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UA37/44 Diary to Kelly

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August 9, 1966

On Friday night, at commencement, as I told you, I sat in the audience, fearing to get too hot in gown and hood, for, since my long illness in the early spring, I am even more subject to getting so hot that my heartbeat gets too high. My goiter is responsible for this, according to my doctor, who warns me to guard against too-high temperatures until I seem about my normal self⁴ again.

But, though I felt somewhat antiquated by not being in the procession, I did see, for the first time in my whole life, the entire procession and not merely my part of it. It is one of the memorable phases of our graduation exercises and of our commanding stadium and its scenery. I had the good fortune to sit among some of our most loyal former students, who had come to see some members of their families receive their diplomas. And, after the program and at the Ballroom of the Student Center, I shook many a hand and felt again that I was a part of it all.

Your suggesting that the intimate touch given by having each candidate for a degree come forward was pat; I hope that some way will be worked out that will allow the graduates, even after they have climbed into the thousands, to have their brief moment in the spotlight, for their own sakes and for the sake of their loved ones. The same intimate touch at Indiana became lost after too many graduates became the rule. When I attended my first commencement there, in 1914, not only did the graduates come forward to the outdoor stage and receive their diplomas, but each Ph. D. was singled out as he came forward, knelt before the president, and had the hood with the university's colors slipped over his head. This made a great impression on me then. When I received my Ph. D., many years later, we to be so honored were merely asked to rise as a group, were welcomed into the ranks of the learned, and then we sat down, while some flunkies from the registrar's office passed our diplomas, about like passing a collection plate at a church meeting. Somehow the intimacy, the sacredness of the occasion seemed less impelling. I am not always impressed with ceremony, but I really missed the quaint, age-old ceremony of investiture.