

Haledictory

Joseph O'Hanley, '36

Longed for, perhaps, in hours of weary toil, or when the fires of ambition burned high, our day of commencement has at last arrived. Commencement! Symbol of change—a beginning and an ending. Now ends for us that life we have grown to love; now begins a time wherein there is much that is dull and drab, little that will recall our cheery college days. Leaving that old routine of laughter and thought, of work and play, that is woven in the tenor of our lives, we hesitate on the brink of a dark unknown, whose ways are not ours, but whose paths we must henceforth tread. In the thoughtless abandon of unreasoning youth we wish to probe its highways and byways, to conquer all that lies therein, to reach its highest pinnacle and gaze below, the master. But when thought and deep reflection halt our heedless progress, the light of experience will reveal a future not everywhere bedecked with the laurels of triumph, not always gilded with the sheen of happiness, not wholly covered with a garment of pleasure. Then will we be deprived of that constant direction, that vigilant care, that our youth has known. Then will adversity and trial creep upon us and find us alone. Then will recur the memory of peaceful college days, filled with laughter, gaiety and contentment. And so we are sad and we are happy: sad that something beautiful and precious is slipping from our grasp; happy that now one of our greatest ambitions is fulfilled.

Realizing this, our minds are filled with thoughts of gratitude: to those who directed thither our hesitating steps; to those whose devotion led our groping hands to grasp the truth; to those whose friendship has illumined the vista of the years. They too must rejoice in our success, regret our departure. For them we have caused many trials and difficulties. But today all is forgiven. They regard only our achievements—our faults and failures are cast into the background. Of their trust and belief we must strive to be ever worthy: their praise we must ever merit. Today they see the fulfillment of our dreams, the justification of their sacrifices.

What happiness it must be for our dear fathers and mothers to see their sons setting out on the stormy seas of

life equipped, as they wished, with the strength of faith and the wisdom of understanding. Unwaveringly they strove that this day might be ours. For them nothing was too great to deny, nothing too small to attend, that would bring happiness and success to us. On their toil and self-denial, on their love and sacrifice, rests the laurels of our accomplishments. But for them we might have allowed ambition to grow cold, the quest of knowledge to have remained unpursued. In every difficulty they encouraged, in every failure they consoled, in every success they triumphed. Out of the love they bear us was this accomplished; out of the love we bear them must be their undying reward.

With wise prudence they placed our future in charge of anointed hands. In this they saw our true progress. Though we might conquer the world of science, what a hollow victory it would have been, were not truth, its master, also possessed. But in what strange surroundings we found ourselves. Our petty wit mixed with great learning, our care-free spirits hushed with an atmosphere of tranquility. We were afraid. The swishing of soutanes, the voices of the professors, intimidated us. Who were we to know such men of learning? Who were we to intimately approach those who wore the garment of God's service? But as the years progressed we gradually came to know, honor, and respect these men who fashioned our destinies. Our fear turned into reverence. Their earnestness, their devotion to our cause, crept into our hearts and found there a place forever. Daily they went about their tasks with cheer, without complaint. Gravely they remonstrated with our many misdemeanors. Heartily they co-operated with our every effort. How many hours of weary labor, how many bitter disappointments did they undergo, that we might bloom forth as gentlemen possessing the knowledge that is strength, the courage that lends conviction. Their example is forever ours to emulate. With them we must now part: their loss leaves a vacancy that only memory can fill. In this we will strive: to be true to the standards they have raised and thus to be true to their memory.

To the life of a student we must now bid adieu. The "boys" we must leave behind. In imagination only will we again mingle with them, play with them, work with them. We go, they remain. To them do we fling the torch. To

them do we say: be honest, be fair, be studious, be faithful. Carry on the tradition in class-room and on campus that was born with St. Dunstan's. On you falls the burden. Do not despise it, but rather by your deeds add greater glory to our noble college in the years that lie in the future. Among you we have found many friends. They are "... grappled to our hearts with hoops of steel." It is they who will keep fresh our fading remembrance. In their thoughts we will linger, though we have long since departed.

And now, my class-mates, we have come to the turning of the road. Now each must choose his pathway, bid farewell, and stride on alone. Our care-free days are over. They are so short, these fleeting years, and of their passing we have taken little heed. Not often did we think that these walls would not enfold us forever, that we must soon enter a new domain where all is not so serene and happy. Now we put away the things of a youth and put on the things of a man. In unfamiliar surroundings we will pursue our way—the way that must lead to the happiness all desire. In the future we will tread paths that weave through a pagan world. These we must spurn—only him who wishes does defilement stain. Our bulwark must be the structure of faith and morals that our training has built. On it depends the integrity of all our actions, our time and our eternity. To say that we will meet with no trouble, no trials, no disillusionment, would be false optimism. Did He not tell us, "If any man will come after Me, let him take up his cross?" Happiness there is for the seeking—that happiness of the soul that surmounts all. We will not all rise to unconquered heights, or rock the world with the force of our achievements, but if we daily strive with all our might, that shall be ours which surpasses all else. We go forth, supported with the pillar of faith, fired with the flame of knowledge, strengthened with the courage of youth. Though ambition may lead us into far unknowns; though our lives may be as diverse as the heavens; though time and tide may far separate us, we will ever hold dear these college days which we now must abandon forever. Here we have gained faith, friends, and learning: in these shall it ever be remembered.

My friends, one chapter of our lives is finished, another already begins. Our great hope is that the final close may be as happy, as peaceful, as full of vision and prospect, as is this, the first.