ADDRESS BY MR. DANIEL WILLARD.

President the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company Talks to the Graduating Class Washington College

Mr. President, Gentlemen of the Governing Body, Members of the Faculty, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Graduating Class and others:

I considered is a very great honor, Mr. President, when I was invited by you to deliver the Commencement Address here today. You may recall that I expressed considerable doubt concerning my fitness for such an important task, but when I was told something about the long and commendable record of Washington College, and after being kindly but rather persistently urged by a number of mutual friends to accept your most complimentary invitation, I finally consented to do so.

I am told that General Washington was one of the first trustees of this college and that he took a keen personal interest in its affairs. I also understand that the college assumed his name with his consent, and that on an occasion similar to this, he himself delivered the principal address. What an inspiration it must have been to the graduating class so honored, to be privileged to listen to the victorious commander of our armies during the War for Independence and later the first President of these United States! What would we not give if we could only see and hear him to day! But if we cannot have him with us in person, we can, I am sure, feel a certain inspiration from his actual presence here nearly a century and a half ago. You enjoy a heritage in that respect that so far as I know is not shared by another single institution of this character.

That you appreciate this heritage I have no doubt, and I venture to hope that all who have been so fortunate as to enjoy the opportunities offered by this college which he helped to establish, will take from here, when they leave behind them the walls and traditions of their Alma Mater, an enduring inspiration for patriotism and good citizenship, the highest and most essental attributes of the people in a Great Republic such as ours.

When I have attended commencement exercises before, it has usually been as a spectator, and I was not at all certain that I rightly understood in just what sense the word "commencement" was used. It somehow seemed to me that the word "finishing" or perhaps "completion" would be more appropriate when used in connection with an occasion such as this. Ie learned, however, without going into too much detail, that by ancient usage and modern adaptation the word and the occasion were intended to mark the commencement of the serious duties of life by those who, having taken the established courses with satisfactory results, were given a certain recognized form of diploma testifying to that fact. In short, I found that the word "commencement" as here used was not intended to emphasize the completion of a course of study but rather to emphasize the beginning or commencement of one's life work.

The occasion, as I now understand it, would seem to suggest that the speaker address his remarks to the problems of the future rather than dwell upon the experience of the past. And yet it seems to me that we might well, and perhaps profitably, give brief thought at least to the three or four years you have spent at this college. What have you done here? What did you get here? What will you take away? Of course, you will not expect me to make definite and specific answer as to each individual, but I can state in general terms what I think you should have obtained while here and also what, in my opinion, you should take away. I was denied the privilege of what is spoken of as a college education, and consequently what I shall say is based largely upon observation and association rather than upon actual experience such as you have had.

You have most certainly added something to your fund of information while here. You could hardly avoid doing that, and still I am inclined to place relatively small value upon what you have learned from books and been able to remember. Please bear in mind that I said "relatively small value." I would not wish to seem to minimize the actual value of information, but information is not always synonomous with true knowledge or real understanding. Your intelligence, or perhaps I should say your intellect, is a divine gift in the sense that it is inherent, but the intellect may be greatly cultivated and stimulated, and the academic work you have done here should have developed and sharpened your intellect just as your athletic work has developed your muscles.

The intellect can, of course, be trained and sharpened without going to college, but the opportunities for mental training in an institution of this kind should be most helpful inasmuch as they reflect the experience of years of careful thought by teachers and students concerning educational practices. I may assume, therefore, that you have all developed well-trained minds while here, with the knowledge of how to use them, together with a certain fund of information—some of which you will forget and some of which later on you may perhaps find to be more or less incorrect or obsolescent.

If I have seemed to place special emphasis upon the training of the mind, I have not intended by so doing to minimize the value and great importance of a well-trained body—fortunately it is rarely necessary to sacrifice either in the interest of the other.

It is also quite certain that while here you have formed many friendships, some of which you will cherish through life. Friendships developed in the atmosphere of school or college seem to possess certain enduring and sympathetic qualities which make for permanency.

You should have learned also while here, and I hope you have, to be tolerant of the views and even of the idiosyncrasies of others. It seems to me that one of the distinctive characteristics of an educated man or woman is a certain spirit of tolerance towards others, and I feel sure that you can have no adequate idea at this time how desirable that is or how helpful it will be all through life.

You have persumably, then, acquired while here a certain amount of knowledge ffrom the study of books and through association with others inspired with a common purpose, and more important still perhaps, you have undoubtedly obtained a much better understanding and appreciation concerning knowledge itself—its many fields, its inumerable treasures representing the work of thousands of men and women, who have sought not only to compile and arrange in convenient form the thoughts and discoveries of others, but in many cases, as a result of painstaking research and mquiry have actually added something themselves to the accumulated knowledge of mankind. To illustrate more fully just what I have in mind—suppose that after you have left here you should wish to obtain more definite information about a certain matter—perhaps a chemical combinaion or period in history. You will know, or at least you should know, as the result of your studies, where and how to find it. That is what I mean by knowledge about knowledge. Knowledge of the kind I have just mentioned will be of enduring service to you through life.

You have been required, I suppose, to follow, in general terms at least, a certain technique designed to train and develop your mind and body and therefore you will take from here the knowledge of how to use the one and develop and preserve the other. You will have made friendships among you instructors and classmates that will be a lasting source of pleasure and encouragement. All of this certainly may be said to be included in the content of your college education which you will take away from here. Now what will you do with it? What I am about to say may surprise you but please remember, that I am simply trying to tell you how certain things seem to me after such experience as naturally comes to one of my age. In my opinion you will make comparatively little use of most of the things you have learned by memorizing while here. You will not, so to speak, frequently reach into the receptacle of your brain or memory and take out some of your college content to be used simply as content.

You may well ask of what value then is your college education if it cannot be used as such. Your college education undoubtedly will be and certainly should be of very great value to you all through life, but not, as I view it, in terms of college education as such, but rather as it is reflected in the use which you make of the natural capacities with which you have been endowed and also in the satisfaction which you will realize from living.

If your college education does not enable you to make more effective use of all your faculties than you probably would have made without it—and if it does not also enable you to get a keener, broader and more satisfying intellectual enjoyment out of life than you probably would have obtained with out it, then your college education from my point of view has been a failure.

A college education finds iits best expression in human values and not in the mere memorizing of words and dates, however desirable that also may be. The late Dr. Charles W. Eliot, for many years President of Harvard University, once said, "Education at every stage of life comprehends three processes—development of power, acquisition of knowledge, attainment of character." You will notice that he placed the development of power first in the list. Speaking again concerning what a young man gets in college he said, "He gets knowledge, to be sure, but better than that he gets power."

I want to illustrate what I think President Eliot meant by power when he used that word as I have just quoted him and also what I mean by a trained mind.

In my business we meet with new problems almost daily. Sometimes they are expressed in familiar terms, but frequently not. I have had opportunity to observe the different ways in which diferent men attack such problems. The man without the trained mind will very likely follow what might be called a trial and error method, and frequently satisfactory results are so obtained, but frequently also at the sacrifice of an unnecessary amount of time and effort.

The man with the trained mind—and not all trained minds are trained in college—will probably attack the problem in quite a different way. He will be influenced, unconsciously perhaps, by the methods he learned while studying algebra, we will say. He will first of all endeavor to find out and clearly state what the problem really is. He will, so to speak, try and express it in terms analogous to a definite equation, and I have found that a problem correctly stated is practically solved, in any event all that then remains to be done is to apply to its solution certain well known and fixed rules or formulas.

The man with the untrained mind hesittates to attack new problems because he has not at his command a well developed technique to assist him and upon which he can rely in such circumstances.

The man with the trained mind sees in a new problem something to be solved. He sees in it a challenge which he is ready to meet, and finds mental satisfaction in so doing. The ability to grapple successfully with new and strange problems is the power which I am certain President Eliot had in mind when he used the words I have quoted.

Speaking for a moment as an employer, I would much prefer to have in our business a young man with a well-trained mind or intellect and with a lesser amount information or learning, than one with more learning but with a less thoroughly trained mind. The latter might forget what he had learned—while the former if he did forget, would know how and where to find and use what he needed or desired.

Assuming now that you leave here as selected and well-trained human material from which useful men and women may be expected to emerge—what should be expected to merge—what should be expected from and of you? Society in its broadest sense, of which you are a member, has through the course of time adopted certain formulas or principles which have received the endorsement of the majority of mankind. It is because of the collective and persistent efforts of mankind through the agencies created by society that we have advanced as far as we have from the original or early state of primitive man and reached our present standard of civilization.

Whatever action organized society takes must find justification in the belief that it will result in bringing about the most good for the greatest number, and it is in the furtherance of hat belief that schools and colleges have been established and have been carried on at great expense to the people as a whole.

Schools, so called, are usually supported by taxes levied upon all the people. Colleges such as this rarely, if ever, are able to exist on the tuition payments made by those who study there. They usually are supported, in large part at least, by appropriations by the State or by the gifts of individuals who presumably believe that by such gifts they are helping tc promote the best interest of the State—that is to say, of society.. The generous benefactors of the institutions of learning are not interested primarily in what happens to Susan Green or Robert Jones as individuals, but rather in how they and all others may best be fitted to help carry on the burdens of society, and aid in improving the conditions of mankind.

All this, if true, justifies me, I think, in reminding you, or perhaps in telling you, that in addition to taking away from here the things I have previously enumerated and which may be classified as assets, you take away also an obligation or debt to society because of what society has done for you and for which you have as yet paid only in part. Society has a very definite claim against you which it may not urge with equal force against those who have not for some reason or other been able to enjoy the advantages that have been offered to and availed of by you.

Your first duty to society is to be a good member thereof; that is to say, a good citizen, and if your college training here does not help you to be a good citizen, then again I say it has failed. How can you best fulfill your obligation to be a good citizen? By cultivation at all times a real sympathetic interest in and understanding of the affairs of the State and Nation, and then by a well-intentioned performance of all the recognized duties of citizenship. It is not necessary that you should hold public office and probably most of you never will, but it is necessary if our political institutions are to endure, that you, and others like you, should do your duty at the polls and elsewhere towards selecting suitable men and women for public office, and towards the development of a well and correctly informed public opinion.

The affairs of the State are the affairs of the individual, and if neglected or badly managed, the result will be the same as it would be in the case of the individual. Every man and woman entitled to vote should look upon the performance of that act as a duty as well as a privilege, secured by the founders and builders of our Nation, the neglect of which reflects discredit particularly upon you as a selected class. It is an unhappy fact that in our country it has frequently happened at elections that more than one-half of all those entitled to vote have neglected o do so, thereby shirking the most important duty of citizenship. The responsibility for what happens in our country during the next thirty years will rest very largely with you and those of your generation.

I cannot urge too strongly the performance at all times of the basic duties of citizenship which I have enumerated—if as I assume to be the case it is your desire that those who will follow you shall have the same advantages and opportunities that have been preserved for you by the generations that have preded you.

I have had opportunity to know many men and women and to talk wit them about the elements that contributed most to their success or failure as the case may have been, and I am convinced that there is nothing, not even genius, that can be relied upon to take the place of constant, sincere and well-directed effort.

I have known of young men seeking to avoid difficult or unplelasant assignments. No greater mistake could be made—for difficulties are frequently opportunities in disguise, and for that reason alone, if for no other, should never be shirked or avoided.

I have heard men in middle or latter life express regret that they had never had the opportunity to do something unusual or of worth-while importance. The fact that opportunities seem to come to some and not to others is due in large measure, I am inclined to think, to the fact that those who grasped them were not dismayed or deterred by the fear of encountering difficulties or even failure if it had to be so. Even it if should happen that an opportunity seized, and a difficulty overcome, did not lead on to fortune—in fact did not seem to lead on to anything except hard work and self-denial—even so, the fact that you could and did meet and overcome it will give you confidence in yourself and courage to try again.

You will meet, as you go through life, with a succession of problems calling for solution, and it has been my experience that most problems are not as serious or difficult as they first appear. Frequently it will be found that any given problem is made up of a number of lesser ones, and if the lelsser ones, and if the lesser and simpler ones are separated from the major problem and dealt with in detail, it will usually be found that the main question is not then so difficult as it at first appeared. I believe it is one of the fundamental military axioms to attack the enemy in detail when possible to do so, and it is the essence of good strategy, as exemplified by Napoleon, to manoeuver for such an opportunity. The same principle will be found good concerning many of the problems of life.

Members of the Graduating Class, I congratulate you upon the good fortune which has enabled you to avail yourselves of the advantages afforded by Washington College. You are about to take up the serious duties of life in one of the most interesting periods in the world's history and the training you have had here should be of great value. Do not permit yourselves to think that your days of study have ended or that your education is complete; as a matter of fact it has barely begun, but you have at least learned how to study and where knowledge is to be found. Continue to seek knowledge; there is no more enjoyable or profitable employment.

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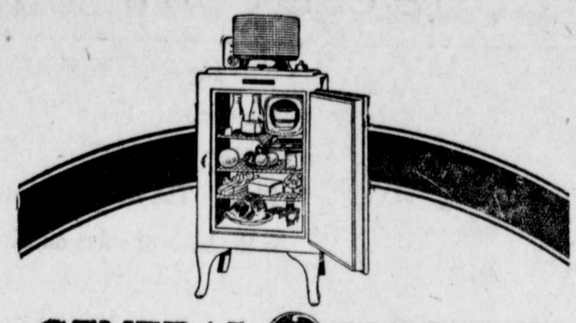

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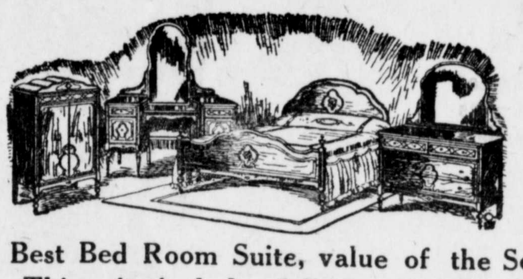

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