

ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATING CLASS
of
PLANO HIGH SCHOOL, PLANO, ILLINOIS, 1940.

I am very happy to have become a part, even though a small part, of the community of Plano and I wish I were younger so that I could look forward to many years of enjoyment of this beautiful country. However I will do my best to be, for as long a time as possible, a useful member of the community.

It is giving me much satisfaction to be able to establish in your School the Morris and Dora DeLee Award of Honor.

Morris and Dora DeLee were my father and mother. They were the first members of our People to settle in the small town of Cold Spring on the Hudson River just opposite West Point, New York,- where our Army Generals are trained for war.

This was about 90 years ago. They grew up with the village. They partook of its joys and its sorrows. No one ever thought they were different from their neighbors except that they worshipped God in a different way, and said their prayers in a language that was neither English nor Latin. When the children grew up they said their prayers in English, and no one thought there was anything wrong with that either.

Everybody knew Morris and Mrs. Morris as they were affectionately called, and they knew everybody else with the same respect and affection. Everybody called each other by their first names. When epidemics of diphtheria broke out they nursed each other's children; when the Civil War raged they all shared its privations and miseries.

It made no difference whether one was a Republican, a Democrat or a Mugwump - they all were working together for the good of each other and for the good of the community and for the good of their country, and for the good of civilization. No one asked are you a Jew, are you a Christian, or are you anything else,- all they wanted to see in a man - or woman - was Americanism.

Many educators, many religious leaders, many statesmen, indeed all public spirited men, over the whole world, have watched with concern the growth of poisonous influences among the peoples of Central Europe, and we are learning with dismay that these doctrines of hate, war, and paganism are taking root and spreading in our beloved land.

We must now face the fact that vast forces are at work aiming to wreck our civilization.

We humans have had a hard job to rise out of savagery and bestiality to the level of what we are pleased to call civilization today. At best we could not be very proud of what we have attained, but we were trying and we were improving and we did have a lighted goal ahead of us, and we were gaining some little assurance that we would reach this goal.

But what has happened?

Professor Carlton J. H. Hayes, Professor of History, Columbia University, tells us so well that I will quote his words:

"The dictatorial totalitarianism of today is a reaction against the whole historic civilization of the West. It is a revolt against the moderation

and proportion of classical Greece, against the order and legality of ancient Rome, against the righteousness and justice of the Jewish prophets, against the charity and mercy and peace of Christ, against the whole vast cultural heritage of the Christian Church in middle ages and modern times, against the enlightenment, the reason, and the humanitarianism of the eighteenth century, against the liberal democracy of the nineteenth. It repudiates all these major constituents of our historic civilization and wars to the death on any group that retains affectionate memory of them."

What were those forces which enabled the human animal to tread the painful way upward from savagery to the level of civilization we now hold so precariously?

Can anyone doubt that the Bible took the leading part? And that, in that noblest of books, the Laws of Moses take first place? The light these tablets, God given on Mt. Sinai, brought to the human race has not been equalled since.

Then another light bearer, Jesus Christ, appeared. He said "I come to fulfill the Law."

Both Moses and Christ were teachers and if you will consider a moment you will realize that all progress comes through teaching - through education. It is education that brought us up from paganism and only education can prevent us from being dragged back to that barbaric state.

Americanism is the true flower of human moral education, it is the light of civilization, and in this medal of honor I have tried to symbolize its origins in the Judaic and Christian religions.

The Tablets of Stone appear on the heavenly clouds bearing the Ten Commandments. How happy this world would be if they were honored by all men!

Under the Tablets of the Law appears the Menorah, the holy seven branched candelabrum. It was placed in the Tabernacle in Moses' time and symbolizes the six days of the Creation and the seventh day, the Sabbath; also the seven continents of the earth and the seven heavens, all lighted by the Law of God.

Alongside is the Star of Bethlehem set in the Cross shining on the Christ child, to indicate that with His coming more light was brought to humanity to aid their toilsome march to civilization.

It is easy to define civilization. What else is it but justice and charity?

Therefore I have put in the Latin motto which is the essence of all these symbols - Ex luce caritas et justitia - From light come charity and justice.

On the reverse of the medal is our revered and beloved flag, which stands for Americanism. And what is Americanism? It is a way of life component of

1. Freedom of the mind, which is liberty of conscience.
2. Freedom of the spirit, which is liberty of religion.
3. Freedom of the body, which is liberty of person.
4. Freedom of speech, which is liberty of redress.
5. Freedom to pursue happiness, which is liberty of effort.
6. Freedom to practice righteousness and to do charity.

This seems queer, does it not? No, it is real.

In Germany there are (or were) millions and millions of good-hearted, justice-loving people. Their right to possess and express their feelings of righteousness and charity has been ruthlessly taken away and they have been converted into a barbarism that has driven them back to Neanderthal. The lights that we have symbolized in this medal have been taken away from them.

But think what a great boon we enjoy! We are Americans! We are free!

Below, on the medal, is the book of learning and on it the torch of progress. Learn your world and carry the lighted torch of progress ever forward for more light. Light! likened to Truth. Know the truth and the truth will set you free.

I am hoping that this medal will be a sort of shrine in your home, a constant inspiration to you for seeking the light of truth, of obedience to the universal God given laws, of the spirit of Jesus Christ, of charity and justice to all,- which is true Americanism.

To worship at this shrine you do not have to be religious. You may be a Christian, or a Jew, or a Mohammedan, or a Buddhist, or an atheist, or what not. The principles of justice and charity are the eternal ethical heritages of man. The religions have brought them to light and light to them.