

At last the day to which we have so long looked forward with joyful anticipation has arrived, and we have gathered together here tonight to celebrate the commencement of our practical life; to take our burdens upon our own shoulders and join that vast throng that is struggling and striving for the top.

It is so deceitful, this life into which we are about to enter, so like the Alpine mirage which paints pictures of green fields and beautiful valleys and thus lures the traveler to his doom in fields of endless snow, so bedecked with duties, and temptations of whose presence we are unaware, that we, standing upon the threshold and gazing into the dim and uncertain future, should pause before entering, and ask ourselves earnestly, "How should we live? What are our duties?"

The mariner, when he takes command of his vessel and leaves his native port, knows that dangers will beset him, but follows his chart and compass however doubtful and fearful he may be, and they lead him safely to his destination. We must also have something to guide us through this trackless sea, something that will shine through the mists and lead us to a higher and better life. Let Him who said that not even a sparrow shall fall without his knowing it be our guide our leader; Let nothing less than the top be our aim and by continual struggling and striving, by concentration, we shall reach it, and O! how much greater is the glory if we have reached it by our own efforts, by hard determined work.

A marksman firing at an object does not cover the whole target at once, but concentrates his aim to the centre, and hits it. Our efforts are like gunpowder, scattered and loose they may create a great puff and a dense smoke but effect nothing, but concentrated upon one spot, the hardest rock cannot withstand them. Why then cannot we reach the top by means of concentration.

It is not necessary for us to go out of our own country to find the truth of this. The history of America is full of men and women who have made their names immortal by their own efforts. Did Lincoln, the railsplitter, or Garfield upon the towpath, men whom many of us remember, ever dream of the high position which they were to hold? In a great measure Yes, They were ambitious, were eager for a better education, like Goethe they continually cried out for more light, and by experience gained in their hard determined manual labor, they moved irresistibly to the top. Therefore dear classmates if we desire to be successful in this world the first acquisition must be concentration. In the words of the poet Holmes,

"Be firm; one constant element of luck
Is genuine, solid, old Teutonic pluck.
Stick to your aim; the mongrels hold will slip,
But only crowbars loose the bulldog's grip.
Small though he looks the jaw that never yields
Drags down the bellowing monarch of the fields."

Our duties. A hard mistress will we find in duty in whose stern face we see no trace of pity, and in whose hand the terrible sword, conscience, is always unsheathed. She has numberless tasks in store for us, which will often make us pause doubtfully in our

life struggle and think "I cannot, I must fall back," but when we have done her bidding in spite of all temptation, the tears of pity fell into her eye, and the radiant smile which takes the place of the sternness of her face is ample reward for all pain and suffering which we have undergone, while the naked sword in her hand, is transformed into a beaming sceptre which extended towards one seems to say, "Take your reward, for you have done your duty."

It is evident that there must be some reward in the fulfillment of duties. Nathaniel Hale, upon the gallows regretted that he had but one life to lose for doing his duty. Many men and women have done their duties cheerfully even at the cost of their lives. Would this be the case if there were no reward? The poet Schiller says beautifully,

"What shall I do let life in silence pass?

And if it do.

And never prompt the bray of noisy brass

What needs't thou rue?

Remember aye the ocean's depth's are mute,

The shallows roar.

Worth is the ocean---Fame is the bruit

Along the shore."

"What shall I do to be forever known?

Thy duty ever!

This did full many who yet sleep unknown.

Hh! never! never.

Think'st thou perchance that they remain unknown

Whom thou know'st not,

By angel trumps in heaven, their fame is blown;

Divine their lot.

"What shall I do to gain eternal life?

Discharge aright

The simple duties with which each day is rife,

Yea, with thy might.

Erre perfect scheme of action thou devise,

Will life be fled,

While he who ever acts as conscience cries

Shall live, though dead."

I wonder how the precepts which should govern this life of ours, will be carried out by the class of '94, with its varied temperaments, impetuosity, sensitiveness, and steadiness combined, when we are fairly launched into this practical world. Our pet ideas will receive many a hard knock and many an idol will be torn. But we will not let this discourage us. We will strive for the best and if we cannot apply in practice all that we have learned in theory, God helping us, we will at least do our duty towards our parents, our flag and our God.