

I

Address to the Graduating Classes

IN DEFENSE OF YOUTH

A few weeks ago there was spoken at St. Andrews one of the most noteworthy of all university addresses. Sir James Barrie, as Rector of the University, stood before a crowded company of Scottish undergraduates. These undergraduates are not noted for their extreme courtesy and their profound silence on important public occasions; indeed their traditions are quite otherwise. Nevertheless, for more than an hour they listened to their new Rector in quiet and fascinated attention as he spoke to them with all that whimsical and elusive charm that is so characteristic of his written words. Sir James Barrie took as his theme Courage. But he had in mind a very specific application of that attribute. To use his own words, he meant courage "as you should use it in the great fight that seems to me to be coming between Youth and their Betters; by Youth, meaning, of course, you, and by your Betters, us."

It would not be easy or indeed possible to compress into a few paragraphs the charming address that followed, and it is farthest from my thought to attempt such a task. Sir James Barrie has, however, done us all a service in putting into new and arresting words which every thoughtful person must wish to read, his reflections upon the much heralded revolt of Youth against Age.

It is not easy to discover why so many persons should appear to think that this revolt is a novelty. It has been going on and repeating itself generation after generation ever since there was Youth and ever since Age began.