

II

THE CHARGE TO ACHILLES AND GLAUCUS

COMING and going about your tasks here, you will think and talk about the War. You can no more help it than I can help writing about it to-day. However, be assured of this. Hate hurts the hater. It harms no one else. The War will crush you if you curse it. It will kill you unless you laugh at it. You can wait and watch and pray only if you work and are merry at that work. It is grim business, but there must be joy as well as grit in it.

And for us at Rice there have been both joy and grit in it. Three occasions I would recall: that fair midnight in May under the flag, that rare morning in June under the tower, that twilight of evening sky at the training camp, when we sent forth our sons on their great adventure, under the Homeric rubric of Rice—the charge of aged Peleus to Achilles his son, the charge of Hippolochus to Glaucus his son—

*To win renown,
To stand the first in worth as in command;
To add new honours to their native land;
Before their eyes their mighty sires to place,
And emulate the glories of our race.¹*

Charging them also in Newbolt's lines to the new men of his college, Clifton, and in tribute to old Cliftonians who went down in frontier wars,

¹ The longer of Alexander Pope's translations of the line,
Αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν καὶ ὑπείροχον ἔμμεναι ἄλλων.

HOMER, *Iliad*, VI, 208; XI, 784.

The Charge to Achilles and Glaucus 307

*To set the cause above renown,
To love the game beyond the prize,
To honour while you strike him down
The foe that comes with fearless eyes;
To count the life of battle good,
And dear the land that gave you birth,
And dearer yet the brotherhood
That binds the brave of all the earth.¹*

* * * * *

*I saw the spires of Oxford,
As I was passing by,
The grey spires of Oxford
Against a pearl-grey sky;
My heart was with the Oxford men
Who went abroad to die.*

*They left the peaceful river,
The cricket field, the quad,
The shaven lawns of Oxford,
To seek a bloody sod.
They gave their merry youth away,
For country and for God.*

¹ Sir Henry Newbolt's poem entitled "Clifton Chapel" appeared originally in the "Spectator," 10th September, 1898.

The poem recalls other lines of the author—

*"Clifton, remember these thy sons who fell
Fighting far over sea;
For they in a dark hour remembered well
Their warfare learned of thee!"—*

inscribed on the pedestal of a statue commemorating men who gave up their lives in the South African struggle. The following translation of this inscription:

*Τῶνδε τέκνων τῶν σῶν Ἀκράγας μέμνησο πέραν που
Οἷς ἔλαχ' Ὀκεανοῦ μαρναμένοισι πεσεῖν,
Οὔποτε γὰρ πατρίου παρὰ σοί ποτε παιδευθέντες
Ἡμασιν ἐν δυσφεροῖς οἶδ' ἐλάβοντ' Ἄρεως.—*

was contributed by Sir T. Herbert Warren to the "Spectator," 10th April, 1915.

308 Matriculation Address, Autumn of 1917

*God rest you, happy gentlemen,
Who laid your good lives down,
Who took the khaki and the gun
Instead of cap and gown.
God bring you to a fairer place
Than even Oxford town.*

The lines I have just recited are from some verses by Mr. W. M. Letts printed lately in the "Spectator" under the caption "The Spires of Oxford (Seen from a Train)." They will stay with you. They were ringing within me as I read on my home-bound train, a few days ago, a rumor that the enemy had offered a reward of four hundred dollars and a fortnight's furlough for the first capture of an American soldier at the front. You have said to yourselves more quickly than I could phrase the words that if that first captive haply should be a Rice man, his captor would surely need the furlough.

As we speed the parting soldier, we hail the coming student. Ladies and gentlemen of the Freshman class, men and women of 1921, this is your day. For you this meeting was called, for you these words were written. From this day forth the freedom, the fortune, the faith, and the fellowship of this place are yours. Its freedom you will not abuse; its fortune you must conserve; its faith you will uphold; its fellowship you must adorn. Its future is your future. Its past also is yours. Its traditions are few but fundamental. Your fellows and predecessors require that you hold one faith with me. You must love beautiful things and consider them important. You must believe in the power of human reason and the capacity of the human spirit for progress. Above all things, you must be enthusiastic for your fellowmen. Otherwise the spirit of this place will fail either of

The Charge to Achilles and Glaucus 309

meaning or persuasion in your lives. But if you keep this faith, then yours becomes the inward spirit of the university, of which these beautiful buildings are but the external form. It is thus that you will honor the Founder, honor your family, honor the Faculty, honor your friends. It is in this sense that you are building the university, for I take it that you have come here, not to get an education, but to live a life.

And the building of a great university is just like the living of a great life. Each calls for the intellect, energy, courage, and independence that characterize the other. The institution outlives the individual, and the university has proved to be about the most enduring of human institutions. Think of the changes in church and state that have been weathered by the spires of Oxford, Cambridge, Paris, and Padua, Salamanca, Bologna, Harvard, and Princeton! Accordingly, we may assure you with considerable confidence that so long as men love learning, so long will the Rice Institute flourish. So long as men seek truth will the spirit and service of science endure. And in beauty and holiness, religion and art will outlast them all. These are the elements of a civilization that traces its origins to Palestine and Greece, and finds its sources in the mingling of streams from Athens and Sion through Rome. Three main currents of that civilization—the Rise of Christianity, the Revival of Learning, the Rise of Modern Science—each in its turn the new knowledge in conflict temporarily with the old, have contributed to the common knowledge of cultivated persons in all civilized communities. An education that would not draw heavily from this common stock could hardly be called liberal either in letters, in science, or in art. We earnestly hope that each of you will make sure of this sure foundation in liberal studies before seeking special or technical training.

Before concluding my remarks I venture one personal

310 Matriculation Address, Autumn of 1917

note. Pope Pius IX said of Pusey the Oxford theologian: "Dr. Pusey is like a bell always ringing, ringing to summon every one to church, but never going in itself." The simile is not inappropriate as an expression of the relationship to the daily life of a university experienced by an educational executive temporarily or permanently deprived of the privilege of teaching. Echoes from campus and cloister reach the loggia in yonder tower, and calls to class-room and council-chamber I may not enter. But there are compensations. Chief among these compensations during the coming year will be the personal conferences I may have with you; so I trust that long before, or certainly when, hope is reduced to the single wire of Watts's broken lyre, when faith has but a ray from some most distant star, when charity must begin at home, and right away, you will pull the rope on the first floor and come up to the belfry in the tower. For we see things, not as they are, but as we are; and I am up there to help you straighten yourself and the world out.