

It is peculiarly appropriate at this season of our lives that we ask ourselves what commencement is. Probably not one of the many young people who have "fought the good fight, finished the course," and stepped out from the college halls all over this broad land, but has asked this question. Some, perhaps lightly, thinking of nothing more than flowers, music, applause, and a diploma. But the most have asked it thoughtfully, pondering long and deeply on its meaning. To this latter class commencement means more than flowers, more than music, more than applause or a diploma. These are only the pleasant accompaniments of the beginning of their true life.—Not only of their true life, but of a higher and grander education than any they have heretofore known.

We have studied algebra in college. We now take the unknown quantities of geologic ages, solve the equations and get the known results—the secret of the plants, the power and adaptability of soils—till even the history of the rocks shall help us in our struggle to subdue the earth.

We have studied geometry as it is taught in schools. We now have the whole heavens spread out before us in a more magnificent geometry than finite mind has ever yet conceived.

Have we studied mechanics, and completed it?—We have now only to go to nature and study her problems,—prob-

lews which it took the Infinite Author millions of years to begin and complete.

Oyes, this is "Commencement," the beginning, not the end. In the broader meaning of the term we have really studied none at all as yet. But we have learned how to take up the problems of life as they are presented to us, — to solve the easier ones without difficulty, and, what is a greater achievement, to concentrate thought and strength on those requiring well-trained and disciplined minds. With this preparation we stand ready to take our place among the workers, to battle as our strength may be.

The general training we have received in college is absolutely necessary, but we know that we must be specialists to be entirely successful in life. It makes but little difference what calling or profession we choose, but when it is once chosen, we must be as thorough as heroic Grant in looking at it, and working from all accessible points. This lies all in the future, but in the years that have passed we have seen it in long looks ahead.

This year there step out from Princeton's halls forty-eight young ministers of the gospel. Do you think for a moment that one of these young men has chosen this as his life-work, without thinking of all the sacrifices he will have to make, — of all the suffering and sorrow he

will have to share and witness? Do you think there is one of them who has not weighed the subject carefully, and prayerfully, and decided that, to him, at least, the good far out-balanced the evil?

To the typical Vassar graduate Commencement means the finishing of school life, and the beginning of another life, - in society, in science, in profession, or in home-making, for even the least of which she is vastly better for her years of training.

To the young man who has studied hard for several long years at Cornell, graduation comes as a moment in which to gather his forces for meeting and battling alone the difficulties and dangers which beset his life's path-way.

To us, and to others who shall finish this course of preparation, Commencement is especially earnest. We are, most of us, children of farmers and merchants, and as such expect to make our own way in the world. We shall feel the guiding hand of Alma Mater for years to come, but we must toil with our own hands, and take the storms in our own faces. The responsibilities that have been laid upon us, and that have come to us here, have given us a fore-taste of this life, and we feel that the training here has been particularly adapted to give us strength for it.

With these today, there come from Yale and Harvard

and Columbia, and from the hundreds of colleges from Atlantic to Pacific, companies and armies of young people, to stand upon the threshold of new life, to feel the stirrings of new hope and to look upon the fields of new conquests.

Why should not Commencement mean much to us. And why should it not mean much to the world that receives these young people. May they not expect life to be quickened, and the work of counting-house and office and shop and field made better by the multiplying of trained heads and hands.

Commencement, then, consists not merely in the exercises of graduation week, but in the new thoughts, new desires, and new motives this season creates in us. — Not merely in the education we have gained, and will be enabled to gain; but in our power of influence for good or evil, whose center is the beginning of our life, and whose rippling waves are boundless as eternity itself.

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