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Law School Dedication Address

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LAW SCHOOL DEDICATION ADDRESS

President McLeod, Dean Prince, Admiral President Smith, Distinguished Guests: Having a deep sense of humility, I always shrink somewhat from the high and complimentary words of praise which usually greet a speaker when being introduced. I might say to President McLeod that his words sound very sweet to my right ear, but my left ear cautions me to be careful. Commencing with yesterday, those who have been guests of the Richland County Bar have been treated to a round of delightful entertainment. In fact, all who have been guests of Columbia and of this Bar have become accustomed to the warmth and friendship and the sociability that always greet us here. I am only sorry that the warmth of that welcome does not quite equal the inner glow that most of us experienced and enjoyed at the preliminaries preceding the banquet last night, and which would make us more comfortable, perhaps, today, on this important out-door event on your campus. I am sorry, too, that the warmth of your welcome is not quite of sufficient degree to temper this frigid blast of air that Chief Justice Vanderbilt brought with him from New England. I am sure that he did not do that deliberately. Yesterday we had the high honor of having Chief Justice Vanderbilt sit with us as our guest on the Supreme Court of South Carolina. I think it is the first time in the history of our Court that we have had the privilege and honor of having a Chief Justice from another State visit us. In fact, we were so pleased with his participation and evidence of friendliness and helpfulness that, following the argument of a case, we attempted to get him to write the decision.

I was impressed yesterday, also, when I had the personal honor of being inducted into the international legal fraternity of Phi Delta Phi. This is a splendid group of young men who constitute in part those who are taking Law in Petigru College. It has become axiomatic for all of us to say that the future of this great country largely depends upon the legal profession, and that the strength of the legal profession depends upon the quality of its members. That being a recognized fact, I feel greatly complimented at being invited to speak here today on this significant and historic occasion.

We were told last night at the splendid banquet given us by the Richland County Bar Association, that the completion of this magnificent structure which you face marks the culmination and fruition of a dream. All honor should go to Dean Prince, President Smith, the Board of Trustees, and the hard working helpful Committee who, week in and week out, pressed for an appropriation to erect this building. Recognizing as we do, that the welfare of our great country does

depend in large measure upon the Bar, it becomes of all importance that we furnish the necessary means and methods to train in the law those young men who attend college and aspire in this direction. They should be encouraged to come here, and they should be helped not only by the judiciary but by every member of the Bar. Every lawyer knows when he begins to practice, that unless he is afforded some unusual opportunity, some exceptional opportunity, his apprenticeship is the hardest and most difficult of any profession. It is not only a difficult thing to begin, but its importance grows year by year as he gains a foothold and serves the public. We are all profoundly interested that the legal profession increase the value of its service to the public and improve the administration of justice.

It has occurred to me that it would not be amiss in this day, when we are beset with so many strange and peculiar doctrines coming from all kinds of sources, to mention a case that was tried in Colleton County 100 years ago. I mention this case not for the purpose of introducing any controversial subject, current or otherwise. I refer to it solely for the purpose of emphasizing that throughout the years, the bench and the bar of this State have striven with might and main to vindicate the law. This case was tried 15 or 20 years before the Civil War, and is reported in RICHARDSON'S REPORTS. It is entitled *State v. Blackledge and Motley*.¹ The crime charged arose in my own County of Colleton. Blackledge and Motley were white men, and were not citizens of Colleton County. Where they came from I do not know. Their business was to catch runaway slaves. That expression sounds as foreign to us today as though it never existed. They were employed to catch a colored man who had escaped. They were brutal, callous men, as they naturally would be since they followed that occupation; and in the course of that hunt they killed the fugitive. They were apprehended and charged with murder. They were convicted in Colleton County and sentenced to be hanged. They appealed to the South Carolina Supreme Court, and that appeal was heard here in Columbia. The judgment of conviction was affirmed 100 years ago, and Blackledge and Motley were hanged.

It is the objective of every true hearted citizen and of every well trained lawyer, and of every conscientious judge, to see that the true spirit of justice and the equal administration of the law shall continue to prevail in our nation. Nothing could embody that spirit more fully or more effectively than the splendid law building which has just recently been erected. Made of brick and stone and steel, it stands dumb and inarticulate. It could be assigned for any other use and

1. 7 Rich. Law 327 (S. C. 1854).

purpose. It is only the pulsating life within it, promoted by an effective and inspired law faculty, and the studious young gentlemen who are there to learn the principles of government and of law, which make it worthwhile. We trust that its usefulness may go on year in and year out, and that the ability and training of our lawyers shall reach an even higher level in the future. May I say as a member of the Supreme Court of this State, that the members of the Court have been very much impressed in the last three years with the bearing and dignity and the poise of the young members of the Bar who have argued cases before us. The preparation of their appeals shows the innate ability which they possess.

Let me close by expressing again my pleasure in being here and speaking for the judiciary of South Carolina and for the Bar of this State.

EDWARD LADSON FISHBURNE.*

*B.S.; 1904. The Citadel. Associate Justice of the South Carolina Supreme Court. Member of American and South Carolina Bar Associations.