

IDEALS IN LIFE

TO THE MEMBERS OF THIS HONORED CLASS:

Congratulations to you upon your graduation by this very fine school. It is no casual honor bestowed simply because you have spent a certain length of time in attendance here. It is an honor that you have earned and merited by work and perseverance. It is an honor you are deemed worthy of by these school officials and teachers. It means you have achieved something very worthwhile and something of which you can be justifiably proud.

I am honored that you should ask me to share this high hour of your life with you. I feel very humble as I realize that this hour is one that you will long prize and remember, and that you have asked me to share it with you. I trust that we shall find in this time together something, which we will mutually treasure forever.

In December 1838, Maribeau B. Lamar, President of the Republic of Texas, send to the Congress of the Republic his first message in which he used these now famous words: "The cultivated mind is the guardian genius of Democracy. . .It is the only dictator that freemen acknowledge and the only security freemen desire..."

Because of the inspired wisdom of those words, which seem to have a peculiar applicability today, they have become the purpose clause of the great charter of public education in Texas. These few words epitomize the goals of public education In Texas in relation to the whole people; that is the goal of a cultured people forming a sure foundation for the perpetuation of the utmost of Individual liberty within the framework of equal laws. So, we may say, the goal of your instructors and of yourselves in the work you have done in these hallowed halls was to endow each of you with a cultivated mind.

What do we mean by a cultivated mind? The process of cultivating the mind means to advance its growth; to refine the character of the individual by inculcating ideals, which result in the improvement of the individual as a member of society and which encourage and stimulate his growth spiritually and morally and in enlightenment. Like most great things it is difficult of exact definition, and it is more exact to discover some of the attributes or results of the cultivated mind than it is to define its nature.

I think that some of the most Important qualities of character, which testify of a cultivated mind, are faith, courage, honor, integrity, prudence, fraternity, and industry. The existence of these qualities in an Individual in any degree measures the extent of his culture. Furthermore, these qualities are available to all of us without respect to person or situation in life. Some may have brilliant mind, some less so; some may have great wealth, and some none. but all may develop and possess these qualities.

Without faith we cannot approach nigh unto God and thereby let Him approach nigh unto us. One cannot be truly cultured without a right relationship to God, to, He is our Creator, the Creator of our fellows and the Creator of all things with which we deal. Unless we are in harmony with Him, we cannot be in harmony with ourselves or those about us, or in harmony with the things with which we work. Nothing is accomplished without faith, but with faith mountains have been moved and cast into the sea. Columbus removed the barriers of doubt, ignorance and fear and cast them into the sea when he put his faith into courageous action and set forth for the west. The pioneers of this great land had faith in God, faith in their fellows, and faith in themselves; otherwise they could not have conceived or executed so vast an enterprise as they did. Men have followed their flag of faith to sublime victories over every circumstance.

Courage, not physical courage alone, but spiritual and moral courage as well, permits us to follow our faith to its accomplishments. Columbus' faith alone would not have carried him forward across the seas without spiritual, moral, and physical courage. And, as Edwin Markham has said, if there had been no land there such was his gallant dare. God's glad hand would have put it there. Some fear is useful, but an excess of fear is what deters men from free accomplishments, makes slaves of them, and perverts God's purposes for them. On the other hand, when we use these fears as stepping-stones upward to courage, they lift us up and help make us free.

Honor and integrity direct our faith to the right; make us love justice for its sake alone and channel our courage toward right objectives and purposes. Without honor and integrity, faith may exist in the wrong things, and courage may be used for oppression. But with the bright shield of honor, it is impossible that either faith or courage should be debased. Integrity is the seal by which our work is attested as true and worthy.

Prudence is essentially the use of reason in all of our affairs. Too many people permit their fears, prejudices and passions to control their actions, and too few apply the rule of reason. If we do not permit reason to control our actions, we may expend ourselves in pursuit of petty things, while leaving the greater to others.

Fraternity is to take a sincere interest in the welfare of others. It is the oil that keeps down the frictions of life. It smoothes our relationships with each other, and permits us to develop great spirits and firm friendships. The Christ once said that we grow great as we serve others. This is a rule of universal application, and this is a quality we may all possess.

Industry means to earnestly devote our energies to the accomplishments of the tasks at hand and in attaining the goals of life.

Faith without courage is often inert; faith and courage without honor and inmost integrity may prove disastrous; faith, courage, honor, and integrity but without prudence may cause us to miss the true values of life; faith, courage, honor, integrity, sad prudence without fraternal interest in others may lead us into a life filled with unhappiness; all of these without industry may rob our life of its fruitfulness. It requires all of these qualities to make a well-balanced individual. To help you attain these ideals as guiding rules of life have been the endeavor of your teachers in the years of your study. They have opened the soil and planted the seed, and it is now up to you to develop the harvest.

Some may say that all of these qualities are never found well developed in the same individual. That is too often true. Seldom, if ever, do we find all of these qualities developed to the ideal in any one person. Because they are so seldom fully attained, there are those who will say that they are but ideals and are not practical in solving the problems or meeting the vicissitudes of life, especially in today's world of fast-moving events.

Ideals are like the stars -- you will not succeed in touching them with your hands, but like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides -- and, following them, you will reach your destiny.'

None of you may ever have great material wealth, relatively few do. You may not attain to such success in the forum, in the pulpit, or upon the stage as to have your name upon every tongue--very few do. You may never devise some new thing and thus write your name large in the annals of science and invention--very few do. You may never lead men in heroic action and become a public idol--very few do. You may never attain to great heights in any field of endeavor--very few do. But you can have high ideals, and clothing yourself in them, like a mantle, seek to work out these noble ends each day of your life. These ideals will burn away the fog of uncertainties, which obscure your vision like the sun burns away the fogs of the sea. You can attain

to the qualities I have mentioned, if not completely, then to some material extent and degree, and thereby attain to successful living, also something that very few do.

This school, in the work you have done leading up to this high hour, has sought to point out the way to you to go forward, but you will go forward only in the proportion you make high ideals your guiding light. Thus ideals, coupled with an effort to attain them, have been useful through the ages in the solution of the problems and meeting all of the vicissitudes of life. We hope you go forward with your education, but if you cannot secure further formal education, you can go forward by continuing to cultivate these and other high ideals, making them the guides to your destiny.

As you well know, and of which it is unnecessary that I remind you, the times are troubled, uncertain, and fear filled. As you enter into a larger realm of life, you are conscious of the fact that no one knows what tomorrow may hold for you. The world is strife torn, and it affects each one of us with its infectious troubles and fears. Trying to plan for the future is indeed difficult. We are living in a fog of uncertainties, which truly obscure vision. Without faith, courage, honor, integrity, prudence, fraternity, and industry the hour would be dark indeed for your generation. With these qualities you can face the future with assurance. With faith you can find a lamp unto your feet, which will lead you surely through all of the clouds of doubt and fogs of fear. With courage you will follow with assurance the design for living laid down in Holy Writ. With honor and Integrity you will walk uprightly before all men. With prudence you will find your way to wisdom. With fraternal interest in others you will find a brother. And, with industry your life will bear good fruit. Thus, though you may not know what tomorrow may bring forth, you will be able to say you are following the path marked by high ideals and purposes, and that their way is the right way.

You may find many paths, and as the years go hence become separated but whatever path you follow, whatever work you assume to do, these ideals of which I speak will still serve to guide you aright wherever you are. No work worthy of you will ever require you to abandon them. No achievement that you could attain would justify you to be false to them. Oftimes it seems that wrong is enthroned and reaps all the best harvest. Remember though that the mills of the gods, the poet said, grind slowly but exceedingly fine. The goals of high ideals are too high, too noble, too valuable to expect them to be attained in a day. Devote yourself to them, however, and with time and perseverance they will prove their value.

Out of the pain of the harsher experiences of life come resolute convictions of what is right. History is but a record of man's experiences as he has sought to climb to a higher plain. Education takes the experiences of man and gives us the benefits of those experiences in enriching and cultivating our minds without having to undergo the pain of the experiences themselves.

If you will develop the seeds now planted in your minds, so that you can look about you, over the rivers, unto the hills and the far horizons, and reusing the vastness of God's creation, and your own small sphere therein, and yet have faith that you are in the care of the Hand that made the world if you can look about you and realize the spiritual, moral, and physical dangers which beset you, and yet spurn that beautiful-appearing little path that leads downward, the path of least resistance, and with fortitude, climb the mountain peaks of life; if you can see men continually seeking their own advantage to the hurt of their country, their neighbors and their friends, and selling their priceless heritages for a mess of pottage, and still keep your own shield of honor bright and clean; if you can see others rationalizing themselves into wrong decisions because they fear to face the truth, and yet in your own life face the truth, and give reason control; if you can see hate all about you, and seek only to serve for the sake of service itself; if you can see others willing to live off of the industry of their neighbors, and yet be willing to devote our entire energy to the tasks at hand; if your heart can be touched by the smile of a little child, and the sunlight glinting on flowing

waters, and the winds whipping the tree tops can stir your soul like the thought of one much loved and long dead; if you can look into a wayside puddle and see something beside mud, and Into the eyes of the most forlorn fellow mortal and see beyond sin; If you can approach the Altar of God in prayer with the simplicity and faith of a little child approaching his father's knee; if with a sword in your hand for the evil, and a song in your heart for the right, you are glad to live and not afraid to die, then my friends you will have come to a realization of the force of ideals in your life, which Is a goal of education, and the reaping of some of the true fruits of the cultivated mind.

Each parent, member of your family, friend, teacher, and school official present, join with me in saying to you at this auspicious hours: May God endow you with His richest blessing.