

In His Words

Daniel William Cooper

[Unknown source]

By our Ritual we must avoid the danger that may come by believing that one could conquer by just wearing an emblem to parade virtues that are not within the heart.

[Address—Semi-Centennial Celebration, Oxford Ohio, June 28, 1905]

The scenes and circumstances of today, the fact of standing on this once familiar spot, amid the classic shades of dear old Miami, carry my mind back fifty years to the time when, with these classmates and many other class—and college-mates, we passed those pleasant years preparing for the great realities of life, its duties, its trials and its joys. The memory of many persons and scenes of those days thrills my heart and seems to renew my youth, making all seem as of yesterday.

I cannot refrain from mentioning the name of Dr. Hall, then president of this university, and of Professors Bishop, Stoddard, Elliott and Wylie, under whose instruction we sat, and whose unfailing kindness and long forbearance toward us, amid our youthful follies and mental dullness, we can now appreciate far better than we then did or could. Among the many delightful memories of those far-off days is that of seven young men, one in heart and purpose—seven, symbol of completeness, if not perfection—who met and founded the Sigma Chi Fraternity, feeble as it was young, and seemingly hopeless and helpless. Looking upon our Fraternity as it then was and as it now is, I am filled with wonder and amazement, and can only exclaim. Is it possible that this growth and advancement has been made in the short space of fifty years? As Jacob of old, in early youth, setting out to make his fortune, crossed the Jordan with no possessions but a staff, but at length, after many years, returned with great abundance of what constituted the riches of the day; so we, the seven without even a staff, left our Alma Mater, and lo! we return today, rich, not in flocks and herds, but in the inconceivably higher, better riches of enlightened, earnest manhood and brotherhood.

As the poet “breathed a song into the air,” the results of which he know not for many years, but at length found it complete, from beginning to end, “in the heart of a friend;” so the song of the seven which we sang fifty years ago, viz.,

We here, united heart and hand
For all that's good and true will stand,
And pledge our word henceforth to be
The Sigma Chi Fraternity.

after these many years is found in its fullness, yea, with a hundred-fold volume and power in the hearts of thousands of brother-Sigma Chis today. One thought among many that impresses itself upon my mind in the presence of these representatives of our Fraternity assembled from all parts of our country, is the power and importance of well-directed efforts. The results of the tireless labor of the master, moving spirit, Brother Runkle, in founding our Fraternity, and of his worthy companions here present or of sacred memory, in that day of small things, are seen today in a manner that needs no comment—they speak for themselves.

Far be it from me to forget or belittle the efforts of the brothers who have so faithfully taken up and continued the work of advancing the interests of our Fraternity through all the years. Animated by the same spirit, and putting forth the same determined efforts, they have made possible what we behold today in this grand, glorious Semi-Centennial.

But while we rejoice in the spirit and power, which have accomplished all this, and can accomplish vastly more in the future, permit me a word of warning. It is easy for that which is strong to become weak; for that which is ascending, to lose its balance and fall to grovel in the dust; and just in proportion as it was strong and noble and exalted, if it falls, will it become weak and worthless and perish. The mighty forces found in nature, the material world—viz., light, heat, attraction, and electricity—so long as they remain in their normal condition and act as the Creator designed, bring health and joy, peace and beauty, prosperity and abundant fruitfulness; but, when out of their proper condition, work only devastation and death, as seen in the earthquake's throes, burying cities and even continents, with all that pertains to them, deep in the bowels of the earth, and in the tornado's deadly rush, and in the thunderbolt's resistless might. And just so in the social, the moral, and the spiritual worlds. The very forces which, when working according to the law under which they were designed to work, produce abundantly the fruits of purity, peace and love, and advance the best interests of all these forces, when working abnormally, out of their order, produce results most destructive and fatal.

Be it yours, then, my brothers, in laboring for the advancement of all that the Sigma Chi Fraternity stands for, to do all in the right spirit and from the right motives, so that you may hand down our Fraternity to those who come after you with its strength undiminished, its beauty untarnished;

and may it continue to advance in all that is good and true, until time itself shall be no more!”

[To the Grand Chapter, June 29 - July 2, 1909]

Brothers, you wear the cross, that emblem to me above all things the most worthy of reverence and love. See to it that you never do ought to dishonor it. Let your character be as pure and white as the enamel of which it is composed. Let your every word and deed be as rich and golden as the gold that surrounds and ornaments it. . . . As Jacob of old, in early youth, setting out to make his fortune, crossed the Jordan with no possession but a staff, but at length, after many years returned with great abundance of what constituted the riches of that day; so we, the seven, without even a staff, left our alma mater, and lo! We return today, rich, not in flocks and herds, but in the inconceivably higher, better riches of enlightened, earnest manhood and brotherhood. It has been my privilege here to be present at the initiation of a candidate into our Fraternity and listen to the beautiful, instructive, and inspiring words of our Ritual, bringing to the mind of the initiate only what is elevating and ennobling, teaching him to seek the highest degree of manhood capable of being attained. I trust that this grand ceremony will never be belittled or disgraced by any unbecoming ‘stunts’ or low, mean performances which endanger limb, life or morals. It is too good and splendid to be mingled with anything low or debasing, and I trust that everyone entering our Fraternity will feel it to be his duty and obligation to exemplify its teachings in his life. . . . And, while there must, of necessity, be partitions or walls between the different fraternities and orders, they should not be so high that we hurt our elbows in shaking hands over them. . . . From some journeys we may return to cross again the threshold and rejoice in the pleasures of the home from which we set out, in the journey of life there is no return. Each day is a step forward, and each year sets a milestone farther on toward that bourne from which there is no return. Ah, yes! Old age is inexorable. But while those who became the founders are near our journey’s end and must soon go the way of all the earth, we rejoice



Founder Cooper and son, H.Boyd Cooper at the family store in Kirksville, Missouri.

that as we leave other interests to the safe keeping of those who will cherish them, so we can leave those of Sigma Chi in the hands and minds and hearts of those who will watch over them with zealous care.”

[To Byron D. Stokes, Executive Secretary of the Fraternity in reply to his telegram informing Brother Cooper of the death of Thomas Cowan Bell, then leaving Cooper as the only surviving Founder of Sigma Chi]

Marion, Ohio Feb. 5, 1919

Byron D. Stokes

Dear Bro.

Telegram announcing the death of Brother Thomas Cowan Bell duly received. I sent a telegram of sympathy at once to his family.

It is with deep sorrow that I think of his death. He was a good student; an accomplished scholar; a brave and fearless soldier and patriot as his advancing titles of Captain, Major, and Colonel attest; a successful educator; a gentleman of the highest type, and an unfailing friend, and in his death the Country has lost a noble Son and our Fraternity a noble Brother.

The founders of this Fraternity will soon all live only in memory, but I am truly thankful that the Fraternity itself, founded on high and unchanging principles, will still live on in increasing strength and prosperity under the watchful care of its loving and faithful members. I appreciate your thoughtfulness in sending the telegram.

With best wishes to yourself

I am yours, in Sigma Chi

D. W. Cooper