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THE WORK, WEALTH, AND

HAPPINESS OF MEN

H. L. Donovan, President
University of Kentucky

Commencement Address
Western Kentucky State College
August 1, 1956

Fifty years ago come this September at about four-thirty in the morning I got off of a southbound train from Cincinnati. This was my first sight of Bowling Green. After eating a doughnut and drinking a cup of coffee at the depot I picked up my suitcase and started in search of the old Southern Normal School. Since the hour was early, I took my time, explored some of the attractive streets of this fair city and became enchanted with the loveliness of Bowling Green. From that day to this I have always

admired this beautiful city with its shady streets and elegant homes. It is one of the fairest cities in our land.

The first person I met in the halls of Van Meter was Professor Frederick Rowman, one of Western's great teachers. Soon he had me in the presence of one of the greatest educators I have ever known-- H. H. Cherry, a man who was to have a great influence on my life, and still has. Before noon that day I was attending classes.

Although I was later to attend four great American universities, the teachers I had at Western were among the best teachers I had during my career as a student. I can say as did Matthew Arnold:

For eager teachers seized my youth,
Pruned my faith and trimmed my fire,
Showed me the high, white star of
truth,
There bade me gaze and there aspire.

I can on this occasion only call the
roll of those of blessed memory who have
passed on: President H. E. Cherry, Dean
A. J. Kinnaman, Dr. Fred Mutchler, Dr.
M. A. Leiper, Colonel Guilliams, and Miss
Laura Frazer. Two of the greatest
still remain with us. I refer to Dr. A. M.
Stickles and Dr. Louis Harman. I wish
tonight to acknowledge my indebtedness
for my education to these noble souls
who also have shaped the destiny of
thousands of other Kentucky youth.

I am delighted that Western, my Alma
Mater, is celebrating her half century of
progress. I have observed every year of

the last fifty with great satisfaction and pride in her distinguished achievements. She has had a phenomenal growth and development; her future has never been brighter.

I have known intimately each of her great presidents: Dr. Cherry was my guide and philosopher; President Garrett, my friend and colleague; and the dynamic young president recently appointed, who reminds me very much of President Cherry, is my good friend. I predict for him and Western a great future during the second half of this institution's first century.

Some years ago I read a book written by H. G. Wells entitled, The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Mankind. I do not

remember much about the content of this book, but the title has always intrigued me. Tonight, I want to talk to you for a little while on the subject *The Work, Wealth and Happiness of Men*. Please do not regard this as a sermon but just a bit of the homely philosophy of the life of a pilgrim who has been and is a happy man.

We are told in the Bible that when Jesus was twelve years old he went with Mary and Joseph and many others down to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of the Passover. Just how long the party was in Jerusalem the Scriptures do not tell us. When the Feast was over they started back to their home in Nazareth. When they had gone a day's journey suddenly

they discovered that Jesus was not in their company. You can well imagine the anxiety of these parents as they returned to Jerusalem in search of this lad. It is no wonder that they had to search for him for three days because they found him where you would never expect to find a twelve year old boy, in the Temple discussing the fundamental issues of life with the learned men of that day. And when they discovered him his mother, with some show of impatience, said unto him: "Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing". And Jesus said unto them: "How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

At the tender age of twelve Jesus

recognized that he had a work to do in the world and that he was preparing himself for that work. I have observed through many years of close contact with young people, that the youth who early recognizes that he has a mission - a work to do in the world - succeeds far better than he who dilly-dallies, procrastinates and cannot decide what he wants to do. Knowing what one wants to do motivates a life, gives it direction.

I think the Biblical story of Adam and Eve being driven from the Garden of Eden and compelled to earn their bread by the "sweat of the brow" has given people the wrong philosophy about work. Too many people look upon work as a form of punishment when as a matter of fact it is the greatest blessing ever vouchsafed

unto men. There is never a year but that this scene has occurred in my office: Enter a father and mother accompanied by an over-grown boy of 17 or 18 years of age. The parents often bear the marks of hard manual labor. They proceed to tell me they have brought the boy to the university to get an education because they do not want him to have to work as hard as they have had to work.

After placing the parents at ease, I usually proceed to disillusion them regarding the question of work. I show them that there is no royal road to an education, that it means work, hardwork, and that when a man becomes educated he is under obligation to society to use his ability in the service of mankind, that educated people ought to work harder,

and many of them do, than those who have not had the opportunity to get an education. I tell them if they want to leave the boy under these circumstances, we shall be glad to give him a chance at an education. Thus far the boy has always been left.

I agree with President Sproul of the University of California when he says: "A little hard work for the purpose of self support is just as important in the life of a young person as a reasonable amount of vitamins in the diet. Too much of either is bad; too little may be worse."

At this point, pardon me for being personal. But I want to pay a tribute to my father who was one of the best teachers.

He had three sons and he taught us how to work. He was prompted by the same philosophy that caused him to break his fine saddle horses when they were two years old to work under harness and saddle. He believed in the discipline of work. Many is the day I have followed a mule up and down a corn row from sun-rise to sunset. I did not like it then any more than the young colts liked being hitched to a bike. But I finally got used to it, and it was not all bad. Today, I thank God for the discipline of work taught me long years ago. Work has never seemed hard, humdrum, onerous, or something to escape since those far off days of my boyhood. My work has been the pleasure of my life. In every position I have ever held I have enjoyed my work.

It never gets monotonous. With the dawn of each new day I find something thrilling to do. I can understand what George Herbert Palmer meant in his great essay on the Ideal Teacher when he said:

"Harvard College pays me for doing what I would gladly pay it for allowing me to do."

Unfortunately, not all people like to work. There are people who are very ingenious in discovering ways and means to keep out of productive labor. Many years ago I saw a man sit on top of the flag pole on the Seelbach Hotel in Louisville for ten days. He was establishing some sort of a record. But I can top that one. Some years later I lived in a community where we had "court-house sitters". Did you ever

meet a court-house sitter? Some of them had records of ten, fifteen, twenty, and occasionally twenty-five years. When one of them died usually his seat was thereafter occupied by his eldest son. How they lived I was never able to fathom for they were never absent from their accustomed places. A few years ago the manager of my farm was desperately in need of labor to help him house our tobacco crop. Thinking he might persuade one of these "court-house sitters" to help, he approached him and asked him if he would like a job. The man was very positive he would like a job. Then the farmer asked him if he could cut tobacco. The "sitter" assured him he could and asked the farmer what he would pay him. Whereupon the farmer said: "I'll pay you what you are

worth". The loafer scratched his head a minute, then replied: "I'll be darned if I will work for that little."

There is something paradoxical about work. When we have it, too often we attempt to avoid it, and when we are out of it, we look and pray for it.

There are a great many people in the world like the goldfish.

"Saucily, serene they lie content
Or softly circle to and fro
But never a whit the wiser grow.
Life is to some a crystal bowl
Where they aimlessly circle to
and fro,
But to others it is a bowl of
Bohemian ware
With the red of passion
And the gray of care."

Have you ever thought of the difference between work and play? Many years ago Earl Combe, one of the great baseball players of the New York Yankees,

was a student in one of my classes in psychology at Eastern State Teachers College. Years later I met him on the street one day when he was at the pinnacle of his career as a ball player. At that time, I knew that he was being paid about \$15,000 per year. I stopped him and inquired: "Earl, do you play baseball or do you work at baseball?" Quick as a flash he replied: "Professor, I play baseball but many of the fellows work at it."

After all whether an activity is work or play depends largely on one's attitude toward it. I believe most successful men enter into their work in the same spirit that a boy rushes off to play a game of ball with the gang.

Not all the loafers today are to be found on the courthouse steps, in the garages, in the soda fountains, or in bars. One of the favorite haunts of young loafers is to be found on college and university campuses. On every campus today there are too many college loafers; too many playboys and playgirls who would be better off working on a job for they are not interested in getting an education. Too often they are sent to college in their automobile; they do not go to college. This is one of the differences between the college today and the Western I knew 50 years ago. We may have been underprivileged in those days but fortunately we never realized it.

Those parents who send their sons or daughters to college with an automobile are making it very difficult for their

children to make a respectable scholarship record. It takes too much of their time to drive their cars. They spend too many of their weekends on the highways instead of in the library and laboratories digging in on their studies. In the years immediately ahead, with all college campuses overflowing with students - with our enrollments doubled by 1965 - both parents and teacher should bear down on the loafers in all of our institutions of higher education. It costs the state and the parents too much money to give a boy or girl a country club education. I am convinced that higher standards of scholarship should be required of those enrolled in our colleges and universities. I also believe that we should make it harder to be admitted to college. Students

with low achievement records and low
I.Q.'s have no place on a college campus.
Let's get rid of the loafer and the drone;
let's make our colleges and universities
centers of learning for those who are upon
the errands of the mind.

I never feel sorry for the boy or
girl who has to work. I am sorry for
the youth whose parents shield him from
work. There are always jobs a plenty
to challenge you. Not all pioneering
has been done.

THE STRUGGLE
Edgar A. Guest

He is dead who sees nothing to change
No wrong to make right;
Who travels no new way or strange
In search of the light.

Who never sets out for a goal
That he sees from afar
But contents his indifferent soul
With things as they are.

During the last half century my generation has done some things very well. By the application of the scientific method to our physical and material problems, we have transformed our environment into a veritable fairy land. We invented the automobile and farm tractor, and then transformed these into the armored car and tank. We perfected the aeroplane and out of it built a bomber and jet planes. Tens of thousands of other gadgets have come from the laboratories of our researchers. They have changed the character of our lives but we have not learned how to use them for the blessing of ourselves and of mankind. The challenge to your generation is to make these gadgets servants of the people. It remains for your

generation to conquer the robot. My generation has solved many of the problems in the realm of the physical sciences. It is left to your generation to exploit the social sciences. Your problems are essentially spiritual, economical, political, and educational. I have faith that you will solve them.

Men usually work to accumulate wealth. Let us now examine briefly this phase of the subject.

What is wealth? Is it stocks and bonds, land and buildings, cattle or a thousand hills? These represent a certain form of wealth. This kind of wealth is essential to society but it is far from being the only kind of wealth a people must accumulate. This is the

type of wealth that vanishes in a depression or revolution. It is the most ephemeral kind of wealth.

A few years ago I stood in front of a beautiful Russian mansion in Moscow. I asked my guide about it. He told me it had been built by a very rich man. I inquired if he still lived there. "No," said the guide, "it is now a rest home." "What happened to the man who owned it?" I asked. "He was liquidated," replied my guide. "Why," I asked, "was he liquidated?" "Because he was a very rich man," responded the guide, who apparently felt that was sufficient reason for his liquidation.

It behoves each of us that we so live that if all our possessions should

be swept away, we would still be wealthy.

Again I quote from Channing Pollock:

"Enough, we must have, of course,

But when we are adequately fed, and clothed, and housed, the more abundant life begins, having to do with what is in mind and heart rather than with what is in closet or bank. What I don't understand is why, when we speak of 'high standards of living' we always mean mink coats and motor cars. Aren't the standards by which we are ultimately known, and those that bring happiness, born of culture, courtesy, understanding, appreciation, and love? Isn't it true that a man is rich less in pro-

portion to what he has than in his contentment with what he has?"

"Happiness isn't locked up in vaults; it is locked up in you. Take the advice of one happy man; When your good fairy comes along with her three wishes, let the first be, 'Don't give me less than I can use well'; and the second, 'Don't give me more'; and let your third, and most important wish be, 'With whatever you give, give me pleasure in what I have.'"

Which brings me to a consideration of happiness. The constitution of the United States guarantees us, Life, Liberty, and pursuit of Happiness. You will note that Life and Liberty are

guaranteed but the constitution can guarantee you only the pursuit of happiness. Whether we overtake happiness or not depends on each individual.

In 1936, I went to Europe on the second trip of the Queen Mary. Seated at my table in the dining room was a young woman whose parents died when she was a child leaving her a great fortune. Her guardian had sent her to a girl's school in the East but she did not like it. She was in pursuit of happiness so she went to Hollywood and lived for a time only to be disillusioned. Someone told her she would probably find happiness in Paris and thence she journeyed only to be disappointed again. Then she went to Vienna, Florence and

other places expecting to overtake happiness but it always eluded her. This young woman told me of her return to this country but that she was still unhappy. Now, she said she was going back to Paris and she was certain she was going to find happiness this time. I saw her get off the ship at Cherbourg and I have never seen or heard of her since. But of one thing I am certain - that she never overtook happiness in her pursuit unless perchance she returned to the home town of her parents in the Middle West and got interested in the local hospital, church, library, school, or community, identified herself with the community's constructive problems and spent some of her wealth making other people's lives richer.

Then there is another type of pursuer of happiness who is doomed to disappointment. It is the man or woman who is going to live after while. We had a neighbor, when I was a boy, who was always going to send his daughters to college as soon as he lifted the mortgage on the farm. But the girls married before the debt was paid. As soon as he redeemed the mortgage, he bought another farm joining his property and went deeper in debt than ever. He was always saying to my father: "After I get out of debt I am going to live." But he kept buying more and more land always going in debt for the new tract. You see that he wanted was only all the land that touched his land. "After while I am going to take things easier," he

said to me the last time I ever saw him.
He was then past seventy.

Everyone in this audience has read Gone with the Wind. You will recall how Scarlett O'Hara admired and loved her mother for the fine virtues her mother possessed. Scarlett really wanted to be like her mother and when she did mean, hateful, cheap, dishonest and unethical acts she would say: "I am not going to think about this now, but after while I am going to be like mother - I am going to be a lady." But Scarlett never quite became a lady. She postponed achieving that ideal too long.

There are people who are always going to be happy after awhile; when they pay off the debt, complete their education, get married, build the new home, secure

a better job, get the children well launched on their careers. These procrastinators of happiness all too frequently let life slip by without achieving this coveted prize. Now is the time to be happy. You have no guarantee on the future.

Who is the happy man? President Timothy Dwight answered this query: "The happiest person," he said, "is the person who thinks the most interesting thoughts."

Emerson said it in another way. "Life," said he, "consists in what a man is thinking of all day long."

Robert Louis Stevenson, in *Treasure Island*, says: "Make us happy and you make us good." Also, "I know what

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happiness is, for I have done good work."

Kipling tells us in L'envoi:

"And those that were good shall be happy:
They shall sit in a golden chair,
They shall splash at a ten-league canvas
With brushes of comet's hair,
They shall find real saints to draw from
Magdalene, Peter and Paul;
They shall work for an age at a sitting
And never be tired at all!"

Louis L. Mann, in his delightful little book, In Quest of the Bluebird, says: "Happiness is a perfume which you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself. When you are good to others, you are best to yourself."

I cannot close this address without

quoting Henry Van Dyke's Work:

"Let me but do my work from day to day,
In field or forest, at the desk or loom,
In roaring market-place or tranquil room;
Let me but find it in my heart to say,
When vagrant wishes beckon me astray,
'This is my work; my blessing, not my doom;
Of all who live, I am the one by whom,
This work can best be done in the right
way'."

"Then shall I see it not too great, nor
small,
To suit my spirit and to prove my powers;
Then shall I cheerful greet the laboring
hours,
And cheerful turn, when the long shadows
fall
At eventide, to play and love and rest,
Because I know for me my work is best."

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In one of the most delightful books written during the past decade, entitled, "Lanterns on the Lane," William Alexander Percy says of himself upon the completion of his college work: "For twenty-three years a great number of people have been pouring out money, skill, time, devotion, prayers to create something out of me that wouldn't look as if the Lord had slapped it together absent-mindedly."

I trust that you who are graduating today, will remember that for a good many years your parents, your teachers, and your country have been spending considerable thought and large sums of money on you. I hope you are worthy of the investment of money and devotion that has been made in you, and that you

will discharge your debt to society by being true to every trust and responsibility placed on you.

Gratitude is one of the finest virtues man has acquired. Its proper expression is often in terms of hard work.

May I wish for you who are graduating today, work that will be pleasant, wealth that will suffice, and happiness unlimited.