

HUMAN HOPES

by

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Commencement is a family exercise. If it were not for their fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters and all of the other relations we would probably mail our diplomas to our graduates and suggest to them to leave quietly and quickly to make room for those to follow.

No other part of the life of the University is shared in to the same extent as is Commencement by those who are not students but who make up the background from which our students come. This is as it should be, for each family has joined in on the struggle that finds its mark of award today in a diploma. From the first days at primary school the family has made sacrifices, given encouragement, and helped in the planning that is a part of the education which we are giving to more and more of our youth for a longer and longer time.

It all gets back to the biological fact that it takes years to develop a mature human being and that man has ideals and hopes that distinguish him from all other living creatures.

Family-community relationship is the outstanding problem

In one way or in another here in America our youth require these longer periods of training in order to fit into the life around them. When we were primarily an agricultural people both boys and girls were absorbed into the life of the family and the community even before they reached what we call the age of majority. During most of the history of our country the family has been the predominant social unit. We now see the movement forward of the community absorbing many of the responsibilities that for so long belonged to the family. To me the most outstanding social problem of the present time is this relationship of the family to the community and then that of the smaller community to the larger governmental units such as the state and nation.

We can over-organize and over-centralize to gain certain objects, and yet be more susceptible to destruction than we are in a more individualized society.

As more and more of our population have become centralized in large urban areas with the industrialization of many of our joint activities, the position of the family has apparently become of less importance. Can we as living beings with certain specific attributes given to us by Nature allow the family and its importance to di-

minish? Are we not thereby in danger of losing even our position as the leading and controlling animals on this earth?

The geologists have given us the records of many thousands of extinct forms of life that failed to meet changing conditions or to survive in the competition or to have the intelligence to maintain themselves. Masses of living units can go to easy mass destruction. There is no leadership in the mass as such. The intellectual leadership provided by a comparatively few human beings has undoubtedly been the responsible factor in spreading us all over this world of ours and giving us more and more control of all of its resources including the control and handling of living organisms, both plant and animal.

The Family is as old as the oldest existing civilization

We are all of us familiar with some of the birds in our neighborhood. We can hardly think of the bird without being reminded of the bird's nest and of the relationship of this bird's home to parents and the care of the young. What it is that goes on in the brains of the orioles as they build their hanging nests beneath the palm leaves or attach them to the branches of trees it would be hard to say, but certainly there could be no finer example of the acceptance of family responsibilities including the bringing up of the young to maturity. The birds with their habits of migration and their devotion to family life have a living record extending far back into the earth's history.

In so far as we know the record, the human family has ordinarily taken over without question the full care of its immature members until they were able to assist in the support of the family and eventually care for themselves. In the oldest existing civilization—that of China—the family has had a pre-eminent place. Ancestor worship has played its part in holding together the units of which the family is the base. Whatever may be our interpretation, we cannot deny that the importance of the family has gone alongside of the oldest existing civilization, holding it together on the same spot for at least 4000 years. E-Yin, the Chief Minister of the first four sovereigns of the Shang dynasty, in B.C. 1539, advising King T'ae-Keah, said, "The commencement is in the family and State, the consummation in the Empire." No matter what developments have taken place there in what we know as government, with the increase in population and the widening of the territory occupied, the family relationships were not materially disturbed. A prominent Chinese in indicating the difficulties faced in

a changing China with participating citizenship said he was brought up by his father to consider it a disgrace to have any relationship to government except on the day when he went to pay his taxes.

Now in China, and certainly with us, we find the community covering many of the responsibilities formerly handled at the fire-side. Some of these community responsibilities have been the result of voluntary associations, but more and more the government is stepping in and providing facilities for education, health, recreation, etc., or determining wages, hours of labor, and various economic conditions. All sorts of fantastic propositions have arisen in all parts of the world to replace or hamper the family unit. The community care of infants instead of the home care, easy laws or customs regarding marriage, divorce, inheritance, have seemed attractive to some, particularly to those who are inclined to dodge the responsibilities of their own personal activities in life. It seems, though, as if the more we try to pass over the normal responsibilities of the family control to others, the more ineffective and unhappy become our lives. Apparently there is no way to avoid the role of affection in life and of the relationship of affection in the family circle to happiness.

Importance of the home as a center

The very choicest of all our human possessions are in and about the family home. In it there is a sense of creation, as well as of trusteeship of all that our race has of social heritage. The parent desires to enhance what we have and to offer the child more than he himself has had in training, in protection and in comfort. There can be no substitute for this in any artificial creation of our civilization. Ideals, standards, visions, hopes, absorbed from the mother or developed with the father as the symbol of the world outside, become predominating in the child's thought patterns. Religion has long had its greatest vitality in and about the home.

In spite of these serious if not critical relationships of the family, this present period in American social and economic life is one of change and conflict, of momentous decisions without adequate or often even casual study of the factors involved, insofar as they concern the family. Women are leaving the home by the tens of millions over much of the day. The psychological factors for children of a home without a mother are giving concern to those who see the constantly rising burden of public institutions for mental cases. In some parts of the world so-called "progress" is being associated with a destruction of the present moral beliefs and the substitution of new concepts attacking the family and put-

ting all authority in the hands of the people as organized into an over-dominating government or state to determine what is right or wrong.

We have seen the enormous extension of human comforts through invention and discovery. We have used the natural resources of the earth together with the discovery by the human mind of the laws of nature to build up an intricate but absorbingly interesting matrix of which we are so proud and in which we try to live with full satisfaction. But our literature, even our daily press, is filled with doubts and questions. We are rediscovering ethical and moral questions that from the standpoint of most happiness to an individual with conscience seem to have been settled many centuries ago. Religion has taken a different form with many peoples. One cannot help but ask what are our real human hopes? In what do we really get satisfaction? What is worth while? Where does the human race want to go? What are its aims? What is our destination?

Biologically we are approaching a static population level

We have displayed a sense of mastery of the world about us, or of aggressiveness, which has had the most to do with our so-called attainments. We treat the plants and animals about us as subjects entirely under our control. Considering ourselves the most precious of all living things we have manipulated as we pleased the lives of our domestic animals. We have also decided what other living things we favor and those we disfavor and have acted accordingly. In other words, the manipulation of life by us is one of our great human resources.

Yet we as human beings have the same biological susceptibility as do those animals which we control. There are biological limits beyond which we are unable to go. We are now finding ourselves facing some of these limits for ourselves. In our own country, our population experts tell us that, before long, we will have a stationary population. There will be fewer children and more old people. We are already in the midst of some of the difficulties associated with these questions here in California. Except for the constant migration of others into our State we would not be able to maintain our population even at present levels. Our birth rate is falling rather than rising. In hundreds of ways we are finding ourselves discussing and thinking in new terms that have to do with human breeding. Our economists, particularly our agricultural economists, as they look ahead are considering these questions with real concern.

We have just come through a century of wide expansion of

educational opportunities. We certainly can view the five or six decades just passed as the Age of Education. It seems evident now that the decades just ahead will be known as the Age of Medicine. We have just discovered how much it is possible to obtain in the way of physical comfort and health through our knowledge of the actions of the human body both when it is well and when it is diseased or when it is invaded by the living organisms causing disease. We are discovering every day new procedures that give us relief from pain, give us longer years, make us more effective as human beings. There is a great stir in our social life in order to get a better distribution of medical care. Undoubtedly within the next two decades we will see a distribution of good medical care in this country to all classes of people that is beyond our present conception. We can see, too, the practical elimination of most of the infectious diseases that have given us the greatest concern in the years gone by and have cut deepest into the family by the destruction of the lives of the young or by giving them physical handicaps of one sort or another. Most of our people have not yet taken full advantage of what we know in the field of medicine.

Influence of medical science on the Family

But there are perils, too, in connection with the application of some of our new knowledge. We can destroy the family as well as build it up by the use of what we have learned in the field of medicine. No greater facility has ever been given the human race than has been made available through modern science and medicine; but certain things cannot be avoided, no matter what skills and knowledge may be developing. We cannot avoid the long period of immaturity for human beings, for instance. Apparently we cannot avoid the further development of a great economic civilization which demands better training and more maturity for those who take part in its activities. We are left then with the fact that we must take care of our youth at least up to the age of twenty or twenty-one in some way that will give them both protection and development. Modern medicine is saving many whose weaknesses or defects would not have permitted survival in the past. Those persons of large income, long professional training and highly developed skills are having the smallest families. Trained and disciplined brains are not replacing themselves at a sufficient rate to keep intelligence in control of human affairs. If we were raising domestic animals for slaughter, just as some nations seem to be raising boys for war, we could drift along with these problems in the hope that some sort of an answer would eventually evolve.

But it seems to me that history teaches us that there is no substitute for the family if we are to have a society that stands for human beings at their best. If our hopes are only those of comfort and health the problem would be comparatively easy; but since practically all human beings are born with what we know as conscience, and all of us have something else that we call ideals, our human hopes are not going to be satisfied by material comforts alone. There is another element that is a part of human happiness, and that is that unless we think of others and do something for them we miss the greatest sources of happiness. It is in the family that these qualities are most apt to be developed. The prayers of the parents have in them the things that are hoped for for their children. Only through ideals and the desire to work and live for children can we expect to have citizens who will hold together a civilization worthy of permanence. Our advances have come not through numbers—no matter how much we may worship the God of Numbers at the polls with majority votes. Our advances have been made by some individuals whose physical and mental qualities were such that they saw new ways of doing old things and had a sense of leadership that forced them to work far beyond their own physical needs. It is in the University that we are trying to bring together those of this type and to give them the fullest possible opportunity for advancement.

If we think in terms of numbers alone, and not of the quality of the individual, unconsciously we are likely to over-emphasize the rise of power through violence, and not the extension of our civilization through persuasion and education. The rise of power through violence, based on numbers, is a vast menace to the world of today. Those handling such power view the family merely as a source of supply for those units necessary for the purposes of the State. The spread of this mass gangsterism is now one of the most serious threats to the life of the family—which is another way of saying that it is one of the ways in which human beings can destroy themselves and their own institutions. With multiple family units coming together to make up a community or a civilization or a government there is safety; but when we have a nation that, regardless of these units, depends upon what goes on within one brain the path to ruin has already been taken. In the family there is the inevitable recognition of the rights of others; there is the inevitable development of moral conscience; and there is the beneficent presence of affection as well as those human hopes that dwell always in the hearts of parents to create an atmosphere that is conducive to what we speak of as democracy in thinking, in government, or in our relations to each other.

Besides this major menace to the family that comes through gangster government and war, there is the steady encroachment of the community of which I have already spoken. The modern industrial community is making domesticated or menagerie animals out of human beings. Our domestication or confinement of animals has not always been conducive to their vigor nor to an increase in their numbers. We all know the difference between hothouse plants and those hardy plants that have met with the vicissitudes of sunshine and shadow, storm and drought. We may live to pay a heavy price for our comforts—for such things as air-conditioning, rubber tires, and sterilized foods. There are so many subtle factors of nutrition and of other conditions that have to do with reproduction that we may well find that there is no stopping the present tendency to have more and more American boys and girls born on the farms of the South and fewer and fewer born in our large cities. Perhaps in the long run this is better so, since there is more likelihood of the family atmosphere surrounding a country child than one born in a human hothouse such as many of our great cities certainly have become. Our endurance as living units will depend upon the toughness of our brains and bodies. If they are not good and resistant, other human beings or other forms of life will eventually win out in that struggle which we see about us at all times.

Marriage should come early and have simple beginnings

Among all of the anchors that hold the human race steady certainly the family is the one of outstanding significance. We must not be afraid to review just what is happening about us. We must be alert to protect the family, to encourage our young people to have families. Early marriages are important if the family is to be important. Certain fallacious social conceptions that are often prevalent among us need to be reviewed. There is no reason why we should expect a young man to maintain his bride at the economic level reached by her father in his full maturity. The dowry system or some modification of it, by which the parents through gifts assisted the young couple, has done much in many parts of the world to hold up the family. Various forms of insurance, including health protection, can and will do much to make early marriages possible. It is good for the family to have simple beginnings. Experience shows that the family is the greatest source of happiness and strength for the human race. We cannot avoid knowing, though, that there has been a weakening of the bonds holding the

family together. This is perhaps inevitable with our changing conceptions, but it is nevertheless vital that we study all of the factors involved. Or we may pay too heavy a price, before we even realize it. Some obvious things we know are detrimental. Disloyalty, drunkenness, gambling and venereal diseases never mix well with the family. Our human hopes center in a happy, wholesome, normal family circle. The applications of science must open opportunity to a higher moral life if we are to get a real culture. We can have hopes for a great and happy future if all of science, not just a part, is used to build up the human being at his best—as we find him in the family.

TO THE GRADUATING CLASSES :

Giving sage advice to those about to leave our institutions of higher learning with a diploma in hand is a favorite indoor or outdoor sport of Presidents and Deans. By graduation time the usual student has built up a good defense against outside suggestions and is feeling the pressure to run on his own power for a while even though it results in a few spills.

Living for many years near or on that firing line where youth operates on its way to maturity I am aware of the rapid way in which you of this generation have gone to the bowwows—at least in the conversation of many of your elders. To sustain you in your defense may I quote from Dr. Wayland's book, *Moral Science*, printed in 1855 (before the parents of most of you were in existence) just to show that there is nothing very new under the sun :

“The notion, indeed, that a family is a society that must be governed, and that the right and the duty of governing this society rest with the parent, seems to be rapidly vanishing from the minds of men. In the place of it, it seems to be the prevalent opinion that children may grow up as they please; and that the exertion of parental restraint is an infringement upon the personal liberty of the child. But all this will not abrogate the law of God, nor will it avert the punishment which He has connected, indissolubly, with disobedience. The parent who neglects his duty to his children, is sowing thickly, for himself and for them, the seeds of his future misery. He who is suffering the evil dispositions of his children to grow up uncorrected, will find that he is cherishing a viper by which he himself will first be stung. The parent who is accustoming his children to habits of thoughtless caprice and reckless expenditure, and who stupidly smiles at the ebullitions of youthful passion and the indulgence of fashionable vice, as indications of a

manly spirit, needs no prophet to foretell that, unless the dissoluteness of his family leave him entirely childless, his gray hairs will be brought down with sorrow to the grave.”

Some words to the new recruits in the Stanford Family

Nevertheless we of Stanford do have some words we want to say to those who are the last recruits to join our big family of Stanford Alumni. We want the outside to feel the full impact of your strength and the benefit of your training, your years of discipline and preparation, and we want you to know the joy of good work cheerfully done for others as well as for yourself. In addition to your necessary interest in the work at hand it is important to acquire the habit of exposure to those enduring phases of life that go under such names as religion, music, art, drama and literature, as well as to be ready to enjoy new jobs in public service of one sort or another. It takes a vast amount of volunteer work on the part of those who are willing and wise to keep our great country going along as it should. We must each do something to make our particular kind of government appreciated as one of the great achievements of the human race.

You will get no words of pity from me because of external conditions or what lies ahead. I can only envy you the chance that is yours to make good in a world full of opportunity for any trained person who proposes to give service and who does not ask for unworked-for results. If you think some new method has been developed by which government can operate a legerdemain through legislation or administration to get something for nothing you had better drift back to the Physics Laboratory and ask to read what happens to perpetual motion machines. If you have fantastic ideas that you can spend money or power or energy and still have it, then we recommend an advanced course in some new department.

Making what you do count by learning to do it right the first time brings the big premiums in life. Using your head before your hands is the result we hope for from our type of education. The Faculty has given each of you some good blue prints upon which you can spend years in constructive effort.

As Stanford men and women we welcome you with both pride and affection. We will help you when we can. We want your support and loyal devotion to our type of privately endowed university, which we believe is one of the most valuable of all human institutions in making our country a place of human happiness and liberty.