Even standards of ethics evolve with culture. What is moral and good at one time and in one place may be immoral and wrong in another age and in another quarter of the globe. It was Pascal who said, "There is nothing just or unjust which does not change its quality with a change of climate. Three degrees of latitude overturn the whole science of law." In other words, it is always safe in drawing comparisons between the conduct of others and of ourselves to ascertain whether our judgment is being passed upon standards or upon the degree of conformity to standards whatever they may be. For as a rule the code to which we point with confidence is a product chiefly of convention and of the times.

For our day and so far as we can see for some generations to come, the fact of racial and national subdivision is another obstacle in the path of social progress. The elements of the problem may be common wherever found but the details of its presentation will vary with the racial habits and ideals and with the traditions which each particular group happens to have inherited from its past.

Concerned, as we are, with American conditions, this last consideration is one of eminent significance. Immigration has served immeasurably to increase our population and wealth, has, in a word, made us what we are, but while injecting from year to year an increasing stream of vitality and strength it has just as increasingly held active and irritant the fact of divergent and often, in the first generation, irreconcilable racial traits and traditions.

The fact that more has not been achieved in the past is not a reason for pessimism or discouragement.

Viewed broadly, each historic upheaval has served to raise the general level of society and its relations. The fact that ultimate solution seems unattainable does not mean that enormous improvement is not within our reach. Anarchy and despotism cannot be admitted as the only alternatives at the world's disposal. The third possibility is less easy to define, but it is that toward which we are bound to work. To arouse a sense of collective interest, to establish common ideals of the common good, to enlist the forces of humanity and justice and knowledge for the improvement of the general welfare—this is Democracy's task.

In conditions less complex than those which civilization now presents much has been accomplished. Even the early history of our own country carries its illuminating lesson. The little Puritan communities of New England achieved results the effects of which have traversed the continent and upon which we still build our governments and more or less order our lives. And why? Because they were communities of like minded men. Because they had the same ideals of religion and liberty and life. Their members believed in the same standards of conduct. They revered the same righteousness and they hated the same iniquity. They had the same conception of the general good. The question is not as to whether their conception was sound and their customs admirable. The important fact is that common ideals produced results and the lesson thus taught it is for us to take to heart.

And yet more is to be learned from a study of our national past, brief as its course has been.

The landing at Plymouth was the visible expression for protest and of an ideal. It was followed by the sixteenth and seventeenth century settlements and

then in turn by the eighteenth century colonies which sought in their experimental way to make living and safe the traditions which had been brought from England and Holland and which were still the objects of struggle in the older environment. The Revolution with its Continental Congress and its later Constitutional Conventions sought to formulate in definite and final form those principles so dynamic in character but so fraught with dissension. This was the first real test to which the American people, not yet a nation, were subjected. The task which faced them was no easy one. The individualism, personal and sectional, which had instigated the effort all but wrecked the undertaking. It is worth noting that even then the traditions of the privilege of class persisted along with the claim for equal rights in government. That staunch old patriot, John Adams, demanded that "the rich and the well born" should still have separate representation. But in spite of strife and bitter dissension the nation was achieved.

From 1781 to 1861 was a period of triumphant adaptation of the new democracy to a series of rapidly changing conditions. One factor did more than anything else to intrench the new order and save it from the fatal complacency of inherited security. This was the pressure of population and the westward extension of the frontier with its constant solidifying effect of shoulder to shoulder struggle for material subsistence.

But through that half century and more of eager lusty growth there remained and grew the seeds of weakness. The shameful incongruity of democracy and slavery persisted.

The selfishness of sectionalism clamored in tones of rising insistence. The second crisis of the nation was at hand and the Civil War was fought. That struggle brought this people once more face to face with the responsibilities which the members of a democracy severally carry. It emphasized once more the almost forgotten fact that self government is a task as well as a privilege, that sacrifice and service must be given if liberty is to endure. That war established a new ideal of freedom and a new ideal of equality and its close saw the high level of democratic sentiment on this continent.

Another half century has passed, a new generation has arisen and again we have forgotten.

And now from abroad has come the awakening summons.

We are not concerned with details. We may dismiss as irrelevant the previously absorbing discussion regarding the definition of Democracy. In its broad outlines it is the right of the people to live and to will and to rule and it is this right which is now challenged.

It is doubtful if that great people whom we are now forced to face as an enemy realized even to a slight degree three years ago this fact which the fortunes and methods of the world war have discovered.

It is a teaching of history that in international affairs strenuous action is not always conditioned by clean-cut motives and never has this been more evident than in the contemporary struggle. But, as already implied, motives, aspirations and even ideals become submerged when the fight is to the death and the sooner we, the American people, awaken to our situation the sooner will be achieved that assurance of civil liberty without which, we, have been bred to believe, life itself is not worth while.

And so, for the first time in the lives of most of us we are summoned as a nation to the test. We are called to duty not through comfortable delegation of responsibility but through personal sacrifice and service.

Each day that passes serves to clarify the issue.

The privileges of liberty and of government by and of the people we have come to regard as a commonplace of birthright and universal recognition. We forget that this heritage was won and bequeathed to us only after centuries of hard fought revolt on the part of our ancestors in whatever section of Europe they may have made their stand. We have failed to see, in that security to attain which you and I contributed nothing, that the might of absolutism was not yet broken even though masked by economic progress and prosperity. It has taken a violated Belgium and the mounting ruthlessness of three years of war to make us see.

God grant that with the opening of our eyes there has come an awakening of our souls!

It is to my mind a fortunate thing that peace was not brought about before time and method had disclosed beyond question and doubt the fundamental issues which have now been brought unequivocally to the surface. Frightful as the cost has been and frightful as the cost must yet be, it is well for the generations to come that the lines are now drawn so clearly that the battle *must* be fought to the end.

And we must pay the price.

Whatever may have inspired France when she sprang to defend her soil in 1914, whatever may have moved Britain when she ranged herself on the side of her hereditary foe in the weeks that followed, whatever dreams of national advantage or aggrandizement may have seized the minds of any warring nation in that fateful year—those motives and those dreams have now been superseded. The issue is no longer to be defined in national terms. It is super-national. It is the simple but appalling question—Shall Democracy survive? It is to assure an affirmative answer that America has entered the conflict.

But let us not delude ourselves for a moment with the idea that this assurance is already won. There is no virtue in blinding ourselves to the fact that today the advantage lies with the enemy. The chief promise of ultimate triumph for the forces of liberty lies in the solemn fact that neither France nor Britain, nor now America, can conceivably lay down her arms until complete victory has once for all established the principles for which the Western peoples are contending.

And as a nation let us realize that in recognizing the issue and in formally accepting the responsibility we must at once and without reserve assume the burden. It is not a question of the mobilization of armies on a scale with which we have hitherto had no experience; it is not a question of a percentage increase in tax levies; it is above all not a question of tumult and words. It is a casting into the balance of every resource of which as a nation we stand possessed.

Are we ready for the sacrifice? That we shall make it I have no doubt. That we realize it I am not so sure.

It is well that, as we pledge our loyalty, we should search our fitness for the great enterprise on which we are embarked.

We believe that the national character is essentially sound. The best sign and most encouraging symptom in these days of gravity is the readiness with which each section of the country as it slowly awakens to the national crisis answers the call.

But the fact that we will is not proof that we can. Generations of prosperity have made us slothful and self centered. Unmeasured natural resources have made us extravagant and careless. Undisturbed security has made us contemptuous and international isolation has made us blind to the lessons which the experience of neighbors might easily teach.

Resourceful in the quest of material success we are notoriously inefficient in the administration of our public affairs. Outraged at the sight of an individual victim of injustice we have freely permitted the development of an economic inequality which threatens the stability of our national structure. Quick in sympathy for personal suffering and misfortune we have allowed poverty and infectious disease, both preventable, to spread like a cancer in the national organism. We are, as a people, undisciplined to a degree hitherto unknown in the history of civilization.

In short, while possessed of a potential strength never yet exerted to a fraction of its possibility, we are cursed by an inefficiency which constitutes the gravest peril when opposed to the trained effectiveness of that concentrated authority which we know as absolutism. In other words, the first practical task of the world today is to make Democracy efficient and nowhere is the necessity so obvious or the difficulty so great as in this, our American commonwealth. We shall not accomplish it until we are purged of the accumulated by-products of generations of indulgence and unregulated prosperity.

And so we are summoned both as individuals and as a nation to subject ourselves to a new discipline. In the response which we make will be foreshadowed success or failure in our great undertaking. It will not be enough that we shall render those material contributions for which the government may call. It will

not even be enough that we shall give the hundreds of thousands of young lives which this modern Moloch will demand. We shall not emerge from this storm which has now overwhelmed us until we, each and everyone, shall have been imbued to the point of personal action by the spirit of sacrifice and devotion. We must realize once more as living stimuli to action and not as academic platitudes the ideals upon which the nation was founded. We must recover the clear vision of our fathers who saw values in their true relations and refused to live if their ideals were stultified or banished.

And next to the individual responsibility for that personal recasting upon which the new national character must rest is the necessity that as a people we shall hold rigidly and unswervingly to the purposes for which we have entered the war.

If, after sobering cost, when we shall participate in what we believe to be inevitable ultimate triumph, we shall permit ourselves to be tempted by opportunities of national aggrandizement, the war will have been fought in vain.

We are not concerned with the establishment of a new balance of power in Europe; we are not primarily concerned with the rehabilitation of a particular nation which we call Belgium; we are not in the last instance concerned with the defeat of a specified power which we name Germany. But we are concerned to the last drop of our blood with the right of small nations to live and to maintain their national peace, honor and integrity. We are concerned so long as a man remains to fight with the principle that no single power shall dictate to the world what shall be or what shall not be against the wills of the peoples who make up the other part.

With these purposes and with these motives we enter the conflict. They are but expressions of those principles which have slowly been achieved and which have been formulated under the concept of Democracy and for its safety and for no other reason do we fight. For lawless destruction of property there may be compensation. Even for brutal disregard of life there may conceivably be atonement, but for the annihilation of ideals there is no redress and for their preservation our choice is made and our stand is taken.

I wish it might be possible for me on this occasion to use words which would make clear the critical situation in which our civilization is placed.

The closest search of the international horizon discloses no signs of approaching peace. The revolution in mighty but inarticulate and unco-ordinated Russia is a pledge for the future, but offers little for the present on the Eastern front. The inconceivable horror of the death struggle in the West is clearly indecisive. The conditions in the Balkans and the Southern field permit no interpretation favorable to the Allies. And the situation on the Seas shows the enemy in the position of advantage and not slow to press it home.

Into this dark setting we have thrust our strength. The problem is to make it tell. There is no virtue in closing our eyes to its present impotence. The highest patriotism will be shown by a stern and clear-sighted realization that the bloody task to which we have set our hands is an enterprise of years. To accomplish what must be will call for the dedication of every resource. The inefficiency of our unwieldy might must be overcome by rigid discipline and at awful cost; for such is the unavoidable price of unbridled individualism. Upon our shoulders must now fall the burden which others have borne to the point of exhaustion, and we have no choice but to assume it.

The time has passed when discussion of details might have been in place. There is now room for but one thought in every mind and that is to find the place where service can best be rendered and then to give without reservation whether the offering be wealth or hand or brain or life itself.

And as we give and in proportion to our service comes a compensating hope and inspiration. We believe that the trial into which our country is entering and through which it must pass will prove its salvation. We shall emerge a new people, leading new lives and thinking new thoughts. We shall accomplish, unconsciously for the most part, social and economic transformation for which under commonplace conditions centuries might not suffice. We shall acquire that which as a nation we most lack, the habit of discipline. We shall see arise, we pray, a new America, freed of its complacency, its indifference, its greed and its extravagance; an

America standing for the world, as it did nearly a hundred and fifty years ago, a pledge for the safety of democratic ideals and of human liberty.

And with the establishment of democratic ideals within national limits there will have been taken a step no less significant for the future of the world. The concert of peoples welded under pressure of national peril may be the forerunner of a new internationalism which shall transcend the claims of race, language and political boundaries. We may see realized those visions of the seers of all time when the peoples of the earth looking beyond the interests of accidental aggregation shall apprehend the glorious ideal of the universal brotherhood of man and with this inspiration shall inaugurate a new era in the history of civilization.