

Messenger and Visitor.

THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER
VOLUME LXIII.

Vol. XVII.

ST. JOHN, N. B., WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 1901.

{ THE CHRISTIAN VISITOR
VOLUME LII.

No. 24.

The Debt of the College Graduate

PRESIDENT TROTTER'S ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATING CLASS OF 1901.

Young Ladies and Gentlemen: For obvious reasons my words to you on this occasion must be brief. My subject is, The Debt of the College Graduate. When I confront you thus as a group of debtors, I am not meaning to cast any aspersion upon your thrift or honesty. It is in the spirit of the old French phrase "*noblesse oblige*" that I announce my theme. I speak of your debt, because I am thinking of your wealth; I venture to point out certain obligations, because I am thinking of the great words, "Unto whom much is given of them shall much be required." In your college career you have enjoyed one of the richest privileges that life could bring to you.

For what does a college stand? It stands for three things: for a certain ideal of life, for learning and for discipline.

For a certain ideal of life. As Carlyle puts it, the college is the fortress of the higher life of the people. In the midst of lower, often sordid, ideals, every college lifts its head and proclaims to young souls that loftier ideal which puts mind above matter, which insists that breadth of knowledge, trained intelligence, strength of judgment, refinement of taste, habits of application and self-command, are indispensable to the fulfilment of life's best possibilities. In an institution like our own the ideal is loftier even than this. Believing in the Christian verities, our own college openly maintains that life should be judged in the light of the incarnation of the Son of God, and in the light of His words, His death, His resurrection, and His lordship over men. It holds that life for men in whatever sphere is a sacred stewardship, a holy service, and that its issues for every soul are eternal.

Then, the college stands for learning. In relation to those vast accumulations of which we are inheritors, the college performs a threefold function: it is a depository where the treasures of knowledge are, in some generous measures, stored and preserved; a distributing centre, to which the young folk may gather from every corner of the land, and from which they may carry away all that they are capable of appropriating; and, lastly, a place where the spirit of investigation is awakened, and where that intellectual stimulus is generated, by which the stores of learning are constantly increased.

The college also stands for discipline. Holding forth before the gaze of the students its social, intellectual, moral, and spiritual ideal, it organizes the learning to which I have referred, and all the activities and procedure of college life, into a system of means, intelligently arranged, and skillfully and constantly applied, with a view to developing in the student physical, mental, and moral power, right habits, and elevated tastes; with a view to putting him in possession of systematized knowledge, and developing in him reliable and symmetrical character. In other words the college is a physical, social, intellectual and moral gymnasium; in which if any man duly exercise himself, his profiting is bound to be made manifest to all.

For these three things, then, I say, the college stands, ideals, learning, discipline. And now I ask you to measure if you can the privilege which comes to any young man or woman who, on the threshold of active life, is permitted to spend four years at college, day by day face to face with these noble ideals, day by day appropriating more and more from the stores of knowledge, day by day acquiring power and learning obedience and self-mastery. And this is the privilege, young ladies and gentle-

men, which you have enjoyed. You are to be congratulated, and that most heartily.

But repeating the old French phrase, *noblesse oblige*, it is my purpose, as I announced, to point out the debt of obligation under which your privileges have placed you. The debt is large to the college, to society, to the Kingdom of God. I shall, however, speak exclusively this morning as to your obligation to the college that has put itself at your disposal, and has nurtured and trained you through these years.

When out upon the Forward Movement campaign, I received infinite courtesy and kindness, but I met one graduate of the college who said in my hearing that he owed nothing to Acadia College, that he had paid for what he had got when here. You and I know that even on the low level on which he was speaking he had not paid for what he had got. The annual fee for each student is about \$35, the annual outlay by the Board for each student is not less than \$85. Similar conditions necessarily prevail in all colleges. They could not do their work without endowments. But suppose you had paid each of you the full \$85 each year, your ideas are too intelligent and noble to permit you to talk of having paid for what you have got by any mere money consideration. Can one pay in dollars and cents for the glory of the sunset, for the shimmer of the dawn, for the songs of the birds, for the fragrance of the blossoms, for the unspeakable splendors of a day in June? Just as easily could one pay for the benefits which a college pours around the soul of an eager student.

I have spoken of ideals—the ideals of this college. How came they to be what they are? Whence were they evolved? How far back must we go to find their beginnings? If I should tell you the story of human history, enriched at length by the incarnation of the Son of God, by His wisdom and His redeeming work, if I should trace the working of God's Spirit in men's souls through the intervening centuries of stress and conflict, if I should trace particularly the social, intellectual, and religious evolution of these provinces, if I should tell you this man's life-story [pointing to Dr. Crawley's portrait,] and this man's life-story [pointing to Dr. Cramp's portrait], and this man's life-story [pointing to Dr. Sawyer's portrait], if I should tell you of the high thinking and doing of hundreds of others, if I should open to your gaze innumerable chamber doors where good men and women have knelt to pray for this school,—then should I only have begun to suggest the multiplied divine and human forces which have converged to give us those ideals of man, of life, of duty, to which we here stand pledged. And what are silver and gold as payment for an inheritance like this?

Then I have spoken of learning, of which the colleges are the depositories and distributors. And here again, is it possible, I ask, for a student ever to pay in dollars and cents, for that which he is permitted to make his own? He is introduced to Shakespeare, and buys a book containing the great master's works, and the money he pays for it goes where? To the paper maker, the printer, the book-binder, the publisher, but only to pay for paper-making, printing, and the rest. What have any of us ever paid for Shakespeare? for Lear, or Hamlet, or *Midsummer Night's Dream*? Shakespeare cannot be computed in terms of dollars and cents. And if a man cannot pay for Shakespeare, then can he pay for the privileges of a library where hundreds of master minds proffer their riches? A student pays his tuition fees, and these plus other amounts from other sources, give to a professor a roof, some clothing, and enough bread to physically support him in his work. But perhaps the professor is seventy years of age or upwards. He spent many years in

preparation for his work as a teacher, and early ranked as a man of marked ability and scholarship; and now for forty-five years, it may be, he has read, and thought, and taught incessantly, till his mind has become a store-house of rich and varied learning, and an instrument of clear and masterful thought; his common speech is drawn from "the well of English undefiled;" and his character is rich with the ripest fruits of long experience. Around the feet of this man young minds gather day by day, while with skilful method and lavish purpose he gives forth of his wisdom and life, imparting to the students knowledge, stimulating their weakness with his strength, disciplining their immaturity with his precision, and by the impact of his personal force exciting to response every faculty of mind and heart. Now what, I ask, does the monetary consideration which the student pays, or this man receives, count for as compensation for the outflow from such a teacher? And he is but one professor among a dozen, each giving forth the best that is in him.

Oh, no, the college man does not pay for the benefits he gets in dollars and cents, they are not computable in coin of the realm. Should he be well-to-do, and empty his purse to the last dollar he would be a debtor still. You will not wish to gainsay me as I press the point, but, acknowledging the obligation, you will be casting about for ways in which you may at least attempt to discharge it.

You remember in that brief Turneresque poem of Browning's called "Home Thoughts from the Sea," how the poet describes his feelings as he sailed toward the Mediterranean, with Trafalgar full in face, and Gibraltar rising, grand and gray, in the north-east, both objects of patriotic pride to an Englishman. As his heart swells with patriotic feeling, and there falls upon his spirit the thought of the price at which England has bought the privileges of her sons, he breaks forth in humble gratitude—

"Here and here did England help me,
How shall I help England—say?"

Commending the sentiment, and altering a word, may I suggest to you and the alumni generally the couplet,

"Here and here did Acadia help me
How shall I help Acadia—say?"

She needs and will continue to need your help. The reach of her influence is not as wide as it might be. Her resources are not equal to existing demands, and the future must be a growing one. You can help her by living lives of honor and usefulness worthy of her ideals, by active sympathy in extending her influence, by the gifts of your self-denial in the earlier days, and by your munificence later on if wealth shall come your way. She has many friends, and the number of them is increasing. She has a right to rely, however, first of all upon her own sons and daughters. The prosperity of every college is dependent primarily upon her alumni. We rejoice that so many of our alumni are devoted to the interests of their alma mater. We have the confidence that in devotion you will not be second to any.

And now we send you forth with our love and benediction, to put your lives into the opening years of the new century. It is a time of high demand and glorious possibility. May you go forth in good heart, may you quit yourselves, not only in your relations to the college, but in all the relations of life as sons and daughters of Acadia should.

The world is young.
And God is good; and Truth victorious;
And Right and Love and Virtue stir us yet;
And Christ is living and we follow him.
See, brothers, see, the night is on the wane,
And all the hills are blossoming with morn."