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Speech of Professor C. V. Riley
At the Second Trustees' Banquet.

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Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen: — I had hoped not to be called upon. I esteem it a privilege and honor to be with you to-night, but thoughts crowd so thickly on such an occasion that it is impossible to do them justice in condensed utterance. Time wings its even course so swiftly, from the retrospect, that it is hard for me to realize that over two decades have passed since I first became intimate with him whose memory and beneficent deeds we meet to commemorate.

In my early St. Louis days I was drawn both by taste and occupation, into the company of men who were generally my elders, and it was my good fortune to become intimate with many who have made this community and the whole country the better for having lived in them. Engelmann, Spencer, Wislizenus, Baumgarten, Shumard, Holmes, Shaw — not to mention those yet living here — will thus

remain with me in spirit and influence as long as memory shall endure. Henry Shaw held a unique position among these. He was a lover of Nature; not a special devotee of Science. Yet he was so alive to the welfare of the plants in his garden and park that everything pertaining thereto interested him. And thus it came about that I was often consulted and spent many a pleasant and profitable hour with him who was by nature rather reserved.

It were supererogation at this time to praise the substantial work which he did for St. Louis, for the country — aye, for the world, — where others who knew him better have already so fittingly done so. But there were three characteristics of his life which shone forth from his other peculiarities, and which those who gather at these annual banquets should never tire of emphasizing. These were his sturdy sense of honor and strict business integrity, his estimate of wealth as but a means to a noble end, and his strong love of Nature.

No nation can achieve the highest endeavor and development that does not recognize its own weaknesses and endeavor to overcome them; and are we not in need, as a people, of enforcing on every possible occasion those principles which Shaw's life exemplified? Had he not seen corruption in municipal, state and federal legislation too often fattening on loose public sentiment; dishonesty winked at as smartness, if only successful in its avaricious aim? Had he not seen how, too often, our most industrious and successful men had wrecked health and happiness in devotion to business which became a passion for mere lucre, until it shut from their lives all other avenues of enjoyment, stunted the intellectual and moral nature, and left to sons, in accumulated wealth, a heritage of questionable value? Had he not witnessed the rapid increase of money kings, the concentrating of vast wealth in the hands of the few and the growth of trusts and monopolies at the expense of the toiling masses, until socialism in some of its more hideous forms began to lift its head in the land? Had he not, in short,

felt that there is danger in our material growth, unparalleled in the history of the world, unless guided and influenced by something higher and more enduring, which will save us from the fate so graphically portrayed in Byron's well-known lines :

“ There is a moral to all human tales ;
’Tis but the same rehearsal of the past.
First freedom, and then glory — when that falls,
Wealth, vice, corruption — barbarism at last,
And history, with all her volumes vast,
Hath but one page ! ”

Henry Shaw knew the refining, elevating and broadening influence of the study of Nature in her more pleasing manifestations. He drew inspiration from the voiceless lips of flowers, and appreciated the value and need of these same influences to the community at large.

The Missouri Botanical Garden and the subsidiary School of Botany give St. Louis proud preëminence in matters which all good citizens must appreciate. The older botanic garden and arboretum at Cambridge do not excel it and nothing else approaches it on the continent. The national botanic garden at Washington is, as such, a farce and a disgrace. Its chief function seems to be to furnish bouquets and plants to congressmen and their friends, and its influence has so far been destructive — not helpful — of all effort looking to the establishment of a truly national and creditable garden. This Missouri garden and school will prove a material and perpetual monument to Shaw's practical wisdom. But valuable as they are and will ever be, I doubt whether they will have more enduring or important influence on the country at large than the lesson of his life as manifested in the three characteristics which I have indicated ; and it seems to me that it must have been a patriotic and underlying sense of this fact which prompted, as much as anything else, the provision for these annual feasts. His work had otherwise insured the keeping of his memory as fresh and green as the May foliage he loved so well —

had already made it certain that due homage would be awarded "till the last syllable of time recorded."

Gentlemen, as an old St. Louisan I feel proud of what Mr. Shaw did. St. Louis is to be congratulated on having had such a citizen; she is to be congratulated that he chose as first director of the garden, one so well qualified for the work. I have watched Prof. Trelease since his graduation from Cornell and have been in close working contact with him, and I but echo the sentiment of all who have had the pleasure of his acquaintance in expressing the confidence that he possesses in a marked degree the knowledge, the enthusiasm, the devotion, the tact and the ability to build wisely and for the world's benefit on the munificent trust with which he has been charged. Gentlemen, I thank you.

