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IV—*The Oldest Living Graduate*

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*IV—The Oldest Living Graduate*

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**F**IND him wherever I go among the colleges—the OLDEST LIVING GRADUATE. At every College Reunion, there he is; at each Commencement Day you may expect him among the first—a trifle bent he is and leans, one cannot but note it, somewhat heavily upon his stick; and there is something in his eye, a dimness, a far-away look as of one to whom already a further horizon is opening.

Yet, frail or not, he is there among the graduates at the earliest call. The younger men may hesitate about a hundred-mile journey to attend the Annual Dinner of the Alumni—not he. The younger men may grudge the time or count the cost—not so the Oldest Living Graduate.

See, it is Commencement Day. There sits the Oldest Living Graduate in the very foremost row of the seats in the college hall. His hand is bent to his ear as he listens to the President's

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*College Days*

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farewell address to the graduates. But he hears no word of it. His mind is back on a bright day in June—can it be sixty years ago?—when first he heard the like of it.

Easy and careless he was then, the Youngest Living Graduate, happy in his escape from the walls of the Temple of Learning. A butterfly he was, hatched from his silken skeins and glorying in the sunshine.

The gaze of the Youngest Living Graduate was turned forwards, not back. He was looking out upon life, eagerly and expectantly. For the time being the sights of the grounds of the campus had faded from his eye and ear. His mind was bent, his strength was braced, to meet the struggle of the coming years. It is the law of life. He had no time, as yet, for retrospect, and in his very eagerness was over-careless of the things that lay behind.

But as the years slipped past the ties of memory began to tighten in their hold. There was time, here and there, in the struggle of life, for a fleeting glance towards the past. And lo! How soft the colours that began to lie on the pictured

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*The Oldest Living Graduate*

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vision of his college days. The professoriate, once derided, how wise they seemed. It is ever their hard lot to be honoured only when they are dead; but all the greater is the honour. The glory of the campus, the football game played into the November dusk—how the shouts of it will linger in the ear of memory when half a century has gone. Nay, even the lamp of learning itself, how softly now does it illuminate the long-neglected page; and the brave lettering of the degree, what a fine pride of forgotten knowledge does it now contain! Ah, my friends, you and I and each of us were once the youngest, or at least the latest living graduate. The time is coming, if we stay to see it, when we shall be the oldest. The time is coming when you and I and an ancient group that we still call our "Class" will walk the green grass of the campus on Commencement Day with the yearning regret for all that we might have done; with the longing for lost opportunity that is the chief regret of Age.

While there is time, let us be up and doing. Before yet we are the Oldest Living Graduate, let

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us borrow something of the spirit that inspires him. Let us discount a note against the future with Father Time, and receive its value in the glowing coin of a present affection. While our class yet live let us realize what a splendid group they are ; and let us find the opportunity to tell the professors how much we owe to them before we write our gratitude upon their tombstones. And if our college wants our support, our help, and our enthusiasm, let us bring it forth with all the affection of the Oldest Living Graduate and with all the power and eagerness of the youngest.