

In His Words

James Parks Caldwell

[To the 1905 Semi-Centennial Grand Chapter at Miami University, June 26-28, 1905]

Here we have met, my brethren, to celebrate the jubilee of a great Fraternity, whose principles and purposes we hold in reverent honor, and in whose progress and prosperity we feel a common pride; rejoicing at the lofty place attained and held by Sigma Chi among the moral and intellectual forces which “make for righteousness” and, all unseen of men, exert far-reaching influences for the betterment of the social and political world. For each of us knows that, in the mind of the eager-hearted youth who for the first time assumes its blazon on his breast, the White Cross of our order becomes at once a shrine for the culture of that love to which both Paul and Plato have lent the music of their words—an emblem of self-respecting manhood, and perpetual monitor inculcating, as the sole basis of honor, the lessons of truth, of courtesy, and of courage.

I almost persuade myself, however, that the splendid loyalty to the fraternal idea, which I have noted as characteristic of Sigma Chi, has given to its founders a more exalted place than they deserve. Not to them only, nor even chiefly, have been due the amazing growth and wonderful progress of our fair Brotherhood, and its magnificent position in the fraternity world—results too marvelous for me to recognize as the natural outcome of any work in which I have consciously borne part. True it is that without the sowers there had been no hope of harvest; but this abundant fruitage betokens later efforts, when ours had gone to waste amid the turmoil of troublous times. Those who came after had a harder task, out of which their native energy has wrought a notable success. Men of constructive intellect, it was theirs to conserve the spirit by a radical change of form, to repair and remodel the crumbling foundations, and to rear thereon the stately structure which we now behold. . . . As the least active of the founders, I tender my homage to the real makers of Sigma Chi, content for my own part, having witnessed the planting of the acorn, to rest rejoicing in the far-thrown shadow of the mighty oak.

Fifty years ago, for all its wide expanse and ocean boundaries, our country had scarcely attained the rank of a second-rate power, and the nation, in the wider sense which now obtains, had not yet been born. Then followed four eventful years of storm and stress, which whatever else they brought, have left a common heritage of valor as an abiding inspiration through all coming time. My brothers here and I viewed the shield from opposite sides, each equally sure that his vision was clear; and quite as sure

am I that not one of us would be willing, were it possible, to undo his action in the past. At the end, the greatness of the victor brought some solace to defeat. The great soldier who led the conquering hosts set a bright example, which might have become the rule, had not a mad assassin stilled the kindly heart that prompted those noble words at Gettysburg. Both the war and the worse that followed have passed into history, and are remembered without bitterness; and I am glad to know that the most faithful upon the defeated side have brought back to the flag of their fathers the same loyalty with which they followed the starry cross, remembered now with tender pride, but without sorrow, and certainly without a shadow of regret.

Fifty years hence it is more than probable that another and greater assembly will gather here to commemorate the centennial of Sigma Chi, and it occurs to me as not impossible that among the younger brothers attending this convention some may happily survive to be present on that occasion. There are more than one whose expectancy of life is great enough to justify a further look into the future, and the number of whose years falls easily within the age-limit of the founders when the Fraternity began. Through them I would transmit a greeting, with a hand-clasp, to a generation yet unborn, with an expression of fervent hope that they may look back upon a career less checkered than that which we have seen; that the Brotherhood may have attained, by the accretion of like to like, the utmost growth consistent with its ancient maxim, *Non quot, sed qualis*; and that the great Republic, her peace secured by floating battlements, shall have long established throughout her broad domain the absolute supremacy of law.



Caldwell's sister, Rebekah Caldwell and niece, Isabella Davis visit with Hololulu Sigs at a alumni chapter meeting, September 1939