CHARACTER, KINDNESS, AND INTELLIGENCE ARE INTERNATIONAL CURRENCY

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Last month in Germany I saw the ruins of war, the results of industry without morality, and the penalties of a losing aggressor. Certain definite impressions came from these observations. These were reduced to notes in Berlin and Frankfurt and over the Atlantic Ocean. And there seemed many thoughts that I could profitably pass on to you who now successfully complete one struggle only to emerge on the more realistic battlefields of your more mature years.

The bulletin board I saw at Westover Field in Massachusetts on May 2nd, 1950, listed flights to Frankfurt, Germany; London, England; the Azores; points in Africa, and two places close to the North Pole. The plane I took home from London two weeks ago had come from Hongkong through Calcutta and was carrying passengers from China, India, and other points. In all of the large air terminals, planes were coming and going from every part of the world. This further convinced me that we in America cannot live apart from the rest of the physical world. It might be pleasant and comfortable for us to exist here smugly in the United States. But on this earth, as it now exists, we cannot live alone, no matter how much we desire to do so. We cannot, as a nation, achieve isolation in the physical and political worlds. For you as individuals, there can be only one kind of isolation—the art of living within yourselves. For unless you learn to do that, there will be wars within you; struggles within your souls and minds, that will torture you more than all the barbs of war. Man must be spiritually, mentally, and socially equipped either to live alone with himself or peacefully with the outside world.

Eight hours' flying at high speed in a Constellation plane took us from Westover Field to the Azores. A flight of seven and a half hours more brought us to Frankfurt, Germany. Only perfection and good judgment took us safely across the Atlantic and brought us back to the United States. As we were flying East over the Atlantic, I figured that at least three million revolutions must be made by each motor to get us from Westover to Frankfurt. That meant perfect work by the mechanics who serviced the plane. Good judgment brought us back, for at Shannon on the return, our plane developed trouble, and the pilots wisely decided it was not fit to fly. Perhaps the greatest skill was required by the navigator. He had to chart our course through solid overcast for many hours and still hit the small island in the Azores for which we were headed. Had he made even the slightest error in judgment, we might have been many miles off our course when we should have been at the Azores. Then it occurred to me that great physical force, great power, great human potentialities, without moral and spiritual direction, can take us far from our own highly desired objectives. The earlier in life we deviate from our true aim, the farther we will be off the course we later want to follow. Finally, we reach the point where there is no way to regain the lost path. The greater the potential power, the quicker and further we can get off our course. You who are here today represent a group with power and ability far above the average. You have a tremendous responsibility to see that you follow a true course with good judgment. You are not only accountable for yourselves, but you are also responsible for others whom you influence by your positions of leadership.

In Frankfurt recently, I met Albrecht, a German boy whom I had seen last in Stuttgart in 1946. Now he is a mature young man, close to your own age. Assuming that he is twenty-one, his life and that of hundreds of thousands of other German youths have been somewhat as follows: If they started school at the age of five, in 1934, they were immediately indoctrinated with Nazi ideology. When they reached the age of ten, Germany had started the war in Czechoslovakia and Poland. Then for six years (1939-1945) they lived in a country which was waging ruthless, aggressive warfare. When they were sixteen the war suddenly ended, after six years of hysteria, bombing, and internal repression. For the next four years they were hungry. Hundreds of thousands wandered around the country like wild animals. Many had lost their parents, their relatives, and their friends. If they still had relatives, these latter had probably lost homes and property. And only for the last year or so have they had sufficient food and comparative freedom. Their entire lives have been spent under the influence of propaganda, war, and starvation. Under similar conditions, what would be your own outlook on life? Surely with all our material and spiritual advantages we can help provide some guidance for these disillusioned and unfortunate youths.

If you profess to be Christians, as most of you do; or just honest, decent people, as all of you are, can you say that you have no concern for the sufferings of the peoples of Europe or of Asia! Have you
no feeling for those 8,000 residents of Mannheim who still live under eight feet of concrete in air raid bunkers without daylight! What of the 3,000,000 people in besieged Berlin who live with the sword of Damocles constantly hanging over them by a thin thread! And China's tens of millions perenially suffering from starvation -- for whom we give hardly a thought. Have you no feeling for all these? Some one does. For wherever I went in Europe a good word was spoken for the Quakers, the Society of Friends. They were respected everywhere for their sincerity and their unselfishness. Few of us have the moral courage to follow them. But if we have no concern for those who want food, who want a home, who just want a friend, then surely we are only nominal Christians. And you ask what you can do? You can be informed. That is first. You can be sympathetic. That's next. You can find out what is needed most that you can give. Then according to your own conscience, you can give yourself or your money.

During the past year here in the United States it has been my privilege to meet many of the German groups who have come to America on our government's exchange program. We also have met public officials from many other countries as they came into Chicago. Some are too prone to look down on these people, because they do not speak English. They are inclined to think that foreign people are inferior for the simple reason that they have a different language. But any person regardless of language who has a good mind, thinks straight, and senses your reaction to him, even though he does not speak your language. Any slight you give him he recognizes, because your reactions are not expressed by language, but by thoughts and acts. Certainly America is a great country, but we do not have all the greatness in the world. In Heidelberg I remember seeing the statue of Bunsen; in Bonn was the home of Beethoven; in Warsaw in 1936, I saw the memorial to Chopin. Our work on the atom bomb was done largely by scientists driven from other lands. So let us not look down on those who speak a different language.

Bear in mind always that character and greatness are not worn on the exterior, like a flaming cloak. They may be concealed by a drab appearance. You can feel when you are with a great man or a good man even though he does not speak your language. This was true when I met Dr. Ernest Reuter, the mayor of Berlin. I knew that regardless of the barrier of language, I had met a man of great character, strength, and resignation. The same was true of Max Brauer, the mayor of Hamburg. He fled from Germany in the 1930's and later became an American citizen. After the war, he gave up his prized American citizenship in order to go back home and try to rebuild one of Germany's most ruined cities. Reuter, Brauer, and others are literally offering their lives for the sake of their people. How many of us are prepared to do as much?

Remember that a scholar is always a scholar, no matter what his language or his economic status. A gentleman is a gentleman no matter where he is and regardless of the language he speaks. Professional people in one country feel no barriers between themselves and people of similar interests in other countries. Free men from every country can now work together harmoniously on professional and technical matters. The day will come when the common people of the world can peacefully settle political matters as well.

The large cities of Germany are still in ruins. Mannheim, a city of 280,000 people, was eighty per cent destroyed and is still rather desolate. Darmstadt, a smaller city, appears to be even more damaged. In Frankfurt, I walked daily from my hotel about one mile to the I. G. Farben Building where our offices are located. Probably half of the buildings enroute are in ruins. The first few days I noticed these piles of rubble, covered by grass, weeds, and young shrubs. However, I soon became accustomed to this as people frequently do in overlooking the unpleasant things around them. Frankfurt is gradually being rebuilt. But to rebuild, it will be necessary to clear away all of the rubble and the shrubs and grass that partially cover it. How similar this is to our own experiences! We get accustomed to the bad things around us and take them for granted, so that nothing is done about them. But also, like the people who wish to rebuild the German cities, we must clear away our mental and spiritual rubble if we want anything beautiful and worthwhile to appear in our lives.

The German stores display excellent products. The people are industrious. Through ECA and through currency reform, recovery has been started and people are working. But as soon as European goods start coming to America from abroad, our people in this country will scream about the competition from foreign goods. On the one hand, we are spending billions of dollars to bring about European recovery, and then we refuse to buy the goods which will help to make European economic
recovery permanent. Americans should have learned by 1945 that they cannot continue to sell to the
world unless they buy from the rest of the world. Our foreign trade can be compared to a game of
marbles, in which the marbles are gold. Because of the fact that we sold abroad more than we
bought abroad, we gradually acquired most of the world's gold and put it in Fort Knox. We were in
the position of a little boy who had won all the marbles and had no one to play with any more, unless
he gave the marbles back or waited for the other boys to acquire more marbles. It is just that simple.
The failure of Americans to recognize some basic principles makes the United States a nation of eco-
nomic illiterates. One of your tasks as new citizens of the working world is to try to dissipate this
adolescent economic thinking.

The people in Germany, caught between East and West, wonder about their future. Everywhere,
not only in Germany, but in other countries as well, people have a universal desire for peace, for as-
surance that they can lead normal lives, that their homes will not be destroyed, nor their loved ones
killed. In the hearts of men everywhere today, the most universal desire is not for money, but for
peace and security. You and your generation will see either this peace or the destruction of the
world. I saw the European cities which were almost completely destroyed, such as Dusseldorf, Darm-
stadt, Frankfurt, Cologne, and others. And yet the explosive bomb that did this damage was just a
plaything -- a toy for children -- compared with the destructive instruments we now possess. We
live in a world which actually knows how to destroy itself, and which can be saved only by application
of moral principles and universal self restraint. Yet the physical sciences receive first attention,
and moral concerns lost place in our thinking and our teaching. In a college such as this, you should
be able to learn not only the arts and sciences, but also the genius of living, the concept of the dignity
of all men, and the moral background which alone can save the world.

When I had been in Germany a few days and had seen the various influences at work, politically
and otherwise, I began to wonder just what kind of a victory we had won. Without a doubt we won a
thorough military victory. To achieve this, millions of lives were lost and billions of dollars were
spent. Untold suffering was inflicted, not only on the military, but also on the civilians, in all par-
cipating countries. Now we have to ask honestly the question, "Just what did we win?" We appear
to have won the war, but nothing else. Perhaps we won only the right to fight a new war of annihila-
tion. As soon as May 8th, 1945 arrived, Americans relaxed; our European army disintegrated.
Plans for a lasting peace and for the treatment of the conquered were uncertain. And while we may
not have lost the peace, we are not profiting from it, nor is the world progressing as a result of our
military victory. We let down too soon, we did not know how we wanted to follow through. You as
graduates from this college may think that you have now won a victory; that your battle is finished;
that you can rest on your laurels. You have merely won the right to go further. You have won the
right to face the greater trials that are ahead. You cannot let down now. You cannot drift. You will
find that the actual work of living, the competition in the struggle for existence, will require far
greater planning and far greater courage than the victory you have won by graduating today.

At Oberammergau three weeks ago, I saw the first regular performance of the Passion Play. All
who saw this great play will be forever influenced by its sights and sounds. The cry of Mary, the
Mother of Jesus, although uttered in German, was the universal cry of all mothers for their distressed
sons. Yes, Mary spoke in German. But you did not need to know the language to realize that her
anguish was real and that her cry was the cry of all mothers everywhere. The kindness and compas-
sion of John and Mary Magdalene at the time of Jesus' crucifixion as portrayed in this drama, were
symbolic of the value of kindness and compassion of all good people everywhere.

Your education to date has helped you to develop your own latent powers. Whether your increased
abilities will add to the goodness or the badness in the world will be determined by moral and not by
intellectual standards. It is to be hoped, then, that you have moral principles to balance your physi-
cal and mental accomplishments. That would be ideal for the graduates of a Christian college such
as this. Your education has been successful if you have learned to be at peace with yourself and at
the same time to sympathize with the less fortunate. You must be aware of the forces that rule the
world and the impossibility of physical, economic, and political isolation. If the shocks of life have
left some debris in your lives, clear it away at once. Your graduation here today merely wins for
you the right to compete in life at a higher level and for higher stakes than you would otherwise.
What you need for further progress is a vision to guide and inspire you.
Such a vision built the most beautiful physical structure I have ever seen. The sheer excitement of its beauty caused my heart to pound when I first saw it in 1946. It is a church in southern Bavaria called "de Wies," the meadow. More than two hundred years ago a little Bavarian girl of twelve worshipping at a chapel had a vision of Christ shedding tears for the sins of the world. Her story so inspired the people of the surrounding areas that they built this church in honor of her. You, too, should have a vision of the needs of this chaotic world, a vision so clear and so inspiring that you can influence others to build a better world, a happier world, and a more peaceful world.