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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO THE CLASS

THE Clerk of the Crown, in a London court of law, put to the prisoner at the bar the usual question: "Guilty or Not Guilty?" With a winning smile, the Irishman replied: "And how can I tell till I hear the evidence?"

The evidence on our enterprise of adventure and discovery is all in. It is written into books of record. It is also indelible in individual memory. It testifies at once to aspiration and to achievement. It bears witness to the reason, origin, and progress of the enterprise. Men call the enterprise higher education. Historically, and actually, the enterprise begins in a house of learning. It carries on in a world of action as well. And it ends? We are not sure whether or where or when, if ever, it ends. The answer depends on many considerations: in particular on what you may think about the persistence and continuity of spiritual life, and on what you may conclude about the beginning and the end of the world.

It remains a fact, however, that the best of your formative years have been employed in setting up and putting in order individual houses of learning for each one of you. Each of these individual houses inevitably resembles the Rice Institute in one way or another. And for the very simple reason, among others, that literature, science, and art still afford the principal approaches to liberal and technical learning. With imaginative understanding it may be said of each one of these individual houses, as was said of the Rice Institute in the autumn of 1912: "Wisdom hath builded her

house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars." Neither in the canonical books from which that ancient couplet is quoted, nor in apocryphal allusions to similar orders of ideas, are names given to the seven pillars. Nor to my knowledge have they ever been named either in print or otherwise. I know of but one attempt. Some years ago an Englishman undertook for the purpose to select the names of seven cities, only to abandon his project without publishing any result. What would you call the seven pillars?

Turn for a moment from pillars to lamps, where we are on more familiar ground. Here there are pickings in plenty, as you are well aware, of names as beautiful as stars in the sky. The lamps bearing the names are for guidance and orientation in special subjects. This sort of thing was initiated by John Ruskin in *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, which appeared in 1849. Later the example of Ruskin was avowedly followed by Goldwin Smith in "The Lamps of Fiction," a speech delivered in 1871 on the centenary of the birth of Sir Walter Scott. And in 1921 the inspiration of Ruskin was again acknowledged by Percy Gardner in his essay on "The Lamps of Greek Art." And there are others. But in none do we find lamps named either for learning as a whole or for wisdom as such. Thus, apart from the pleasure in recalling enlightening parallels, we are really no farther along than we were after an earlier, unavailing search for named pillars of learning and named pillars of wisdom. So what will you call the seven pillars?

As a matter of fact, names for the pillars are not far to seek. One name after another may be drawn from your own immediate experience. Your task is one of making selections to meet the requirements of your house of learning. The chief concerns of the house center in the building of character and the producing of knowledge. The primary transac-

tions of its business are of excellence in character and of accuracy in knowledge. Its standards are high standards, its subjects comprehensive subjects. The standards are specific like honesty and veracity, and the subjects as various as are those, for example, of pure science and of political history.

Now your experience differs from mine if you have not come to prize those of your associates most who in all circumstances of time, place, and thought manifest truthfulness, kindness, high-mindedness, loyalty, courage, decision, and efficiency. A good deal of the happiness in everyday living derives from associations with men and women whose truthfulness, kindness, and high-mindedness you can trust, and on whose loyalty, courage, decision, and efficiency you can depend. These seven qualities are of course of wide application, but they are chosen from an individual point of view not unlike that of the Scottish shepherd who said that his cottage was the center of the surrounding country. True to his horizon, the shepherd was right, yet I am not content with such a personal point of view for you, because ampler vistas are open to you.

So I suggest that you take as your choice, again out of your own experience, the following: goodness, beauty, and truth; freedom; faith, hope, and charity. It is a sequence of ideas in which the father of the Platonic philosophy and the pioneer missionary of Christendom meet. They had met before. Though the two men were separated in time by several centuries, in ideals both of them stood near the *Sermon on the Mount*. It is from them that we build up the series composed of the eternal values, goodness, beauty, and truth; the Christian verities, faith, hope, and charity; and freedom, which is indispensable alike to the search for and discovery of values, facts, and verities, and to the establishing, developing, and applying of them. And I offer this series of

seven in the spirit of the Rice Institute, that is to say, without prejudice to political, or social, or religious opinions. In that same spirit you will challenge the seven, suffer them tentatively, accept them with conviction, or reject some or all of them and think out your own.

Still I think you will bear in mind that the point of view I have taken for this sequence is not that of a person, or a group, or a community, or a state, or a nation, but that of western civilization itself, reminiscent of its Greek, Hebrew, Roman, and Christian sources. That point of view may justify these seven to you as names for the pillars of your individual houses of learning. You may add to them at will, but the seven, if possessed by the citizens individually and by the state collectively, are sufficient to secure the protection of our families and homes, the maintenance of our churches and schools, the administration of our institutions of government, of, for, and by the people, and the discharge of our duties to all people and peoples of this planet.

Thus the names I have recommended for the pillars of your individual houses of learning represent dominant ideals. The ideals are cardinal elements of our western civilization. They are essential to the survival of that civilization. They are the most durable realities of which I have any knowledge. They are proved. They have inspired the piety and informed the patriotism of your forefathers through many generations. They have animated your own enterprise of adventure and discovery. They sustain your enthusiasms and endurance for that lifelong enterprise. In a crisis they outweigh all objectives of personal fortune. They are forever worthy of every sacrifice to make them effective. They forecast what you will will to do in a new and better world. To bring about that new and better world you carry them today into further action at home and on battlefronts abroad.

Whatever heaven may have in store for you, we shall hold you, as we have your gallant forerunners and comrades, in constant and grateful remembrance. And our pride in you and in them will continue to increase with the years. So has it been with us from our *earliest beginnings*.

From our first commencement in June 1916 on down to the commencements of June 1943 and of February 1944 we have sent our sons and daughters of Rice forward, for God, for country, and for truth, under an ancient injunction that dates from a distant and significant background of western civilization. Even so today, in October 1944, on the occasion of our *thirtieth commencement*, with high hopes and all the solicitude of affection, we send you forth to do battle for liberty, justice, mercy, and truth, under that same Homeric rubric of Rice:

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

EDGAR ODELL LOVETT.

