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SCOTLAND NECK, N. C., THURSDAY AUGUST 31, 1893.

NO. 40.

THE DUTY OF A COLLEGE GRADUATE.

ALUMNI ADDRESS.

Delivered at Wake Forest College Commencement May 30, 1893.

By W. E. Daniel, Esq., of Weldon, N. C.

I confess to have been greatly troubled in the selection of a theme upon which to address you this evening, and it has caused me much anxious thought. And as day after day and week after week I have considered the matter, I have been profoundly impressed with the unwise selection that you made, for, and I speak meaningly, I approach the performance of this duty with an embarrassment that comes from my inability to discuss a subject fit for the occasion and the audience.

I had thought when I was so highly honored—and, believe me, I do consider it an honor—as to be chosen your speaker for the evening, that I would present some subject new and interesting, something out of the usual line, but in my searches and selections and conclusions I have never been more convinced than I am to-night, that, so far as concerns me, there is nothing new. Do not understand me as being so presumptuous as to deny the existence of novelty; I only mean that I cannot find it. Then I have looked patiently and diligently, and even laboriously, in limited current literature, for some suggestion upon which to base my remarks, and after patience and diligence and labor has come the weariness that must have been King Solomon's when he wrote: "Of making many books there is no end."

It is impossible for me to deliver a literary address, for the reason that the calling to which I have given my time has almost ceased to be a profession and has become a business, and the rough contact with the rushing, busy, hurrying world has dimmed and effaced whatever literary relish and finish I was supposed to have had when, several years ago, I left my *Alma mater*. And who is there of us that can look over fifteen years of such contact full of triumphs and disappointments without a heart overflowing with pity and hope for him who is to make the beginning and the race? And it has occurred to me that something might be said from the ground of advantage upon which we are supposed to stand, to remove some of the difficulties from the ways of those who are to come after us; or, in other words, as graduates to more clearly define and lay down our duties and relations to the masses of the people around us who are not so fortunate as to have received the benefits that we have received.

I wish I could speak some word to-night that would encourage the sympathy that ought to be felt by everyone for his neighbor. It is a fact, and our system of education is partly responsible for it, that we know too little, and care less, of that which is true of those who are in the throw of a stone of our own doors. We are following our own enterprises, and we are not allowing our souls to be burdened with the thought that we are our brothers' keepers. I mean that there is too great a distance, a distance which my experience shows is widening, between the educated classes and those who are uneducated. If this is true, then college trained and college benefited men ought to know it; and knowing it, they ought to think upon it, and realizing its importance they ought to have the courage to grapple with the problem. It should be their duty to remove the gap if possible, to begin the work by lessening it, certainly.

Let me give expression to the wish that it was in my power to bring some idea, some thought, some principle, fresh from the people, with the smell of the fields upon it, clothed even in the garment of poverty, that would quicken your philanthropy for them, your patriotism for their country. I would consider my task done to my

satisfaction, if I could kindle in your minds a resolve to know more of those of whom I speak from the higher plane of thought and culture in which you live. And I have heard them called by so many names: the masses by social writers and political economists, labor by capital, the producer by commerce, the people by politicians and statesmen, and that which makes us all akin, immortals by religion. For the purposes of this hour, I will designate them by a name which, though given because of the fall, has the merit of antiquity: "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread."

How little we know of them! Their hopes, their aspirations, their conditions, their difficulties, their hardships, their despair! And yet here is the same world for us all; the light that comes and blesses makes no distinction, and it is written that a dying Savior, with healing in His tender words, forgave and saved a thief.

It is the duty of a college graduate to know the people, to understand their thoughts and to know their lives. Do not understand me as taking the position that he should know them after the manner of the average demagogue who makes frantic appeals at stated intervals for the apparent purpose of preventing the ruin of the country, but he should know them in order to benefit them, in order to do good to those with whom he comes in touch; he should know that he may make an effort to improve their condition, to elevate their ideas, to give them the true idea of an education which has failed in its object if it makes a man anything but a worker. Unfortunately for those who are called educated, they are regarded and judged by this class as prepared and equipped to make their living and build themselves upon their brawn and their muscle and their lives worn out in ceaseless toil, and that, too, without manifest exertion.

There is a widespread distrust existing and we may as well face the question. I will have to confess my inability to explain the causes; there are many plausible and ingenious reasons given and supported by strong argument. If you have ever attended a political discussion you have heard them set forth by all manners and kinds and measures of statesmen. But we may accept this fact as true, and these results have brought about this feeling of distrust that the people feel for each other, that those who have made a study of economic questions have satisfactorily proved that in the past ten or twenty years there have been great changes and disturbances. One portion of the people has become poorer, while another has become richer; the purchasing power of one class, who, because of the simplicity of their wants, ought to be independent, has become less and less, their economy more stinted and more stinted, until now it is not a question of economy, but it has reached the point where it becomes almost a struggle for sustenance, for existence. This is true, and it is true in North Carolina, and I am not overrating the picture. I do not intend to detail to you the horrors of a tenement in some crowded city, where large families are huddled together and where children are growing in squalid vice, breathing a hatred for order, maturing at last into a menace to our institutions, but I am telling you as to men who ought to know and who doubtless have observed, who, having received the benefits of a more enlightened system, should prepare for these problems. And I do state that this feeling of distrust and unrest is showing and manifesting itself right here in North Carolina where we boast of a native population and of least outside influence.

It is the duty of a college graduate to study the causes that have brought about such conditions. As I have already suggested, those who have made a study of the supposed causes and questions differ. Some say, and I have heard eminent men take this position, that we are simply paying a debt placed upon us by the civil war

and the subsequent evils that followed in its horrible train.

Others say that it is the burden placed upon us all by the iniquities of a war tariff, which has been increased into a Chinese wall for the sole and exclusive benefit of those who control the manufacturing power, that it has become a veritable Old Man of the Sea upon the back of the producer, pressing him down and down at every effort he makes to relieve himself of his burden.

Then, patriotism and politics have increased a pension list by extravagant legislation until no standing army in armed Europe costs so much. This character of legislation has indirectly, and insidious and dangerous because indirect, drained from the pockets of our people a vast Niagara of money for which there is little or no return. On the other hand, the products of the fields have year after year been sold at less than the cost of production. And what is the result? The New South which a few years ago was foretold by every one has not fulfilled the promises of its prophets. The fact that the great majority of our people are in debt and are helpless. And what is debt? Have you ever thought on the subject? After making every effort to meet obligations, one is like the man caught by the sea with his tide surely, slowly, mercilessly rising to his death. Debt! It bows the strong man like a reed and breaks his will like a straw. I heard an eminent lawyer once speak of this curse as a spectre at the elbow, a shadow at your side that walks when you walk and runs when you run, that follows you to your home, that comes between you and the wife of your bosom, and drives the little children from your knees, until at last hope leaves, and then with this condition as a companion the aimless struggle begins. It hampers genius, it curbs ambition, it blights and wrecks promises and prospects. You who are before me have probably never been called upon to face this enemy, because I should say that when it is the result of economic changes and disturbances, it commences with those who are nearest the earth first and comes to you last, but you have only to go through the homes and belongings of those of whom I speak to grant the truth of that to which I call your attention.

Again, there are others who say that these changes have been caused by the financial system of the country by a contraction of a currency, which so many profess to understand and explain, and do not. To many holding this position the remedy is easy. It is only necessary to stamp the promise of the nation upon anything to make it money; or that the government should lend its currency upon the products of the fields and the face of the earth as pledges; or to coin the white metal which is dug in such wonderful quantities from the mines of the West and which is opposed so bitterly by that class who already have nearly all their strong boxes. In other words, in these latter days it has become the fashion to go to the State, the Government, for everything, like a child to its father, and I am even told that higher education asks and receives large appropriations of taxes wrung from the pockets of poverty, and that in the face of the fact that the minds of thousands of children are starving for the elementary principles.

And the ignorant and deluded and helpless are knocked hither and thither like shuttle-cocks, hoping and believing that there is legislation in the minds of their leaders which, if enacted, will bring to all peace and happiness and wealth and prosperity. So the play goes on upon the credulity of those who ought to be the objects of the tenderest care of those who are the most favored, the intelligent, until sometimes I fear there will come an awakening which by reason of their wretchedness will bring momentous results.

I fear that I am transgressing the usual lines of addresses to the members of this Association, but I am speaking to men who ought to be the

leaders of thought and action and patriotism in their communities, to those who ought to be, from the positions which they hold, in sympathy with those who labor with their hands.

A collegiate education ought not to remove one man from another, but it is often the result. Primarily we use its benefits for our own good, but its divine object is the helping of others. There should be a connection between all men, and the lifting of one ought by this link to lift the other; and any system of education which, because of that education, breaks the chain in my own humble judgment in some measure, at least is a failure. When one is benefited and the other not, when one grows and the other decreases then follows this separation and distrust that have grown up between men, and which has become so hurtful in every branch of our social and political life. What is needed is an education of mind and heart that will dignify and uplift labor, that will elevate a work-bench, and that will make a workshop as respectable as an office.

I know that it is a favorite saying that labor is honorable. As an abstract principle I am willing to admit that this is true but I charge that in practice it is not true, and the difference is becoming more and more apparent every day. For a number of years this difference has been growing in life, in thought and in sympathy between him who makes his living by his mind and him who makes his living with his hands. You may call the one the aristocracy of intellect, if you please, but when the distance becomes too great the structure will fall of its own weight and involve us all in a common ruin.

Unfortunately, an educated man does not regard a eagles of this character as commensurate with the talents he is supposed to possess. Run over in your minds the large number of young men who leave our colleges and who crowd the professions. How many of them are adding anything to the material wealth of the section, how many of them are even causing two blades of grass to grow where one grew before (I believe that is the minimum of benefit to mankind according to Jonathan Swift)? And in the consequent depletion of the productive classes by the withdrawal of the best minds, carrying with them, too, an abhorrence of the station and labor from which they came, sympathy is lost, humanity and brotherhood are forgotten, and those who are left regard themselves as the least favored of all classes; they are certainly the illest paid in the blessings of life. Their toil is not sweetened by intelligence, but made bitter by poverty; what they do has been done in the same way with slight improvement, for generations; they cannot hope to rise above their labor.

I sometimes think that the poet had a conception of this poverty of sympathy as well as necessity when he wrote:

"Work, work, work.
My labor never flags—
And what are its wages, a bed of straw?
A crust of bread, and rags?
A shattered roof—and naked floor,
A table, a broken chair,
And a wall as blank, my shadows I thank
For sometimes falling there."

Society must look at these things because it creates such conditions. Ignorance is not always an evidence of weak-mindedness, and such a class constitute themselves courts, and they try you. They consider the questions of difference, whether Society, or the State, or knowledge, or anything that you may call Power, has the right to draw these lines between the beggary of want and the lavishness of luxury. These questions are asked and answered; they pass judgment on you and they hold you responsible for their suffering, and whenever circumstances arise they do not hesitate to hold the supposed causes to a strict account.

I do not wish to be considered as radical in my views, but I am not prepared to say that they have not strong reason on their side. Let me cite just one illustration. I was reading some time since that a man who had accu-

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mulated a priceless fortune, and who lived in all the magnificence of Eastern luxury, said that the true solution between labor and capital was the difference between a man and a dollar. He said: "Lay the dollar upon the shelf for a year and at the end of the period it would still be a dollar, no less; put the man there, and without work he becomes either a skeleton or a criminal."

It ought to be a source of thankfulness to us that we have been spared the extremes of riches and poverty that are found side by side in the more thickly settled portions of our own country; but apart from that the portentous omens are gathering like storm-clouds, there is everywhere an unrest that is deep-seated, there comes up from the people a cry for a change. We may not be able to understand or control it, but it would be well for us that it be heeded.

We are told that on one occasion there was a meeting of England's government to consider some question of surpassing importance. They had gathered at their place of meeting, and there were the chancellors and councilors, mighty in wisdom and skilled in government, the Lords of the Treasury, and so forth. But one member was absent. The Prime Minister enquired concerning his absence, when some one suggested that they wait no longer, that the absent member, as was his custom, was doubtless walking the streets of London listening to what the common people were saying, and ascertaining what they wanted. "No," said the Minister, "we will wait for that man, for above everything else we want to know just what the common people are saying and want as to this question before us." There is need for men who study the people, there is need for men who have their hand upon the arteries of the great masses when the conflict comes. Great principles and great reforms have often been hindered and delayed by unholy combinations for present political advantage, and when enthusiasm born of ignorance threatens to sweep over truth from its fastenings, the only hope for the truth lies in those who, lifts above the vagaries of an agitator, earnest and quell and direct the tumultuous passions of the populace.

How can this be done if you are not in sympathy with those whom you should meet and ought to influence? In your education, in your patriotism, in your faith in Him who leveled all ranks in Himself, you ought to stand with them. If you have not done so, if you are not doing so, you are not doing your duty to the principles upon which this institution is founded, not to the lives of the men who have fostered and cherished it.

Having studied the people, it is the duty of a college graduate to take an intelligent interest in their politics. There are many educated, cultured men who think that it is not becoming to their dignity to take even a passing interest in the political matters around them. They insist that politics is cor-

Continued on Fourth Page.

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