ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTE

A SCHOOLBOY, who had read his Bible in parts, once defined a lie in this way: "A lie is an abomination to the Lord, and a very present help in time of trouble." The truth is, I was considerably abashed, though at once elated, by the kind commission Captain Dupre has entrusted to me on the present occasion.

I have great respect for the United States Navy and for the Administration of the Navy Department in Washington and in Houston. My knowledge of Naval Science is hardly voluminous, nor is my acquaintance with Naval Tactics numerous. Most of what I know about naval matters I learned from Rudyard Kipling, whom I once tried to get to the Rice Institute. According to Kipling, "There are no excuses in the Navy." That is precisely why I am here this morning.

The present occasion has its own eloquence, for service men and civilians alike. Like good wine, it needs no bush. It speaks for itself. In no uncertain tones it speaks in thought and word and deed. It gives voice to the very soul of man. It speaks supreme enterprises of the human spirit. And its voice carries on, just as love of country, zeal for learning, and trust in God carry on, even unto everlasting.

By the same tokens the appeal of the present occasion, at once emotional and intellectual, is an inspiring appeal. In root and branch its inspiration derives from the funda-
mental fibres of our civilization. Our civilization is like a tree. It is not a bean-stalk grown overnight. It is a great tree growing for centuries. It cannot be cut down in a day. Its enemies discovered that five and twenty years ago. They are well aware of that again. They find that the tree has become a mightier, wider-spreading tree. And no wonder, for it has been fed and watered by the tears and blood and toil of millions on millions of men and women like ourselves. Its roots and branches are the spiritual ideals and moral ideas of men and women like ourselves. Civilization stands or falls according as those spiritual ideals and moral ideas prevail or not. They shall prevail because you have sworn by your very lives that they shall prevail. They are not lifeless abstractions. They are embodied in your heritage and your hopes. They are living realities, like individual initiative and duty, like justice and knowledge, like beauty and mercy and truth, like freedom, and like that fear of the Lord which is the beginning of wisdom.

Lately I was riding in a railway coach with a learned and distinguished gentleman. He had come a long way into the South to address a considerable convention of colored teachers. He related how the colored chairman had introduced him to the meeting as one of the most overestimated educators in America.

You will place a high estimate on the unique significance, indeed I might say the historical importance, of the present occasion. And for reasons such as the following. In the first place, because aggression is aggression, robbery is robbery, slavery is slavery, infamy is infamy, wrong is wrong, wherever, or whenever, or by whomsoever, committed. Such are the incitements.

In the next place, because all that your forefathers held dear and you hold dear is at stake: the making of your life
Commissioning Ceremony

is at stake; the building of your university is at stake; the saving of your country is at stake; the winning of the only noble kind of war is at stake; the conquest of the globe in freedom's cause is at stake. Such are the issues.

In the third place, the present occasion is of high moment to you and to us because you are about to receive prizes and rewards for proficiency in your preparation for the final settlement of these issues. Prizes and the winning of prizes are very good things for all of us. Ambition may lag, enthusiasm lapse, and zeal languish. The prospect of a prize within reach may stimulate interest and industry, discover latent talent, awaken desire to achieve, arouse determination for excellence and efficiency, whip up competition. And competition is the life of study no less than it is the life of trade. Even disappointment and defeat react in renewed resolution and repeated effort to win. But perhaps best of all is the reaction on the winner himself. He has a reputation to maintain, and henceforth he is in competition with himself—the most dogged kind of competition. Thus the present prizes are good things alike for the donors, for the losers, for the winners, and for all of us, within the Naval R.O.T.C. Unit and without.

Finally, the day becomes and remains a day of days for you and for us because your Commanding Officer is about to award you commissions in the Navy. The awarding of these commissions is an altogether gratifying event both to you who go out and to us who stay behind. For those who have done well, and many of you have done well, we have only admiration; while I have a good deal more than my accustomed sympathy with those of you who have not succeeded in doing so well. For every one of you uncertainty gives way to certainty—the sort of certainty for which you have been working and praying and waiting. Release from
that kind of worry must afford you great relief. You have your rank and you have your orders. They may still be sealed orders, but ere long you will have your heart's desire in the great adventure that may very well carry you to and through the seven seas. May you embark, and may you come back, under Henry Newbolt's lines:

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.

EDGAR ODELL LOVETT.