President Friend, Members of the Trustee Board, Distinguished Faculty Members, The Class of 1979: I recall with nostalgia my undergraduate days, when each fall a Charge was given us by Provost Egar Fahs Smith of my University, only one of which Charges made a sufficient impression upon me to recall even a part of it. Therefore, in the hope that you may at least recall in years to come, when you hear the name Alexander, that a woman of that name was one of ______ persons receiving Honorary Degrees who gave a Charge at your Swarthmore Commencement, I agreed to give a five (5) minute written Charge, so as not to exceed my allotted time.

Frequently I am asked: "Why, after receiving a Ph.D. in Economics did you study law?" Because, no College, University, public or private institution would employ me. In fact, I can not recall during 1916 to 1918, my undergraduate days, a female instructor, not to mention a professor, in any department of my University. My husband was practicing law so I decided to enter Law School so I could work in his office, if no other place. My husband, Raymond Pace Alexander, hereinafter Raymond, showed a great deal of interest in my progress but irritated me by often comparing my report of the method of teaching law at The University of Pennsylvania, to that at Harvard. I decided to stop repeating my experiences in class. Realizing, however, that my husband was very liberal in agreeing that I study law and especially in paying my expenses, I only replied to questions he asked such as: "How are things going? Do you think you will make it?" This last question I did not again hear after I made the Law Review. However, to prove to me that Harvard Law School Professors excelled mine, after graduating and being admitted
to the Bar, Raymond made an appointment with Dean Ezra Pound of Harvard Law School for me to meet the Dean and hear one of his lectures, so he planned.

On the appointed day we arrived at Dean Pound's Office at about 8:30 A.M. and were warmly received. At about 8:45 A.M., as Raymond had often told me, the Dean started to walk to his class room, being followed by large numbers of students asking him questions or just listening as best they could to his replies. When we got to the door of the class room, Dean Pound started to shake hands and bid us a pleasant visit in Cambridge, etc. etc. Whereupon, my husband spoke up saying: "Dean Pound, I brought my wife so she could hear you give just one lecture. She has graduated from Penn Law School and is admitted to the Bar." Whereupon, Dean Pound replied: "Alexander, don't you know no woman can be admitted to the Law School of Harvard University?" He proceeded to tell about the daughter of a professor, who applied and was refused admission which almost wrecked the faculty. Raymond, with hesitancy in his voice replied: "No! I did not realize the depth of the discrimination. I guess I experienced so much freedom in Law School that I never stopped to realize it was all for men, only."

And so, after shaking hands and the Dean expressing pleasure at our visit, Raymond and I departed to lick our wounds and discuss a plan of action. I think after the Pound experience, when frequently requested to recommend a qualified candidate for a position, Raymond usually could find a woman better qualified than any of the male applicants. I attacked the problem by researching the law on the admission of women to the Bar and mailing copies of my study entitled: Women Practioners of the Law to every Overseer of Harvard Law School, the Faculty and Trustees. I do not know what effect, if any, it had on the decision years thereafter when women were admitted to Harvard Law School.

My charge to you young men and women entering the highly competitive
society of this age is, turn what appears to be adversity into an opportunity to rise above the pettiness in life, demonstrate your ability to achieve in the face of trials and tribulations and forgive those who know not what they do.

Sweet are the uses of adversity,
Which like the eoad, ugly and venomous Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.