Silliman, Saither, and the Memorial Tower

Thomas Jefferson recognized how inextricably time is woven into the fabric of human affairs when he built a precision clock (which hangs over the entrance to Monticello) in order to be constantly reminded of the passing hours.

And the artisans of Venice constructed a clock atop a building in St. Marks Square, and as the sun moves over the heavens, two iron men raise their mallets and periodically strike the bell to remind the populace of the passage of time.

And where students gather on the eastern coast, the Silliman Tower welcomes the day with its carillon call.

And far removed, on the western coast, the Saither Tower in the Berkeley Hills, rings out authoritatively as the approaching sun lights up its pinnacle.

And far to the south in a gentler clime, the 'Orange' Tower at our sister university, booms its sonorous voice to earnest students to take heed of its message.

Two and a half years ago the Rice Memorial Center with its lofty chiming tower was completed, and the tower was a worthy rival of the Bok Singing Tower, as the soft mellow tones of its bells pressed upon the quiet air and suffused the campus. And without benefit of dictum, the tower became the symbol of campus time, dividing the day as the shadows moved; relentlessly insisting, and continually directing the formal life of the campus.

But unlike the sun dial at Hampton Court which counts only the sunny hours, the Memorial Tower counted through the night with a friendly, reassuring voice. But like Browning's Duchess, the Tower has been silent for lo these many months, and the feelings which it engendered are passing into nothingness.

The silencing of the Tower, whether by accident or by orders is regrettable, for its gentle voice imbued the campus with a sense of unity and harmony, and with its passing, those pleasurable feelings which it aroused, and which nourished the soul and quickened the heart, recede into obscurity.

So—I offer myself as a party one
To get the clock going before the year's gone;
Though man did invent it, he knows to his sorrow
That time integrates him today and tomorrow.