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ALFRED UNIVERSITY

College Opening Addresses

by

Boothe C. Davis

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COLLEGE MORALE

College opening address by
President Boothe Colwell Davis

October 1, 1924

The eighty-ninth year of Alfred University which has now auspiciously opened, is in many respects a record year. Your attention has already been called to the fact that we have our largest college enrolment and the largest Freshman Class in our history; an increase over last year in each case of over sixteen per cent. A Freshman Class of 125 and a college student body of 375 brings our attendance to the verge of capacity for the present equipment of the College and for the village.

Among the recent acquisitions to the Faculty are four men with the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. This brings the Faculty up to a high percentage of its members with this

degree or its equivalent. Few colleges excel us in this respect. Undoubtedly this proficiency in graduate training never before existed in Alfred's faculty to so high a degree.

The annual budget of the University will reach this year, for the first time, approximately \$200,000.

At a cost of over \$12,000 expended during this summer vacation, about half of the buildings on the campus have been wired and equipped with the best modern fixtures for electric lighting. High power current has been brought into the village for the first time and made available for lighting and power purposes. This has greatly improved the dormitories, the library, and some of the laboratories and lecture rooms.

Another and far more important
But there is a ~~different~~ basis for a record year this year

which I wish particularly to emphasize in this college opening address. It is still a potentiality rather than as

fully
yet a realized fact. I speak of a Superior College Morale.

While it is only yet in process of development, I am confident that with the background of the past and with the better advantages of the present, a superior morale may be numbered among the achievements of this year. Not that our morale has been bad in the past but it is one of the things in which there is always room for progress. Above all it is of the greatest concern to me that Alfred should steadily advance in this respect.

By "morale" I mean that larger spirit of industry, fairness, justice and faith which is most essential in the training for Christian citizenship. It is law abiding. It is thoughtful. It is reverential. It loves truth and goodness and kindness and order and beauty. It involves all that President Coolidge meant when he said more than a year ago

in an educational address at Amherst:

"We do not need more national development, we need more spiritual development. We do not need more intellectual power, we need more moral power. We do not need more knowledge, we need more character. We do not need more government, we need more religion. We do not need more *of the* things that are seen, but more *of the* things that are unseen."

But it includes also loyal enthusiasm, in our tasks of education, coupled with *This* ~~the~~ spirit of which President Coolidge spoke.

Suppose I should say that morale is the disposition and the ability to do what one knows he ought to do, in all his relations and activities as a member of a college community. How many of us do you think could say truthfully that we have both the disposition and the ability to do, in all respects,

what we know we ought to do? I suspect that would be a difficult test for many of us. yet that is exactly what I want to see accomplished this year, in what I have called a "Superior College Morale."

In my judgment education is unsuccessful, or breaks down, if it does not develop in men and women that disposition and ability to do what they know they should do. There are evidences that can not be ignored that education is not yet wholly successful in these respects. Possibly it is having a more difficult task to do so now than in former generations.

Our new social conditions produce new and possibly keener temptations.

Sometimes it is said that Democracy is responsible for a crumbling of the inner reality and granite character of the earlier American generations. Democracy sometimes gives the impression that we should be ruled by majorities, and so snuffs out the inner light of individual responsibility from

the minds of people who are superficial. Men sometimes say that this generation of youth has been externalized by custom, fashion, ~~good~~ form, etc, and the modern youth is afraid of being different, and only cares to be sure that he is like others.

Some critics of our generation say that it is the modern, scientific point of view; or Modernism as against Fundamentalism, that is the trouble with this generation. If we focus the microscope upon our bundles of reactions, conduct ^{seem to} may be explained without reference to inner principle and moral worth. But all these attempts to explain the present problems and failures of ethics, morality and religion only point out afresh the conquests still challenging education.

Neither democracy, custom, nor modern science can be held responsible for immature and untrained powers of discrimination, choice and will. I am willing to throw the

responsibility for training in character and in morals back upon education in its broadest meaning.

If our present knowledge of science and custom and government leaves the individual merged in the maize of modern life without stability or positiveness of character, without the motivation of the inner life of religion; with life all externalized, then education has been defective in method if not in content.

There are three distinct fields of human conduct, viz: 1st, free choice; 2d, obligations that are only self-enforceable; and 3d, formal or positive law, externally enforced. Education must differentiate these three realms of conduct and equip the individual to exercise, intelligently and wisely, his privileges of free choice, his responsibility for self-enforceable obligation, and his duty to obey and enforce formal law. The

college is pre-eminently the place to acquire training in these character qualities.

The right of free choice is a realm of conduct, dear and precious to every man. Here he has the right to choose for himself and, properly used, he has the right to claim freedom from criticism for his choices. Originality, initiative and moral responsibility are all dependent upon this freedom.

The choice of our religious beliefs, of our political parties, of our life companions and of many other fundamental things makes this domain of our life our most precious inheritance.

The degree in which we can be trusted with this freedom of choice is an important measure of character and of a successful education.

The second domain of human conduct has been called the

domain of manners. It is a field in which we have obligations, such as courtesy, consideration for others, loyalty to family, friends and country; patriotism, piety, reverence, chastity, good form; and a thousand others. -Obligations to self, to society and to God, which can not be enforced from without. Their performance depends upon ourselves. They are self imposed and self enforced obligations.

The range of these obligations widens as education and religion enlighten and spiritualize man.

Police enforced obedience does not measure the greatness of a man or of a nation. Civilization is measured by the extent to which its citizens are obedient to the unenforceable.

The true test of character lies in the extent to which individuals can be trusted to obey self-imposed law.

It is a far cry from such trust, to unrestrained license which so often parades iteself under the name of liberty or

of self-government.

The third field of conduct is that which has to do with formal or positive law.

It is in this field where our Country is suffering so much now from the lack of obedience to law and law enforcement.

I am mentioning these departments of conduct, so clearly defined in citizenship, to illustrate my idea of superior college morale.

As individuals we are entitled, on the one hand, to a realm of free choice in matters in which the obligation is only to ourselves. But that realm, precious and sacred as it is, is not nearly so broad and privileged as we have been accustomed to suppose.

At the other extreme of action, is formal or positive law. It is the realm where statute law with penalties and enforcement machinery dictates what we may or may not do.

In College this formal law may be Trustee decrees and regulations. It may be faculty rules and methods of procedure or it may be campus rules, made by the students themselves and administered by the Senate; or it may be student government rules, or the honor system, etc.

In any case it is constitutional, statutory or judicial law.

Now in between these two realms of free choice and statutory law, lies the biggest part of a student's life, as it is the biggest part of a citizen's life. It is the part where obligations are self assumed and self imposed.

Here is where College Morale comes into play. It is where you are loyal, not because external law compels it, but because you wish to be. It is where you give your support to the enforcement of campus rules and self government and the honor system, not because you have been compelled to do

so but because you choose to do so. It is where you defend standards of scholarship for your fraternity or sorority, not because the inter-fraternity council can compel you to defend their standards, but because you want their value to be universally recognized.

It is where you sacrifice something for the sake of your class, your fraternity, your team, your Y.M.C.A. or your college.

It is Morale that makes all these things worth while factors in College life. But they are all obligations that can not be enforced by external authority.

We must do it of ourselves and for ourselves. That is what I call superior student Morale, and it is what I want to see made the most distinguishing characteristic of this college year.

President Cutten of Colgate said in his college opening

address last week that only ten percent of the people of this country are capable of receiving a college education.

I am not so pessimistic over the youth of this country as to agree with that. I believe that a much larger percentage of our youth should have access to higher education. But in order to make that possible there must be greatly increased college facilities. There are not half enough colleges. It requires millions of dollars to build colleges. These millions must be contributed by benevolent people.

No one thing will have so great an effect in producing this enlarged equipment for higher education as superior college Morale.

If students are able to become better citizens, more orderly, more law-abiding, more self-controlled, and self-directing along right lines; if they can demonstrate while in College that they can learn to help create and enforce

wholesome law and public sentiment; If philanthropic men can

see that Freshmen who come to college from the high schools

without morale, without willingness or interest to help enforce

the honor system, student government, or campus rules, immediately

on coming to college,
acquire ~~the~~ college Morale, and eagerly assume responsibility for

the maintenance of student honor, scholarship, order and campus

rules; then they will know that the colleges are training for

citizenship, and they will gladly make available such

opportunities for multitudes more.

It is my hope and firm belief that this year will be a

record year for Alfred in Superior Morale, as well as in so

many other ways in which we are proud to see her grow.

*Your cooperation in this great enterprise
is earnestly solicited by the faculty; and we
pledge to you our sympathy and cooperation
in every serious and fair means for its
accomplishment. By such a morale you
will be having the best possible training
for future citizenship.*