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AMHERST COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT

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To the son of any college, although he does not make his connection with his college a profession, a return of Commencement Day recalls many memories. It is likely also, after nearly a quarter of a century, to cause some reflections. It is, I suppose, to give tongue to such memories and reflections that after-dinner speaking is provided. After all due allowance for change of perspective, going to college was a greater event twenty-five years ago than it is today. My own memories are not yet ancient enough to warrant their recalling. The greater events of that day are too recent to need to be related.

But I should fail in my duty and neglect my deep conviction if I did not declare that in my day there was no better place to edu-

cate a young man. Most of them came with a realization that their coming meant a sacrifice at home. They may have lacked a proficiency in the arts of the drawing room which sometimes brought a smile; but no competitor met the Amherst men of that day on the athletic field or in the post-graduate school with a smile that did not soon come off. They had their pranks and sprees, but they had the ideals of a true manhood. They were moved with a serious purpose. He who had less lacked place among them. They are come and gone from the campus, those men of the early nineties, and with them went the power to command.

Those were days that represented especially the spirit of President Seelye. Under his brilliant and polished successor the Faculty changes were few. There was Professor Wood, the most accomplished intellectual hazer of freshmen. There was Professor Gibbons, who was strong enough in Greek

derivation so that every second-year man soon had a clear conception of the meaning of sophomore. After demonstrating clearly that on the negative side the derivation of "contiguity" was not "con" and "tiguity," he advised those who could not with equal clearness demonstrate its derivation on the positive side to look it up. There were Morse and Frink, Richardson, Hitchcock, Estey, Crowell, Tyler, and Garman. All these and more are gone. The living, no less eminent, I need not recall. As a teaching force, as an inspirer of youth, for training men how to think, that faculty has had and will have nowhere any superior.

"So passed that pageant."

The college of to-day has taken on a new life, a new activity. Military training then was a spectacle for the Massachusetts Agricultural College. To-day Amherst welcomes its returning soldiers, and but a little time since divested itself of the character of a military camp to resume the wonted garb

of peace. Yet it is and has been the same institution, — a college of the liberal arts. In this so-called practical age Amherst has chosen for her province the most practical of all, — the culture and the classics of all time.

Civilization depends not only upon the knowledge of the people, but upon the use they make of it. If knowledge be wrongfully used, civilization commits suicide. Broadly speaking, the college is not to educate the individual, but to educate society. The individual may be ignorant and vicious. If society have learning and virtue, that will sustain him. If society lacks learning and virtue, it perishes. Education must give not only power but direction. It must minister to the whole man or it fails.

Such an education considered from the position of society does not come from science. That provides power alone, but not direction. Give a savage tribe firearms and a distillery, and their members will extermi-

nate each other. They have science all right, but misuse it. They lack ideals. These young men that we welcome back with so much pride did not go forth to demonstrate their faith in science. They did not offer their lives because of their belief in any rule of mathematics or any principle of physics or chemistry. The laws of the natural world would be unaffected by their defeat or victory. No; they were defending their ideals, and those ideals came from the classics.

This is preëminently true of the culture of Greece and Rome. Patriotism with them was predominant. Their heroes were those who sacrificed themselves for their country, from the three hundred at Thermopylæ to Horatius at the bridge. Their poets sang of the glory of dying for one's native land. The orations of Demosthenes and Cicero are pitched in the same high strain. The philosophy of Plato and Aristotle and the Greek and Latin classics were the foundation of the

Renaissance. The revival of learning was the revival of Athens and Sparta and of the Imperial City. Modern science is their product. To be included with the classics are modern history and literature, the philosophers, the orators, the statesmen, and poets, — Milton and Shakespeare, Lowell and Whittier, — the Farewell Address, the Reply to Hayne, the Speech at Gettysburg, — it is all these and more that I mean by the classics. They give not only power to the intellect, but direct its course of action.

The classic of all classics is the Bible.

I do not underestimate schools of science and technical arts. They have a high and noble calling in ministering to mankind. They are important and necessary. I am pointing out that in my opinion they do not provide a civilization that can stand without the support of the ideals that come from the classics.

The conclusion to be derived from this position is that a vocational or technical

education is not enough. We must have every American citizen well grounded in the classical ideals. Such an education will not unfit him for the work of the world. Did those men in the trenches fight any less valiantly, did they shrink any more from the hardships of war, when a liberal culture had given a broader vision of what the great conflict meant? The discontent in modern industry is the result of a too narrow outlook. A more liberal culture will reveal the importance and nobility of the work of the world, whether in war or peace. It is far from enough to teach our citizens a vocation. Our industrial system will break down unless it is humanized. There is greater need for a liberal culture that will develop the whole man in the whole body of our citizenship. The day when a college education will be the portion of all may not be so far distant as it seems.

We live in a republic. Our Government is exercised through representatives. Their

course of action is a very accurate reflection of public opinion. Where shall that be formed and directed unless from the influences, direct and indirect, that come from our institutions of learning. The laws of a republic represent its ideals. They are founded upon public opinion, and public opinion in America up to the present time has drawn its inspiration from the classics. They tell us that Waterloo was won on the football fields of Rugby and Eton. The German war was won by the influence of classical ideals. As a teacher of the classics, as a maker of public opinion, as a source of wise laws, as the herald of a righteous victory, — Amherst College stands on a foundation which has remained unchanged through the ages. May there be in all her sons a conviction that with her abides Him who changes not.