An Address
By Dr. J. Will Harris
Founder and President
of the Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico.

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OUR COLLEGE.
1912-1935.

Members of the Faculty, Students and Friends:

We are assembled for the opening of the twenty-third school year. I wish to call your attention to our present equipment and to future possibilities.

We have a physical plant of seventeen all-concrete, modern superior buildings erected by my brother, Mr. Clarence Harris, with his eyes always on perfection and utility, according to the plans and specifications of our able architects, Broughton and Broughton, of New York, to whose artistic imagination stand the buildings and Farmers Monument on Riverside Drive and the bridges on the green thoroughway. These buildings and the athletic field are memorial buildings roofed and grounded as monuments to the donors of their perpetual love and interest in the generations of students that are to pass through this college.

In addition to the above we have found near a location on seven hills covered with tropical trees and flowers, surrounded by mountains and valleys and cooled by the trade winds that climb up 4,000 feet to the crest of our eastern mountains and roll down in refreshing breezes, tempering the otherwise hot continuous summer into a perpetual spring. Even our nights are gladdened by all the constellations of the heavens from the North Star to the Southern Cross. The darker the night the brighter shine the stars and the nearer we feel that we can almost reach up and touch the skirts of the Milky Way.

The hills, valleys, mountains, stars and constellations say to us: "We are the expressions of your Heavenly Father's love; treasure, care of and forthought of you, faculty and students. He watches over you. He wants you to be perfect even as He is perfect. All creation, all knowledge, all experience, all things are for the development in you of a perfect character. Use them all."

The courses now offered in this college are the accepted liberal arts courses commonly found in all colleges. We have been forced to this purely academic field by circumstances over which we have had little control. It is good as far as it goes but, in my mind it is only a small part of what we should and could do if we had the means. The justification of our Liberal Arts College in Puerto Rico is its emphasis on definite Christian character and teaching.

For as E. Stanley Jones says: "The Christian is the creation of a new type of being, as different from the ordinary man as the ordinary man is from the animal. The modern man is left by science without a goal; by exploded humanism without a hero; by logic with an impassable. Men need nothing in their modern days as much as they need a working philosophy of life—an adequate way to live," "The real concern and purpose of this age," as Lord Haldane said, "is not so much religious, nor even intellectual, as moral."

The most important thing in education is not so much the subject matter learned from books, nor the droning, centralizing and the disciplining of the mind; nor yet the ability to make high grades, however pleasant, attractive and profitable these may be. The great thing in education, and which most students miss, is the attainment of right attitudes, great aspirations, and purposeful tenacity of the Christian.

Dr. Harris spent his first two decades on Texas cattle ranges following, among others, the Persian curriculum, "riding, shooting and telling the truth."

I feel we are now getting somewhere with our contemplated emphasis in our liberal arts curriculum. The Persian curriculum—"to ride, to shoot, and to speak the truth" is figuratively the better curriculum of students for boys and girls—learning to do, to think and to hit the mark, for life in the hills and plains, for the discharge of everyday responsibilities. This is, in my opinion, the most useful and efficient course of study for students in the liberal arts college of today. The college is the place and time for youth to learn. In addition to class work, the great principles of living to give and to take, to see good in every body and every thing and to perceive that good discarding the bad; and to associate with all classes without lowerestested status. Out of all this the student should emerge, all conscientious.
most, clean, strong and prepared to enter life as it is. He should be prepared to keep out of the whirlpools of the common currents, and to grow into superior worth to society because of his association, in college, with people and with books which together with those every day common arts which I give in more detail below, develop true, worthwhile character.

The old college curriculum of Latin, Greek, Mathematics, and English was like a draft horse steady, hard pulling over steady roads which finally bucked us at the end of four years’ study. We were at the end of college years launched out into the cold, presumably equipped with sufficient mental power and religious fervor to begin life. That curriculum broke down, but it had much in its favor.

Then came the elective system, where students had a chance to choose the things they wanted to study. They chose the easiest road and in high powered cars reached the end of this brainless system in a short thirty years. The brain trusters and specialists mean highest efficiency of service. All students had to major, specialize. Result: many specialists grasping poverty and all specialized jobs filled. We are like a Latin American Republic with all our army holding the lack of general and colored—all highly trained to command but no regiments to take orders.

I would like to see our liberal arts courses extended to include other cultural and practical phases of the best things in our modern life—the things that will make a horse a power of inspiration, a church a fountain of refreshing vigor and a state a common place of abode, the chief aim of all being to widen men’s sphere of social effort and activity and to increase freedom and security in that sphere.

I propose the following additional courses:

A. The Useful Arts. This includes Home Economics such as sewing, needlework, cooking, care of children, foods, clothing, etc.; and also includes such portions of Agriculture as are related to the maintenance of a home, e.g., kitchen gardening for vegetables, rabbits and pigs for meat, cows for milk, chickens for eggs with a table in the parlor. The table may be supplied with food. In all these, knowledge and skill are demanded, and in their acquisition lies the educational value of their place in the curriculum of a college seeking to develop the whole man.

B. The Demonstration Service of the above.

The College Farms offer a practical application of all theoretical knowledge. The model dairy, pig pens, poultry houses and vegetable gardens, will be the laboratories.

Inexpensive but well equipped modern cottages will afford home practice for the girls. They will learn to keep house in much the same fashion as they will later have to in their own homes; doing all the work, purchasing food, planning and cooking meals, etc. Through the performance of these household duties the women will acquire skillful and systematic adaptation of sciences for the attainment of a well ordered home as the embodiment of calming personality expressed in the order and the appearance of the home and in the home and the manners of the hostess.

The Social Arts.

A Community Rural Center will be established near the college to be conducted by the students under supervision. This will be a center in which the people of the community can gather in the evenings and on holidays for social, educational, and religious cooperation in the development of their common life as citizens of a democracy. In this social settlement work the student will see life as it really is for the common people and will be led in time to devote his energies and thoughts to our rural communities where 75% of our people live.

These community centers could be extended in

making, modeling and making clay such as vases, base relief, comfits, and pottery in general.

B. The Free Arts.

These are the arts that create form for its own sake, including music, painting, drawing, engraving, sculpture, poetry, etc.

C. The Independent Arts.

This branch of Arts creates form that ministers to some useful end, e.g., interior decoration; landscape gardening; cabinet making and general carpentry; ceramics or the production of all objects formed by

number in all the districts within reach of the college. For present there is no such center anywhere in the municipality of Osnabrueck with its 20,000 population. In fact, this kind of work is nowhere found among Posen to Rico’s rural population of 1,156,000 living on small farms among the hills of our little school.

I believe the above courses should constitute a part of our curriculum and count towards the requirements of a liberal education. The present system of higher education is preparing a part of individuals ex

pert in one thing with little knowledge or interest in anything else. Individuals learn more and more about less and less. It is leading us not to liberty but to slavery. I believe in specialization after the student’s graduation from college.

Had Henry Field been educated in modern engineering he would probably have been found today at his table working in perfect the third piston ring of a $15,000 car zoom company was building. Had Thomas A. Edison been subjected to the rigors of a 20th century electric school, he would possibly have spent a life time experimenting how many accurate messages could be sent over one telegraph wire at the same time.

Harry Woodman Chase, twice president of the University of North Carolina, late of the University of Illinois, now Chancellor of New York University, is dedicating a memorial tablet to New York University’s most famous professor of Art, Samuel F. B. Morse, the inventor of telegraphy, recently declared:

"Samuel F. B. Morse? ignorance of the best scientists thought a century ago saved him from pedantry in his early experiments with the telegraph. Had Morse been a physicist with a physics’ specialized theory it is quite possible that his great plan of making the universe ‘by kingdoms rightwise’ might never have passed beyond the stage of a dinner table conversation. It would be of the reliability of a recent saying by Mr. Dewey: ‘We are only as the things we do not know.’

I believe that every student should be given a general cultural course stressing at all times the (art and skill necessary in business and social dealings bearing it all on the greater factors, namely, the integrity and honesty of individual character as fundamental both in private and public service, as servant, steward, business man or an ordinary citizen. I further believe that the major and minor should not be so regimented, possibly abdicated altogether, except for those who are preparing for admission to higher studies, and that final summer examinations be discontinued. The credit system of units cut up into semesters and carefully packed away into frames of sacrifices is calling all far too short of efficiency in education. I would have the student work at least one and two years before entering the subject and the needs of the student) for a semester in the following: Languages, Biology, Mathematics and Physics, Chemistry, Geology, Astronomy, Sociology, Economics, Psychology, Ethics, Logic, Comparative Religion, the Bible and Religious Education, History, Government of our own country, the Useful Arts, the Free Arts, the Independent Arts and the Social
students need a preparation for common everyday living as home makers and worthy citizens of a free democracy, which democracy will either make or destroy them, depending not on the Government but on their attitudes, their industry, and their perseverance in that which leads to the highest and common good of all.

Too often it is true that students have to readjust their whole way of living when they leave college and those who succeed do so in spite of their college training. We should make it doubly sure that our graduates succeed in no small degree because of their college training under our direction. They will do so if we try to fit the courses of study to the needs of Puerto Rican and even trying to fit the students to the courses and standards handed down to us by other colleges. If we try to fit the student for clear thinking; honest endeavor, and an appreciation of God's beauty and goodness, we will succeed.

The student here should be trained to be honest, industrious, law-abiding, God fearing men and women of integrity, who will go out to establish a democratic society in the home and in their communities, and to help to maintain our democratic institutions and government to an even increasing degree on the foundation of righteousness, justice and equity.

Thus, I believe, is worthy aim and should be the great objective: the development of every student along his natural gifts through a broad, general training, into a well-rounded character, resourceful, independent, and of a steady Christian faith, full of hope in himself, in his fellowmen, and in the providence of God.

Such is the college ideal I had twenty-five years ago and such is the college in which I am interested in furthering in the 9th degree on our present solid foundation of liberal arts till it becomes a power in Puerto Rican education and an example to other colleges that are sure to spring into being soon over all Latin America.

In this paper I have simply restated my original ideas when I started this school in 1912. Let us hold our academic courses to a high standard—such as we are to accept other colleges of liberal arts; let us introduce students to the modern methods of life and maintenance of the home through the performance of practical duties related to the home. Let us endeavor to convert the students to the present purpose of themselves not for making money but for entering into a gloriously endowed world in which there has been and will always be a place and employment for every individual talent of the adequately trained men, with a guarantee of the supply of all their needs—physical and spiritual. Let us perfect our college not as a center for social work but as a power house for the development of character, according to our charter specification, "Independent, resourceful and of a steady Christian faith."

In doing this our college will best serve the present generation and will find a growing field in the leadership of educational development of our part of the world.

As a college, one therefore a twofold debt and obligation, to worthy friends who have given us these beautiful buildings and to our Creator who has supplied us so bountifully with natural surroundings. We can discharge this obligation in the faithful performance of our duties and in the care and protection of what has been given to us for use in life. In doing thus we may confidently undertake great and greater things—anticipating heaven's blessing and earthly joys in the accomplishment and fulfillment of our ideals.