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ADDRESS OF PRESIDENT M. CAREY THOMAS AT THE OPENING OF
BRYN MAWR COLLEGE, SEPTEMBER 29, 1915

We meet this year at the opening of the 31st year of the College for another year of peaceful study and, as at this time last year, we meet in the midst of the greatest war the world has ever known. Except in our western hemisphere there is hardly any part of the world which is at peace. Even though all Asia is not fighting, there is widespread unrest throughout the whole east and, as you know, the hideous massacres of the Armenians by the Turks are going forward as I speak without any possibility of their being checked. The largest battle lines of history are facing each other, running from the North Sea to Switzerland on the east, on the west from the Gulf of Riga to the Carpathian Mountains, and along these hundreds of miles millions of men are fighting each other. In the beautiful Austrian Tyrol the Italians are storming Austrian fortresses thousands of feet up in the clouds. In the Carpathian Mountains Russians and Hungarians are fighting for the possession of savage mountain passes. On the plains of Homer's Troy and in the Hellespont, in the classic places fought over by Greeks, Romans, Macedonians and all the races of antiquity, English, Scotch, Irish, Australians, Canadians, Indians and French are struggling with Germans for the ancient capital of the Byzantine Empire. Greece

and all the Balkan States whose peoples are the descendants of the inhabitants of the outlying provinces of Greece and Rome are only waiting to spring to arms. In the deserts and trackless forests of Africa the British South African forces are taking jungles away from the few German settlers. In a few months or weeks Great Britain will own an African Empire that stretches from the Cape to Cairo. Everywhere in the air aircraft and under the sea submarines and submarine destroyers wage incessant warfare.

Men of all the countries at war between twenty and fifty years of age are being killed, or invalidated homes shattered in mind and body. Women of all the countries at war are doing men's work at home and must continue to do it for a generation. As in previous wars, 40 per cent of the men killed in battle will leave no descendants, and among the men killed first of all in battle will be, as in all other wars, the most distinguished men of their generation. Only a few of the widows and sweethearts of the men killed in battle will marry, and the weakened descendants of the unfit will stagger for generations under war debts such as the world has never imagined. The torch of civilization must be kept alight by the youth of the neutral countries of which the United States is by far the greatest. Your

generation of Americans must see to it that after this war is over there shall never be another to destroy all that remains to us of civilization. Until this war is fought out nothing can be done. The issues involved are so vast and the sacrifices already made so colossal that an enforced peace now would mean an armed camp of European nations gathering fresh strength to spring at each other's throats. Moreover, an enforced peace now would mean only an enforced Germanic peace without indemnity for ravished Belgium, northern France, and northwestern Russia—a peace unthinkable for the Allies who since the beginning of the war for which they were wholly unprepared have been steadily gaining from week to week in soldiers, ammunition and offensive power.

I believe that Jane Addams and other women who called and attended the Women's Peace Congress at the Hague this summer were ill judged in their action and wholly unaware of the actual situation. As was foreseen, they accomplished nothing. The great suffrage leaders, Dr. Shaw, and Mrs. Pankhurst, and the French women who unanimously refused to take part in the Congress and sent a ringing protest seem to me much clearer sighted in waiting until the war is over, when women and men of all civilized countries can unite together in plans for preventing another war.

It becomes our highest duty, however, as citizens of a nation at peace, now while the war is being fought out to a finish, which is inevitable in my opinion, to prepare ourselves to come forward instantly on its conclusion with a practical plan to make war less probable, and permanent peace more possible in the future. Such a practical plan, and the only practical plan that I know of, is

"The League to Enforce Peace," explained by Ex-President Taft for the first time publicly at the last Bryn Mawr Commencement and since then at many public conferences and meetings. This League to Enforce Peace has been recently organized with Mr. Taft, as President, President Lowell of Harvard as Chairman of the Executive Committee, and a long list of Vice-Presidents of which I am happy to be one. It should, in my opinion, be joined by every Bryn Mawr professor and student and by every other true American. The need of some such League was fully explained and admirably argued by Mr. L. Lowes Dickinson of Oxford in an article in the *Atlantic* in 1912 called *The War and the Way Out* which has been published in pamphlet form. Also in the current October *Atlantic*, President Lowell brings forward excellent reasons for organizing the League to Enforce Peace and answers all objections. I hope that every student will read both Mr. Dickinson's and President Lowell's articles and if convinced will become a member of the League. On successive Fridays for the next six weeks in chapel I will take up the reasons for joining the League. Next to woman suffrage, it seems to me the most urgent outside public question for you to think of and make up your minds about.

And now let us turn from the great war which has been absorbing so much of our sympathy—and also of our time, if we do our part in trying to alleviate even a little its terrible suffering, to Bryn Mawr College and our coming year of study. I am sure that all our former students have returned eager to do their best work and that all our entering graduate students and freshmen are equally eager. We were so busy going through a crisis last year that I think it may have

interfered a little with our work. But it did not affect the work of the freshman class. They were attending classes regularly while the rest of us were discussing the cut rule. We have never had as good work done by any freshman class as last year. The whole college, however, had the happy experience of attending lectures. The students knew what it felt like to go to lectures and the professors knew what it felt like to have filled class-rooms. At the end of the year with the coöperation of the students the faculty agreed on a plan which the students believed would be perfectly satisfactory. It remains now to prove that it will work better than a formal cut rule. There is no reason why our present students should not attend their classes with perfect regularity as our earlier students used to do and have the joy of doing it without a cut rule. We have all agreed that we do not wish anybody in Bryn Mawr College who does not want to go to lectures. It will be the duty of the senate to exclude such students. In a little community like ours carefully selected by examination there is no reason why there should be even one black sheep. You are all of you very white but now and then one black sheep creeps into the college. The only thing is to get it out as fast as possible. This will give the good students, the white lambs of Bryn Mawr College, the opportunity of doing right of themselves. I understand that you are going to instruct all the freshmen that they must attend lectures regularly. The professors will do the same and the senate will take care of the renegades. We are not going to allow them to deprive other students of the liberty of the olden days of Bryn Mawr. If the students make this plan work it *will* work and

if it does work it is much more ideal than any formal cut rule however liberal and independent.

I wonder how many of the students have read a splendid little book by Arnold Bennett called *The Human Machine*, which we may well take as our college manual for this year. In this little book Arnold Bennett tells us that if we choose to take the trouble to harness our brain and make it do what we wish it to do we shall be very much better off than people generally. He says many very admirable things some of which you are not old enough to appreciate. He says that people go through life always intending to live by rule and to save time for thought and reading and that when they reach sixty years of age they are still going on intending from year to year and then all of a sudden their life is over and their brain has never been harnessed. He has a great deal to say about the brain as "gentleman at large." It does what it pleases unless we train it. If we train it it does just what we want it to do.

'I didn't feel like stewing,' says the young man who against his wish will fail in his examination. 'The words were out of my mouth before I knew it,' says the husband whose *wife is a woman*. 'I couldn't get any inspiration to-day,' says the artist. 'I can't resist Stilton,' says the fellow who is dying of greed. 'One can't help one's thoughts,' says the old worrier. And you will say to me: 'My brain is myself. How can I alter myself? I was born like that.' In the first place, you were not born 'like that,' you have *lapsed* to that. And in the second place your brain is not yourself. It is only a part of yourself. The brain can be trained, as the hand and eye can be trained; it can be

made as obedient as a sporting dog, and by similar methods."

If you will read this admirable little book I think that you will feel that it is quite possible for you to do almost anything with yourselves. You all of you have quite enough brain to get on with. You would not be here in Bryn Mawr College otherwise. Your brain can do almost anything you want it to do if you will only train it. I am perfectly certain that any student of Bryn Mawr College who chooses to study from 9 to 1; from 2 to 3.30 and from 7.30 to 9.30 for five days in the week and from three to four hours on Saturday and to make her brain work hard during these hours could become an excellent student. But there are distractions and that "lady at large," your brain, is so very willing to be distracted if you allow it. If you knew how hard it is to get even one uninterrupted hour after you get into the rush of life you would regard seven hours a day of uninterrupted time for thought and work as your highest privilege. There is scarcely anything in the world more pleasant than really working hard at something worth while and succeeding in doing it well. Very few things in life are so much worth while as the intellectual work you do in college.

Many freshmen tell me that they have come to Bryn Mawr because it is such a small college. We *are* a small college and that gives us a chance for perfection that is harder to get in a large college. When you sing in a few minutes your song to Athene, the goddess of wisdom, I wish you to remember that she is not only our Bryn Mawr Athene but that she was also the chief goddess of the Athenians. In this world it is quality that tells not quantity. In Greece about 10,000 Athenians in about

200 years gave the world the most beautiful things ever written, the most beautiful sculpture, the most beautiful architecture. A few lines of Sappho are more lovely than anything that has been written since. Plato and Aristotle have taught us more that is true and beautiful in philosophy than all the philosophers that have ever lived. The Greeks did a few things perfectly. We do many things imperfectly. It would be wonderful if Bryn Mawr should take as its ideal quality and not quantity.

It seems to me that every Bryn Mawr student has double the opportunity of other students. You have passed a hard entrance examination. You are few enough to come into contact with your professors. Your professors are greatly interested in research work and study and can really help you to study. We like to think that Bryn Mawr is the servant of her students, that as a college she has been founded and is carried on in order to give you what you want, in order to give her graduates the opportunity of doing research work and her undergraduates the opportunity of coming in touch with scholars and with scholarship. In thinking of the college as I have been travelling this summer and comparing your opportunities with those of other students I have felt that you were really very fortunate. I had an opportunity of speaking in Japan to about 300 Japanese girls. Miss Tsuda, the head of the school, is a Bryn Mawr woman. She told me that the ideal of her Japanese girls was to come to Bryn Mawr College and that this ideal was just as impossible of attainment as it would be for any one of you to study in the planet Mars. She said that she really did not dare talk much to them about girls' colleges in the United States.

It makes them too unhappy. They lie awake night after night thinking of how wonderful it would be to go to an American college. It seemed to me perhaps unwise of Miss Tsuda to give them the excitement of seeing the President of Bryn Mawr. Women of other countries long in vain for what you have given you so freely that you sometimes forget it is the greatest gift youth can have. The daughters of mothers whose highest hope had been to come to Bryn Mawr but who failed to fulfil it are now being sent to Bryn Mawr as well as the daughters of Bryn Mawr graduates. One of the freshmen told me that when she decided on Bryn Mawr her grandmother was perfectly delighted. It seems that it had been her grandmother's ideal for years to have a granddaughter at Bryn Mawr. I wonder if you realize sufficiently that you are enjoying here privileges of study which the older generation of American women were unable to obtain. Plan your work in college. Do not take just any course—take the *right* course. How silly are the reasons for which some students take college courses—"right time of day"—"said to be easy"—"somebody I know is going to take it." Make your brain do your will and tell you what course you really need. Think carefully what you may want to do after leaving college. Here at Bryn Mawr older students tell younger students: "Take required work—Latin, English and a science." They never tell

the Freshman that if she begins in her Freshman year on what she loves and wishes to specialize in she will have the joy of taking advanced work in it and studying it for four years. We now give the Bryn Mawr degree with distinction in three grades and we are thinking of giving the Bryn Mawr degree with honours in special subjects which will mean honours in those studies in which post-major work is taken for two years. I believe this is a step in the right direction. High grades and honours in special subjects mean not only the power of continual attention, than which nothing is more important, but also intellectual ability. A great deal can be accomplished by a person who possesses industry and devotion alone, but a person who possesses intellectual ability *and* industry *and* devotion is happy beyond all others and is sure to become distinguished in life.

You have come to Bryn Mawr College to acquire habits of industry, to find out what you care most to do in after life and to pursue it with devotion, and to develop whatever intellectual ability you may possess to its highest level. Do not let yourselves forget these main objects of your college life in the less important distractions that surround you even here where we try to protect you from them. If you become faithful votaries at the shrine of the goddess of wisdom, you will be rewarded by the highest happiness the world can bestow.