

Speech given at Haliburton Deb - King's College
May 3/52.

I am really a little incompetent to answer such a toast, and in such a company. Both Haliburton and Dalhousie are richly storied names, and I am as yet a little strange to the tradition of the one, and the mantle of the other. But since you have thought me a worthy guest I shall try to fill the role.

Tradition is really a large part of the stuff of which a University is made. We speak generally of universities as institutions of learning, and of course they are that, or rather they should be. And yet if you want learning and nothing else, perhaps you are wasting your time to come to a University. If you will look at the really learned men of the last century, certainly, you will find that many of them were not University men. Browning was the most learned of our poets, Acton and Grote among the most learned of historians, J. S. Mill one of the most learned of our philosophers. Not only were none of these University men, but it is obvious that if they had been they would have been less learned. Perhaps they would also have been a little less original. You may remember what Walter Bagehot said of the poet Clough - that like others of Dr. Arnold's pupils he had a rather tired way of looking at great subjects. It is not just learning then that Universities give to their children. It is character, stamp. Take Professor Bennet and myself for example. Professor Bennet like all of us is a raw Colonial. Canadians always thought of New Zealand as something extraordinary in the way of Colonies. But as we learn from the papers New Zealanders are rioters and rough frontiersmen, just like Canadians. But there's a difference between Professor Bennet and myself. Before I ever heard him speak I knew that he was a Cambridge man. And I'm just as sure, that he was just as sure, before he had heard me speak, that I had made the egregious mistake of going to Oxford.

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At its worst of course the University stamp is not a very desirable thing. The Canadian who goes either to Oxford or Cambridge and returns with nothing but an accent is perhaps the most offensive of all God's creatures. But at its best the University stamp is a bulwark of civilisation. The Cambridge mathematician, the graduate in medicine at Edinburgh, the Ph.D.'s of Johns Hopkins in Gilman's time, these men are legions against the anarchy of Ignorance and Superstition. And the reason for that is that, while Genius is highly individual, Ideas do need co-operative effort and circulation if they are to be of practical use in the world.

What is the Dalhousie stamp? Well, there is one thing that causes Dalhousie to be bracketed with another Canadian University, whenever Canadian University men meet, in a friendly freemasonry. Any one who knows will tell you that Queen's University and Dalhousie University produce in their graduates a loyalty that is unmatched elsewhere. There is another feature of it which perhaps ought to be mentioned. When any of the other seventeen Canadian Universities meet, the question arises which have the better opinion of themselves, graduates of Dalhousie or graduates of Toronto. The character of Uriah Heap does not seem to appeal greatly to either. Loyalty and pride, then, would seem to be the Dalhousie hall-mark. I think that's a good hall-mark. Loyalty is perhaps a little blind, and pride is certainly a trifle deaf to criticism, but nature is fond of married imperfections, and in the marriage makes a new perfection.

I spoke, a moment ago, of Ignorance. I never could understand why Universities did not have professors of Ignorance. Ignorance is easily the biggest thing in the world. Why not study it? You University men, who are being prepared for the world, why should you prepare yourselves to deal with Knowledge? You will hardly meet Knowledge, when you leave the Haliburton Club. But Ignorance crieth in the streets, and no man regardeth it. Ignorance you think of as a pure negative, "in" not, gnosce, I know. But it's not negative. It's a positive force. It's a vested interest. It's the thing the world is most possessed of. Why doesn't the Commerce Department study it, and take statistics of it? It's the commodity which has the greatest sale, and the steadiest market.

Sam Slick would have been into this at a glance. And so I recommend it to the Haliburton Club.

to One more thing I should like to say before I sit down. I have said it a few other club-groups of Dalhousie students, who have this year done me the honour to let me join their company and discussion. And I say it very seriously. Nothing is more valuable to yourselves, nor to the University, than banding, in little clubs like this, for friendly discussion. I may claim, I suppose, to have some intimate knowledge, now, of five different Universities in three different countries, and I think I have always got nearer to the soul of the University in such companies, and informal clubs, as you have here, - students and teachers coming together not too seriously, and yet with the purpose of having some interplay of ideas. Such a group is not a clique. It in no way impairs your loyalty to the larger group.

which is the College, and there is nothing artificial, nor precious, nor silly, nor snobbish, about it. I should not, for a moment, like to apply any of these adjectives to another kind of college group about which my opinion has been pointedly asked several times lately. I mean the fraternity. But I am inclined to doubt whether the fraternity is as healthy, and as human, as good for the students, and as good for the University, as this sort of club.

But I am forgetting that I was asked to reply to a toast to Dalhousie. I do so on behalf of Dalhousie, and, in the name of the University, I express the wish that the Haliburton Club may long flourish.