

VALEDICTORY

Hubert O'Hanley, '42

Commencement day has arrived once again. The friends of St Dunstan's have once more gathered to witness the commencement exercises. What they see today is in general the same as what they have already seen many times. The only difference they can find is in the faces they see. To all outward appearances it is just another Convocation Day. All the exercises are externally the same with only different characters to play the roles. But for us, the graduates, it differs radically from any we have ever attended. At all others we were merely thrilled spectators who watched with interest the procedure in which we hoped some day to have an active part. Today we have that active part and today's commencement exercises mean more to us than former ones. For today we are receiving our degrees and are about to leave St Dunstan's with her stamp of approval affixed.

When we first came to St. Dunstan's, this day seemed very remote and far away. We realized then that we were faced with an uphill struggle. At first the slope was gentle and we mastered it easily. But the farther we progressed the steeper and more rugged became the hill we were climbing. We had to work much harder to make the grade.

There were great obstacles in our path. We tottered often on the brinks of the deep crevasses of indifference and lack of industry. But we finally bridged them with words of exhortation from our learned masters who, standing high above us, directed us along the proper road up the steep ascent. Difficulties lay in the way like huge boulders which we sometimes had to surmount ourselves, but more often than not it was necessary to call upon our guiding friends for help. Sometimes steep precipices blocked our way, but, mounting to the shoulders of intellectual giants, we were enabled to scale them. Finally we now stand upon the first peak, one of the lowest probably, but nevertheless a peak. From our vantage point we look back upon the way we came and realize that the distance we have come is not great. Heights tower over us and the way that leads to them is rough and rugged, filled with pitfalls made by our enemies who lurk ahead. But, armed with the weapons of proper

training and instruction, we are ready to climb still higher in spite of these snares. Some day it is our hope to reach the heights which, breaking through the dark clouds of failure, are bathed in the sunshine of success.

At this time we find it difficult to express our true feelings. We are indeed happy, for we have reached to the goal for which we have been working. It brings us joy to be finally receiving our degrees and to have our friends present when they are conferred. But the fact that we are graduating means that we must leave St. Dunstan's behind. The scenes and activities with which we have become so familiar will soon be only pleasant memories. Bonds of friendship which we have formed must be broken and we must part with those whom we have "grappled to our hearts with hoops of steel". The idea of leaving all this behind takes some of the tang out of graduating and leaves us with a feeling of emptiness.

Possibly our deepest emotion is one of gratitude. Now as never before do we realize our indebtedness to all the friends who have in any way helped us to achieve our end. Foremost among those are you, our parents. It was you who taught us the first truths of religion and guided us through the formation days of boyhood. With the desire of giving us the benefits of a Catholic education, you sent us to St. Dunstan's. Heedless of your own necessities and pleasures, you strained to meet our new needs with never a word of complaint. Nothing was too small, too trivial, to be left undone that we might be happy while at St. Dunstan's. And we know that you have been with us in spirit throughout our years here. For all this you ask no thanks; you think it reward enough to have finally accomplished what you set out to do. But for us, your sons, this is not sufficient. We realize that we can never repay you for your years of sacrifice in our behalf. Nor can we express in mere words the feelings which we have had towards you since boyhood. We can only thank you from the bottom of our hearts.

Our thoughts turn next to the members of the faculty of St. Dunstan's College. They have been our guiding masters and friends since we enrolled for the first time. They placed before us not only facts which we were to absorb but also the Catholic principles by which we should rule our lives. They spared themselves no pain in preparing courses which are extensive and at least on a par with those of other colleges. By word and example they have shown us the

proper way of living. Ever solicitous for our welfare, they did not hesitate to place a steadying hand on our shoulders if they saw us falter. We realize, Right Reverend Rector and Reverend Fathers, that in spite of all you have done for our benefit, both as professors and as priests, we have too often been unappreciative and even ungrateful. At not infrequent intervals we have indeed tried your patience. But we hope that all our faults and deficiencies will be forgiven and overlooked. For all you have given us we humbly acknowledge our indebtedness and gratefully express our appreciation.

There are many others who contributed to our success at St. Dunstan's but we may mention only a few. Among these are the pastors of our respective parishes. In no small way were they responsible for our enrolling at St. Dunstan's in the first place. Doubtless they influenced our parents to send us to a Catholic college. During our years here they, like true fathers, have not been wanting in words of encouragement and exhortation. For their kind solicitude and interest we offer our sincerest thanks.

And now, classmates, the time has come for us to leave behind with a last longing look the happy days we spent together at St. Dunstan's. They form an unforgettable part of our lives. But now they are past and the not-too-inviting future lies ahead. Our youthful ambitions have long since been shattered, or at least have received a severe setback, by the state of war into which our country has been plunged. Some of us no doubt will see fit to give up our dreams for the future and don the uniform of Canada's fighting forces. Although none of us wishes to be a square peg in a round hole, our lives will not be disrupted by the fact that we are working in a field other than the one in which it was once our ambition to work out our salvation. The principles of life which we have been taught apply as easily in the services as in any other phase of life. The future for us does indeed seem somewhat indistinct and we begin up the hill again with not-undue anxiety. But we have really nothing very great to fear. We can encounter obstacles and overcome them because we have what is necessary for the task. Our youth, ambition, and education can carry us ever onward, no matter what difficulties we encounter. The truths we have been taught will be our guiding principles and in our belief in these we must be strong. We will seldom find anything in the world to

remind us of them or to strengthen our faith in them. For our banner in the struggle of life we carry the colors of St. Dunstan's and in them, as in the colors of the altar boy, we find a fitting symbol of the right way of life:

*"For white bespeaks untainted,
A heart both tried and true;
And red tells love the sainted
And holy martyrs knew."*



Ill-grounded passions quickly wear away;
What's built upon esteem can ne'er decay.

—Walsh

Experience joined to common sense,
To mortals is a providence.

—Green

