

## ADDRESS TO GRADUATES

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**T**ODAY and tomorrow—next week and next month—in grammar schools and high schools and colleges and seminaries, from Maine to California, and Florida to Oregon, a million young people will enjoy that experience known as being graduated. A million pieces of paper or parchment will record the fact that so-and-so has completed the prescribed course of study and is a duly accredited graduate of the school which he has attended. And these credentials of graduation are received very gratefully and very reverently, and are exhibited with pride to admiring aunts and uncles and friends; and some of them are framed and hung on the wall; and others find their way to the family treasure chest where they lie along with the marriage certificate of father and mother, baby's first shoes and other keepsakes, undisturbed except possibly by mother on the occasion of the annual clearing out.

Today and tomorrow, and next week and next month, upwards of ten thousand commencement addresses will be delivered. Ten thousand serious and dignified gentlemen will stand on assembly platforms (even as I am doing) and will look very austere and important, and utter a great many learned words about life and character and opportunity and the advantages of education. Some will wax very eloquent, and will use many gestures; others will tell comic stories. And the adults in the audience will listen with a great deal of intelligent attention and will applaud vigorously at the proper places. And the young people—the members of the graduating class and the student body—will listen, too—for about three minutes. After that their minds will wander to the track meet, or picnic, or they will fall to wondering why so-and-so didn't come, or to hoping that the new pair of shoes won't squeak when they walk up to get their diplomas. But they will applaud vehemently enough when the speaker has finished. Why shouldn't they? Isn't the man through at last?

Listen: I suppose in my time I have attended a score of commencement exercises, and I never could remember anything the speaker has said. Commencement addresses are necessary evils—like stiff collars, taxes and other unpleasant things that we have got in the way of having and don't quite know how to get rid of.

Now, when your estimable superintendent did me the honor of asking me to deliver this address, I began to cast about in my mind for something to talk about. Impatiently I canvassed the well-known sub-