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UA1B3/5 Cherry Statue Dedication Speech

Brinton Davis

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Brinton B. Davis

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is an auspicious occasion. It is a proud and historical day for this community. We are here in recognition and appreciation of service rendered.

We honor ourselves on this occasion by honoring in a dignified and significant manner one of your distinguished citizens.

In every generation there are a few men and women who, because of some outstanding attribute, such as philanthropic aims, or intellectual achievements, have won the respect and love of their fellowman. It is these men and women who raise the average of humanity, and by their words and deeds brighten the world about them. Such a man was the late Dr. Cherry. The story of his life is well known. We are familiar with his achievements, and we know how we have benefited through his devotion and zeal. All of this has won for him the warm place which he will ever hold in our hearts. Our lives are richer and fuller because he lived. It is natural that we should desire to give some expression to our appreciation. We have therefore assembled here in his honor.

It is a melancholy pleasure to pay tribute to the memory of a man who founded this institution of learning. Why, may I ask, were the people of this community prompted to do this thing? For what reason do they honor his loyalty, love and devotion by erecting this bronze statue, and why do they now perpetuate his memory in this enduring form?

He was kind, he was thoughtful, he was considerate; but it is in something more than all these things that the reason for this memorial is to be found.

It is to be found in the kind of a man he was and in the life of devotion he lived. He reached his port of toil, by eyes uplifted to the stars and by the daily grip of God's strong hand. It is character that counts in the great crisis of life. Far above his ability as an educator, above his skill in management, above his extensive information and well-reasoned convictions of life in general, the great

strength of Dr. Cherry was in that patience and far vision and confident faith which grew out of strong convictions and dependence on the source of all power.

His example still speaks. He is speaking of us today, to those who were his associates for many years, and to those who never saw or met him, but recognize that his was the life of character, of conscience, and of human kindness.

Here in the presence of those who knew him and loved him, may I offer in words written of another, but appropriate to him, this ode:

"Tis one thing that the deeds you wrought
have brought success, and given man his due.
It is another when a master's hand has builded
better than he knew.
You built so that success did crown your efforts
as you guided deed or act
But to lay plans that others, coming on, might
shape a fancy into fact
Is better still. And praise unmeasured unto
masters of this class is due-
And on your tomb might be this epitaph: "A man
who builded better than he knew."

The fragrance of his life still abides to inspire others as he inspired, to serve as he served. The years will not dim his memory.

I think I can see in the life of Dr. Cherry that the definition of success was fully met. In the remarks of that splendid address of John Temple Graves at the grave of Henry W. Grady we hear him say these words:

"I have seen at midnight the gleaming headlight
of the giant locomotive rushing onward through
the darkness, heedless of dangers and uncertainty,
and I thought the spectacle was grand;

I have seen the light come over the eastern hills
in glory, driving the lazy darkness before it
like mist before a sea-borne gale, till leaf and
blade of grass sparkled in the morning rays like
myriads of diamonds, and I have known that it was
grand;

I have seen the lightning leap athwart the
storm-swept sky, hovering over chaotic clouds
and howling winds, till cloud and darkness
and the shadow-haunted earth flashed into
noon-day splendor, and I have known that
it was grand;

But the grandest thing next to the radiance that flows from the Almighty's throne is the light of a noble and beautiful life shedding its benedictions on the destines, and at last finding its home in the bosom of God!"

Surely the life of Dr. Cherry was a full and noble one, and an inspiration to all who knew him.

This memorial to the late H. H. Cherry not only signifies that he is honored by his associates, but also indicates that he has rendered high service to his fellow men.

Every memorial very truly has a reflection, and this reflection determines the character of the memorial. The material of the memorial may be marble, granite, bronze, or even gold, but these materials stand for little within themselves. It is the cause they stand for or what they represent that really counts. The great Washington Monument in the nation's capital, or the unknown soldier's grave in Arlington would not stand for much without George Washington or the unknown soldier.

President Cherry is not dead. He lives in his example and his influence. He lives in the splendor of his deeds. He lives in the hearts he left behind. He will live in the traditions that pass from generation to generation. He has just wandered over the boundary, there to illuminate and irradiate the pathway of mankind. His sunset has come, but we believe it was a sunrise that will never again set.

I repeat our departed friend is not dead. He merely sailed away not long ago in the hush of the pale twilight through the purple shadows on the ebbing tide into the unknown sea, on towards the far off mystic isles, where in a safe anchorage lies the draft of those who have gone before. Let us as we meet here, reconsecrate and rededicate our lives to the service of humanity, so that we, some day, somewhere, by the grace of God, "may in some brighter clime bid him good morning."

The very presence here today of busy citizens is proof of the truth of the sweet words of the poet:

"There is no death! An angel form
Walks o'er the earth in silent tread,
And takes our best loved things away.
And then we call them dead.

But ever near us, though unseen
The dear Immortal spirits tread;
For all the boundless universe
Is life. There are no dead.