

## THE COMMENCEMENT EXERCISES

The sixty-fourth annual Commencement exercises of the University were held at ten o'clock, June 18, 1908. Following the custom of many years, the classes met at their various buildings to form in the long Commencement procession, which was headed by Dean Mortimer E. Cooley of the Engineering Department as marshal. Following the President and Speaker of the Day, President Finley, LL.D., of the College of the City of New York, the Regents, the recipients of Honorary degrees, the Faculty, and the Alumni, passed down the long walks, lined with the members of the various classes who fell in line in turn and passed up four abreast to University Hall, where they completely filled the central portion of the great auditorium. The alumni occupied a section at once side, which was reserved for them, while the Faculty sat upon the other side. The gallery was reserved entirely for the parents and friends of the seniors, each of whom had been given one complimentary ticket. We give in part the Commencement address.

The axe and the plough, the rifle and the saddle, have carried us through the days of the simple life, through democracy's heroic period, into more complex if not more strenuous days, we are constantly reminded by those who see our golden age behind us. We are her tamer, o'er-refined, effeminate, luxury-loving children, living most of us and willingly, like birds in cages which the telegraph and telephone wires have made about us. We sing our songs beneath roofs; we have our food thrust between the rails of steel or the meshes of the wire; we do not have to roam the forest or scour the plain for it like the stone age man; the water is pumped to our lips and we do not have to seek out vanishing springs as did Tantalus; we have the one environment (except as we are let out of our cages for a little time of vacation), and the one fashion of life. I went some time ago into the wild Rockies but was informed before I started that I should take my evening clothes. Montana buys the costliest paintings in Paris; Parkman's "Oregon Trail" so dear to me in my college days is redolent of the gasoline automobile. There are Carnegie libraries in Wyoming; there is a university in Oklahoma. Even the Indian has assumed the similitude of the garb and manners of the university graduate. There are no frontiersmen, for frontier has become as center, the marches as the capital! So we are told by those who have eyes to see the external things only. But I have come out of the most thickly settled spot of the con-

continent if not of the world to tell you what many of you know already, that this is not a fact.

I have been estimating that the number of young men and young women of your age in this *entire continent* (Indians excepted), at the time when this territory was passing from French to English rule was not as great as the number in the one little Island of Manhattan today. And I have somewhere read that at that time there was only one college trained man in the Colony of New York and only thirteen young men "who were to impress themselves on affairs who had secured any sort of a liberal education." If all the young men in this continent of your age a century and a half ago had been gathered into one place (say the Harvard Stadium where they could have been comfortably seated), they might have all seen one football or baseball game together or together have sung one college song or all have heard the sound of one man's voice.

I have often wished that I might have spoken to that audience of youth from the Androscoggin, the Altamaha, the Hudson, the Susquehanna and the Mohawk,—all the young men of America. Think how one might have influenced the whole future of this Republic by one speech, with Washington and Patrick Henry and Boone and Stark and Robert Morris among his auditors.

This is what I might have said:

"You are the van of a mighty civilization. Where you lead with your axes and your rifles, your ploughs and your forges, your canoes and your transits; your ideals and your habits and your laws, the ships will follow without sails, the wagons will go without horses, thousands will walk across rivers dry-shod, threads of iron or copper will carry speech and fire, and a hundred million will live in greater comfort than even the richest of you today. Ten thousand pillars of cloud will stand by day over towns and cities where now there is but a wilderness, ten thousand pillars of fire will glow every night where there has not been a light for centuries save in the sky above. You, *you* are the pioneers of all this. Think what a destiny is within your grasp. What you do, what you are, what you give, will be multiplied a hundred, a thousand fold for good or bad. Not an act of yours but will be felt to the rim of the continent, not a word but will be heard in a myriad echoes from sea to sea. And so I say to you, remember who you are. Do not waste your time; do not be disheartened by your hardships; do not complain of your lot. Through your sacrifices a new world is to spring from the old. You are heirs not of the Past, of the Old alone,

but of all the Future, of the New. Go back to the rivers from which you have come and look not longingly toward the Eastern sea into which they flow, but westward, northward, southward to their sources."

But I might as fitly make this address to you who are of the new pioneers in America, for this country has her frontiersmen not less certainly today than in the decades of her past; frontiersmen not less numerous in her cities than once in her forests and wildernesses; not less valorous in their ventures and their sacrifices amid multitudes and in busy streets than once amid the perils of death under a lonesome sky. And I venture to say that they are and are to be not less dear to her than to those who blazed the way through forests, who gave augur of the course of civilization by the flight of the great birds they drove Westward, who divined the future from the entrails of the heads they slew upon the prairies, or marked the sites of future cities with their furrows.

The hardship of the new pioneer is no longer that of sleeping on the bare earth, of making long journeys on foot. All this we do now-a-days for pleasure. I have for an outing paddled a canoe in the wake of the French explorers down "St. Joe," the Desplaines and the Illinois and I have duplicated the marches of Washington and his soldiers as a recreation. The privation is no longer that of going without food or drink, or living far from neighbors and friends, of enduring the untempered cold or the withering heat or the piercing tempest. The hardship is that of holding oneself to a course of study or hard training that will lead out to the edge of the known, the privation that of denying oneself every comfort to find what the truth is; the suffering that of following the truth wherever it leads.

It is no mere fiction of my imagination which reckons as a part of democracy's territory that great estate, now invisible nor subject to the measurement of degrees of latitude and longitude, which the past has gathered of human experience. A part of that estate is transmitted through the medium of physical inheritance, though we are assured by biologists that those of one generation are not able to transmit their several "acquired characteristics" to those who come after them (much to the comfort of some of us whose characteristics are not all that could be desired). But whether "acquired characteristics" be transmitted directly or not, there is certainly a vast territory that is not directly inherited by the individual, that comes under cultivation and into fruitfulness only by the medium of some sort of teaching, either of parent,

neighbor, book, paper, speech or teacher. It is that territory which democracy must somehow manage to enlarge, hold and develop, not less than her material resources, if she is to keep herself and her children out of the poorhouse of nations or the cemetery of disappointed hopes.

She must hold that territory as she has held the public lands upon her Western frontiers for the free or practically free occupancy of her growing and more ambitious family; a fenceless field in whose conquest and cultivation the eager of mind may find the opportunity of a larger service or of escape from the confinements and servitude of a narrow ancestral lot which has by nature fallen to them. I do not know where to find more fit expression or how to visualize more clearly the opportunity and the consequent obligations that are upon democracy to educate in the highest and broadest sense of the term her sons and her daughters, than in this figure of the fields.

The keeping of this free territory upon her borders is the best relief for the discontent of congestion, for the hopefulness of ignorance and for the despair of finding noble employment. It gives opportunity for the constant passing from the narrow, skyless circumscribed lot of mere livelihood to the wider horizons of life and of hope. I speak of the public obligation, that of the state. Private philanthropy in the education of others, and private wealth in the education of its own, do give and will give that same aid to those whom they reach, will put and do put thousands out upon those fields or on the way to them. Indeed, in the higher education we have been dependent largely upon such agencies. But there are many thousands of youth, even with this splendid private provision (and especially in the great cities of our republic) who can never have the remotest chance of coming into sight of this more sparsely settled country of truth and of becoming men of leadership and power and service in their communities,—who are held by circumstances within walls they can neither beat down nor scale.

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*The transfigurer of things*, he is the man we wish to keep upon our borders, and if the man of Science be not such a man then there should always tent with him the poet, one who will "merge scientific facts into new relations between man and man, between man and God and between man and nature." He is to be of the frontiersmen, too.

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And you teachers and others who lead

youth out in the path blazed by scientists and poets, you who have yourselves looked across the verges, who are some of you to recruit their camps, but who are most of you to live in the latitude and atmosphere of more familiar truths and are to know of the new only by report from the frontier, you are the probate judges of these estates, the guides to the eternal fields; and you graduates who go to occupy them, are as renters, or rather as managers of estates,—that is what baccalaureates, bachelors, originally were, managers of estates,—estates devised to your keeping and cultivation by the Past, estates of which you are trustees for the Future.

Democracy has her best hope of stability and perpetuity in *the education*—the *leading forth*—of those who are today at the converging of the forces of the past—leading them forth into those larger estates, in bequeathing them so much of the truth as she is able to gather from all the Time that has gone, and in teaching them to cultivate that truth into a greater fruitfulness.

A great university president said some time ago in a public address in my hearing and the hearing of your President, that if the universities, established of democracy continued and increased their high and beneficial service, truth-telling might become universal. For the function of education is threefold, since there are three classes of men who cannot speak the truth, first, those who do not know the truth; second, those who know it but whose selfishness or cowardice keeps them from telling it; and third, those who know it and are brave enough to speak it, but know not how to tell it. In these human lacks and frailties has education her tasks intimated and assigned and in such education has democracy her hope—to teach men the truth, to tell them how to express it, and then to make them dare to speak it.

Following President Finley's address the diplomas were presented to the graduates by President Angell. The number of degrees given out was 885, exclusive of the Honorary degrees, of which there were nine. Degrees were conferred in various departments as follows:

Department of Literature, Science, and the Arts—	
Bachelor of Arts.....	292
Master of Science (in Forestry) . . .	5
Master of Science.....	3
Master of Arts.....	28
Doctor of Philosophy.....	4