

LB 2325

.W5



Hollinger Corp.
pH 8.5

ADDRESS
OF
PRESIDENT WOODROW WILSON

DELIVERED AT
SWARTHMORE COLLEGE
SWARTHMORE, PA.
OCTOBER 25, 1913



PRESENTED BY MR. CHILTON
NOVEMBER 6, 1913.—Ordered to be printed

LB2325
-W5



D. OF D.
NOV 15 '918

ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT WILSON AT SWARTHMORE COLLEGE, SWARTHMORE, PA., OCTOBER 25, 1913.

YOUR EXCELLENCY, MR. CLOTHIER, MR. PRESIDENT: That greeting sounds very familiar, and I am reminded of an anecdote told of that good artist, but better wit, Oliver Herford. On one occasion, being seated at his club at lunch, a man whose manners he did not very much relish came up to him and slapped him on the back and said, "Hello, Ollie, old boy, how are you?" He looked up at the man somewhat coldly, and said, "I don't know your name and I don't know your face, but your manners are very familiar." The manners exemplified in that cheer are delightfully familiar.

I find myself unaffectedly embarrassed to-day. I want to say, in sincere compliment, that I do not like to attempt an extemporaneous address following so finished an orator as the one who has just taken his seat. Moreover, I am somewhat confused as to my identity. I am told by psychologists that I would not know who I am to-day if I did not remember who I was yesterday; but when I recollect that yesterday I was a college president, that does not assist me in establishing my identity to-day. On the contrary, this very presence, the character of this audience, this place with its academic memories, all combine to remind me that the greater part of my active life has been spent in companies like this, and it will be difficult for me in what follows of this address to keep out of the old ruts of admonition which I have been accustomed to follow in the rôle of college president.

No one can stand in the presence of a gathering like this, on a day suggesting the memories which this day suggests, without asking himself what a college is for. There have been times when I have suspected that certain undergraduates did not know. I remember that in days of discouragement as a teacher I gratefully recalled the sympathy of a friend of mine in the Yale faculty, who said that after 20 years of teaching he had come to the conclusion that the human mind had infinite resources for resisting the introduction of knowledge. Yet I have my serious doubts as to whether the main object of a college is the introduction of knowledge. It may be the transmission of knowledge through the human system, but not much of it sticks. Its introduction is temporary; it is for the discipline of the hour. Most of what a man learns in college he assiduously forgets afterwards. Not because he purposes to forget it, but because the crowding events of the days that follow seem somehow to eliminate it.

What a man ought never to forget with regard to a college is that it is a nursery of principle and of honor. I can not help thinking of William Penn as a sort of spiritual knight who went out

upon his adventures to carry the torch that had been put in his hands, so that other men might have the path illuminated for them which led to justice and to liberty. I can not admit that a man establishes his right to call himself a college graduate by showing me his diploma. The only way he can prove it is by showing that his eyes are lifted to some horizon which other men less instructed than he have not been privileged to see. Unless he carries freight of the spirit he has not been bred where spirits are bred.

This man Penn, representing the sweet enterprise of the quiet and powerful sect that called themselves Friends, proved his right to the title by being the friend of mankind. He crossed the ocean, not merely to establish estates in America, but to set up a free commonwealth in America and to show that he was of the lineage of those who had been bred in the best traditions of the human spirit. I would not be interested in celebrating the memory of William Penn if his conquest had been merely a material one. Sometimes we have been laughed at—by foreigners in particular—for boasting of the size of the American Continent, the size of our own domain as a nation; for they have, naturally enough, suggested that we did not make it. But I claim that every race and every man is as big as the thing that he takes possession of, and that the size of America is in some sense a standard of the size and capacity of the American people. And yet the mere extent of the American conquest is not what gives America distinction in the annals of the world, but the professed purpose of the conquest which was to see to it that every foot of this land should be the home of free, self-governed people, who should have no government whatever which did not rest upon the consent of the governed. I would like to believe that all this hemisphere is devoted to the same sacred purpose and that nowhere can any government endure which is stained by blood or supported by anything but the consent of the governed.

The spirit of Penn will not be stayed. You can not set limits to such knightly adventurers. After their own day is gone their spirits stalk the world, carrying inspiration everywhere that they go and reminding men of the lineage, the fine lineage, of those who have sought justice and right. It is no small matter, therefore, for a college to have as its patron saint a man who went out upon such a conquest. What I would like to ask you young people to-day is: How many of you have devoted yourselves to the like adventure? How many of you will volunteer to carry these spiritual messages of liberty to the world? How many of you will forego anything except your allegiance to that which is just and that which is right? We die but once, and we die without distinction if we are not willing to die the death of sacrifice. Do you covet honor? You will never get it by serving yourself. Do you covet distinction? You will get it only as the servant of mankind. Do not forget, then, as you walk these classic places, why you are here. You are not here merely to prepare to make a living. You are here in order to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, with a finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world, and you impoverish yourself if you forget the errand.

It seems to me that there is no great difference between the ideals of the college and the ideals of the State. Can you not translate

the one into the other? Men have not had to come to college, let me remind you, to quaff the fountains of this inspiration. You are merely more privileged than they. Men out of every walk of life, men without advantages of any kind, have seen the vision, and you, with it written large upon every page of your studies, are the more blind if you do not see it when it is pointed out. You could not be forgiven for overlooking it. They might have been. But they did not await instruction. They simply drew the breath of life into their lungs, felt the aspirations that must come to every human soul, looked out upon their brothers, and felt their pulses beat as their fellows' beat, and then sought by counsel and action to move forward to common ends that would be crowned with honor and achievement. This is the only glory of America. Let every generation of Swarthmore men and women add to the strength of that lineage and the glory of that crown of life!



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

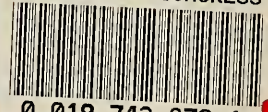


0 019 743 872 1

Holl

1

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 019 743 872 1

