

MATRICULATION ADDRESS, AUTUMN OF 1917¹

I

IN THE WAKE OF THE WAR

LIFE in America has suddenly become worth living, death worth dying. Pessimism is perishing. Life becomes worth while because for every man it has become a hard grind with a great purpose. Death becomes worth while because it has become the shining glory of a great hope—freedom for the planet.

A theologian with some sense of humor has said that the authentic remark of Adam to Eve as they left the enchanted Garden was, "We live in an age of transition." That ours is an age of transition is the discovery from age to age alike of scholar and statesman. "Nothing that is can pause or stay." Every particle of matter in the universe is now in motion, has always been in motion, will always be in motion. From electron and ion to mountain and planet, from molecule and mountain to men and measures, this principle of ceaseless change is universally operative. Backward and forward, round and round, in waves and cycles, in whirls and spirals and rockets, from millions of swings in a second to single swings in millions of years,—and all under the written word of reason, we should like to think, rather than the spoken fiat of chance. Changes in human society and human government are neither so swift nor so slow as these extremes in modes of motion. "I have seen many changes in the last three years, but few in the last fifty," said Mr. Dooley. Nor

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are changes in human nature swift; they are comparable, perhaps, with those in the faces of mountains and the forms of continents. However, in a general sense, every age of peace is an age of transition. An age of transformation is every age of war. Our age is specifically no exception.

For, the War is a consuming fire. In its wake a new heaven and a new earth will rise, from its wreckage a worthier world will roll, and under clearer skies. Religion, education, and patriotism will shine forth with a new light from the burning. All enterprises of the human spirit will come through purified. Neither pure gold nor pure character can be burned. Neither freedom, nor faith, nor fellowship can be burned. Superfluous and dispensable elements may be eaten away; the structural and permanent members cannot be burned. Our adoration of the good, the beautiful, and the true cannot be burned. Our aspirations for the great, the lovely, and the new cannot be burned. Education for all the people, government representative of all the people, liberty, intellectual, religious, political, industrial, for all the people—these ideas cannot be burned. Institutions founded on them will come through and carry on. The fruit-gatherers of an old civilization and the forerunners of a new will alike come through purified. You and I, whether or not we survive, will come through purified, in soul, in speech, in service. The War is a consuming fire. But after the fire, the builder. And it will be a new heaven and a new earth.

In the meantime, while the fire is raging, what of Education during the War? With the President of the United States, I have no hesitation in saying that the educational enterprises of the country should proceed without interruption. The training of intellect, the stimulating of imagination, the development of initiative, the dissemination of

intelligence, the discovery of truth, the invention and resolution of problems,—these processes must go on as though there were no war. And this to the end that we may be as economically and efficiently organized for the preservation of peace, after the War, as we shall shortly be for the waging of war, now that the War is on. The noble words of John Milton jump to mind: "I call a compleat and generous Education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices both private and publick of Peace and War." As comprehensive and more concise was William of Wykeham's definition, "The making of a man." The business of making men must go on as usual. There must be marrying and giving in marriage. There must be mothers of men. There must be schools for the children, from kindergarten to college. The country schools, the city schools, the commonwealth's colleges and universities must be continued at concert pitch and on maximum schedules. All academic, æsthetic, and athletic activities must be maintained unimpaired in strength, that men and materials may be available in abundance for the days of reconstruction. Accordingly, the springs of educational effort and progress must be kept strong and pure at their source in the university.

For, education begins at the top, not at the bottom. Light descends from above, not from the depths. It is a question of the direction of influence, not one of the determination of importance. There is no greater or less in education. It is a question of sequence in time, not one of an estimate or scale of values. Elementary education and higher education have one and the same source, one and the same aspiration, one and the same object, and in achievement should still be one and the same. Education in a democracy would elevate the masses of men, would develop the average man

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to the limit of his possibilities, would single out and train the exceptional man for the graver responsibilities of leadership. Without the college there is no educational ladder, without the university there is no educational highway, for the people. Without the university not even an effortless educational escalator would be possible. Build the university and the schools will be built. Enlarge the university and the schools will be multiplied. No nation without universities is educating its people. The enlightenment of a people proceeds apace with the building of universities. Mexico has no universities. Turkey has no universities. Japan is multiplying her universities. America is multiplying her universities. Moreover, in America the states which have the best universities have also the best schools. And in those states any question of the greater or lesser importance of school or university drops out of consideration, for the very simple reason that in these states the relationship of school to university has become in all respects a completely reciprocal one.

The spirit of that reciprocal relationship is one of service, universal service, the manifold service of science and scholarship to state and church and society. That spirit, as the spirit of liberal and technical learning, finds its way in freedom and faith and fearlessness; and in no other way does it find its own way. It divines and directs its own service. It droops and dies under the domination of dogma or despotism. Its duty is the search for truth; its discipline, the fires of knowledge; its daring discoveries, the fruits of wisdom; its dominion, that of free spirits. In freedom it attains to life in science, art, and letters. And among freemen, fettered only by the desire of fearless hearts and open minds to serve, science cannot be sectarian, philosophy cannot be political, history cannot be heterodox, nor is there of neces-

sity either atheism or anarchy in art. Moreover, in the law and the reason thereof, the mind and the mystery thereof, the heavens and the glory thereof, there are glory and mystery and reason beyond chronicles and charters and creeds. Furthermore, the work of laboratories, libraries, and lecture-rooms must proceed without distraction, though the heavens fall. The scholar gives his best service when the serenity of his study is undisturbed by sounds from the street. Unless specialized, this service will be superficial. Specialization calls for concentration of effort. And it is only under conditions of quiet and uninterrupted study that such concentration becomes most effective. On the other hand, the universe of the university is not an isolated universe. It is a human institution in very human relations. Its province is the wide range of human knowledge, and within its preserves are the wider ranges of human ignorance. In many of its subjects its lecture-halls are the meeting-house, the theater, the almshouse, or the jail; its laboratories, the city or commonwealth, continent or cosmos; its libraries, the living epistles that are read of all men. It is thus, through contacts as diversified as human interests, that the service of the university becomes universal.

To attain to such service in these exacting times, both school and university must be maintained at the maximum efficiency of normal conditions in order that education may supply men and materials for constructing the new heaven and the new earth we may expect in the wake of the War.

What, then, is the normal programme of the Rice Institute? That of a university of liberal and technical learning dedicated to the advancement of letters, science, and art, by instruction and by investigation, in the individual and in the race. The preceding paragraphs are shot through and through with its spirit. Its history is not long, but it is liv-

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ing. That history has been lovely because at no point lacking in interest. It began in a vision that is now on view. What was rhetoric on the rostrum in 1912 is reality on the roster of to-day. The prospect on the prairie was not a mirage of the plains. Prophecy has become history; and promise, performance. Rice has been running its race—a race that will never be run. And that race has been paced by some such considerations as the following. Briefly, we found ourselves in a new and rapidly developing country. With all due respect to the work of institutions already established, the country had not yet produced a school of science, pure and applied, of the highest grade. The new foundation was explicitly dedicated in its very title to the advancement of letters, science, and art—the whole sweep of things—with just about money enough to take care of one of those wings well. The income, however handsome, was limited. Moreover, the Trustees wisely determined, both to build out of the income and to live within the income, keeping intact not only the endowment funds, but also those which, under the terms of the will and charter, might have been legitimately spent outright, the latter amounting to approximately five million dollars. Despite some impatience in waiting, some inconvenience in working, the wisdom of that self-imposed limitation has never been questioned. Accordingly, their choice of immediate educational endeavor in these circumstances was a comparatively simple one. They proposed that the new institution should enter upon a university programme, beginning at the science end. As regards the letters end of the threefold dedication, they proposed to characterize the institution as one both of liberal and of technical learning, and to realize the larger characterization as rapidly as circumstance might permit. With respect to the art end, it was proposed to take architecture

seriously in the preparation of all of its plans, and to see to it that the physical setting of the Institute be one of great beauty as well as of more immediate utility. This, in rough outline, was the original programme of the Rice Institute.

Such was the plan. What about the product? Another seven short sentences will suffice. We have been laying foundations, broad and deep, in the fundamental domains of pure science. We have been giving thorough training in several lines of applied science. We have been maintaining high standards and on a university plane. We have made beginnings in the other liberalizing studies of philosophy, letters, and history. We have taken architecture seriously, and housed in a home of extraordinary beauty the spirit of liberal and technical learning. We have begun to advance science, art, and letters in knowledge, cultivation, and citizenship. We have built out of our income and have lived within our income. And were I not writing under considerable restraint, I should shout here, and reverently, For all of which the name of the Lord be praised!

We felt last June we were closing a chapter. We find this September we are continuing the story, for we are not going to allow the changed conditions of our living to affect our life. I have said repeatedly that Rice is the most democratic society of which I have any knowledge. I have also been assured that the American Army is the most democratic organization on earth. Accordingly, we may anticipate an easy adjustment of our old ways to the new arrangements¹ by which the Rice Institute is to be converted, as far as may be consistent with its university programme, into a military camp during the War. We have been realizing in our un-

¹ By authority of the National Government units of the Reserve Officers' Training Corps are being established at the Rice Institute, and its courses in pure and applied science are receiving recognition at the hands of the Army and Navy Departments.

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dergraduate corporate life a measure of the Athenian ideal of liberty; the Roman, of order; the Mediæval, of unity as embodied in the Holy Roman Empire; and the French Revolutionary ideal of equality; while in local patriotism the modern ideal of nationalism has been as conspicuous as any. These things we do not intend to lose. We have said a great deal about science and scholarship and service. We have sought character and culture and citizenship as ends of education. To these we shall hold fast. Come peace, come war, we believe that in the character of the cultivated citizen lies the strength of the civilized state. To the accomplishments of that cultivated citizen we are proposing to add the soldier's art, for the very simple reason that all are subject to the country's call while the nation is at war.

While the country is at war we have no choice but to work. The time for argument and discussion is past. The time for decision and action is here. We have no time to ask, Why the War? We have barely time to win the War. And the first and final business of these United States of America is to win the War. I have worked too long at science, not to think in terms of the planet. I have worked too long at education, not to believe in cosmopolitan citizenship. I have worked too long at religion, not to be a world humanitarian. But the nation is at war. At this moment the first and final business of America, and of every individual American citizen, is to win the War. The shadow of the thing engulfs the whole planet. From the eclipse a new planet has "swum into our ken"—this planet. The roar of the planet is in all men's ears as never before in human history. We are at grips—death grips—with an enemy for the freedom of the planet. And we shall win, because we propose to hold that freedom secure, not by the sword of conquest aided by the destructive arts of war, but by the spirit of coöperation in all

the constructive arts of peace. We propose that democracy—the democracy of delegated authority to expert representatives—the democracy of representative government—shall prevail in the earth, enabling all peoples, great or small, to escape not only the “tyranny of the crown” but also the “tyranny of the crowd”; enabling all peoples, great or small, to enjoy not only freedom from man rule to-day but also freedom from mob rule to-morrow. Representative rule is at stake; with it stands or falls the possibility of a war-proof planet. Pan-planetary peace is at stake; with it comes or goes the prospect of a federation of the world. Safety first for democracy the wide world over has rung round the earth. In the spiritual urgency of his utterances, their political principles and final phrasing, the President of the United States has become “the clear and powerful spokesman” for the planet. The Pan-American Union of Republics, planned in this country for this western hemisphere, has become the immediate historical forerunner of a world-wide League of Nations to Enforce Peace, planned also in this country for the solidarity of the sphere. From the confusion of conditions too complex for compression into formulæ, and of consequences too seriously significant for superficial summary statement, at least three stubborn facts stand out in sharp relief: one stubborn fact for the present—we are at grips, death grips, with an enemy for the freedom of the planet; another stubborn fact for the future—the stake of our war against war is a war-proof planet; and this stubborn fact for all time—we fight that pity and laughter may return to the common ways of men, and the world become strong, not through force and the will to power, but through faith and the will to freedom.