

Valedictory

(Read by Mr. Austin O'Brien, of Alma, at the last Annual Convocation of St. Dunstan's University).

My Lord, Reverend Rector, Your Honor, Rev. Fathers and Gentlemen of the Faculty, Fellow Students, Ladies and Gentlemen :—

ALMOST three score years ago this institution sent forth its first graduating class, and each year since then has witnessed the departure of another band of students to take their places among the alumni of St. Dunstan's University.

On all those who have thus completed their courses their Alma Mater has bestowed many gifts.

She has placed within their reach the bright jewel of knowledge — of science. She has endeavored to give them in the various branches of study an intellectual training such as would fit them to take an eminent place in whatever life work they might choose. But true education demands something more than a training of the mind. He who attends only to the perfecting of the intellect may for a time dazzle the eyes of the world with the brightness of his genius, but sooner or later he will find that the whole structure of his education is built upon the "sands" and must inevitably collapse bearing him down in the general ruin.

St. Dunstan's has ever realized that :

"All knowledge is not nourishment
The mind
May pine upon its food. Its reckless thirst
The scholar sometimes kneels beside the stream,
Polluted by the lepers of his mind."

That this moral disaster may be avoided the will also must be developed and strengthened and in fulfilment of this duty, our Alma Mater has ever kept before the eyes of those under her tutelage the great and important truth: "Only one thing matters, the welfare of the immortal soul." In order to encourage and enliven this singleness of purpose she has been careful to point out to the students the means of attaining to moral perfection the proper standards by which their lives should be shaped. In a word she has presented to them in all its brilliancy and lustre the precious gem of faith. The development of these two faculties—the intellect and the will—together with a proper care of the body makes up the well balanced and thorough education for which St. Dunstan's alumni are noted. All this is well known, it needs no repetition here. "By their fruits you shall know them," and we have only to look round with observant eyes to see that in every sphere of activity in every clime and in every condition of life—unfurling the banner of success high above that of their rivals, stand the sons of our venerated Alma Mater.

Prominent among the many treasures which the graduating student carries away with him is one which in after life he will prize and guard as one of his most valuable possessions, one which will help him very materially to "make straight the path" to his final end and that precious keepsake so ardently loved and so zealously preserved is the memory of the days spent, of the deeds done and of the companions met and parted with during the "golden years" of college life.

The realization of the influence which memories have on our future life was well expressed by the poet Moore in the words:

"When time who steals our years away,
Shall steal our pleasures too,
The memory of the past will stay,
And half our joy renew."

It is surely a gratifying thought that in our later life when we are no longer able to enjoy our accustomed pastimes we can turn to that marvelous repository, the memory, and by means of it partake again of the happiness of the past, like the scenes on a moving picture film, the happenings and associations which gave us pleasure in the days that are no more, will reappear before the mind's eye. Time or space will not limit the operations of this faculty, and those incidents which we enjoyed in our early years will be represented to us in our later life no matter how distant we may be from the scenes of their occurrence. Like a bank account which we have stored up in our youth, and from which we draw in our declining years, the impressions made on our memory of early enjoyments will serve as a fund of happiness for our old age.

Yes, the evening of life would for many be a cheerless and cloudy one, were it not for the luminous rays of happy recollections radiated in their lives through the medium of their memory. How vigilant then we should be that in this garden of the mind we plant, in the springtime of life, only such seeds as will in the autumn blossom and pour forth a sweet fragrance over the soul.

To us who are leaving her precincts today, St. Dunstan's bequeaths a wonderful store of memories: memories of the college campus where so often we took our recreation in common, or strove in athletic contests.

How greatly the campus figured in the moulding of our character we perhaps do not as yet fully realize. It was there that we learned the admirable quality of self-control. What an admiration was evoked for the fellow who could with a smiling countenance for all and an uncharitable remark for none, bear the brunt of a hard fought game or even the sting of defeat. And what pity was manifested towards him who because of a disappointment, gave himself over to anger or sought for personal revenge. In the broad campus of life when the broils and tumults of a selfish world threaten to engulf us, may that spirit of self-control and charity fostered on the college playground serve us in good stead, so that when the great game of life is over, we may return to our Heavenly Home, bearing the laurels of victory on our brows.

Memories of the class rooms, of our teachers and of our classmates. The remembrance of these last two will be among the brightest stars in the firmament of our memory. Even now many of them are but memories for us. Some whom we knew in the earlier years of our course are far away. Some have been called from this life; many have in tragic Europe traced in letters of blood their valedictory to this world. Industry, honorable and friendly competition, a moderate ambition to use — the keynotes of our class work — will, we trust, attend our endeavors in the life that lies before us.

Yes, the memories of the refectory. Although we passed but a small part of the time here, it was time eagerly anticipated and most profitably spent. The pleasant conversation which accompanied each repast ripened many friendships, the bonds of which will not soon be broken.

Ah, the memories of the college chapel; each morning our first act was to hasten to it, to lay before our Maker the work of the opening day, and assist at the offering of sacrifice to Him. At noon and again in evening we returned and each visit received from His generous hand strength to carry the burdens which fell to our lot. We feel sure that in the future, should we be tempted to forsake the standard of God, the remembrance of those blessed moments spent in the chapel we have learned to love so well, will rise up in our souls and crying "Halt", make us to realize the baseness of our desertion.

These are a few of the precious remembrances of our college days which we should always cherish—exclaiming with the poet :

"Long be my heart with such memories filled,
Like the vase, in which roses have once been distilled,
You may break, you may shatter the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still."

Fortified then by the salutary teachings of our Alma Mater, adorned with the golden chain of memories which is ours, and trusting in God for the future, we stand ready to respond to the bugle call of duty.

To our beloved Rector, to the esteemed members of the Faculty and to the kind Sisters we extend our sincere thanks for their solicitude in our behalf and to them and all else that is included under the ever to be remembered title of "Dear Old St. Dunstan's" we bid a fond "Farewell."

When men speak ill of thee, live so as nobody may believe them.—Plato.