

Governor Roosevelt then spoke as follows :

MR. PRESIDENT, AND LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

I appreciate very deeply and very peculiarly the honor that has been conferred upon me to-day by the University of the city of my birth—the city where my ancestors, like yours, Mr. President, have for many generations been born.

I could not have been a New Yorker and worked for any cause worth working for, without working hand in hand with graduates of Columbia. The very earliest experience that I had in politics, I underwent—and I use that word advisedly—in company, Mr. President, with yourself. It was when Professor Van Amringe and I had joined the local political association of the body to which we belonged; and what I have to say this afternoon will be very largely simply a variation on his theme of this morning—on what was more than his theme of this morning, what I have seen him put into actual deeds in the work that he has done.

I don't know that Professor Van Amringe himself ever realized how much he made me feel it my duty to go on and take part in politics—and not to take part spasmodically, not to go into a movement once a year and feel that I was very good to have gone in then ; but to take part all the time, doing a little bit whenever the chance arose, because that was the way that Mr. Van Amringe himself did. We worked at the caucuses and at the primaries, and I, at least, peddled tickets at the polls. Those were the days before we had the Australian ballot law, gentlemen, and we did all of those small and irksome duties of citizenship, because every young man who was around Mr. Van Amringe would have felt ashamed not to do the work that he did. That is the kind of practical teaching in the performance of political duty that will do more good to any young man who is making his start in life than even such an address as that you made this morning, sir, though great good has been done by such an address . . .

A year ago at this time the expedition of which my regiment formed a part was on the transports in Tampa Bay. One reason why I feel a peculiar pride in that regiment is that, mixed up with the wild riders and riflemen of the South and West—the miners, cow-punchers, hunters and mining prospectors—were a couple of score or more of young college graduates from the East ; and in the whole regiment there was no braver, nor more devoted and soldierly man than Hamilton Fish. I remember him well. From the very beginning, from the time of the organization of our regiment, he was one man in whom I put peculiar trust. He was employed at once as a non-commissioned officer, in the difficult and delicate task of drilling men who had in them the most splendid material out of which it is possible ever to make soldiers, but whose very sturdiness and independence, whose very inborn Americanism and desire always to take the initiative, made it not always easy to discipline them as was needful ; and young Fish

did his duty as only two or three other men in the regiment did theirs—with all his heart and soul and mind. . . . And that is one thing, Mr. Van Amringe, that always makes me glad to see athletics developed in our colleges—not only because of the effect of athletics on character (for of course it does affect character, and it is this effect that really is most important), but also because it is a good thing to have a strong body as well as a sound body; for if with the body goes the mind and soul, then the body becomes a powerful agency in bringing about good results, especially at those times when we get down to the naked, elemental passions in man. . . .

On landing in Cuba we camped out; and on the second night after our landing, after a long march, we struck Siboney late in the evening. Fish was the first sergeant in the company of a man, who, on the whole, was the best captain among all the good captains we had—young Capron, a man who was a better leader even than Fish himself and a man, like Fish, of singularly fine physique. I recollect well that, shortly after we had gone into camp and had arranged the troops in the lines, there came up a heavy cloudburst, and it rained very heavily for an hour or so with a downpour known only in the tropics. After it was through, word was sent to us that we were to be sent forward at dawn to head the Spaniards on the left wing on the attack and to fight the next morning. . . . I strolled over to Capron's fire, and he and Fish and a young Harvard fellow were standing around the fire, holding their clothes up and drying them, and Capron was instructing Fish as to what would be his duties the next day. Capron had been told that he was to have the advance guard; and, having selected young Fish to lead "the point," as it is called—the four men who were to make the extreme advance,—he was telling him what he should do. . . . I remember particularly Capron saying, "Now, Sergeant, to-morrow is the chance. We have the post of danger,

and that is the post of honor. While we are here, always seek the post of danger; that is where the chance of honor lies," and Fish answering, "Yes, Captain, that is what I came for." This was at ten in the evening, and before ten the next morning I passed them both in the jungle, lying with their glazed eyes turned towards the sky.

I feel the deepest sympathy for those who loved young Fish, for Capron's wife, and for the people of both of them—the keenest sympathy for them; but not for the men themselves, not for those who have won the glorious prize of death with honor, not for those whose country delights to honor them, not for the man who left a heritage of honorable renown to his college by what he did in Cuba. It is a good thing for any young man to have the chance that Fish had, and to take advantage of it as Fish did, be his fate what it may. To Capron and Fish, and the others who there gave their lives, there is a peculiar meed of honor that should be paid just at this time.

We live in a period when there is much social discontent, much social unrest. Every man who, by his actions or by any failure to act when he should do so, gives the slightest justifiable cause for an increase of that discontent—every man who in any way, wittingly or unwittingly, feeds fuel to the social unrest, is a traitor to what is best in our national life and deserves ill of the country; and so, every man who does what is in him, to prove the fundamental truth that all who live in this country are equally concerned in its welfare, and should be equally ready to pay even the final great debt for it, puts the whole country under an obligation to him. The fact that young Hamilton Fish—recently a member of Columbia College, a man who had been used to luxury—was not only ready, but more than anxious to stand in the forefront of battle with the miner, the cowpuncher and the hunter, to face the same hardships and meet the same death that they met, should make you proud of him. He laid you of Columbia,

he laid us of New York, he laid all the people of America in his debt—laid them under heavy obligations by what he did, by the death he met. When he did that, though we mourn him, surely our mourning must be swallowed up in pride.

I wanted to speak to you this afternoon primarily upon the college man in his relation to social and public life, and yet there is little that I need say beyond pointing to the examples already given. All that I can ask is that you of Columbia—that your fellows in every college in the land—realize that the advantages you have had confer upon you no special privileges, but do put upon you special and heavy responsibilities. I have scant patience with the demagogue who denounces men of education, and scant patience still with the foolish cynic who sneers at the part that can be played in public life by the man of college training. It is essential for this country, essential for our higher life, that the man of college breeding and college training should take his full part in the work of governing the nation, and that the nation should see that he takes it. . . . There is no meaner form of bad citizenship than that which—either truckling to what it believes to be the popular belief, or from a crude lack of judgment on its own part—fails to perceive the full necessity of deep and broad mental training among the men to whom it is specially desirable to entrust much of the management of our public affairs. . . . We need college men, we need cultivated men. We need the broadly, deeply cultivated man, and we need him continually in our public life, and in our social life.

Now, take the proper standpoint of the cultivated man himself. He can do his duty to the nation only if he keeps ever clearly in mind the fact that his advantages in training do not give him any right to the prize; they merely fit him to strive on good terms for it. Let him always remember, if he has the peculiar advantages only to be obtained from the education probably gained for him by the self-denial of those who went before him, that these advantages

will avail him nothing, unless he has in him also the spirit which will enable him to take advantage of them. . . .

It is a great thing to have a sound body and a sound mind; but, as Professor Van Amringe has said to-day, the greatest thing is to have character—to have not only the virtues, but the sturdy self-reliant virtues; to be good and to be strong. I think that we are gradually getting over our admiration for what Milton called “That fugitive cloistered virtue which dares not face the heat and dust of the contest.” We are more and more learning to understand that, while a strong man who lacks righteousness is simply all the more dangerous as a citizen because of his strength, on the other hand, every good man who lacks strength must be of but little weight in the community. I would preach the doctrine of righteousness going hand in hand with power. I would preach the duty of every man to go out in life, not hoping for an easy time; but willing and anxious to face irksome and grinding toil, to face disappointment and failure, if out of failure he can finally wrest success—to face all that comes in life, provided only that he may show himself a man among men. . . .

There are many things that I should like to say to the college-bred man, but all of them can be summed up in this: The college-bred man must show himself an American citizen like all others, but with the feeling that it is incumbent upon him to prove that he is *more* of an American and a *better* citizen than other American citizens are. If he does not do this, he is false to his university and false to the training that he has had.

There is so much that is enthrallingly interesting in life, there is so much that is individually well worth doing, that I think all men of sound mind and character have a feeling of utter contempt for the idler—for the small soul who stands aside from the stress and strain of that life where the great issues are faced, where the great defeats are suffered and the great successes won; for the man who is

content to whirl in an eddy on one side, because it is quiet in the eddy, while there are waves on the main stream. To all college-bred men I would preach the doctrine of work. If you are fortunate enough to have means which will enable you to lead a life of leisure, remember that the life of leisure, if it is to be worth living, is not to be a life of idleness. We need men who are able to lead lives of leisure, because we need to have done an immense amount of work that is not remunerative; and much of that work—probably the most of it—must be done by men of leisure. We need men of leisure and men of means, then, to work out and fully develop the national life; and these men should understand that they are bound to work as hard as anybody else in the land, the only difference being that their work is of a different kind.

The college-bred man should, above all, set the example of working efficiently, disinterestedly and honestly. In all our American life, with its tendencies for evil (which must be faced and fought against, just exactly as we gladly recognize and glory in the tendencies for good)—in all our American life I think that, on the whole, the tendency for evil which is most dangerous, which should be most steadily fought, is the tendency to defy mere success, without reference to whether that success was obtained honorably or dishonorably. We suffer from too great a tendency to deify the successful man. But we cannot become a truly great people, we cannot rise to the level of the highest traditions that we have inherited from the men who with Washington founded this Republic, or with Lincoln perpetuated it, until public opinion is trained so that every man who wins wealth, or political success, or any other kind of success by means that are dishonorable, is made to feel the full scorn of all whose approval is worth having. . . .

I don't want you to be impractical. . . . You have got to work in practical ways, if you are going to accomplish anything. Of course, this applies to every career, to

every walk in life, but it applies peculiarly in politics. The man who works entirely impractically in politics is working hand in hand with the forces of evil, because he withdraws his weight from the force for good. . . . What we need is men of high instincts who are not a bit afraid of going down into the hurly-burly, into the arena—men who want to work with their fellows. That is the type of man we must more and more develop, if we want to make our political and social life what it should be.

A word in closing. . . . You have been following up, probably all of you, what has happened in France—you have seen the measureless abyss of humiliation into which the French people have plunged themselves, by setting up a standard of race and religion in place of the standard of righteousness and decent citizenship. Let me draw a lesson from my own regiment. I had in that regiment men from the East, from the West, from the North, and from the South; men who all their lives long had made their living by daily toil, and men who lived on what they had inherited from their fathers and their fathers' fathers. I had in that regiment men of all the different races and race strains that go to make up the composite American people, men of all religions that are known to our country, and men who would be regarded as heterodox by the exponents of any recognized creed. I had Captain Capron, who came primarily from the Huguenots of France; Captain O'Neill, whose father fought in Meagher's Brigade in the Civil War; Captain Muller, who was born in Germany; Lieutenant Colonel Brodie, of Scotch descent; men representing every strain of descent from Puritans and Cavaliers. And when, after San Juan, I recommended five non-commissioned officers for promotion to lieutenantcies, it happened that I recommended two Protestants, two Catholics and a man of Jewish faith. We were able to keep that regiment in good shape and to make it approach nearer and nearer to the ideal of what an American regiment should be, because we considered but

one thing about any man, and that was whether he was or was not a good soldier. Whether he was a Catholic, Protestant or Jew; whether he was of Irish, German, English or Scotch birth; whether he was a day laborer or a man of independent fortune; whether he was from the East, from the West, from the North or from the South—these things counted for nothing if he was a good man, a man who did his duty as an American soldier. Now, I ask you to remember, you of Columbia and your fellow college men throughout this country, that you are called upon, above everything else, to keep that as your guiding principle as you go through life. In your relations with your fellow Americans, remember that every man who discriminates for or against any other American because of his creed, birthplace, social or educational standing, is guilty of treachery to the principle upon which this Republic is founded, and is showing himself to be a bad and unworthy citizen. I ask that you set for yourselves, and therefore for others, that standard of American citizenship which rests solely upon a man's courage, his righteousness and his honest endeavor to do all that in him lies to make America what it should be, and what it shall and must be, the greatest of the great nations of the whole world.

Prof. Van Amringe, in closing the meeting, said :

FELLOW ALUMNI: Don't go yet. There are two things that I want you to do before you leave the hall, and you can do them better than any set of men I ever knew or ever heard of. One is, to give three Columbia cheers for our absent fellow alumnus, our well-beloved President Low. [The cheers were given.]

The other is, that I want you to give (Wait until I get through!)—the other is that I want you to give three more Columbia cheers for our new fellow-alumnus, Theodore Roosevelt, Doctor, Governor, Colonel, renowned historian, mighty hunter and prince of good fellows.

*Columbia
University
Quarterly*



37342

❖❖❖❖❖❖ PUBLISHED BY THE
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY PRESS
VOLUME I: 1898—1899 ❖❖❖❖❖