

Preface

CARVED in the stone frieze above the principal entrance to the great gray building now fronting on Massachusetts Avenue near the Charles River in Cambridge is the inscription:

THE MASSACHUSETTS
INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
WILLIAM BARTON ROGERS,
FOUNDER

Probably few who daily pass through these portals lift their eyes to read the words in enduring stone above, and relatively few among the thousands who, as alumni, have previously gone forth from the lecture halls and laboratories of this institution since it has been located in Cambridge are cognizant of the full meaning of these words, nor of the events surrounding the Institute's birth and early years. Young men naturally look forward rather than backward, and hence today but a few of the fifty thousand alumni know intimately of the devotion, the character, and the sacrifices of many men who contributed to M. I. T.'s establishment, its growth, and its far-reaching reputation. For it is now recognized that this school, founded to carry on a new educational ideal of usefulness to the industrial and social life of the country, has attained an enviable position internationally on the roster of the world's institutions of higher learning. The fame thus acquired has come not through age nor size of enrollment, but rather from a continuous and well-recognized leadership in the training of young men in engineering, science, and architecture during its nearly ninety years of history.

For more than half a century, up to the autumn of 1916, the activities of M. I. T. were concentrated in the vicinity of Copley Square, Boston—hence the well-known sobriquet "Boston Tech." With the hope that a history of this period of M. I. T.'s life, presented in a generally chronological but not too detailed fashion, might make alive again memories of some of the truly great and inspiring

figures who gave so much to the service of "Boston Tech," this volume has been undertaken. Its preparation has been a labor of love and loyalty, and a partial acknowledgment of the debt of gratitude *one* alumnus owes to M. I. T.

Somewhat as the ties of memory and family loyalty that bind a son to his early home and ever inspire in him respect and love for his parents, one may visualize the ideal relationship of an alumnus to his *alma mater*. Such a relationship depends not solely upon the mere fact of having entered its doors and attended its courses of instruction, nor on the records of its athletic prowess or other extracurricular achievements in his own day or since, nor even on the school's standing in the educational world. Instead, as time goes on, his regard for it comes progressively to rest upon something deeper in his emotions, something intangible yet vital, something best denoted as a spiritual value from which there springs an abiding concern for the continued well-being of his *alma mater*. In this way there comes the realization that an educational institution is in essence a living, continuing organism, evolving throughout the years. Of such a living body he has been a part, however insignificant.

Four vital groups—the Corporation and administrative staff, the faculty and instructing staff, the ever-growing body of alumni, and the student body itself—constitute the M. I. T. quaternary. All are bound together functionally as component parts of a living whole activated and unified by the institution's aims and high ideals, its splendid traditions, and rich memories and aspirations, which carry on from the past into the living present and the expected future. With such a concept, knowledge of the past may bring deep understanding and satisfaction to any student or alumnus, strengthen his allegiance, and guide him in his responsibilities toward M. I. T.

Regardless of his appreciation of the four-fold concept of M. I. T.'s organization, the inner feelings of an alumnus toward the Institute derive more directly from memories of outstanding personalities—whether officials, teachers, or fellow students, who specially impressed him and influenced his actions and thinking during undergraduate days and long afterward—memories which loom larger to him as years advance. To him these various individuals stand out clearly in retrospect among his many teachers and fellow-students; they are

what make him realize that M. I. T. is a complex of activities, memories, and traditions involving many personalities who have played effective parts in making it a strong institution of high repute. The student of bygone years naturally thinks of the Institute as it was in his day in a brief but distinct era in its history. He may have forgotten what had preceded and be unmindful of later events. It may have been for him a strenuous and exacting place, and possibly one with fewer joys than sorrows scholastically. But few have passed this way, even for a brief period, without finding something in the way of reward through personal struggle, the inspiration of helpful teachers, and especially the lasting friendships formed in their undergraduate years.

It is a far cry from my own early days when the faculty was a group of hardly more than a score and each member, with his particular virtues and foibles, was known by sight, or at least by repute, to every student. With the passage of years and the rapid expansion of the school, and the concurrent increase in its faculty, staff, and student body, this situation has necessarily changed, and so really distinguished men of an earlier era tend to become progressively mere names without special force or significance. Thus something of real value is lost unless effort is made to recall and record appreciation for the men of leadership who have built character into the institution throughout its whole existence. Hence, it seems desirable in sketching the history of "Boston Tech," to do so more in terms of men than of eras and statistics, and thus to try to revivify some of its earlier great characters, and to recapture some of the qualities of a few of the many who have marked the Institute with a priceless stamp of their own influence and service.

SAMUEL C. PRESCOTT

Cambridge, May, 1953