

Valedictory

(Following is the Valedictory, read at the Convocation of St. Dunstan's College on Tuesday, June 1st, by Mr. James A. McDougall).

*My Lord, Reverend Fathers, Gentlemen of the Faculty,
Fellow students, Ladies and Gentlemen :*

In the course of our journey over life's rugged highway we come to certain halting places, where, like the stage travellers of pioneer days, we stop and rest for a brief interval of time, before we again set out towards our destination. We have to-day arrived at one of those inns by the wayside, and, as the wont of the travellers of old, we delight to recount the many incidents of the last stage of our onward progress, and to speculate as to what vicissitudes of fortune may beset our way in the next.

Looking back over the years now numbered with the irrevocable past, life, from the graduates point of view, resolves itself into two distinct epochs, the close of the second being the present occasion. First were the happy school days, when our only troubles were the schoolmaster's tasks, and our greatest ambition to outgrow the educational possibilities afforded by the school, that we might qualify to enter college. The memory of those days is now eclipsed by the crowded recollections of the second epoch, when, having realised our first ambition, we anxiously looked forward to the Commencement Day which should mark our advent into the realm of college graduates.

Now that that day has arrived, let us take a retrospective glance along the years which constituted the term of our College course, ere we begin to peer into the misty vista of the future.

It has been a feeling common to each of us as we returned here year after year to resume our studies, that the day on which we should all assemble to hear addressed to us the parting admonitions of Alma Mater, would be one of unalloyed pleasure, one which would

date our emancipation from a slavery to book and bell. How anxiously we anticipated that day, how distant from it seemed the beginning of each successive year! Do we now experience that anticipated pleasure? Does the thought of leaving for ever the old familiar retreat of the last six years occasion us the delight which unreflecting fancy so often conjured up before us, while we impatiently yearned for this event? How different are now the feelings which we entertain towards this the day of our departure. Now the scene is changed. All the old surroundings to-day assume an altered aspect, and what we were wont to bear as burdens, now appeal to us as pleasant occupations of the past. The class rooms to which "creeping slowly" we betook ourselves, so often with reluctance, and in which time seemed to slack its pace, are now the hallowed abodes of memories of the past. The campus, the scene of our sports and trials of prowess, is now shrouded with an air of solemn stillness, a silence reverberant with the echoes of bygone friendly combat. The bell, whose iron-tongued notes so often intruded with unwelcome tones upon the peaceful quiet of our morning repose, whose accents spoke the stern command of duty or the mirthful call of play, now hangs in its turret mutely eloquent of the days that are no more. Even the holy quiet of the chapel, wherein we daily assembled to invoke the protection of Him who cares for all, seems to-day to add a sad serenity to its soul-inspiring calm, and to invite us to tarry yet awhile ere we quit its sacred precincts. All the associations of our college years, all the tasks and pleasures, triumphs and defeats, to-day pass in review before our memory and—

"Though varying wishes, hopes and fears,
Fevered the progress of those years,
Yet now, days, weeks and months, but seem
The recollection of a dream."

Pleasant indeed is it for us to indulge this dream. We delight to lose ourselves in reverie and wander back over the land which now seems to us like "the land where it was always afternoon," and to bask in the sunshine of its happy memories.

But we cannot linger. "Life is real, life is earnest," and with the truth of this now beginning to dawn upon us more fully, we must awaken to its actualities and bury our dreams with the past dead. We must now turn from the retreating past and present our front to the advancing future. We must now "gird up our loins" and sally forth on the third and last stage of life's journey, the course of which leads to the termination of our earthly career, thence to our eternal destiny.

When such is the goal for which we are about to set out, is it any wonder that we hesitate ere we proceed? What dangers may lurk along our future pathway we know not. What siren-voiced seductions of the world may lie in wait to lure us from the straight and narrow path, we neither can foresee. Hitherto we have followed on our way under the direction of vigilant guides, whose every care was to indicate whatever might imperil us or impede our progress. Henceforth we shall have no such mentors to guide our course, but each by himself must we journey on to the end of our earthly pilgrimage; we must now wield our own weapons of defence in the world's battles.

But well have we been armed for the conflict. Diligently have we been drilled in preparation for the encounters with the enemy in our march through life. For six years has Alma Mater, with true maternal solicitude, laboured to equip us for this venture, when we must leave the beacon-blazed pathway of our former travels and essay to correctly guide our wanderings among the confusing byways of the world; and to-day, as she bids us God-speed, we are reminded that if we faithfully follow her instructions, we shall safely arrive at our destination. With this assurance then we prepare to go forth and take our places among the countless throngs already struggling in the same direction.

Now that the curtain is about to rise on another act in the drama of life, the question we must ask ourselves is, what part are we going to play therein? Are we to be mere "birds of passage" in the world, or are we determined to be a living force for the accomplishment of some definite aim in life, an aim which shall be,

the active embodiment of the principles inculcated by our course at St. Dunstan's College? Must it not occur to us that we are singularly fortunate, that we enjoy a priceless privilege by starting life in the world with the advantages which our education should bring? Not to everyone has this privilege been accorded; not everyone has received the preparatory training which has been ours ere they set out on life's great Marathon. What are we going to do to show that we have been worthy of all this attention? "Much is expected of him to whom much is given" and since we have received so much our obligations are correspondingly great. To teach us to know these obligations and to properly discharge them, has been the especial care of our Alma Mater during the time of her tutelage over us.

We have been taught that our first and greatest obligation is that which we owe to our Creator, the duty of rendering a full account to Him for all that we have from Him. Since we possess our very life in trust from God we must return it in full to Him or forfeit His eternal favour. To enable us to repay this debt He has endowed us with particular talents, and with us rests the responsibility of exercising these to the utmost of our ability in order to fulfill the end for which we have received them.

We have learned, that next to the duty, which we owe to God is that which is due from us to our fellow-men, a duty essentially co-ordinated with the first. Holy Writ itself deals rather arbitrarily with the man who, claiming to love God, disregards his neighbour's welfare. Whatever we may do towards assisting a brother to bear his cross, or whatever we may accomplish in adding to the lot of human happiness, will therefore be efforts directed towards the fulfillment of our obligations to God and man.

With a full sense of these obligations ever before us, we shall also obtain for ourselves, in so far as it is possible to be obtained in this world, what we all naturally desire—viz., happiness. That true happiness can only thus be found is the testimony of the whole history of man. Ask all who have sought it otherwise, and when life's fevered race is run, their answer will but

confirm the world-old story. Worldly power or affluence cannot minister to the desire for happiness as these only awaken a greater passion for more of their kind, and often carry in their train miseries instead of happiness. But we must not confound that passion for worldly power with properly directed ambition. Ambition if impelled by worthy motives can accomplish a great deal in the way of good. If we feel that we are capable of better fulfilling our mission upon earth by labouring along the higher walks of life, then let us aspire thereto. If preferments will enable us to do a greater good to a greater number we should seek to attain them. I have said that wealth cannot bring happiness—that is, wealth sought for its own sake and for mere love of gain. So long as we are in this world we require worldly goods and a moderate acquisition of these may well be one of our aims. But as "Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long," we should strive to possess these goods only in so far as their possession would supply our needs and further our endeavour to accomplish the greater ends of life. "For what will it profit a man if he gain the whole world, but suffer the loss of his soul?"

With these ideals firmly impressed upon us, we to-day bid adieu to St. Dunstan's. Faithfully has our Alma Mater nurtured us on the verities during the period of our adolescence and now she sends us forth to vindicate our manhood. It now devotes upon us to prove ourselves worthy sons of our benign mother, to ever live as the fearless exponents of those principles of virtue and honour, with which she so sollicitously sought to imbue us. Long may she continue her noble work. Long may St. Dunstan's stand to rear aloft her banner proclaiming afar the imperishable motto, "Ex Eodem Fonte Fides et Scientia."

Reverend Rector, Reverend Fathers and Gentlemen of the Faculty: In severing our connection with you as our instructors, we wish to assure you that we sincerely appreciate the unselfish efforts which you have made for our physical, intellectual, and moral welfare. Your untiring zeal on our behalf has been an incentive to greater effort on the part of ourselves, and will ever

serve as an inspiration for us, when confronted by the perplexing problems of life. That the future may bear to you many years of fruitful labour is the fervent wish of those who now bid you farewell.

Fellow-students : Some time is yet yours ere the portals of this venerable institution close behind you, and in taking our departure from your midst, we hope that your remaining days in college will bring you the happiness which our associations with you have brought us in the past.

Classmates : To address you in terms which would bespeak my feelings, I am unable. This is an occasion of awful import to us. We are going out into the world at a time, when even more than ever is expected of men, which an institution like St. Dunstan's should produce, a time replete with opportunities for service to God, King and fellow-man. Since these are the end for which Alma Mater strove to fit us, let us not fail to measure up to the trust which she now reposes in us. Here we have lived in peaceful seclusion, lived as a brotherhood of co-labourers working with a common aim.

Together have we striven in friendly rivalry in the class-rooms ; together have we faced each other in manly emulation on the campus ; together have we knelt in adoration before the same altar, and though now our ways divide, if we follow the injunctions of our Alma Mater, together shall we kneel before the Throne of Heaven.

So for now farewell.

"Farewell!—but whenever you welcome the hour
That awakens the night-song of mirth in your bower,
Then think of the friend who once welcomed it too,
And forgot his own griefs to be happy with you.
His griefs may return, not a hope may remain
Of the few that have brighten'd his pathway of pain,
But he ne'er will forget the short vision that threw
Its enchantment around him, while lingering with you."