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VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

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When we were lanky flesh and so much bone,  
Learning held no thought of common sense,  
And we wore happy sackcloth of our own,

Denying what we knew of penitence.  
Today we come in black, but not for mourning,  
Nor for the death of our schooled innocence,

But for a solumn kind of student warning,  
A proclamation of our loyalty.  
We, as graduates, are not for scorning

A school that has allowed us what we see.  
On the contrary, we shall belong  
To its future and what it will be

As well as to our past. It would be wrong  
To dwell so on the present and forget  
What is to come: our world is not yet strong;

There are no other vacant worlds to let.  
What we must learn, perhaps, is that the days  
When common life and common people set

The pace are gone and in their place a maze  
Of complicated thoughts plays in a hide-  
And-seek with our more solid, folksy ways.

Before the separation is too wide  
Between our culture, art, church, life, and nation,  
Let us of sixty-two stand on the side

Of a steady Christian liberal education,  
Such as we've received, and even more,  
Let's pull against the reins of specialization

That threaten to misguide our hearts and lore.  
Instead let's keep alive traditions. When  
The physicist thinks of atomic war,

Let him remember love of country in  
The classics, how the Greeks and Trojans fought  
As much for honor as they did to win,

Or how destroyed Roland burst our thought  
With his heroic music. For our culture's  
Sake the student of such history ought

To learn some science, otherwise dry vultures  
Which pick dead bones are all we can produce.  
Let business majors try their hands at sculptures.

But let's not make each of these things a use.  
What we are seeking is a common vision  
For our culture and no weak excuse

For studying poetry or nuclear fission.  
What generous learning can provide we need,  
Them knowledge that gives freedom of decision,

And better bonds in word and thought and deed.  
So as we graduate to artist, scholar,  
Scientist, and businessman, the seed

That we are is sown with every dollar  
Earned or spent by us. And every word  
That we speak can make our culture taller

If we but choose to make our wisdom heard.