THE STUDENT AND HIS COLLEGE OF ANOTHER DAY

J. L. Morrill

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INTRODUCTION TO KIT KAT SPEECH

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Webster defines a "GOLDEN OLDIE" among other things as (1) radiantly youthful and vigorous, (2) high degree of excellence, (3) advanced in years or age, and (4) not new--not recently made.

Under these definitions, it must be obvious to you now that you are looking at a "GOLDEN OLDIE". In addition, the title of my talk tonight is "The Student and His College of Another Day" and, perhaps, we could discuss its relationship to a "GOLDEN OLDIE" after you've heard it.

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THE STUDENT AND HIS COLLEGE OF ANOTHER DAY

"Too many people going to college," Dr. William Oxley Thompson once said. "It's always someone else's children, never their own, that they mean when they say that," the Doctor remarked. Each of us here tonight who has children is determined or has already endeavored to assure for his boy or girl the advantage of college training. There has never been the slightest question in our minds about it. We have made that decision without any deliberation whatsoever, quite regardless of whether we ourselves were college graduates. Millions of American families have made the same resolve and more millions will make it in the future.

Are we to sneer this common, distinctly democratic and uniquely American purpose out of court with the superficial cynicism that youngsters are going to college these days "just because it's the fashion, the thing to do?" Where else is the strength of social control except in the common sanction that some things are "the thing to do?" To uphold religion and the church, to live peacefully in the community, to observe respectably the bonds of

matrimony--these, for example, are patently the thing to do and the extent to which we do them is one measure of our civilization.

So it is that the American college student of today is a permanent part of the picture of our society. Like the machine, he is at once a factor and a phenomenon in our scheme. Like the machine, he is to be used and improved and made to serve the purposes of a better society. As with the machine also, the student himself is not the problem; the problem is that of our own intelligence in doing and dealing with him wisely.

How, and how well, have we met it--and how shall we meet it for the future?

Higher learning in America today is the historical product of three great streams of influence upon our institutions--each a priceless heritage, each not quite consistent with the others and each certainly not yet assimilated with the others. It is important to understand these influences which have mixed, but not quite mingled, to shape the modern college and university. Until we can bring ourselves into some philosophical recon-

ciliation and harmony of purpose about them we can have no real peace with our academic consciences and we shall only continue to subject our students to an indigestible fare.

Let me list them in our consideration of the student and his college of another day: the day of the past, the present and the future.

The first influence is that of the old colonial, the typical New England college, with its deep and personal concern for the individual student. The next is that of the pre-War German university, with its impersonal zeal for scholarship per se, its cold insistence on the subject matter of philosophy and science as the disembodied instruments of social progress. And the third great stream of influence has been that of the land-grant college with its homely emphasis upon service--mainly through vocation--to the state and nation. Only this third is strictly native and distinctly American; both the others were wholly foreign in their origin and nature, although both have been partly assimilated into the American educational ideal and both have made incalculable, if contradictory contributions to that ideal.

Strongest and most persistent of all these influences even to the present day in the thinking of many college presidents and professors is that of the traditional New England college--particularly the college of the 1800's. For here, in essence, is an intellectual tradition that goes back through the centuries to Abelard and his golden glory; to Salerno and Bologna, and later to Oxford and Cambridge; to the Petit Pons--the Petit Pons, that little scholarly bridge which led to the later true University of Paris and which, wrote Guy De Bazoches in the 12th Century, "belongs to the dialecticians, who walk there deep in argument"--a dusty and delightful phrase. In that era flourished the student guilds, drilled in doctrinal theology and the discipline of the trivium and quadrivium; grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music; the liberal arts of the Middle Ages. One sometimes forgets, in his present dismay at the large numbers crowding the college campuses, that in the middle of the 14th Century there were more than 13,000 students at Bologna, and shortly afterwards at Paris more than 30,000.

Mingled with the lingering aura of medievalism, in this tradition of the New England college, there is the beauty that charmed scholars in the 14th Century Revival of Learning--with its enraptured emphasis upon an appreciation of the languages, the philosophy and the achievements of antiquity as the key to freedom of the spirit and the way to "the good life." To be sure, this humanism of the Renaissance was very different from the medieval goal of otherworldliness wherein, as Huxley said, "culture meant saintliness" . . .and "the education which led to it was of necessity theological." "But after a time," as Professor Boyd H. Bode has said, "a reconciliation was somehow achieved, and so the way was prepared for the conception of the Christian Gentleman, which became especially popular with denominational colleges and set a new pattern for education."

This religio-humanistic ideal of the "Christian gentleman" had been clearly developed within the older English universities before the beginning of the 17th Century. And this ideal, together with the kind of college which nurtured it, was transplanted bodily to the rude and inauspicious environment of the New Continent in the establishment of the first of the

colonial colleges--Harvard, in 1636.

Historians have commented upon the fact that between 1630 and 1649 no less than 100 university men emigrated to New England from the mother country. Seventy of these were from Old Cambridge--among them, John Harvard, that "godly gentleman and a lover of learning" whose heart "it pleased God to stir up to give the one-half of his estate (it being in all about 1700 pound sterling) towards the erecting of a college, and all his library."

Speaking to the Rotary Club of Chicago, a former president of Amherst College said, "Education is more than training, more than instruction, more than the attainment of a fixed number of credits, and the passing of certain examinations. We conceive of education in a college as including the whole of a young man's life during his four years of residence. Character, manners, relations with his fellows, the power and technique of group action are as essential as the hours in the classroom. And these aspects are individual; they do not lend themselves readily to the technics of mass production. They are a by-product of intimate association with and personal stimulus from the maturer minds and cultivated personalities of the faculty."

Note, then, that the New England college has shown all along a marked personal concern for the individual student. This is important for it exhibits sharp contrast to the German university and the land-grant college conceptions of higher education which later entered in to influence the course of American college and university development. Both the latter have placed their emphasis upon subject matter rather than students as the instruments of social progress.

This concern for the individual students was more harsh than humane in the very early years of these colleges. Calvinistic principles controlled the consciences of college presidents and preceptors.

"The Puritan master, like the Puritan father, believed that he whipped Satan when he whipped a refractory boy, and he was only too piously glad to smite the arch-enemy who lurked beneath the skin of an undergraduate," said William R. Thayer in his book on "The History and Customs of Harvard University." Thayer cites Judge Sewall's "Diary" for a description of one of these floggings at Harvard in 1674. "The culprit," he tells, "who had been guilty of 'speaking blasphemous words' was sentenced to be 'publicly whipped

before all the scholars,' to be 'suspended from taking his Bachelor's degree,' and to 'sit alone by himself uncovered at meals during the pleasure of the President and Fellows." The sentence was twice read before the officers, students, and some of the Overseers, in the Library; the offender knelt down; the President prayed; then came the flogging; after which the President closed the ceremonies with another prayer."

Time and change tended to soften the severity of these early attitudes toward students. Very like our own experience after the First World War was that of the New England colleges after the Revolution. When the battle for Independence had been won, there flocked back to the colleges large numbers of students much older than average college age--young men somewhat hardened and disillusioned by their war experience, less amenable to discipline. The infallibility of theological doctrine among these boys was seriously sapped. Student rebellions were frequent, and successful. New viewpoints and new knowledge disrupted the rigidity of the narrow old time curricula. Chemistry led the van of the sciences to batter at the barriers

of theological and strictly classical teaching. Princeton in 1795, Columbia in 1802, and Yale in 1803 appointed their first professors of Chemistry. So, too, the biological and social sciences began to crowd their way in.

We come now to the second great stream of influence to shape the course of higher education in America today--that of the German universities.

In America, two dates might be given for the inception of that influence. One might be 1819, when Edward Everett, who was graduated from Harvard with the class of 1811, took his Doctor of Philosophy degree at the University of Gottingen, the first American to be awarded that degree. The other date might be 1876, when the Johns Hopkins University was opened at Baltimore, to give only the Ph.D. degree at first.

In Germany itself, two dates likewise might be listed to denote the origins of that powerful new spirit in higher education which was to sweep the world of Western civilization. One would be 1694, when the University of Halle broke with medievalism to make German, instead of Latin, its medium of scholarly communication; substituted the study of Descartes and Bacon

for Aristotle; embarked upon actual medical experimentation to replace the time-honored dicta of Hippocrates and Galen; and launched the first empirical consideration of mathematics and physics in the mood of modernity. Until this time the universities of Prague: Vienna, Heidelberg, and Erfurt (all founded in the 1300's), patterned on the models of Paris and Bologna, had contented themselves with ecclesiastical philosophy, canon law and what Professor Martin Doerne of Luckendorf, Saxony, describes as "a desultory inheritance of antiquity in the scheme of the 'septem artes liberales' "--the trivium and quadrivium of earlier reference.

The more significant date, however, would be 1809, when in that great internal rebirth of the Prussian state, arising out of Napoleonic aggression, the University of Berlin was founded. Then followed Breslau in 1811 and Bonn in 1818. In these universities was born that almost antithetical ideal of the university established, administered and subsidized by the state but with a political liberalism that gave full guaranty of internal freedom to teach and to learn--the predecessor of "academic freedom" of present day controversies. High attainment in some branch of knowledge

and the ability to advance that knowledge became the indispensable criteria. Neibuhr's "Roman History" was one of the first fruits of the University of Berlin under this new dispensation. Here Hegel, Schopenhauer and Lotze made over philosophy. Here Fechner and Wundt began the study of experimental psychology which led later to the establishment of the first psychological laboratory in the world at Leipsic. At Berlin, Müller introduced the microscope into the study of pathological anatomy, with enormous promise for the future. Here, too, Liebig (who founded at Giessen in 1824 the first real chemical laboratory) created a new Chemistry; and Helmholtz, a new Physics.

In all this conception, I beg you to note, the stress is upon subject matter, never the student, as the instrument of social progress. In Germany, the university considered its duties fulfilled when it provided lectures and laboratories and conferred degrees after specific examination. The viewpoint was one that assumed the maturity of the student, with little or no concern for his morals or manners.

Hundreds upon hundreds of leading American students and scholars flocked to Germany and brought back with them the ideal of research and experimentation, together with the techniques of the lecture method in which large numbers of students could be accommodated, the seminar, and the laboratory bristling with equipment. More especially they brought back the idea of scholarship as specialization; the breakdown of knowledge and study into highly discrete and specific subject matter which, as such, of course, has nothing to do with the classical function of knowledge as the way toward "the good life" or with the function of education as "the creative organization of experience," in the more modern definition of Professor John Dewey.

What these students brought back from Germany they quickly and fruitfully transplanted into the barren seed-bed of American education--especially in the state universities then just in the making. Even the older, New England-nurtured college presidents were fully sensitive to the lack of something vital in their scheme.

No such aim to produce an elite, either intellectual or social, was

in the plan or intent of those who founded the land-grant colleges of this country. They sought the democratization of education, and this goal they have achieved.

There are those, among them Dr. E. A. Bryan, former President of the State College of Washington, who date the real birth of the state university ideal, as we know it today, back to Thomas Jefferson. The Magna Carta of the whole movement, Bryan believes, was the charter of the University of Virginia, drawn by Jefferson, then a man of seventy-five, in 1818. Here, in Bryan's words, "was an attempt to give voice to the needs and aspirations of a people engaged in a great experiment in industrial democracy," and Jefferson's voice, he says, "was the voice of a seer." Jefferson expressed his aims in these words:

> "To form the statesman, legislator, and judges on whom public prosperity and individual happiness are so much to depend;
>
> "To expound the principles and structure of government, the laws which regulate the intercourse of nations, those formed municipally for our own government and a sound spirit of legislation, which, banishing all unnecessary restraint on individual action, shall leave us free to do whatever does not violate the equal rights of another;

"To harmonize and promote the interests of agriculture, manufactures and commerce, and by well-informed views of political economy to give a free scope to the public industry;

"To develop the reasoning faculties of our youth, enlarge the minds, cultivate their morals, and instill into them the precepts of virtue and order;

"To enlighten them with mathematical and physical sciences, which advance the arts and administer to the health, the subsistence, and comforts of human life;

"And, generally, to form them to habits of reflection and correct action, rendering them examples of virtue to others, and of happiness within themselves."

Certainly no college in the America of 1818 was then rendering or had any practical thought of rendering the educational service which Jefferson envisaged. But Jefferson was, you remember, a curious mixture of intellectual aristocrat with political democrat; the product of both French and British intellectual influences. The general tenor of his language is in tune with that of many of the colonial college charters in the matter of glittering generalities, very like old Samuel Johnson's plea for the training of youth "in all virtuous habits, and all such useful knowledge as may render them creditable to their Families and Friends, Ornaments to their Country, and useful to the Public Weal in their Generations."

It is probably fairer and truer to accept, as the reach charter of the modern state university, the simple and straightforward language written by Senator Justin Smith Morrill in the Land Grant Act of 1862, signed by Abraham Lincoln, which provided:

"That the proceeds of the land-grant sales were to be devoted to the endowment, support and maintenance of at least one college (in each state) where the leading object shall be, without excluding other scientific and classical studies and including military tactics, to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanic arts in such a manner as the legislatures of the states may respectively prescribe in order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions of life."

"Dr. Thompson reminded us "that the land-grant colleges did not have the ordinary background such as was common among the colleges of the older type. They were not the setting up on a new soil of the same old type of house in which the fathers had lived for generations. This move-

ment was not an effort to transplant from across the waters the type of institution that had greatly benefitted other people."

"Nor was this type of institution born of the existing colleges," he likewise reminded us. "The Land-Grant Act laid the foundation for a reform movement. Again we are reminded that no important educational reform was ever conceived and brought to maturity in a college. Colleges are engaged in other affairs. . .Most of them have always been interested in the status quo, or the status quo ante, that beautifully indefinite thing which no one understands. Rarely have they been interested in the status futurus."

It is very interesting to look at colleges and universities at once. "The essential difference between a university and a college is in the way they look," Slosson says. "A university looks forward and the college looks backward. The aim of the one is discovery; the aim of the other is conservation. One gropes for the unknown; the other holds on to the known."

Applied science was at the very core of the land-grant college conception.

It demanded laboratories at the outset. The technologies of agriculture and mechanic arts could not be studied from books.

The rise of the land-grant college was the rise of the laboratory method in American education. Here, of course, the German points of view and techniques of experimentation and research took hold most vigorously. President Thompson showed that the land-grant college, working hand in hand with the agricultural experiment station which came along in 1887, gave graduate work in American institutions powerful impetus.

"Education and agriculture had walked far apart since the days when the earth was young," says Edwin Slosson, author of "Great American Universities." "Pagan, peasant, yokel, bumpkin, rustic--all the old names for countryman imply illiteracy and lack of culture. It was the object of the Morrill Act to change all this."

That it could be changed was made possible by that phrase in the Act which enjoined the teaching of agriculture and the mechanic arts "without excluding other scientific and classical studies." Under one aegis these

arts and studies were to be advanced, and there was the discovery for the first time that the word "culture" is a part of the word "agriculture." The land-grant college was envisioned as the servant of the state, to be an agency of public progress.

Chancellor Samuel P. Capen of the University of Buffalo, discussing "The Relation of the State College to the New Movements in Education, in 1929", said that he "grew up in the days of academic snobbery," when it was "just barely respectable to be an engineer." And then, referring to the "rise of technical education in importance and dignity," he continued:

"The tables have been neatly and completely turned. Look now at the great university organizations of the country and what do you see? Engineering, Agriculture, Forestry, Commerce, Home Economics, Education, the great Health services--these hold the front of the stage. They attract the bulk of the students. They absorb the major part of the appropriations. They carry the institution's reputation. Indeed, the distinctive contributions of America, to higher education, the contributions that are

recognized throughout the world, have been made in this once despised field of technical education."

The best and the worst of the American land-grant college movement stands revealed today in an institution at our doors, and the faith of a great commonwealth in what it has wrought is being tested anew at this moment in the ordeal of this recession.

"We are told on every hand that the American college is facing a crisis," Dean Gauss of Princeton remarked in his book on "Life in College", adding the amiable and evidently untroubled observation that "this is probably true, but it is also true that it has always been doing so."

Crisis or no, we do face a task and a problem in higher education too significant for dismissal in an easy epigram, it seems to me.

What are some of the aspects of that problem?

1. The first is the fact of numbers. Not fewer, but more students will throng the thresholds of our institutions. Make no mistake about that. Mass education at the higher levels is here to stay. Germany has

discovered this since the fall of the Empire. It is an inevitable phenomenon of modern social change. England is finding it out, and France will, in our lifetime. Russia welcomes it with open arms. Two things alone in America would insure it. One is the improving efficiency of the secondary schools and their enlightened social outlook which makes mossbacks out of most of us in the schools above them. Another is the activity of a majority of the private colleges in this country. In the sudden overcrowding of their campuses after World War I, these colleges talked much of stricter standards and restrictions of enrollment through more rigid selection of their students, but they embarked upon a campaign of almost terrified proselyting for more students--under the whip of depreciated endowments, declining enrollments, and the cramping of economies forced by lack of fees. These same colleges were making just such a campaign 25 or 30 years ago. Their spokesmen appeared in every high school. That campaign bore fruits, and this one will too--extending far beyond what recruits they may muster at the moment.

Americans are peculiarly susceptible to advertising, and education is

an excellent commodity. Moreover, even if the present institutions, in an entirely commendable effort to raise standards and improve the character of their work, do resort to stiffer selection of entering students, new institutions (both public and private) will spring up to meet the demand. Can we not see that just exactly that thing has happened? Let us remember that the demand for mass production is a challenge, not necessarily a calamity. American genius has met it admirably in other areas--why not in education, once we really face it in that spirit.

2. The second aspect of our task, it seems to me, is to achieve some charity in our philosophy of higher education. There is little amity or agreement in this area among the professors in any one college or university in the country today, unless it be in the Catholic institutions. The typical New England college, pictured in this paper, is really an abstraction. It was imported, tried and found wanting, insofar as its capacity to meet the needs of a great industrial democracy is concerned, and the colleges have yielded ground, sensibly, to keep abreast of the times. The old idea is academically still the most respectable, but hopelessly retrospective,

still clinging to the backward look. There is no such university in America today as Johns Hopkins, sired by the German ideal, started out to be. And the modern state university, born of the land-grant college, is a hodge-podge of all three with a tension of conflict in every meeting of the faculty.

Yet we have seen how valuable for us are certain contributions that each has made. Remember the New England college, with its human concern for the student as an individual, with its insistence upon a friendly fellowship as a vital part of the process of learning, and the urbanity of its religious and humanistic objectives. Remember the influence of the German universities, with their zeal for unfettered and undiscovered truth, their discipline of thorough and uncompromising scholarship. And remember the land-grant college, as native to this land as the nobility of the Ordinance of 1787, arising to meet the needs of a nation that has glorified work rather than aristocratic leisure as the means of social progress--the very instrument to build an enlightened democracy and to insure its perpetuation.

These are the heritage of our educational history. How can they be preserved and reconciled?

In two ways, I venture with humility to suggest.

The first is this: Would we not come closer to some solution, take at least one step toward meeting our task, if we were to recognize frankly and generously that America need adopt no one pattern of institution? Why this constant quarrel and crusade for conformity? Is there no peace for professors except in the acceptance of some unattainable absolute?

Harvard and Yale with their Harkness millions, built on this continent their conception of a new Oxford and Cambridge, with their clusters of small college units, each self-contained for the fellowship and comradeship of small groups of students and fine teachers. Let us be happy about this and bid them God-speed in their design, recognizing without envious self-comparison that there are not yet enough millions in America to do this for all our students, and that the experiement has yet to prove its value.

President Arthur E. Morgan of Antioch College made his own distinctive

contribution to the problem, and the breadth and generosity of his understanding seemed to me unique.

"European education continues the old tradition of preparing small groups of educated intellectuals to lead a relatively inert mass," he said. "America has larger hopes. It is endeavoring somewhat blindly to explore the whole range of human capacities, to discover what can be added to the life of every person to give it the greatest range, satisfaction and value.

"The proportion of young people attending secondary and higher educational institutions is five to ten times as great in America as in England, France or Germany. Temporarily, our methods seem to serve mediocrity rather than the best intellectual ability, but the American ideal finally will achieve greater dignity and range."

My second and final thought grows out of the first, and it is this:

Although it is no longer possible to mould, in this "great variety of educational institutions" which are required, a common end-product modeled

on the colonial college prototype of "The Christian gentleman," may we not still hold to that earlier concern for the student as an individual? What institution today is really organized to meet the enormous problem of individual differences among its students? It, too, is a problem that grows out of the great number and variety of students who come to our campuses.

"To ignorant or thoughtless people," Charles W. Eliot said in 1888, "it seems that the wisdom and experience of the world ought to have produced by this time a uniform course of instruction, good for all boys, and made up of studies permanently pre-eminent; but there are two strong reasons for believing that this convenient result is unattainable; in the first place the uniform boy is lacking." And later in a letter to Albert Stickney he said: "I find that the best college course for each youth has to be expressly contrived for him with careful consideration of his school studies, his purposes in life, his inheritances, and his tastes. In my opinion to direct a hundred boys upon the same course of study for four years in college is a careless, lazy, unintelligent, unconscientious method of deal-

ing with them, and I will never again be responsible for the selection of a course of study intended for any such use."

Logically, the whole movement of "organized guidance", or personnel work, in higher education has developed--with the science of Psychology at its base and with a common sense understanding of human nature. The best of our teachers have always had this point of view, but the best are always too few. Institutional adjustment to individuality is the fourth great stream of influence needed to remake the college world entire.

Higher education in America is yet young, with its beginning but three short centuries away. The physical frontiers of the nation have at length been won, but the frontiers of the mind, as in all ages, are still beckoning. And the colleges and universities, as always, will be their outposts.

"Then ho, America," as Walt Whitman, that prophet of frontiers might say, "ho, for the student and his college of another day!"

THE STUDENT AND HIS COLLEGE OF ANOTHER DAY
EPILOGUE

This essay was originally given by a distinguished member of the Kit Kat Club, Managing Editor of the Cleveland Press, first Alumni Secretary of The Ohio State University, Vice President of Ohio State from 1932 through 1941, President of the University of Wyoming, and for fifteen years (1945 through 1960) President of the University of Minnesota, Dr. James Lewis Morrill.

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