

February 1947

A pessimist would probably remark that the caps and gowns of the Class of February, 1947, were only rather ~~gloomy~~^{impractical} raincoats put on in order to enter a stormy world. And even if he were to ~~and~~^{concur} grudgingly that you looked very nice in them, ~~he~~ would add in a moment that nothing of beauty is destined to remain a joy forever in a universe of atoms and all consuming bacteria. But Hunter is not going to be pessimistic. It is persuaded that you are a most fortunate class, leaving collegé as you do just as the nation is rubbing its eyes and stretching its limbs and coming out of the coma of war. The sprigs of peace laurel are not yet in full bloom and the frost may come. But they are budding and the aroma thereof is like that of the trees in the garden.

~~As one who twice in a lifetime has emerged from a time of battle, I want to reminisce a bit, having the excuse -- which is doubtless not valid -- that like Desdemona this to hear you will seriously incline. There is this difference between the disillusionment which followed the First World War and that we now experience. Then we felt that we were ^{as a people} oh, so good, and the rest of the world was, oh, so wicked. The trouble was only that goodness seemed to be associated with lack of intelligence, and we bitterly attacked what we felt was a lack of sense in high places. Today we are quite certain that we aren't good-- as a matter of fact, we are rather desperately aware of the opposite -- but we feel that we are intelligent. It is the rest of the world that isn't.~~

~~I hope you will take from your college experience just this conviction:
we shall begin to have true peace~~

As one who twice in a life time has emerged from a ^{era} ~~time~~ of battle, I should like to reminisce just a little, having the excuse -- which is doubtless not valid -- that like Desdemona this to hear you will seriously incline. When we came back from the first World War, the nation was in the grip of a disease hard to explain now which is historically referred to as "flaming youth." I shall never forget going into a ^{room} ~~class~~ full of Freshmen and having a young man get up and remark, "Professor, Mr. Shaw says those who cant do, teach." And now we have, I think, moved into a time when that ^{variety of peculiar imbecility} ~~is~~ inconceivable, but when we seem to be beset with fears that we have only a little ^{while} ~~time~~, only an imperilled little ^{while} ~~time~~, into which to crowd a life-time of experience. Whereas our forefathers planned their lives as a mile runner plans his pace, we seem to believe that there is going to be only a forty yard dash. We do not trust either history or Father Time.

It would no doubt be useless under the circumstances to quote Browning.

"Levae now for dogs and apes, man has forever," is a valiant line, but our world ^{we must fear} is afraid to take it seriously. I shall therefore hope that you will, at least, know by reason of yours ^{efforts} ~~years~~ here that it took some hundres of millions of years before earth produced, after infinitely varied trial and error, the queer ^{proper habitat for the} ~~being~~ ^{being} who is known as man; that [?] ~~he~~ is distinguished by the possession of that which no other creature has, namely a measure of consciously recognized freedom; and that therefore neither this effort of the earth's nor this freedom can be meaningless. There is the glory of sacrificial ages about us as we go through life; and it is perhaps the chief value of education that it gives us, for our comfort and healing, some insight into this radiance.

In short we were made not for concentration camps but for liberty. But what a challenge it reall is to husband liberty! You were free to come to Hunter

free to study or not, free to make a pattern for your lives or not. We of the Faculty will hope, as ^{you} ~~we~~ take leave of us, that you will never regret this choice but will think of college as a place neither pleasant nor gloomy, neither cold nor effusive, but as a home of the mind and heart where there was a fire lighted and bread on the board. You ~~and~~ we alike have been guests of the college. It will be sweet to remember that we were, all of us, among friends.

Good bye, God Bless you

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