

Mrs. McGillivray, on behalf of the Graduating Class, then read the following

VALEDICTORY.

With what feelings of wonder and gratitude we realize the cause of this Convocation, we cannot express. When we see in this the successful close of the first year of the Women's Medical College, we recognize that the day is upon us—the night is over. When we think, too, that it is only a few months since we were in a sea of trouble, when we could only hope that sometime, somehow, somewhere, good would be the final goal of ill; when the beam that had slanted forward was all but overcast by the clouds that arose, we never cared to look for so speedy a fruition of our dreams. In the light of such good fortune we may indeed hope for all things, and doubt not that through all the ages one increasing purpose runs, that the thoughts of men are widened with the process of the sun. It is in this, this widening of thought, fuller growth of generosity, that we look for the warmth that is to nourish and mature the infancy of this happy venture, an infancy that is naturally healthy, and presages a long and useful life. As the first graduating class we deem it a proper occasion, before saying our adieu, to give, as far as may be, in a brief way, our reasons for the faith that is in us, our reasons for holding that all sources of education should be as freely opened to woman as to man:

First—As to our right; it has always seemed to us so very plainly right, and so little in any way reasonable to be said to the contrary that we have scarcely considered it a matter of apologetics. Since we belong to the *genus homo*, since humanity is the noblest work of God, and on earth is none lordlier than they, then who is there should say, "this may you do—this may you not do." Aside from the laws of country that uphold and protect all men and women equally, whence the authority derived that presumes to say to an equal creature, "thus far and no farther shalt thou go." When the great Author of all created us of the human race, and gave us the nature and souls that made us mortal, He never made distinction between the souls of men and women, and since the soul, the mind, is the dominant power of the creature, and the "highest is the measure of the man," how can it be that either should be trammelled by the laws of the other. Had this general principle been recognized, had what we "claim as right" ne'er been mooted, but frankly ours, as dues of nature, the inch by inch conflicts that have spurred some advocates to rush too far into ungracious extremes, to push right as right to so objectionable an end, would never have been chronicled. "Woman's Sphere!" most hackneyed term! has been so often defined that it has become almost meaningless; but give us leave to say it has heretofore been chiefly defined by the half of creation not woman, and therefore by her open to criticism. First, always comes the highest, holiest office of womanhood—that of wife and mother—the highest, the holiest work, to mould the minds, to form the characters, of the rising generation; to guide them on in paths that lead to the perfecting of what is noble and pure in their natures, in paths that lead to perfect manliness, to perfect womanliness—to nourish the seeds of good, to destroy the germs of evil; to create in them influences for good to all eternity, to the uplifting of mankind, to the welfare of the nation. So far woman has not been the ideal mother she might have been. Where she has been the noble and true mother that we all revere, think of the mighty efforts of love, untiring zeal and patience necessary to achieve so much at so unspeakable a disadvantage. What keen perception there must have been exercised to catch the reality of things from the mere reflections that were her all. Perfect motherhood! noble

ambition! and how shall it come? Not by dwarfing her mind, not by cramping her powers in any way, but by allowing her to work her will, developed by all the advantages of education, physical and intellectual, and unhampered by prejudice and adverse criticism. We feel that neglect here accounts for the immaturity, the misshapen, imperfect lives that are lived out in weariness, utterly devoid of the true, soul-delighting happiness within the reach of the trained and thoughtful intellect. Just so sure as that the light of science has reached the brightness of the present day through years, decades, centuries of constant nourishment of what was already given, thro' rectifying mistakes, through taking out the false links in the chain, through every means that could strengthen true principles and promote growth toward a far-off divine event of perfectness, just so surely have years, decades, centuries of seclusion, ignorance, and restriction tended to pervert, to weaken the intellect and the body of one half of creation. And yet we are told again and again women have not the capacity for education; they are mere weaklings in intellectual fields; they have never yet evinced power by any achievements; they lack scientific accuracy; they are most profoundly illogical. Oh, justice! where art thou fled? Woman's mind has been starved; instead of being surrounded by anything to call forth the latent powers with which we know nature has endowed her, her aspirations have been most timely "nipped i' the bud" by the rigid dogmas of father and brother, and, oh! grievous truth, by the holy horror of her orthodox sisters. Did she evince a desire to acquaint herself with the workings of state, to gain a glimmer into the sacredly masculine mechanism of politics and legislation, or venture to open her lips on a subject which custom had decreed beyond the scope of feminine intellect, her courteous friends accorded her a smile of superior greatness, while her brothers privately admonished her to keep silence in such matters; that it was unbecoming in a lady, and entirely beyond her "sphere." So, chilled and repressed on all sides, the years have rung out their changes, and woman has remained at a stand-still, the genial current of her soul frozen and inanimate. It has told sadly upon her. She feels that she is not expected to be strikingly sensible, that she and logic are two; a prettily curved smile, a becoming dress, a sweet, confiding manner, is the sum and acme of the desirable girl. She is informed by her gentlemen friends that she is delightful just as she is. "Heaven preserve me from a learned woman," "the saints defend me from a lady-physician:" "while a scientific female would fairly set me wild!" It reminds us of what a well-known writer once said: "Such men, in choosing a wife, wish to make sure of one fool who will call them wise;" or "We are not a denyin' women are foolish; God made 'em so to match the men." Yes, it is an undeniable fact, that history asserts on every page, there has been (excepting, of course, our lately granted advantages, for which all due thankfulness) an utter disregard of the intellectual development of woman, and of the physical as well; and here we might say that we cannot but realize that the physique of woman to-day is one of nature's marred intentions. There must be a reason for it. Nature never made a mechanism that would not work well, therefore the fault must be in ourselves, not in our stars, and we know certainly that education has not perpetrated the mischief. It is not due to any newly-arisen evil, it has been an insidious growth, or rather decay, and therefore not exactly recognizable or traceable. But we earnestly feel that were woman possessed of more knowledge she would see wherein her manner of life is contrary to the laws of health, and conform herself to them according to her enlightenment. At whose door lies the burden of the wrong? Not altogether at that of men, not altogether at that of women, but