

**ADDRESS DELIVERED
BEFORE THE
ALUMNI OF BROWN
UNIVERSITY. POEM**

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Address delivered before the alumni of Brown university. Poem by Edward L. Pierce & S. F. Smith

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EDWARD L. PIERCE & S. F. SMITH

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DELIVERED BEFORE THE

ALUMNI OF BROWN UNIVERSITY,

TUESDAY, JUNE 15, 1880,

BY

HON. EDWARD L. PIERCE.

POEM

BY

REV. S. F. SMITH, D. D.



PROVIDENCE:

SIDNEY S. RIDER.

1880.

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Foster

At a meeting of the Alumni of Brown University, held in the Chapel of Manning Hall on Tuesday, June 16, 1880, it was

Voted, That the thanks of this Association be tendered to the Hon. EDWARD L. PIERCE for the able, eloquent, and appropriate Address delivered by him before the Alumni this day; also to the Rev. SAMUEL F. SMITH, D.D., for his excellent poem; and that the Secretary be directed to request copies of the same for publication.

Attest :—

RUBEN A. GUILD,

Secretary.

ADDRESS.

This is the festival season of culture. On these fair days of June scholars come as pilgrims to seats of learning, and youths go forth from them to assume the duties and responsibilities of men. Few spectacles in human life attract sympathies so genuine and universal. If our hearts are rightly attuned we cannot fail to enter into the spirit of occasions in which worldliness yields to primal instincts. The traveller, in a foreign city, pauses by the wayside as teachers and pupils celebrate some holiday with songs and banners, or children in white array go to their first communion, or bride and bridegroom, with the loving escort of kinsfolk and neighbors, enter the cathedral to receive the consecration of their vows. Speaking another language, and kneeling at other altars, they are for the time of his kindred and family, and he blesses them with a stranger's benediction.

In a like scene, to which all hearts are responsive, we have met again to participate. Nearly three-score young men, equipped for active life, go forth from the University to enter on the work which God shall appoint unto each to do. Father, mother, sister, brother, are to rejoice in the growing promise of one on whom their hope has centred. The ingenuous youth himself is to see visions of the future as it offers duties, honors, rewards. We as spectators, in sober thought, shall contemplate the possibilities of each as he comes upon this platform where once we have stood, and shall ask what will he do with the training, the acquirements, and the inspiration of his college life?

I esteem it a privilege to stand before you to-day, looking into the faces of early companions; in a church where holy men, no longer in mortal flesh, my guides and friends,—Granger, Wayland, Caswell,—still speak in their remembered ministrations; in a city beautiful for situation, to which I am bound by ties far tenderer than those of any academic fellowship; and, what most concerns the hour, in the presence of young men who are passing from the seclusion of the college to the activities of the world. You will not be vexed this morning with any old question of literature or history, or with any speculations of science; but the occasion in which we join, and the period in which we live, shall suggest my theme:—

THE PUBLIC AND SOCIAL DUTIES OF THE COLLEGE
GRADUATE.

It would add to the value of our statistical tables if they informed us with substantial accuracy how many students are now in institutions which may fairly be called colleges according to the American standard, and how many receive degrees from them each year; what is the total number of such graduates in the country, and how they are distributed among the various professions; but however unsatisfactory the attainable figures may be, all will agree that the college graduates living at any period ought to be a prodigious force in the direction of public opinion.

Without refining upon the purpose of the college curriculum, it is enough to say that it is arranged primarily for the discipline of the whole man, his intellectual and his moral nature; and secondarily for the acquisition of the elements of knowledge in as many departments as time permits, so that thereafter, by himself or under specialists, the student may pursue any one according to his taste and aptitude. It puts in complete working order the noblest machine in the universe, and starts it off to become the greatest of dynamic agencies for good or for evil. With it ought to come a clear perception of truth in the various human relations, and a facility for impressing that truth on others. The studies

are not confined to one specialty or group, but are comprehensive. They deal with the intellectual and moral nature, with the best thoughts of antiquity, with the material world, with what is taught by science in its manifold divisions, and with what has transpired in human history. If one study followed exclusively tends to disturb a normal development, this curriculum, so broad and inclusive, awakens the whole soul, and teaches truth not as an absolute entity alone, but in its many relations. This is what Milton describes when he says: "I call, therefore, a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war."

The College does more than train faculties and teach elements. This may be done under private tutorship or in a lecture-room, without association among students, or between students and professors. The College is a *society*. It is a society founded for a noble purpose, rich in the implements of culture, hallowed by the devotion of its benefactors, glorious often by what it has done for mankind. As such a society, it forms, directs, and inspires its successive generations of students.

The college student is for four years set apart from mankind. He is here at a period when the soul is sensitive to all impressions, when the character takes its direction. He comes as a boy: he leaves as a man.

The world he enters is unlike that which for a time has closed to him. They have points of comparison, but their points of contrast are many and striking. Outside is the conflict of material interests, the classification of men with reference to wealth or worldly success, the subordination of the better impulses to the lower, the pressure of expediency against duty, the assertion and practice of a conventional morality in politics and trade, which sneers at the highest rectitude as sentimental and pharisaic. There, too, are the fierce competitions for place, the war cries of parties which no longer signify living issues, and the fever of speculation, with its curious periodicity of return.

From all this the college student is withdrawn. He is indeed born and remains with like passions as the rest of us, but his time has not yet come. If the noise without reaches him, he is undisturbed, for he listens rather to the calm voices of teachers and books. If, from his chamber window, he has a glimpse of human activities, he sees them only as spectator and critic. If public journals and partisans condone corruption and duplicity in high places, or are subservient to clamor, or are always dinning in our ears that it is the highest duty of a citizen to sustain party nominations however objectionable, he turns for instruction to moralists like Wayland, and to publicists like Lieber and Woolsey. Whatever outlook he may have, he is in personal interest and activity isolated from the world beyond. His