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THE MICHIGAN ALUMNUS.

JULY, 1898.

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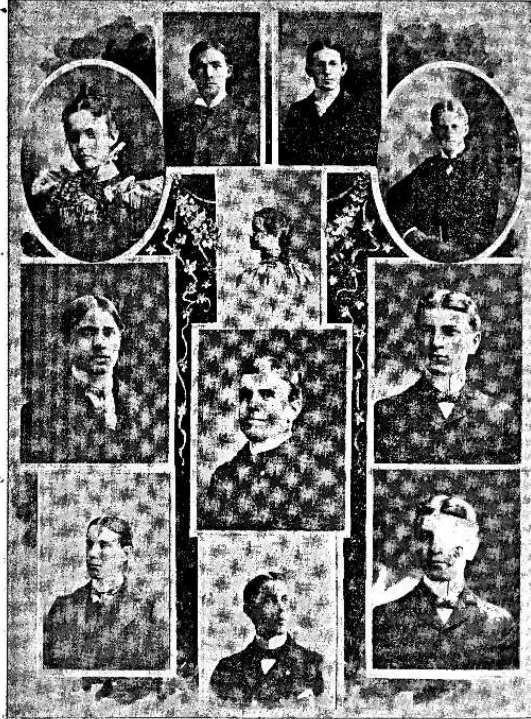
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ADDRESS TO THE GRADUATING CLASS OF THE LITERARY DEPARTMENT.

BY THE CLASS PRESIDENT.

The occasion which has brought us together to-day for the last time as a class is one of unusual interest to us who are about to say farewell to the campus which has grown so dear to us during our years of college life. The exercises of commencement week are pleasant and rightly so. Our class day especially should be one of rejoicing, for it is the crowning event of a four years' record of which we may well be proud. Yet if we inquire a little beneath the surface, we shall see that after all the ending of our school days and the severing of our undergraduate relationship with the University are matters of more than ordinary moment.

We have put in four of the best years of our life here, we have worked steadily and earnestly, and we have completed the curriculum prescribed for us. What then have we to show for this outlay of precious time and valuable energy. Let me put the question a little more strongly, for much is expected not only of us but of all the hundreds of young men and women who this year leave college life for the larger life outside. How then are we better equipped to take our place in the world than those to whom a college education has been denied? How well are we prepared to bear the responsibilities which will surely devolve upon us? How are we to render to the University, the state, and the nation the rich return which is their due.

In a general way we have been getting an education. That is what friends at home may have been saying of the son or daughter away at college. We have been getting an education and they have rightly expressed it. But what do we mean by an education? That acquisition of knowledge which the study of books has given us, that training of the mind which results from reasoning and thinking for ourselves, that discipline which constant and conscientious application enforces, surely; but that is not all, and this is the thought that I should like to express. There is an education which is not of books. All the language, all the philosophy, all the sciences and mathematics can not give it to us, although they may help us. Nor can time ever efface it. In that respect it is almost peculiar to itself. I speak of the education we receive from our contact with living, acting men, a knowledge of the motives which influence our fellow beings, an insight into human character. We have been thrown among young men and women from all parts of this broad land. From the north and south, from the east and west they have come to assist without knowing it in giving us an education. We have been associated with three thousand active and earnest young people whose varying temperaments and dispositions have given us opportunity for extended study and careful observation. Nowhere in the world is a better opportunity afforded us for broadening our minds, opening our hearts, and wiping out every inclination to sectionalism or bigotry.

If we have missed this broader education we have let slip the grandest opportunity of our college course, and as soon as we have been thrown upon our own resources we shall find this out. If our four years at college have not made us broad-minded and liberal-spirited, we have not gotten the full value for our expenditure of time and energy. Grant what seems to me to be a fair proposition, that the man who has equipped himself most thoroughly for the duties of life is the best educated man, and the above conclusions seem obvious.

It is with pleasure then that we can look back upon the career of our class. It has shown itself to be one of more than

ordinary ability. Not only has its record in the class room been beyond reproach, but it has demonstrated by actual work in other fields that it is able to grapple successfully with problems whose issue has affected the whole University. A liberal spirit has pervaded its councils. It has done much to bring together all classes in the University. It has beyond a doubt increased the true University spirit which is slowly but surely emerging from a state of partial paralysis. Fostered by an institution whose very breath inculcates a spirit of independence, an institution which places a premium on self-reliance and conscientious effort, the members of this class go forth truly educated. For here have we found, if we have eyes with which to see and ears with which to hear, that which disciplines and enlightens the understanding, corrects the temper, cultivates the tastes, forms manners and habits, and unfolds the whole human nature.

Now the responsibility rests upon us to show that we are worthy of the institution which sends us forth. Of our alma mater President Angell has said, "She has no endowment, she can have no endowment of silver or gold, so precious and so dear as the success and affection of her sons and daughters, who like you go forth with her benediction upon their heads. We shall be called upon to serve our state and it may be our nation. We shall be looked upon as college graduates whose responsibilities are co-ordinate with our opportunities. This University was indeed founded for far more than the perfection of the individual. The state has been making an investment in us. It is receiving and expects to continue to receive a suitable return.

The era upon which we are now entering gives evidence that it will be an epoch making one. The whole land is profoundly moved with the stirring events of the past few months. Visions of imperial sway are held before our eyes. Radical departures from our established policies are talked of. For the instant those momentous political problems within our own land and with which you are all familiar have been driven into the

background. But sooner or later they will come up for settlement and we shall have to share in the task of settling them. The country is crying for reform and we shall be asked to contribute our services to this cause.

To use a homely comparison it seems to me that the body of college men and women should perform in society the functions of a balance wheel. They have studied more deeply the lessons of history, they have examined more carefully the foundations of our political system, and they should exercise a steadying influence throughout the whole country. They should not rush blindly into new policies nor rudely attempt to change existing institutions. As reformers they should not think of changing the face of the earth in a day but should recognize conditions as they exist and approach the present day problems from the standpoint of common sense. Their place is in the thickest of the fight. No supposed superiority or contempt assumed because of knowledge should hold them aloof from any man.

One thing above all is certain. Our future will be determined by us, not for us. It may be that our life work will be chosen by chance rather than desire or inclination, but there luck and chance end. The manner in which our vocations are pursued is governed by neither. This brings the matter home to each one of us and we should meet it fairly and squarely. Whichever way we turn we see that the world wants men and women with faith in something, enthusiasm for something, and ability to do something. The University sends us forth at an age when we should be vigorous, energetic, and ambitious. The opportunity lies before us. It is ours to take advantage of it.

Chauncey Depew once said to a graduating class, "Whether you succeed or fail, the associations which you end to-day are the one asset upon which the sheriff can never levy." That great student of men knew whereof he spoke and we shall feel with him as time passes by that our college years form the brightest spot in our lives. On this our class day then let us