

## INAUGURAL ADDRESS

by

ALAN VALENTINE

*Distinguished delegates and citizens of Rochester:*

WHEN Charles W. Eliot hesitated before accepting the presidency of Harvard, he was assured by his predecessor that the presidency was at least a respectable way of earning one's living. Such respectability is often bought at a high price in perplexity and discouragement. There is a mutual sympathy, born of mutual suffering, among college presidents. Some of them have graciously indicated that sympathy by their presence here today. Yet there is a compensation in the task; we believe in its importance. In the work I now begin, I cannot promise success, but I can pledge without reserve whatever energy and wisdom I can muster.

This University has an honorable past and moves toward a distinguished future. Seldom has an institution been so rapidly favored by generous gifts, or withstood better the dangers of sudden prosperity followed by a national depression. Unless the future brings still greater trials, we shall be free from those extremes of material need which can sap the courage of a university.

Thankful for our good fortune, we must recognize the responsibility it imposes. We cannot justly compare the rate and quality of our progress with those of universities less well endowed; we must move forward in proportion to the greatness of our opportunity. Each of us who serves this University must throw into that service all the intelligence and idealism he possesses. Only then can we count upon success.

There are many standards of success in life, but only one for a university: the extent to which it contributes to the progress of thought and character. Universities are great in terms of the intellectual quality of their graduates. No one knows or cares what university a hundred years ago produced the fastest runners or the richest men. No one a hundred years hence will care about such achievements today. Our purpose is to teach the habit of thinking

clearly and deeply. Toward that goal a university must move, avoiding attractive bypaths offered by those who see less clearly our ideal.

There will be times when compromise will seem the safer way. But the compromises of yesterday have created the educational problems of today. They were often forced upon universities by a too easy acceptance of trends in American life. A mistaken ideal of democracy has demanded a downward leveling of university standards, both for admission and for the degree. Universities have fought, not always successfully, against this pressure for mediocrity from a public unaware of the possibilities of higher education. As a nation, we have only begun to realize how far our present achievement in education falls short of the ideal.

The University of Rochester is in a position singularly favorable to the pursuit of that ideal. The prosperity and the wise leadership it has enjoyed permit the elimination of mediocrity. There are few universities so happily located. There is virtue in being a private university free from the entanglements of party politics—a virtue which a wise nation must continue to recognize. But it is our special good fortune to be a private university in a city not too large to share its life and interests, and possessing a sympathy with high educational ideals. Such sympathy is rare; we owe it to the community in return not to compromise with the second-rate.

There are several reasons why no standards save the highest can serve this University and this community now. The first of these concerns most directly our national welfare. Our economic difficulties cannot be blamed upon a lack of energy or of intelligence. Our failures have been primarily failures in clear, dispassionate thinking. As Charles Beard has said, the world is suffering from a crisis in thought as well as in economy. We have not been able to think through the complicated problems of the twentieth century. We lack clarity in the methods, and clarity in the objectives, of our thought. We will not emerge from economic doldrums or political dangers until we emerge from this mental haze. Our universities must help to dissipate that haze. Colleges have educated millions, but have not educated them well enough to solve our problems. Party leaders of today, no matter how well-intentioned, cannot now revise the mental processes of a lifetime. It is too late for them to learn a new incisiveness of thought. We must provide better training for those of the next generation, and make sure that the educa-

tion they now receive qualifies them to think accurately, impartially, profoundly. The new leaders must use instinctively the scholarly approach and the scientific method. Until our universities teach these more effectively, they postpone real progress in our national welfare.

Clear thinking permits no compromise, for illogical thought is little better than guesswork. There can be no shoddy in the cloak of wisdom. The college that compromises the quality of its thinking can only perpetuate shallow thought and the problems shallow thought has given us. This is the first reason why this community should demand high standards of its University.

There is a second reason, concerned more directly with the individual. The only happy people are those running at full steam ahead. Unemployed workmen lose their morale; unemployed rich men search disconsolately the seven seas for a contentment they seldom find. Conversely, many men who hate militarism look back upon their war service with satisfaction, because it demanded the full use of their energy and intelligence. University life is no exception to this rule. If education fails to demand all the powers of a student, he will seek the satisfaction of complete exhaustion in college activities. The college that claims only half a student's mental powers will receive no more than that, and half an education is not enough. In the ideal university, all the powers of its students would be turned to an essential part of education. When a young man finds a sensible use for his talents, his friends, with obvious relief, say that he has "found himself." Men find themselves by concentrated effort, not by dissipation. A college must help them by calling out that effort. The individual as well as the community cannot be satisfied with an education that does not set the highest goal.

There is a third reason, concerned chiefly with the people of Rochester. If I interpret correctly the spirit of this city, it looks forward always to self-improvement. Rochester turns its face toward the future. Its city plan, its love of music, its many organizations for cultural improvement, show its spirit and its aims. Such a community will not be satisfied by the mere presence of a university; it will demand continued self-improvement there. Nothing less should satisfy this city; nothing less will satisfy its University.

What is a great university? Its greatness does not lie in its numbers, in the variety of its activities, in the magnificence of its buildings or the social standing of its students. The figures in its financial state-

ments or on its athletic scoreboards do not make it great. Its true worth depends upon its success in aiding man's conquest of himself and of the unknown, in cutting the knots of superstition, in breaking the bonds of prejudice, in deepening the channels of thought. Its success is measured by the number of men and women whom it has taught the power of the intellect and the excitement of knowledge.

No one who has thought seriously of universities has ever come to a different conclusion. But too few have troubled to think the matter through. The attractive trappings, the interesting by-products of a university dim the eyes of its admirers to its essential purpose. One is tempted to loiter among the sideshows of education. For extra-curricular achievements are easily seen and easily estimated; we can count their glories because they are obvious on the surface. But the heart of education is harder to find and even more difficult to recognize.

It is never easy for those who watch a university to keep their eyes fixed upon the quiet daily efforts that make it great. Often a university, faithful to its ideal, must disappoint those who see its objectives less clearly. A university and its observers should pause occasionally to evaluate its progress and to renew faith in its objectives. If we lose sight of the central ideal, we may neglect new opportunities to forward it, or may encourage things that distract us from it. To the extent that our University fails of continued self-improvement, we shall fail to realize the spirit of this city. This is the third reason why no standards save the highest can serve this University or this community now.

It is easier to state the case for high standards than it is to apply and maintain them. There are, for example, those who would judge a university by the number and extent of its columns in the public press. They reflect too clearly the temper of American life today. The fine art of ballyhoo is not one of our more attractive national talents, and is wholly adverse to the values for which a university should stand. There are kinds of publicity which are worth less than nothing, because they appeal only to those cheaper instincts which we do not seek to encourage. The finest publicity a college can have is the quiet enthusiasm of hundreds of graduates for the mental maturity it gave them. Not the flashlight and the microphone, but the silent workers in laboratory and library will bring this University the good opinion of those whose praise is valuable. It is the duty of

any university to correct, not to encourage, the vulgarity which the world tolerates in the name of publicity.

Much of this sophomoric distortion is centered upon intercollegiate athletics, and particularly upon football. There is much that is good in athletic competition, but when victory becomes a necessity to maintain the morale of students and alumni, when the clamor of sports journalists and locker-room critics affects its policies, a university has sold its birthright. This University shall not yield to such distortion. Its students will continue to play games because they like them, but we shall not pretend that athletic achievement is the main end or even a major end of college life. I turn with pleasure to more profitable things.

The happy relations between the University and the citizens of Rochester offer opportunities to widen the field of higher education. There are invitations to co-operate in research with schools and philanthropies of the city, and to add to the evening courses now offered. Such proposals are attractive, and merit careful consideration from the University. Each will have its enthusiastic special advocate, who will judge the University largely by its acceptance or rejection of his particular proposal. If we adopted every such suggestion, we should plunge with abandon into the uncharted seas of extra-mural instruction.

All universities are by definition conservative, since they are the conservers of past wisdom and guardians of higher education. They prefer to advance slowly over prepared ground, not to dissipate their forces over an unknown terrain. They believe that vocational training is not their chief purpose, and they see that most academic ventures outside the campus boundaries have led dangerously near the vocational. They know that an absorption in facts may obscure the principles behind those facts. The chaotic development of campus activities has already created many problems; the unguarded expansion of extra-mural activities might create as many more. Such developments might lower, as they have lowered elsewhere, the standards of this University.

Yet the spirit and interest of this city present rare opportunities to add breadth and vitality to the uses of a university. Perhaps in Rochester we can bring into unusual unity the interests of the scholar and those of the citizen. No work could better serve the cause of education. It would lessen the popular distinction between

the academic and the practical, between higher education and citizenship. The prospect is a tempting one.

There is only one wise course, and toward that the University is already moving. From the opportunities before it, it must select those which will most surely serve the community. These it can develop and extend with care, never moving so fast as to raise false hopes, or to neglect its duty to the undergraduate colleges and professional schools. Through extension courses, the University now shares its facilities with citizens who care to make use of them. It has already begun to work with organizations of the city upon social and educational projects. Most effective of all has been the collaboration between city and University in the care of patients at the Municipal Hospital, of which Mayor Stanton spoke so graciously at a recent public dinner. Already these efforts have disclosed a dazzling array of new opportunities; for every project begun, a score of others attracts the attention. We cannot mount and ride furiously in all directions without losing our way. The University cannot but sense the great opportunities for research and instruction this community offers. The University as a whole cannot but feel, as I do, a desire to serve this city in as many ways as the aims and standards of a university will permit. The best service the University can render this city is the indirect service resulting from the leadership of its graduates in every aspect of community life. We must ask patience and understanding as we move together, with dignity and with mutual respect, toward a mutually desirable goal.

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Sixty years ago, university inaugurations were long, erudite and scholarly. A president was then a remote but admirable figure, generally respected but seldom understood. He felt his authority in the intellectual world and made the most of it. Universities then were less complicated; teaching and study were still accepted as the main activities. To attend college was not a right but a privilege, and that sense of privilege often brought scholarly results. Sure of respectful agreement, the inaugural speaker then could range among the peaks of classical and theological learning, to the amazement of his auditors. That was the golden age of college presidents.

Since that time, the learned world has become less restricted, and its members more critical. Modern administrators are less often

theologians or classical scholars. The extent of learning has increased, but the prestige of learning has not. Today this president could not, and this audience would not, face so overwhelming an academic barrage. The burden of omniscience has happily been transferred from the shoulders of one to the shoulders of many.

That change is a healthy one. No man is wise enough to direct alone the policies or details of a university. Wisdom no longer reaches us in clear accents from the clouds; we find it among the mundane efforts of many associated minds. Only from the successes and discouragements of those who teach and study in this University shall we extract such truth as exists here. In that truth—in our combined search to find it—lies our only strength. The pen of the scholar, the microscope of the scientist, the baton of the musician, the voice of the administrator, all are parts of a larger unity and a larger aim. Behind the pomp and circumstance of this occasion lies an effort to affirm that aim and achieve that unity.

## THE BENEDICTION

PRESIDENT BARBOUR:

O God, our Heavenly Father, Thou hast granted to us the manifestation of Thy presence in the convocation of this day, and we render to Thee our gratitude. We now crave Thy benediction as we bring these exercises to their close. We pray Thee for Thy blessing upon one who has not been with us save in spirit, Thy servant who has recently closed his great record of the administration of the affairs of this University, and who carries with him into the years to come the grateful and loving appreciation of us all and of many who are scattered about the circle of the globe. May the consciousness of a great service greatly rendered be an abiding blessing to him.

May Thy presence be abundantly with Thy servant who now assumes the duties of his high office, already holding, as he does, the faith and confidence and affection of us all and of those throughout the world who hold this University in love and honor. May he have constantly with him the sense of the presence of Him who is the source of all wisdom. Establish Thou the work of his hands upon him; yea, the work of his hands, establish Thou it. May the memory of this inaugural time be a constant source of strength and inspiration to him.