

142 Linn St.,

Ithaca, N.Y.,

March 18, 1918.

## " A Better Chapter, A Greater Fraternity."

Brother President and Brothers of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity:

With the criterion of our "Papers of the Evening" set at a standard which I consider worthy of any undergraduate body of any university in America, there could have been the possibility of my flinching before the task of presenting to you something worthy of consideration and open to criticism by my esteemed brothers; but for the fact, that shortly after my initiation into the brotherhood there began to accumulate within me suggestions, which I could have made from time to time, even as they occurred to me. But knowing of a coming opportunity to speak before the House, I awaited my time.

At no period, in the history of the U.S.A. has there been so many vitally important and so extremely interesting topics before the public at one time. I am excited enough to believe that I could have interested the majority of the House in any of the following discussions: The controversy over Armed Merchant ships and its relation to the Negro State of Liberia, Africa, Our own great question of National Defense as it is now being debated in Congress where in the Negro has been the latest power on which the democratic government has built some of its most delicate arguments yet as we all know would never be admitted openly until this nation found itself in the throes of a conflict such as is ravaging the eastern hemisphere at this writing. Supplementing my discussion with the weakness of our army and navy. And again, why not a discussion of the anti-bandit Villa and why Uncle Sam has submitted to his unpardonable outrages until public sentiment has forced an issue through the Columbus tragedy. Or I could have spoken to you on the teaching of secondary mathematics such as now presented in the Colored Prep Schools and colleges of this country.

But as my subject indicated I shall discuss very briefly a topic that is unquestionably nearer and I am sure by far, much nearer, to the Alpha Chapter is an increase of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, then to the extent that we put our lives even our very souls into this the work of our beloved chapter, even to the same extent does the General Fraternity approach as a limit, the magnificent ideal as expressed in our most noble motto: "First of all, Servants of all, we shall transcend all." Hence the boldness of my subject, "A better Chapter, A Greater Fraternity".

If in the course of my paper I offend any of the brothers, I beg of you as a brother to forgive, because that which I am about to say is the result of observation and my firm convictions of certain matters which are for the good of this our beloved Chapter.

In our Chair we have a most noble Brother, in the person of M.M. Dorsey, clean, upright, industrious, worthy of every name respect, yet I can truly say that he does not receive the courtesy and respect that is due the president of such an organization. He is more than a brother he is our President. Both in and out of meetings we should never forget that fact. We can't control the outside part but we can and should better the conditions within our meetings. Should our president ask for order more than once especially when he speaks personally to a brother? How can an intelligent man possibly forget to address the chair before speaking to the house? Brothers let us have just a little more respect for our President.

As to our regular meetings let us have an hour to begin, making late enough that only a very rare case will make a man <sup>early</sup> late. The idea of reading reports three or four times for some bedraggled Brother is preposterous, it is highly absurd. Brothers should we hold any conversation except to the chair ~~in~~ house, except by permission? Should we smoke during the meeting? Should we go to bed while the meeting is in session, even though some of us are seated on such? Why, I have actually seen Brothers with their backs turned squarely to the Chair. Should we descend ~~the~~ to see as to even think of sneaking a brother up while in session assembled? That practice

is one of the lowest forms of amusement, and an open insult to the Chair and House in general. With an insistent, persistent and consistent consideration of the foregoing facts, our business part of the meeting will be shortened by thirty minutes. Not that I am in a hurry to get out, but Brothers it is a contemptible reflection on us as educated men, as efficient men to spend ninety minutes doing thirty minutes business. Then at our meeting we could have plenty of time to sing, laugh, gossip, and if necessary goose each other all around the room.

Brothers, Saturday night is our meeting night. We owe it to the Fraternity to give this one night unreservedly to the Fraternity. Shopping, Parades, social, or business engagements, even social work ~~should~~ <sup>are and before</sup> circumstances ever be arranged for Sat. Night. That is our night and we should demand it unreservedly.

Although we are the mother chapter, and naturally <sup>have</sup> a great amount of prestige, yet to maintain it we must get on the job. Beta, Gamma, and Nu are displacers, do you realize that they are displacing us? We need letters filled with something worth while, not only to the Sphinx, but to every Chapter in the Fraternity. And such an offense as Brother Pollard shopping <sup>and his before</sup> ~~she~~ <sup>is</sup> attacked with such fire that Bro Pollard and the other Chapters would always think twice when they are dealing with Alpha Chapter. *We need, must have a general officer, from this Chapter next year.*

Brothers, our ritual is copied on cheap soiled paper filled with mis-spell words and lacks dignity. It should be recompiled and put in book form, as if it was really the ritual of this organization. I don't <sup>expect that</sup> all of us have stopped to think what a ritual is. The same suggestion applying to our Chapter Constitution.

Many of you are thinking, "She is going to do all of this work!" I suggest that the Chair appoint a committee and if I am unfortunate enough to among its members I assure you that I will do two men's part. But as the Concert is ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> will take all of our time until rendered such a suggestion <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ for the future. Brothers may I ask, do you think that it would be acceptable for a dozen men, educated men, to assemble weekly, for eight months and leave the organization no better off, no

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better organized, to really contribute nothing <sup>to the</sup> ~~both~~ to the Chapter nor to the General Organization. Brothers there is no stand still we are either building or deteriorating and retrograding. It should not, it must not be the latter.

I have already spoken in commendation of our most honorable president, and as to his fellow officers I have the same regard and admiration for their integrity and value to the Chapter in their respective positions. Knowing the great responsibility that rests on our superior officers, knowing the sacrifice of time that it demands, knowing what it means to any organization to have not only competent but energetic and consistent men as its leaders, let us be men, show that we are true brothers of Alpha chapter and have put aside all petty prejudices all former party affiliations, destroying all personal likes and dislikes, and to the best of our unbiased judgments, let us nominate and elect men even as you did in your past elections, who shall unflinchingly push the battle for a greater and more perfect order of Alpha Phi Alphaism.

Respectfully,

H. Ray Wooten.