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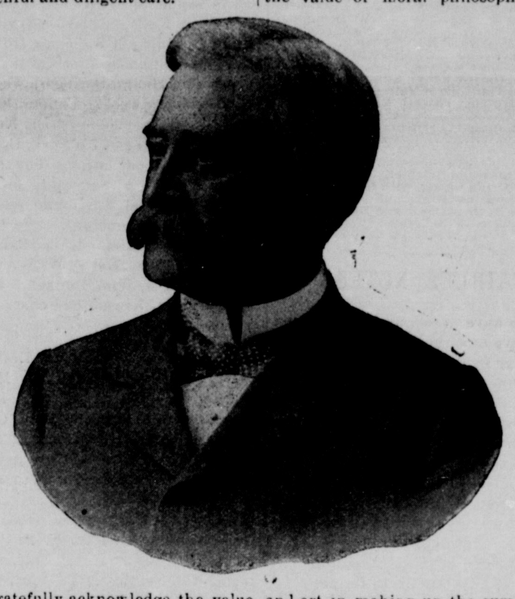
Gov. Smith's Address To W. C. Graduates.

Governor Smith spoke as follows to the graduates of Washington College:

A most pleasing duty, and also the first, which I have to perform at this time is to thank the President of this college for the honor he has done me in inviting me to be present, and to deliver the diplomas to the graduates of the class of 1903, who are about to sever their connection with this venerable and honored institution of learning.

At the same time it is with a feeling of regret that I recall this occasion also marks the termination of President Reid's services to the public in Maryland as President of this college; but I wish to extend to him on retiring to other fields of usefulness the thanks and congratulations of those friends of the college, who like myself, have watched his career, and have witnessed the quickened interest in the college and its increased prosperity since its administrative affairs have been intrusted to his watchful and diligent care.



We gratefully acknowledge the value of the time and talents devoted by him to the development and progress of the college, and we will follow him with our sincerest best wishes for his success and happiness in his new undertaking.

It has probably not been the lot of many of my predecessors in the distinguished post in which I find myself, to deliver an address under circumstances more adverse to the best deliberation and most careful preparation which an occasion of this kind merits, and should have from the most gifted. The daily, and even hourly calls upon me are incessant, and I shall only endeavor to impress upon you a few reflections and exceedingly practical suggestions which have no doubt occurred to many of you before.

Everyone, I suppose, who is called upon to address a body of young men and young women upon an occasion such as this, must have a cordial interest in them as they are about to embark, it may be to sink in obscurity and despair amongst the perils of life, it may be to reach success, happiness and honor. Everyone must also feel a yearning to draw from his own experience some hints or lessons which may tend to save them from distress and disaster, and which may give them help and encouragement. Every man who has not dried his withered soul by the persistent, systematic pursuit of selfish aims must always feel a tender sympathy for those who are about to take up the struggle of life in maturer fields. This sympathy is a well-spring of youth, which keeps our higher emotions and impulses vigorous long after the weight of years we have to carry bows our decrepid physical frames and robs us of our energy and zest in life.

This bond of sympathy, powerful always, must have added strength when it is aroused towards an assembly of young men and women who are graduates of one of our most ancient seats of learning, remarkable as it is for the distinction of having been encouraged and aided, as well as named for the greatest man the Western Hemisphere has ever produced, George Washington. This is a world of commercial warfare, and an age of keenest competition, and the result of this competition is to make the value of education more thoroughly comprehended and appreciated. Most men and women must be educated in order to raise them above mediocrity and enable them to attain any considerable degree of success. It is true many highly educated men have failed miserably, and it is also true that many men without education have succeeded. Many who are educated and have succeeded in life are educated along widely different lines, just as divergent, indeed, as are the lines which they have pursued in life, and which have led them to success, the one by one route, the other by a different route, but no two in precisely the same groove.

This brings us to the question what kind of education from the standpoint of probable commercial success should be placed within the grasp of the young men and women of this age. The curse with which our first ancestor, Adam, was cursed follows his descendants; and we must work; but I doubt if in the changed order of the Universe this curse is not more a boon and a blessing than otherwise. As a rule, first and foremost, every individual in the world who does not expect to become a public charge must make a living, and whatever education the individual can acquire which aids him in the more successful accomplishment of that result is a benefaction.

In the commercial world, whatever in a broad sense is collateral or superfluous, is a hamper and a drag which retards the progress of the energetic young man or woman. Only that part of the education you have which is productive will pay. The knowledge you have, as you are able to apply it to the every day affairs of life, must be of money value to the world or else the world will pay you nothing for it. It will be as unproductive otherwise as a costly but useless mechanical invention. The ancient conception of a proper education was to amass a store of comparatively useless learning. Scholars dug after Greek roots and neglected the necessities of mankind which might have been relieved to an extent by the same intelligent effort applied to the solution of the industrial and political problems which burdened the world. Hence we read of students living in obscurity and discomfort. They were honored by the world, but were not fed by the world, because their conception of the proper function of an educated man was to eschew untilitarian pursuits.

The student was a non producer. His education, his delving with infinite pains and labor in the realms of the fossil remains of forgotten "ologies" did not produce one single blade of grass nor add one single atom toward the promotion of the public welfare, and it was therefore but natural students were obliged to walk many miles barefoot, begging their way to the old universities of Europe, impelled by a pathetic enthusiasm which bore with patience the incredible hardships they endured. Their education was defective because it did not teach them to stand and walk alone. I do not intend in anything I have said, or shall say, to convey the impression that I discount or disparage the value of moral philosophy, logic and art in making up the sum total of the world's resources, nor that I do not recognize and appreciate the truth that men "can not live by bread alone." The influence and the culture springing from such sources is inestimable as well as indispensable in civilizing humanity and softening the roughness of our hard natures, but these things are unfortunately for the few.

I deplore any system of education which does not broaden the sympathies and appeal to the highest attributes of human character, or which as has been aptly said, "makes large brains and little hearts." I do not take a sordid or earthy view, I trust, of the functions of education, but the hard fact remains that the problem which confronts the vast majority of the human race from the cradle until repose is found at last in the grave is not how to improve and cultivate one's self, but how to make a living. It is to this class I speak, and to advise its members to devote themselves to the luxuries of education, which are available only for those financially independent, would be as unpractical and betray as great ignorance of condition as they are as the celebrated suggestion of Maria Antoinette, who when told that the starving French people were crying for bread advised that they eat cake.

It has been said there are but three ways, and only three, to secure a livelihood; and a person to accomplish it must work, beg or steal. After thinking the subject over I can recall no fourth way. Although there may be some short cuts to wealth as long as fools have money and rascals want it, the world must live by labor. Millions of members of the human family must be condemned to it. Existence for most of us must be a life of penal servitude.

The scholar who devotes himself to some one of the learned professions with the hope of success is as much a laborer as the man who works with a pick or hoe. And no matter in what trade or profession, when one generation of laborers, dispirited and exhausted, drops out, a new generation eagerly rushed in to take its place, to labor, disappear and be replaced in turn in ceaseless flow. The leaders of one generation are soon the departed heroes of the next. But education is the artist who should illumine the dark shadows of the somber picture I have drawn. Whilst not the only function of the most advantageous education, it is undoubtedly its most important function, to lighten this load of labor which bears so heavily upon the world, or make it more productive by the systematic application of scientific principles.

Her education finds its most profitable, because its most useful theatre of action. There is no productive occupation which adds anything to the capital of the world if followed diligently and intelligently, with a clear understanding of its basic principles, but will lead to a fair measure of success. Take for example the work of a farmer, an industry with which we are all more or less familiar, and which engages the attention of more people and more capital in Maryland than any other business or occupation, and has nowhere reached a higher state of development than in this county. The farmer's business is to make the soil produce. The elementary operations are the simplest, but between the rude attempts of the poorest farmer and the highest agricultural success lies a world of science, and room for the most exhaustive study of machinery, chemistry and trade conditions. The only interests which suffer because farmers are educated are the dealers in hull-less oats and fake fertilizers.

Each scientific point which is discovered, which results in saving expense or labor, or which causes the earth to yield a little more is a step in advance which will surely bring its reward. Education for the masses directed from the beginning, straight to a definite end is a practical business necessity, so that students no longer go unrewarded for their labor, because their thought, talents and accomplishments are needed, and must be encouraged. Students no longer beg a crust and content themselves with high thoughts and poor lodgings. Educational advantages are more generally and more generously supplied than ever before. Education is rapidly being brought within the grasp of ambitious young people of small means. Institutions of learning flourish as never before, but the most flourishing are only those institutions which grant the student a reasonable liberty of choice in selecting the course of study he deems most useful to him in his intended occupation. The progressive educational institution should no more require all its students to pursue the same course of study than an up-to-date shoe dealer would insist upon all his customers wearing shoes made on the same last.

As I have said, this is an age of competition. The individual who anticipates his competitors, even by a hair's breadth, is that much ahead in the race. From a selfish commercial standpoint the most successful education is the education directly in line with the course in life the student proposes to follow, whatever that may be; the education which concentrates all its power at one point without squandering any energy on subsidiary objects which are not essential to the main issue. The trend of progress along educational lines, as far as my observation goes, has been effected by the force of commercial conditions. A young man or a young woman, in very few instances, can follow the path through life they would choose and do only that which gratifies their whims or pleasures. It is fortunate for the world such is not the case. The problem which most of us have to solve and which will confront you young men ond women of the graduating class after these exercises are over and you have reached your homes within the week, is how to turn what you have acquired to the best advantage.

I think you will find the training you have received directed straight to an end, which has eliminated all superfluities, will be the most useful to you in solving the problem. Life is too short and there is too much real work to be done in the world for any one to afford to spend time in aimless wandering. You see the trend toward specialization, which means economy, in the mechanical world. The development in machinery has been to make it more simple and lighter, and thereby decrease friction and increase efficiency. Results are now being accomplished by modern machinery which would have been impossible from machinery constructed after the old cumbersome patterns. And thus by means of education along special lines results are now being accomplished by young people of both sexes, who have thrown off the weights of old time conventionalism, and which otherwise they might not have obtained this side the grave.

But we do not live for ourselves alone. Another responsibility which education imposes is the care of others. The world looks to the educated men and women for guardianship and generalship. More of wisdom and unselfishness is expected of you by the world, because you have received more. The young men and women who like yourselves have received the benefits of a broad, liberal education will be the leaders in business. in politics, in the professions, in the homes and in religious progression. You are heirs apparent to the leadership of the world, and I envy those who will see the development and effect of that power during the coming generations.

Much gratuitous advice is crowded upon graduates. Usually they are told to be industrious, to be truthful, to be honest; but I believe the young ladies and gentlemen of the class of 1903 are honest, true and industrious; and if their parents and natural guardians have not succeeded in instilling and impressing upon them the nothingness of everything else when these elements are lacking, it is hopeless for me to attempt to influence them at this date.

But although I shall not give you any advice, I hope I may be pardoned a few general observations before closing, though I may have detained you long enough. We live in times of change, intellectual change, religious change and political change. Questions of which our grandfathers knew nothing have arisen to vex us, and it may be to wreck us, or it may be to make us greater as a nation. The young gentlemen who are before me more particularly must assume a share of the responsibility of this situation. This nation has departed from the conservative course marked out for it by the patron of this college and the Father of his Country. It has forsaken his advice to avoid entangling foreign alliances, whether wisely or unwisely it is now too late to question or debate. Certain conditions exist, and the practical question which confronts us all is how to deal with them wisely and honestly. The largest and gravest questions which concern us as units in our system of government confront the country, and perplexities with regard to which self interest is perpetually tempting us to be false to our real convictions.

It is for the solution of these problems the nation must turn to the men of education and patriotism. The strong man, the master who settles these difficult questions without trampling the rights of the helpless or jeopardizing the peace, integrity and prosperity of the nation, will be worthy to rank next to the man whose name is the synonym of liberty in the United States.

But to return to the matter in hand. I have no doubt the thought uppermost in the mind of each of you is that now you have your education what can you do with it right away. No one apparently seems to want exactly what you have. That is a mistake. The equipment you have is necessary and desirable, but a little more is wanted before you can feel you are fairly started to the goal of your ambitions. That which you now have is mostly theory, and that which must be added is experience, before you are fairly able to hope to attain the highest pinnacle of success.

But none of us will ever attain the highest pinnacle of success, it is safe to say. For myself, I doubt if it is altogether desirable. I quite agree with the observation of one of the world's ablest philosophers and the wisest man of his time, who said: "I am certain that the good of human life cannot lie in the possession of things which for one man to possess is for the rest to lose, but rather in things which all can possess alike and where one man's wealth promotes his neighbor's."

But notwithstanding it is impossible for us all to attain perfection or the highest pinnacle of greatness, it is within the power of each of us to endeavor

"To stand the first in worth as in command,
To add new honors to my native land,
Before my eyes my mighty sires to place,
And emulate the glories of our race."