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FRENCH ILLUMINATION OF A TEXAN IDEAL¹

I MOST warmly appreciated the very kind invitation to attend this meeting extended in the name of the Presidency of the Committee of Organization, composed of M. Gabriel Hanotaux, of the French Academy, M. Charléty, Rector of the University of Paris, and M. le Duc de Broglie, of the French Academy and of the Academy of Sciences. It was altogether gratifying to be asked to participate in a Congrès des Nations Américaines à Paris, organized under the patronage of the University of Paris and of the Committee France-Amérique by the Institut des Études Américaines. If I have ventured to come, it is also to pay another installment on a personal debt that began in my student days and has been accumulating ever since. But, more justifiably, it is to acknowledge French illumination of a Texan ideal, to the realization of which associates of mine, under the leadership of Captain James A. Baker, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Rice Institute, have been devoting almost a generation as men count time.

I wish, therefore, to speak of this young American university, and of the perennial influence of French institutions and French traditions upon its development. The occasion is perhaps all the more opportune, because the Rice Institute has just completed its first quarter of a century as an educational foundation. In felicitation of its formal opening in

¹ An address delivered, July 5, 1937, at the Congrès des Nations Américaines à Paris.

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the autumn of 1912, the late M. Liard, President of the Council and Vice-Rector of the University of Paris—mediaeval mother and model of modern universities—sent us a friendly letter of good will at the hands of M. Émile Borel, the eminent mathematician, accompanied by Mme. Émile Borel, who had already attained distinction in the literary world.

Achieving a career as member of parliament, cabinet minister, and President of the Academy of Sciences, Professor Borel, if I may be permitted to say as much, has worthily maintained for science in the service of the government, a French tradition that has carried on from the Marquis de Laplace in the eighteenth century to Mme. Curie-Joliot of the present day. In America the scholar has of late been coming more and more to the front in public service, through voluntary associations of well-nigh infinite variety, as well as in many branches of the state and federal governments. As a matter of fact, however, there have always been scholars in American public life, from the founding of the Republic on, not many, but scholars. For example, Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, who had intimate residential relations and responsibilities in France, jump at once to mind. And from our more recent history, you may recall a remarkable sequence, namely, twenty years of the national presidency occupied by Theodore Roosevelt, the twenty-sixth, William Howard Taft, the twenty-seventh, and Woodrow Wilson, the twenty-eighth president, and, respectively, graduates of Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. To ideals of Franklin and Jefferson, realized in the American Philosophical Society, founded by Franklin, and in the University of Virginia, of which Jefferson justly described himself as the father, the Rice Institute is under tribute, while from the more immediate past to which

I have just animadverted, Grover Cleveland, Theodore Roosevelt, and Woodrow Wilson gave freely of advice and counsel to the Rice Trustees in the preparation of their early plans, while William Howard Taft later actually inaugurated the institution's first lectureship in public affairs, the Godwin Lectureship.

The first public mention of the Rice Institute abroad was made in the Amphithéâtre Richelieu of the Sorbonne in the autumn of 1908. The mention occurred in the sixth of a series of twenty-six *Conférences* given on the Hyde Foundation at the University of Paris and repeated in part at other universities of France, by the late Professor Henry van Dyke of Princeton University, subsequently United States Minister to the Netherlands. The lectures were delivered in English and afterwards translated into French and published under the title, *Le Génie de l'Amérique*. The reference to the Rice Institute was, to be sure, only a passing one, almost wholly anonymous in character, but I had the honor of sitting in the audience and to me the experience was an unforgettable experience.

Three years later, in 1911, after a round-the-world journey from Paris through the major university and scientific establishments of the learned world, and after laborious days on the plains of Texas, I was again in Paris discussing with friends new and old the inaugural programme of our prospective university of liberal and technical learning, avowedly dedicated to the advancement of letters, science, and art. In particular, through the good offices of Professor Jacques Hadamard of the Collège de France, the consent of the late Henri Poincaré was obtained to come and participate in the opening academic festival. Poincaré's acceptance gained for us a hearing on the part of other European scholars and scientists. And ultimately a goodly

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company agreed to assist in launching the new university, a company representing the fundamental sciences of mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology, and the liberal humanities of history, letters, philosophy, and art. Alas, the lamented death of Poincaré, to our everlasting regret, anticipated the event, but he would have shared our pride in the happy circumstance that Altamira of Madrid, Borel of Paris, Volterra of Rome, de Vries of Amsterdam, Jones of Glasgow, and Ramsay of London, each delivered three inspiring lectures in our hearing, while Croce of Naples, Kikuchi of Tokio, Mackail of Oxford, Ostwald of Gross-Bothen, and Størmer of Oslo each contributed a series of three lectures all of which were also published, together with addresses of many official representatives of Church, State, and University, in the three volumes of *The Book of the Opening of the Rice Institute*.

Our visitors found the first buildings of the institution rising as rare flowers in the wilderness of a virgin prairie. Designed under the direction of Mr. Ralph Adams Cram of Boston and New York, their architecture reveals in manifold ways the influence of early Mediterranean periods: vaulted Byzantine cloisters, exquisite Dalmatian brickwork, together with Spanish and Italian elements in profusion; all in a richness of color permissible only in climates similar to our own. A dominant warm gray tone is established by the use of a local pink brick, a delicately tinted marble from the Ozark Mountains, and Texas granite, though the color scheme undergoes considerable variation by the studied use of tiles and foreign marbles. To meet the local climatic conditions the buildings have been pierced by loggias and many windows, while long shaded cloisters open to the prevailing winds. On the seventy-fifth anniversary (2 March 1911) of Texas Independence, the Rice Trustees laid the cornerstone

of the first building, which bears what is perhaps the best expression of the spirit of science in any tongue: a Greek inscription in Byzantine lettering, from the *Praeparatio Evangelica* of Eusebius Pamphili, the first historian of the Church, which in English translation reads: " 'Rather,' said Democritus, 'would I discover the cause of one fact than become King of the Persians,' " a declaration made at a time when to be king of the Persians was to rule the world.

That same spirit of disinterested devotion to pure science and to humane learning was further expressed in carvings of symbolic figures to science and religion, bearing the respective inscriptions:

If we properly observe celestial phenomena we may demonstrate the laws which regulate them.—Aristotle;

Love, beauty, joy, and worship are forever building, unbuilding, and rebuilding in each man's soul.—Plotinus;

and carved panels, bearing effigies of Homer and Newton and Leonardo da Vinci, representatives of letters, science, and art, and carrying in turn the following quotations:

The thing that one says well goes forth with a voice unto everlasting.—Pindar, Mackail's translation;

Speak to the earth and it shall teach thee!—Job;

The chief function of art is to make gentle the life of the world.—Anonymous.

Moreover, on the caps of the granite columns supporting the arches of the first cloister appear the heads of sixteen founders, leaders, and pioneers: in religion, St. Paul; in history, Thucydides; in philosophy, Immanuel Kant; in art, Michelangelo. In jurisprudence, Thomas Jefferson; in medicine, Pasteur; in engineering, de Lesseps; in commerce, Christopher Columbus. In mathematics, Sophus Lie; in physics, Kelvin; in chemistry, Mendeléeff; in biology, Charles Darwin. In aerodynamics, Samuel Langley; in

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electric oscillations, Heinrich Hertz; in eugenics, Richard Galton; in radioactivity, Pierre Curie.

Such were some of the European backgrounds we sought to bring to consciousness in the first days of the new institution's life. We had scarcely rounded out two years of that local academic history when the world war broke in Europe. At our first commencement, in June, 1916, our first bachelors were graduated. Before another year had rolled around these first graduates of ours were on their way to join your colors. And diplomas of our second annual commencement, in June, 1917, were actually awarded in American army training camps. Five years before we had begun in the simplest possible manner with seventy and seven students. Despite that modest beginning, and conservative growth thereafter, we had more than seven hundred in war service, not all of whom returned. We suffered, not as you suffered, but we suffered. We have our dead. We too have our honor roll of Rice soldiers in shining armor. We were for peace, and only when war seemed to become the price of peace did we go to war. Not all the objectives of the war were achieved, but some things were averted. I am still for peace, but to avert those things that were averted by the world war I would willingly go through that war again. I have no desire to see or to participate in another war, and I would do anything honorable within my power to prevent my country's going to war, but if my country goes to war, I go to war. That we are done with war, I am by no means sure, but I very much wish that your country and mine might be forever done with war. And whenever I hear of rumors of war, I think of a remark Voltaire made at a time when a general war seemed imminent. "Won't it be necessary to make peace after the war? Why the devil don't they make it at once, then?"

Immediately after the world war the Rice Institute received visits, in November, 1918, from the British Educational Mission to the United States, and in December, 1918, from the Official French Mission to our country. To the Rice lectures and other local performances of the distinguished members of these foreign missions we devoted Volume VI of *The Rice Institute Pamphlet*. From the contents of that volume I would cite in particular three lectures of Professor Louis Cazamian of the University of Paris on "The Mind of France," entitled, respectively, "The Unity of France," "The Personality of France," and "The France of Today and Tomorrow"; and I would also cite the lecture of Mme. Louis Cazamian on "The French Woman and Her Family Life," together with the illustrated lecture on "Tradition in French Music," given by M. Charles Koechlin, with the assistance of Mme. Cazamian.

Nor in the intervening period has a year passed without the presence at the Rice Institute of one or more French scholars or scientists either for a course of lectures or for residence with us for a season or a semester. They have been drawn not only from France, but from time to time French scholars have come to us from Brussels, Strasbourg, and other centers of learning. Our own local activities in these respects have been supplemented and strengthened by visiting lecturers of the Alliance Française, the Institute of International Education, and similar organizations. And *The Rice Institute Pamphlet* has carried, in addition to French contributions already mentioned in previous paragraphs, lectures or courses of lectures by Mlle. Nadia Boulanger, MM. Cazamian (2 courses), de Cartier, Chamard, Guérard (2 courses), Hadamard (2 courses), Honegger, Mandelbrojt, Moraud (2 courses), Ravel, de Reul, and de la Vallée Poussin.

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Among many other memorable French performances at the Rice Institute which could not be captured for print in our permanent record, I would recall eloquent lectures by M. F. Funck-Brentano, de l'Institut, the late M. Gaston Chéreau, de l'Académie Goncourt, M. Jean Massart, the botanist, M. Gaston Rageot, then Président de la Société des Gens de Lettres, M. Louis Réau, Directeur de la *Gazette des Beaux-Arts*, M. Émile Ripert, de l'Académie de Marseille, M. Firmin Roz, de l'Institut, M. Léon Vallas, man of letters, an exciting interview on the occasion of the informing lecture of M. André Siegfried, professor at the École des Sciences politiques, and an incomparable discourse, by the present director of the *Mercure de France*, M. Georges Duhamel, de l'Académie française, on the contemporary novel, made with all the brilliance of an ascending star of the first magnitude.

More recently, indeed almost exactly three months ago to a day, we had the honor of receiving at the Rice Institute, for a day's visit plus an evening and a morning, the brilliant company constituting the Mission Nationale Française Cavelier de La Salle, and the accompanying delegation of French-Canadians. I need hardly remind you that the de La Salle Mission was organized and conducted under the Presidency of M. André Chevrillon, M. le Marquis de Créqui Montfort, and M. Gabriel Louis-Jaray. We had the pleasure and privilege of welcoming our visitors on their arrival at a Reception arranged by the several French Societies of Houston, and again later, in the City Hall of Houston, at the Battlefield of San Jacinto, in the Faculty Chamber, Faculty Club, and Amphitheatres of the Rice Institute, at a Luncheon offered by the Rice Trustees, and a Dinner given by the Directors of the Houston Chamber of Commerce. These very distinguished ladies and gentlemen of the de La

Salle Mission were recounting the adventures, retracing the trails, recovering the achievements of early compatriots of theirs in the new world of the West. They were bearing gifts for remembrance of their country, of their history, and of ours. In particular, they were carrying a bust of de La Salle to the Capital of the Commonwealth of Texas in commemoration of the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of his death, which occurred in Texas on March 19, 1687.

Of de La Salle we may fashion a legend not unlike the ancient legend of Ulysses. "Many were the men whose cities he saw and whose mind he learnt," said Homer of Ulysses. The cities that Ulysses saw were already built, and the men that he knew were alive, but de La Salle looked forward and dipped into the future far as human eye could see. It was of cities yet to be, of men and minds still to come that de La Salle had penetrating and prophetic vision.

The day of the arrival in Houston of the de La Salle Mission, these latter-day French missionaries of religion and letters, of science and art, of commerce and industry, dedicated at Liberty, Texas, en route, a memorial to some six hundred of Napoleon's soldiers who in 1818 founded a settlement in that vicinity. The morning after their arrival in Houston they brought to the Battlefield of San Jacinto a bronze palm further to commemorate a most significant event in the history of freedom. For on that battlefield arose the Republic of Texas one hundred and one years ago. France was the first of the nations officially to recognize the Republic of Texas. A warm renewal of that recognition we witnessed on the part of the de La Salle Mission. Citizens of France in a kinsmanship of spirit again joined hands with citizens of Texas. The utterance of General Perrier on that occasion was a most moving utterance, and the benediction of Vicar-General Boisard, representing the Arch-

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bishop of Paris, was a most blessed benediction alike to the dead and the living. Today citizens of France and citizens of America may well pledge anew their loyalty to the ideals of representative government under liberty, equality, fraternity, pledge anew their resolution and determination in the words of Lincoln that government of the people, for the people, by the people shall not perish from the earth.

Of the visit with which the de La Salle Mission honored the Rice Institute, I have brought to Paris a partial account published in the July, 1937, number of *The Rice Institute Pamphlet* quarterly, which has been dedicated exclusively to that object. This *Pamphlet* contains M. André Chevillon's original disquisition on "De La Salle jusqu'à la prise de possession de la Louisiane," which, on our earnest request, the Dean of the French Academy most kindly presented to us with permission to publish. We regret that M. Chevillon was obliged to reserve for other purposes his inspiring after-luncheon address in which he reviewed his experience of American universities over a period of nearly fifty years and as many as ten journeys to the United States. We also regret our inability to recover for the *Pamphlet* the stirring, impromptu citations which M. Gabriel Louis-Jaray, Executive President of the Mission, made when presenting to the Rice Institute a replica of the beautiful de La Salle medal, together with reproductions of invaluable seventeenth-century maps tracing the earlier of French explorations on the North American continent, and a rare volume inscribed to Mrs. Edgar Odell Lovett with the autographs of all the members of the de La Salle Mission. And this July number of the *Pamphlet* would have been appreciably further enriched if it had been possible to obtain for publication the lyric rhapsody of reminiscences embodied in Professor Louis Cazamian's encyclopaedic "Appeal of

Texas"; the distinctive "Portrait de Cavalier de La Salle" so sympathetically drawn by M. Gabriel Louis-Jaray, and the luminous extemporaneous addresses of Mme. Marcelle Tinayre on "Le roman français: ses tendances récentes," of Professor Henri Peyre, representing the University of Lyons, who spoke on the intellectual relations of France and the United States, and of M. l'Abbé Olivier Maurault, of the Canadian Mission, Rector of the University of Montreal, who recalled a surprising number of contacts which early French explorers in Canada also made in Texas.

In the commemorative *Pamphlet* of which I am speaking, M. Chevrillon's memoir is followed by the text of a public lecture on "De La Salle's Last Days in Texas," delivered in advance of the de La Salle Mission's arrival by Professor Marcel Moraud of Rice; the morning discourse on "Life, Literature, and Spirituality in France," which Mme. Saint-René Taillandier kindly read in English in the Rice Faculty Chamber; and the four formal lectures prepared especially for delivery at the Rice Institute by representatives of the University of Paris and the Paris Academy of Sciences, namely, Professor Louis Cazamian's lecture in English on "Humour in Hamlet"; Professor Fortunat Strowski's lecture in French entitled "Le Théâtre contemporain en France et ses tendances récentes"; Professor René Maunier's lecture in French on "La société française et ses transformations récentes"; and the lecture of General Perrier, of the French Army, the Paris Academy of Sciences, and the École Polytechnique, delivered in French under the title "Le développement de la géodésie de ses origines à nos jours."

The *Pamphlet* thus carries seven remarkable contributions from as many remarkable French scholars. It concludes with a facsimile of the original announcement of the personnel of the de La Salle Mission. We have pride in

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distributing the *Pamphlet* in a considerable edition, free of charge, as usual, to a selected mailing list of scientists and publicists in our own country and abroad. It may be accepted, we hope, as a modest but very sincere return for the de La Salle Mission's very generous contribution to the academic history of the Rice Institute.

In conclusion, I should like to remind you that the founder of the Rice Institute, to whom I owe your favor and friendliness on this occasion, was a merchant. He was born in the state of Massachusetts, of Welsh and English forebears. In his youth he came to Texas to make his fortune. By habits of industry and thrift he made a fortune in Texas. He was not only a merchant, he was a builder of highways and cities and railroads in Texas. He anticipated for Houston a future as a world trading center. In the past, great trading centers have often been conspicuous centers of vigorous intellectual life: Athens, Florence, Venice, and Amsterdam were cities great in commerce, but, inspired by the love of truth and beauty, they stimulated and sustained the finest aspirations of poets, scholars, and artists within their walls. Mr. Rice hoped that his adopted city of Houston would ultimately become the Athens, Florence, Venice, or Amsterdam of the southwest section of the United States of America, and to that high end he gave the city of his adoption a powerful impetus.

From Petra, Burgon's "rose-red city half as old as Time," to "Petroleum City," built overnight, there are cities and cities and cities, alike in space and time: cities of arms, cities of kings, cities of government, cities of pleasure and leisure, cities of commerce and industry, beautiful cities of art, holy cities of cathedrals and convents, university cities of letters and science. Not every city of the globe may qualify for admission to all of these classes, but I believe that the city

of Paris and its environs, above all modern cities, most nearly qualifies as a composite of these several types. Rome, the eternal city, is still for many of the devout the spiritual capital; London, the mighty metropolis of an island set in a silver sea, may still lay claim to be the financial capital; but to saint and statesman and scholar alike Paris remains the intellectual capital of this planet.

In what to my mind is the finest of his four magnificent odes to France, George Meredith hails her as mother of pride, mother of delicacy, mother of luxury, fond mother of her martial youth, mother of heroes, mother of honor, mother of glory, mother of reason. And I should like to think that you in turn would find certain, if not all, of the several strains of this "various Motherhood" already manifest in the younger civilization of Texas. At any rate, I am persuaded that my young Texan society of scholars, and your established institutions of an older civilization, may differ in degree, but not in kind. I therefore venture to hope that you of the older and we of the younger may join hand and heart in a wider human brotherhood—a brotherhood of law, of honor, of freedom, of reason, a brotherhood in letters and science and art, a brotherhood of righteousness, justice, and truth.