My dear President Harper:—

As my recent trip to Princeton, to attend the Yale-Princeton debate was undertaken at the instance of the University, I desire to render you the following statement as a report.

Outside of the specific information received on the subject to be discussed in the Chicago-Minnesota debate, three general considerations occurred to me: first, the thorough grasp of facts and principles revealed in typical intercollegiate debates of the present time; second, the importance of securing good form along with good matter; third, the hopeful aspect of the debating situation in Chicago.

The opinion that speakers in typical intercollegiate debates of the East (and of course it is only debate in the East that I have known)—the opinion that speakers in these debates evince a thorough mastery not only of the facts but also of the principles involved in the questions discussed, is to me not a new one. I do not remember a contest in which the speakers seemed to have only a superficial knowledge. I do not remember an instance
in which the charge could most plausibly be lodged that still in presentation conveyed emptiness of matter. Rather, before had this impression been so strikingly confirmed as it was by an incident at Princeton. By speaking at the informal banquet after the debate one of the judges, ex-Secretary of the Treasury, Charles S. Fairchild, declared that he was indebted to the men on both sides for the information he had received. By no means a startling declaration; yet the fact that a man of Mr. Fairchild's wide experience should declare himself indebted for information to a group of college students, I cannot regard as anything but a significant testimony to the value of intercollegiate debating. Mr. Fairchild is a man of too much reserve in speech to make such a statement lightly. His attitude which so far as I am aware reflects the general attitude of men of like calibre, is ample indication that the day if ever there was such a day, when it could rightly be charged that an intercollegiate debate was merely an exercise in juggling with words, has passed. In the second place, the Yale-Princeton debate showed clearly the necessity of carrying
along with investigation of matter, training in presentation. Every sensible man will admit that 'form' without 'matter' is altogether empty and inconclusive; but at the same time 'matter' without 'form' is ineffective. It is not enough to make points that are logically valid; unless they are stated clearly, (and clearness is partly a matter of expression) unless they are stated clearly, forcefully, and persuasively, they fail of their effect.

This principle, true not only of intercollegiate but of all presentation of ideas, was strikingly illustrated in the contest at Princeton. The competing teams seemed about equally familiar with the material bearing on the question; in fact if there was any advantage in grasp of evidence, it lay with Princeton which showed slightly keener analysis; and if one could forget the form of its speakers, unquestionably more alertness in rebuttal. But all except one of the male debaters spoke with a confidence, a power, and a human insistence that would not be denied. If one listened closely to the Princeton speakers, he could not help feeling a high respect for their knowledge, but their presentation was so tame, so mealy; they were so painfully stilted.
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gling to find the expression for their ideas that one found it hard to listen. The Yale men made one listen; made the judges listen; made the audience listen; and the verdict in their favor found ready assent. It is unnecessary to discuss the causes of Princeton’s weak form. To whatever circumstances the result is due, it demonstrates clearly that while “form” for its own sake is just as unworthy of respect as it ever was, “form” cannot be neglected; it is absolutely essential in order to give to matter the weight that good matter deserves.

In the last place, the Yale-Princeton debate gave me substantial encouragement in regard to the outlook for debating in this University. The men who spoke in that contest are of no higher order of ability than men here. While the older debating traditions of the Eastern universities give them an advantage that we have not, after all it is an advantage that can easily be overestimated. With industry, wisdom, and patience on the part of the instructors, and an extension over a larger number of students of the tenacious and enthusiastic interest now felt by a few, there is no reason why debating in this University...
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City cannot be placed and held upon a high plane of efficiency.

Very sincerely yours,

Henry Porter Chandler.