The Baccalaureate Sermon.

The Baccalaureate Sermon was delivered on May 27th, by Bishop Lawrence, at the Sunday afternoon service in Trinity Church. Through the courtesy of Dr. Donald and the pew holders, the church was given up entirely to the Seniors and their friends. More earnest and appropriate words than those in this sermon could hardly have been spoken.

Exodus xlv. 15. “And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou to me? Speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward.”

The words of the command are crisp and clear, and they find a response in the life and ambition of every young man to-day. Forward is the watchword of the century, of this country and of every young American. And as for you, my friends of the Class of ’94, although your memories are no doubt running backward over the past four years,—the friendships gained, the work accomplished, and the happy days spent as a student,—yet, if I mistake not, your thoughts are now most strongly set for the future; your ambitions are there, your life is there, your struggles and successes are there. Before the forward movement, however, it is well to stop for a few moments to gather to one’s self the experiences of the past and the anticipations of the future, in order that the future may be more successfully met.

In this hour we meet to confess the shortcomings and sins of the past, to ask God’s help for the future, and, as with the knight of old before starting on his holy quest, to pledge ourselves to truth, to honor, and to the great King himself.

There is one thing of which we may be sure, that however different the work and interests of the future may look to us as compared with our student life in the past, we are going to be much the same men. And the qualities which have made success in the past—intelligence, hard work, sympathy, and courage—are going to make success in the future.

What, then, I want to emphasize is this: that the life of education and the life of action are one; that they cannot be separated as if they had no relation to each other; and that the young man of education in entering upon his profession, carries with him the same high ideals, the same principles, and the same enthusiasm, simply readjusting them to the new surroundings and different occupations.

As one looks out upon life to-day, with its interests, activity, and magnificent achievements, he cannot but be impressed with one characteristic arising from the very intensity and activity of interest,—a tendency on the part of each man to confine himself and his sympathies to the profession, business, or calling, which he has chosen.

Division of labor has developed with wonderful rapidity. As a mechanical and financial economy (and this has been the first consideration), its results have been marvelous. But the question for the rising generation,—for you—is as to its effect on the individual character, and on the people as a whole.

The realm of study is so large, and the work demanded so thorough, that a man in order to be successful is pressed to turn his life and interest into one narrow life. Hence the feeling arises that in order to insure success in the next generation a man must narrow himself to one line of interest, and be content to be a narrow man.

Granted this, and you have submitted to the demoralization of the individual. You have demanded that all scientists shall follow the example of their master, Darwin,—so great and yet so limited,—and suffer an atrophy of poetry and religion. And you have shut the great and modern callings in science, which the Institute of Technology represents, into small and narrow pursuits.

Granted this apology for a narrow life, for a specialist who is a specialist and nothing more, and you have lost one of the noblest objects and ideals of mankind.

Pardon me if I say that this strikes me as the imminent danger of technical and mechanical schools. Intense application to the work of the school may narrow the sympathies and cramp the larger aspirations, and the young graduate, keen, brilliant, able in his own calling, but narrow, unsympathetic, without other interest, goes out to make his way in life. Such, I know, is not the ideal set before you in this Institute of Technology. The founders were men with breadth of vision; your officers are such; the Institute is well placed in the midst of a cultivated community. This very Copley Square, with its noble churches, suggestive of the spiritual life, its Art Museum, telling of beauty and truth, and its library, with its associations of history and literature, are daily reminders to you of greater thoughts. You have missed a large part of the benefit of your course if you have not at least felt the influence of a culture broader than your studies, and of a character nobler than your calling. A man’s science is no less science when he feels within and behind it the pulsations of art and poetry. The civil engineer is no less the civil engineer, and he is the larger and the happier man if, in the deep woods through which he is to lead the railroad, he feels the solemnity of the primeval forest, and rejoices in the beauties of nature around him. The architect is the nobler architect and the greater man if behind the mechanics and the art of his work he feels the thrill of the religion which has made the glorious fanes which are still the pride of architecture. In fact, if architecture is the expression of the architect’s ideals, we can have no noble creations unless we have noble men as architects. I have emphasized this, my friends, because I want to press home upon you the spirit in which the educated man takes up his life work; intensely interested in his own pursuit, and widely sympathetic with all that concerns men.

Whatever pursuit you enter, then, be larger than the pursuit. Keep your mind open to the thoughts that seek entrance from every source; be alive to the interests of others; put yourself into sympathy with men of other callings. Read and think of something beyond your own