1915-06-23

Speech delivered by William Arnold Shanklin at the Anniversary Exercises on June 23, 1915

Shanklin, William Arnold

http://hdl.handle.net/10456/35694
Public Domain

All materials in the Allegheny College DSpace Repository are subject to college policies and Title 17 of the U.S. Code.
Mr. President:

I count it a privilege and an honor to bring you, Sir, and the Trustees and Faculty of Allegheny College, good will and good cheer in the name of the colleges of America. Though bound by no legal pact, they constitute a genuinely sympathetic fraternity, "confederate to one golden end". More and more closely knit together they are becoming in the bonds of confidence and trust, in the spirit of courage and devotion to the service of truth, our country, and our God. And from the heart we congratulate Allegheny College, not only upon the attainment of her hundredth birthday, but as well upon the deepening and broadening influences which are her destiny in her service to the nation and the world. For a college cannot have geographical or other similar relations. It cannot be confined to a country, generation, or time. It must be so conducted that, while best serving each generation in turn, it will ever adapt itself to the new and larger wants of the succeeding one. Allegheny College is no merely local school of learning, it is not mere gathering of teachers and students for the moment. It is one of the great everlasting forces for the upbuilding of civilization.
The American college is the best expression of our American civilization in education. With its origin and leadership, every educator is familiar. It was begotten of the Church, and its curricula were for years governed primarily by the need of the Church for an educated ministry. Historically, there is a profound interdependence between the College and the Church. Its vital relation, however, is larger than any formal control, and is in no wise dependent upon charter provisions. Institutions cannot be made Christian by legal enactment. A college is made Christian by its spirit, by the fact that the members of its faculty are great personalities, men of profound and accurate scholarship, lovers of learning and lovers of men, who long to share the truth with others, who, by their characters, transmit truth to those committed to their guidance. Widely as the college has diverged from its immediate purpose in its founding, that spirit of consecration and of sacrifice abides. It continues to translate that original religious impulse into terms of current thought and action, "making itself a centre of spiritual light, of generous activities, and, above all, of noble, intellectual, and religious charity".

The educational tradition of America, established in the founding of Harvard nearly three hundred years ago, and continued almost without change until about forty years ago, has been that of the independent college, the need for which in America is as imperative today as at any time in
the past. It has always stood for culture and character in
the nation, and the demand for culture and character was never
more imperative than at present.

I do not question the wisdom of the policy that has
developed from colleges nearly all of our present universities.
The change on their part was in response to demands which ex­
press an obligation. Even in the American university, however,
the heart of the institution is the college. It has latterly
been passing through a serious struggle with many antagonistic
elements, and must yet more fully adjust itself to both high
school and university. We believe, however, that its future as
the home of liberal study is assured, if only it continue to up­
hold such study with definiteness, wisely adapting the idea to
meet the real and essential needs of the hour. Standing for that
spirit of opportunity and liberal culture which alone can create
truly great men, it will sustain its legitimate place in the new
educational development, for, in the words of Doctor Pritchett,
"The most permanent factor in our educational system is the
American college". It is its external form rather than its
essential nature which is undergoing changes, for its problems
are among those great human questions, which, as has been finely
said, are to be answered not in the spirit of the age, but in
the spirit of the ages.

There is today a demand for more humanity, more imagina-
tion, more spirituality in the life and teaching of our institutions
of learning. Notwithstanding the fact that the form of the
discussion concerning educational problems is various, there is
manifestly a trend toward the old ideals of liberal culture---the
education of the man for the sake of manhood and character, and
not merely for the sake of what he may turn out in material
products. Knowledge alone is not the end of education, but rather
knowledge penetrated by insight and alive with motive. Liberal
training is, in its essence, ethical. Its object is that the soul
may get, in Plato's words, "soberness and righteousness and wisdom",
that a man shall come to "see life steadily, and see it whole".
The college exists to help the youth of America in their great task
of understanding our complex civilization, so that they may enter
into the work of their generation developed and trained and adjusted
to the moral relations of life. There must be, then, the process
which develops independence, thoughtfulness, creative energy, and
versatility, and sends forth the man with permanent idealism, great
not in isolation, not as he separates himself from other men, but
great as he is able to enter constructively into the lives of other
men, and great, primarily, because he is not afraid or unable to
put his conscience into all his mental operations. To this end, the
college must teach a man that he is a will—a will trained not
only to strength but also to morals—a will that takes spiritual
and moral truths, personal righteousness and social duties, and
incorporates them into life as realities. All education points to
morality; but the morality of which we speak is something more than
good habits and good principles. We mean a morality that takes
charge of the whole man and makes his will its servant, to do its
work.
One of the most pregnant utterances I have seen in years is that entitled "Whither?", in a recent issue of The Atlantic Monthly. Contrasting the day when youth were taught that we had immortal souls, to whose safeguarding, thought and care and endeavor must be given, with the present era of the physical and its needs, the writer states that the chief question was: "Is it right or wrong?" The chief question today is: "Is it sterilized?" The college "strong for service still and unimpaired" must continue to teach that there are some things that are right and some things that are wrong, and that it is safe and sane to tie up to these old-fashioned and fundamental distinctions.

The end of education is complete life. Or, in the words of Erasmus: "The higher end of humanism is attained when the sense of duty to self, to the community, and to God, is realized in the triple aspect of one and the same ideal". The function of the college is, by all the complex influence of college life, to turn out men; men of disciplined mind, balanced judgment, and high character. This it has to do by the whole influence of its life and curriculum. While the college places all just estimate upon Greek and Latin, and philosophy and pure mathematics, and science, and history, and politics, and literature, and the fine arts, her chief purpose is to send out men, grounded in truth and in the divine principles that should regulate human life and conduct. In harmony with the recognition of the moral power which is latent in an active intellectual discipline, the
college insists that education must be permeated with the sense of the social obligation. Service to the state, service to mankind—that is the true motive in intellectual and spiritual life. While in the days gone the great services were delegated, today it is not possible for one educated man to be free from the social obligation. It is the province of the collegian to "live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King". By the rule that Christ Himself laid down, "To whom much is given, of him much shall be required, it is more grievous for the college man to live ignobly, than it is for another: his is the higher light, his the nobler calling, his the more royal anointing.

In the curriculum today the older and the newer knowledges stand on a common footing of absolute equality. Each particular subject has its own place, significance, and value, in its relation to the totality of knowledge, of which it is a component member. The college is to cultivate the scientific habit of mind, the faculty of grasping the universal element of all human knowledge. The different departments of knowledge cannot be taught scientifically without showing their relations to each other as parts of one organized whole. To know one subject thoroughly, one must know many more. The most superficial knowledge of science in any of its provisions suggests to us by how many links one is connected with another. Indeed, "science is just the search for unity; the endeavor to reproduce in thought that systematic order and harmony and unity which exist in all things". It leads us to think of God as the God of truth, Whose dwelling place is wherever knowledge sheds its light over
the paths of men, Whom every true thought and every discovery are helping us to know more fully. For shaping life to just ends, for employment of all the faculties, trained and quickened, in the service of a great idealism, there is nothing comparable to the Christian faith.

Allegheny College is not a gourd of yesterday, but a vine of God's own planting. For a century she has been a centre of inspiration. The colleges of America unite in expressing the strongest and most cordial wishes that God may strengthen and uphold her and give her the prosperous continuation of a work, the influence of which only eternity shall measure. And we fervently pray that God may give you, President Crawford, many happy years of steadfast devotion to the noble task into which you have already poured your life for twenty-two years!