

Hotchkiss, John B. (1869). Valedictory address: Delivered at the first commencement of the National Deaf Mute College. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 14, (4), 252-255.

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS.*

Delivered at the first Commencement of the National Deaf Mute College.

BY J. BURTON HOTCHKISS.

HONORED PATRON :—Toward you as the representative of the government which has fostered the Institution with which we have been connected for the four years past, and of which we this day take a final farewell, we cherish more than ordinary feelings of gratitude. But for your munificence, the training which we have obtained within its walls would, probably, never have been ours. As the first who go out into the world with its teachings instilled into our minds we shall endeavor to show our gratitude by cherishing those principles of loyalty and patriotism which should always live in the breasts of true citizens ; and with those talents which God has given us, and which you have helped us to cultivate, we will try, in our future lives, to follow in your illustrious footsteps in seeking the utmost good and prosperity of our country. Farewell !

GENTLEMEN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:—As a class, and as individuals, we feel a high sense of the obligations we are under to you for the benevolence and the progressive spirit you have shown in the organization and direction of the College we leave to-day ; and we sincerely hope that the enterprise will meet with the success which your energy and devotion to the work warrant us in expecting ; and that you will receive the support and encouragement due to a project whose utility can no longer be questioned. We greet you as friends of the cause of universal education ; and we are happy and thankful that the claims of the large and growing class of Deafmutes have been committed to such worthy hands. Farewell !

*The oration of Mr. Hotchkiss entitled “Nature and Literature” we had hoped to give in full, but have only space for the Valedictory Address delivered at its conclusion.—*Ed.*

HONORED PRESIDENT :—The tie that we sever in parting from you is no ordinary one. Sustained, as we have been, through our whole college course by your friendly interest and wise counsels, we shall ever feel the greatness of the debt due to you. Amid the trials and perplexities of an untrodden path, your hand has ever been ready to guide and help ; and now, as we go forth into the world, we feel well assured that we shall find no truer friend and well-wisher within its farthest bounds. It is the greatest wish of our hearts, because we know it is one dearly cherished by you, that the time may not be far distant when you will hear the halls of our Alma Mater echoing to the tread of hundreds of youth from all parts of the world, and its Alumni scattered far and near, performing their work on earth with credit to themselves and honor to your teachings. In bidding you farewell, need we say, that in our future spheres of life, we shall look with increasing interest upon the progress of your work, and do what lies in our power to contribute to its continued success. Farewell!

GENTLEMEN OF THE FACULTY : —Our four years of pleasant intercourse here come to an end. No more of daily meetings in the class and lecture room, to mingle in the search after the hidden truths of science, or to receive from your hands the precious ore of knowledge. We go out from you; others will take our places, but we shall always cherish in our inmost hearts pleasant memories of those times that can no more return. For your patient forbearance with our faults and failings we thank you. For your untiring efforts to implant in our minds the germs of true wisdom, we thank you. For your generous interest in our welfare and your well-timed advice we are truly grateful; and we hope to carry with us, wherever we go, those seeds of true manliness which you have taken care to sow in our hearts, and in future years will lay at your feet whatever meed of praise and honor they have won for us in this world's strife. Farewell!

CLASSMATES:—There are times when we experience thoughts and feelings which we cannot utter. It is so with me to-day, for I find it impossible for me to express the varied emotions that surge through my heart in bidding you a long farewell.

In looking back upon our College experience with its varying lights and shadows, which one of us does not feel springing up within him a thrill of joy that he has been permitted to store up such memories? Which one of us does not feel thankful that it has been granted to him to mingle with his fellows and feel the elevation of their friendship and sympathy? Is there one among us who can say he does not find himself elevated and refined by the toils and sorrows, the hopes and joys we have shared in common? And in our after lives, when we permit the tide of these youthful memories to sweep over our vexed and despondent spirits, who of us will not arise refreshed and reinvigorated, and go forth with new enthusiasm and hope to carry on the battle of life.

We are few in number, and our class-history is soon told. We *were* four. We *are* three. One who entered, eager as the best of us, has not lived to see the end. Let us, in this hour, bestow a thought upon him who was so true a man and so faithful a friend, and go our ways, cherishing his memory and sorrowing for what our brotherhood has lost by his death. We are indeed few, but the smallness of our number has brought us into more intimate relations, and opened to each that inner sanctuary of the heart which but few can occupy ; and this makes it all the harder to sever the links which binds us to each other and to our Alma Mater. But our limited experience has no doubt, already taught us that life is made up of such meetings and partings—and yet, if there are many such as this we may well look forward with misgiving. But it is not wholly sorrow that makes tumult in our breasts to-day. We have youth, and hope, and ambition, and to us the future has a rosy hue. We have looked forward to this hour as the beginning of our earnest life-work, and now that it is to come, we cannot feel sorrow alone, notwithstanding all it brings with it. “ Our spirits leap to be gone before us in among the throngs of men,”

“ Men, our brothers, men the workers, ever reaping something new ;

That which they have done but earnest of the things which they shall do ;”

and may we enter into our part in this life-work with an energy and perseverance that will reflect honor upon the faithful

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teachers and friends we leave behind us. Yet, still, let us choose the nobler part, and live not so much for self as for our fellow men, our country and our God.

Classmates: the hour is come, Farewell !
