

II

THE FREEDOM OF THE FOUNDATION

To his trustees, a self-perpetuating board of seven life members, the Founder gave great freedom in the interpretation of his programme and corresponding discretion in the execution of its plans. The charter and testament under which these gentlemen discharge the obligations of their trusteeship are documents so liberal and comprehensive as to leave the institution under practically but one restriction, namely, its location must be in Houston, Texas. But therein lies what is perhaps its greatest opportunity. For men who are too busy doing the world's work to find time to talk about it would tell you that there never were more insistent challenges to constructive thinking than are confronting the South at the present time. Opportunity is written over the whole Southwest: opportunity commercial, opportunity political, opportunity educational, but educational opportunity is written larger than all the rest. We have problems to face, serious ones, that have been perplexing the South for a generation: but even to the most superficial observer it is daily becoming more and more apparent that any solution of these peculiar problems of the South calls for solutions of Southern educational problems in terms of educational opportunities for all the people. Furthermore, the agricultural and industrial transformation now in process of development offers manifold additional arguments to Southern men to prepare their sons for the possession of this land of plenty and progress. Though for nearly a generation the ambitious young Southerner may have seen larger possibilities ahead of him farther from home, to-day he finds conditions completely changed. Go South, young man! is the slogan

in one section. Stay South, young man! is the answering call of opportunity in the other.

In the South and in the West, of the South and of the West, you find yourselves in an environment whose clear skies make men blandly or keenly observant of their powers, whose mild climate keeps men constantly human and neighborly and friendly in ways of living, whose democracy recognizes no inequalities; in an environment which will have its way with us unless we have our way with it; an environment bristling with opportunities for creative and constructive effort. You find yourselves in a State which can know no provincialism, because it has lived under seven flags. You find yourselves in a section of that State which lives under a categorical imperative of progress, for we of the plains are drawn by irresistible lure of the prairie, impelled to advance by beckoning mirage quite as wonderful as mountain prospect. You find yourselves among men who live their lives in the open, under a making sun that does not rise but jumps from the horizon full-orbed in his noonday splendor.

And how you do get into your blood and bone the wine and spirit of this country! Speedily you absorb its patriotism and pride, and as speedily come to feel the fearlessness and freedom, the frankness and the faith, that characterize the life of this Texan empire. For this reason it is that in portraying its virtues modesty is not a sin which doth so easily beset us. Houston—heavenly Houston, as it has been happily named by a distinguished local editor of more than local fame—you will find in some ways a bit too close to New York, perhaps, but here you will also find many a heartening reminder of the memories and traditions of the South, and all the moving inspiration in the promise and adventure of the West. Here, in a cosmopolitan place, in a community shaking itself from the slow step of a country village to the

self-conscious stature of a metropolitan town, completing a channel to the deep blue sea, growing a thousand acres of skyscrapers, building schools and factories and churches and homes, you will learn to talk about lumber and cotton and railroads and oil, but you will also find every ear turned ready to listen to you if you really have anything to say about literature or science or art. Of cities there are genera and species and types whose science is still to be written: cities of arms, cities of kings, cities of government, cities of commerce and industry, cities of pleasure and leisure, beautiful cities of art, holy cities of cathedrals and convents, university cities of letters and science. Houston at present may fail of qualifying for admission to certain of these classes, but there is great reason to rejoice in the commercial prosperity of the city and in the growing development of the community; for just as certainly as trade follows the flag, just so certainly does the patron of learning follow in the wake of the empire-builder. For builders of cities, great merchants and captains of industry, by the character of their work and the extent of their interests, are rendered alert, open-minded, hospitable to large ideas, accustomed to and tolerant of the widest divergencies of view. Thus it has come to be that great trading centers have often been conspicuous centers of vigorous intellectual life: Athens, Florence, Venice, and Amsterdam were cities great in commerce; but, inspired by the love of truth and beauty, they stimulated and sustained the finest aspirations of poets, scholars, and artists within their walls. It requires no prophet's eye to reach a similar vision for our own city. I have felt the spirit of greatness brooding over the city. I have heard her step at midnight, I have seen her face at dawn. I have lived under the spell of the building of the city, and under the spell of the building of the city I have come to believe in the larger

life ahead of us, in the house not made with hands which we begin this day to build. However, in the exultation of the moment in which we witness the dedication of the new university, we must not forget that the organization which William Marsh Rice incorporated has already rendered the city and State of his adoption considerable service. I need hardly remind you that during recent years the Rice Institute has contributed in a substantial manner to the upbuilding of Greater Houston. On a conservative basis—always on a conservative basis—certain of the foundation's funds have been invested in various enterprises which have sustained in no small measure the steady and continuous advance of the city in industrial and commercial prosperity.

The epoch whose beginning we observe to-day with these formal exercises marks the period in which even more powerfully that same organization is to support the intellectual and spiritual welfare of the community; and, finally, to touch again upon the material side of progress, the very machinery by which the stone age of the new university is about to be transformed into its spiritual age will distribute the income of the foundation through the several channels of Houston's business, philanthropic, social, and religious life; and thus we contemplate with some degree of satisfaction the slow but sure evolution of a threefold influence on the material, the intellectual, and the spiritual aspects of the life of the city.

“'Tis not the walls that make the city, but the men”;

and the men in the day of Pericles were freemen who “pursued culture in a manly spirit, and beauty without extravagance.” Such freemen are the men that build the university. The strength of this foundation lies in its freedom: the

freedom to think independently of tradition; the freedom to deal directly with its problems without red tape; the freedom to plan and execute vouchsafed by the will of the Founder and the charter of his foundation; the freedom of his seven trustees, seven freemen, who approach its problems of organization, policy, and aim, without educational prejudices to stultify, without partisan bias to hinder, without sectarian authority to satisfy, with open minds accustomed to large problems, with clear heads experienced in tracking the minutest details of business; seven men always ready to reason together, steady and conscientious in reaching conclusions, quick and decisive in action when through common counsel they have come to a common mind respecting any line of action. And in their freedom these trustees are building for the Founder a university whose greatest strength likewise is in its freedom: in the freedom of its faculties of science, humanity, and technology, to teach and to search—each man a freeman to teach the truth as he finds it, each man a freeman to seek the truth wherever truth may lead: in the freedom to serve the State because entangled in no way with the government of the State, and the freedom to serve the Church because vexed by none of the sectarian differences that disturb the heart of the Church.

While we rejoice in our freedom from Church or State control, we rejoice none the less in the work of these fundamental and indispensable agencies of civilization, for we can conceive of no university in whose life there do not appear the energy and enthusiasm, the affection and the calm, that we associate in one way or another with reverence, patriotism, politics, and religion. Hence to us, quite as important as is a university's freedom from control by State or Church, are its right relations to each of these two institutions, because upon principles of order, conduct, and knowledge is

based our faith in the capacity of the human spirit for progress, and without such basic faith all theories of education become either confused or futile. As a matter of fact, the three fundamental principles I have just named—order, conduct, knowledge—find expression in the forms of three great institutions—the State, the Church, and the University. These institutions themselves are not fixed and final but fluid and forming, constantly in the flow of change, in transition from good to better, to meet new requirements of a changing world and a growing humanity. In their present mutual relations, the State, the master of the sword and peace; the Church, the guardian of the soul and purity; the University, the servant of each of them in preserving to men the mastery of their spirits. The State guaranteeing to the University intellectual freedom, to the Church religious freedom; the University in freedom of thought and research constantly enriching the State with the theory of its own greatness, constantly recalling the Church to the theories of life wherein all men are made free; the Church in its turn sustaining the Nation and supporting the University in high ideals of progress and ultimate triumph. Moreover, testing any programme for better uses of life and leisure by a double criterion: Is it based on an understanding of the ways of men and the needs of humankind? and Does it appeal to the understandings of men? the University would seek, while preserving its own freedom and independence, to assist in the advancement of humanitarian movements in State or Nation or world. This humanitarian aspect of university service, as differentiated from the more strictly scholastic and scientific activities of university life, appearing under newer forms comparatively recently in the so-called university settlements and in the university extension movement, finds its latest phase in coöperative unions for world-wide

programmes of scientific investigation on the one hand, and on the other, in the organized movements for improvement of good will and the promotion of peace among the nations. In such united efforts the new institution would participate, for in its future days it is to be a university of Texas, a university of the South, and later, let us hope, in reality as in aspiration, one among the national institutions, reflecting the national mind, one among the universities of the nations, fostering the international mind and spirit in cosmopolitan ways such as the mediæval universities enjoyed before the death of universal language and the divisions in a universal Church.