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Convocation Address

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THE SUMMONS TO ADVENTURE IN OUR MODERN LIFE

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Life is as full of adventure as it ever was. This is true whichever of the three definitions of adventure we accept. If we mean "boldness of undertakings," it is so. If we mean the "meeting of hazards," life is full of it. If we mean "accompanying results dependent upon fortuitous circumstances," - likewise.

C. Columbus adventured; so did C. Lindberg. The Roman government fed on a mass scale; so did the United States of America. A Babylonian king dispersed the Jews; so does a German Fuehrer. Genghis Khan "blooded" his way from east to west; Japan is on a rampage. The world laughed at Galileo; it had some fun at the expense of Orville Wright. The followers of Moses, as devotees of immediacy, saw more in the glitter of a golden calf, than in the light of eternal truth; in our day, we confuse trinkets with treasures. The feudal age took toll of travelers; in this age, we mow men down with automobiles at the rate of 36,000 per year.

Our day teems with movement. For some, it sparkles with joy. For others, it sputters with sorrow. What Professor Jesse Steiner calls "the tangled web of human forces" enmeshes us. A man seeks a job. Ten millions are in competition with him in our country. An artist with a sensitive soul and an imaginative brush mixes his blood with his pigments as he transmutes his vision into plastered wall or canvas pictures, while the government by a relief allowance saves him from hunger and despair. A man and woman marry, having knowledge that one out of six marriages in this country ends with divorce; thus, they have the same chance for failure as the dice-thrower has for turning up a chosen number in the throw of a die. Is one imbued with a desire to amass a fortune? Let him note

that only one out of 60 families has an income of over \$5,000. Does one covet good health? In our nation during 1935, there were 312,333 deaths from diseases of the heart, 144,065 from cancer, 103,516 from nephritis, 99,967 from accidents, and 18,214 by suicide. This is the society in which we live.

In Ohio, all forms of public relief cost 4 million dollars in 1929. In 1937, it cost \$174 million. Our state's total prison and correctional population in 1934 was 10,243. Our 8 hospitals for the mentally ill cared for a total average of 17,296 patients throughout the year. Estimates point to 133,000 feeble-minded persons in our state and 20,000 epileptics. The jurisdictional state department has licensed 200 children's institutions and agencies, and has 26,000 children under its direct or indirect supervision. This is the society in which we live.

Only six years ago, in a large city of the Middle West, a crowd of citizens gathered in front of the city hall. The mayor had announced that no more money could be found for relief. The crowd was dispersed with stench bombs. They went away in an ugly mood. The mayor thought better of the matter during the night. He did find money for relief, and announced in the next morning's papers that \$100,000 had been found for the purpose. I had friends in that city. They told me it was only the mayor's announcement that warded off serious riots and bloodshed. Men were ready to fight for food.

In a city here in Ohio, citizens out of work, out of food, out of home (dispossessed), were camping on the green in front of the city hall. In New York State, one in ten of the population was receiving relief. In Denver, 1932 compared with 1931, the number of families receiving relief increased 370 per cent and the money for meeting those needs increased only 271 per cent. In 126 of the larger cities of the country, representing 56 per cent of our urban population, the aggregate relief expenditure for the month of May alone was \$22,310,417.

In our own city of Columbus, our municipal relief authorities and all other relief agencies combined, spent, in June 1929, \$24,413 for 1,380 families. In June 1932, the same agencies spent \$160,381 for 8,901 families. For a large part of that year, 11 per cent of the population of Franklin County was dependent upon public or private charity. This is the society in which we live.

In a figurative, yet realistic sense, we are in the midst of action such as Harry Hansen, of the New York World-Telegram writes of "Andrew Jackson," by Marquis James: "Pistols were loose in his saddle, the sword ready to leap from its sheath. For sheer adventure, action, gusto, read Andrew Jackson: The Border Captain." Well, friends, there is plenty of "gusto," anno domini, 1938.

Current thought is not in agreement as to what the economic debacle of the past nine years and the attempted measures for its amelioration will mean to this country. To be sure of the truth of the assertion, one has only to read the copious statements, analyses and prophecies of the over-night historians, that numerous array of columnists whose good, bad and indifferent, syndicated articles make the reading of the daily newspaper a pain or a pleasure. They agree with each other as do a pugnacious dog and a militant cat, who have acquired their canine and feline codes of ethics by roaming around the back alleys. So let me quote Hendrik Van Loon in "The Story of Mankind:"

"It is very difficult to give a true account of contemporary events. The problems that fill the minds of people with whom we pass through life, are our own problems, and they hurt us too much or they please us too little to be described with that fairness which is necessary when we are writing history and not blowing the trumpet of propaganda."

There are many good things on the favorable side of the social balance sheet. We have our educational facilities, churches, organizations of labor and of capital, our homes, fraternal groups, devotion to democracy, systematized

philanthropy, organized research and individual integrity. Pessimism solves nothing. Does optimism? It is perhaps debatable whether optimism or pessimism has made the greater contribution to progress. If the pessimist is the chronic complainer, believing that whatever is, is wrong, whose gloom has no basis in sincere study of conditions, then he will be missed from society as an aching wisdom tooth will be missed from a suffering man's jaw. If the optimist is the man with a slushy mind and a "rolly-polly" heart, who closes his eyes to fact and opens his ears to fancy, who believes that no harm can come to America because we are God's chosen and spreads an unsound and unsupported confidence, he is as dangerous as an extremist preaching an unsound philosophy of government. A wish psychology directed to the social affairs of our day succeeds in demonstrating only that "hope deferred maketh the heart sick."

The aged patriarch went forth, not knowing whither he went; a man goes forth today perhaps with objectives in his mind, but with adventure as his certain lot. Physical and mental hazards abound. Has civilization crumbled? Is there a God? Is life worth living? The best answer to that question is one given by an unknown as follows: "It depends altogether upon the kind of life you propose to live." What is a man to do in the relentless rush of current cruelty, extravagance, avarice, injustice and exploitation?

In John Galsworthy's play, "A Family Man," John Builder is sitting in his after-breakfast chair before the fire with The Times in his hands. He has breakfasted well, and is "in that condition of first-pipe serenity in which the affairs of the nation seem almost bearable." It is easy to blow smoke-rings in a calm. There is a terrible and awful whirl about life that adds impediments to well-rounded behavior.

In 1932, according to press reports, Mr. John Smith, of Arno, Missouri, (only his name has been changed), made this statement: "Not a can of paint, not

a bundle of shingles, not a roll of wire, not a single automobile has been purchased in this neighborhood to my knowledge in the last six months." I do not know Mr. Smith. I have never been in Arno. I know nothing of the geographical extent of the "neighborhood" to which he referred. I have not tried to appraise his responsibility as a reporter of the volume of commercial transactions in that area. I deduce two conclusions, however, from his reported statement. The first is that business was not good down there. The second is that John Smith, of Arno, Missouri, was worried about it.

This second consideration is heavy with significance. It is quite possible to be so wrapped up in one's own pursuits that the meaning of interdependence is missed. How long must we suffer as a people before we realize that paint, wire, shingles and automobiles are part and parcel of the same social pattern? How long must we live in the midst of the "multiple causes of social maladjustment" (to use Professor Gidding's phrase) before realizing that the concern of Arno is the concern of St. Louis, that the concern of St. Louis is the concern of Columbus, Ohio, that Ohio concerns the United States of America, and that this country concerns the world in reciprocal influence?

In "The Nature of the Physical World," A. S. Eddington shows how the world studied by the methods of the physicist remains detached from the world familiar to our consciousness, at least until the physicist has completed his studies. Such detachment is possible only to a limited degree in our social life. The social structure is a going concern. We may take an automobile out of circulation, place it in a service garage, submit it to the scrutiny and operations of skilled mechanics, pay the bill which is always a little more than we thought it was going to be, wipe the inevitable grease from the steering-wheel, and drive away for a ride in the repaired car. When we labor with society, we must speed along on the running board, look under the hood and do our tinkering while the

contraption is in motion. This is the simple reason, with complex consequences, why social administration is an exacting occupation. L. P. Jacks, in his very inspiring "Constructive Citizenship," suggests some such thought.

I saw a sign over a salesman's beautiful display of luscious apples. It was this: "Do not pinch the apples. When you pinch an apple, you hurt us." Life is like that.

Consider the attitude of my friend. He is a corporation officer. He is in the chain store and mail order business. We were discussing relief for the unemployed. He said that if people had saved some of their wages against future needs, there would now be no suffering. As a matter of fact, according to his naive assumption, there is no reason why any able-bodied man should be an object of charity. Well, say I, if wage earners had hoarded their scant surplus, if any, that man would be in a less desirable economic position. His own corporation has been assiduously coaxing the money away by all devices known to salesmanship and advertising, and doing it in the name of over-worked mothers, happy homes, standard of living, and so forth, on the plan of a dollar down and a dollar every time the collector finds you at home. My business friend is living in a state of detachment from the realities of life. An opaque existence is not compatible with an individual's contribution to social progress.

Consider my friend in Memphis, Tennessee. This friend has an acquaintance, an estimable man of that community, who sits as director in each of several important corporations. "When he goes into a director's meeting," said my friend, "he leaves his daily world behind him and becomes a different sort of being. He sees nothing but the ruthless processes of business regardless of their social effects." I know nothing about the justice of the indictment. It appears, however, that the two men mentioned have not learned that when you pinch an apple it hurts us, and that commercial and industrial problems cannot be resolved by

an ignoring of the happiness of individual human beings.

There is much current talk about the American standard of living. There always has been discussion of that topic. Henry Pratt Fairchild, social economist, writing in 1928, is authority for the statement: "Both wages and prices have gone up very much in the last two decades, but it is very difficult to tell which has gone up more. The best evidence on the subject goes to show that since about 1890 the standard of living of at least the unskilled wage earner's family has been slowly but positively going down." Through organization of labor and federal legislative enactment, persistent effort is being made to turn wages upward. Through Social Security legislation, effort at social stabilization is under way. While these various movements are going on, something else seems to be showing a noticeably upward tendency (Is there any one here who wishes to take issue?). I refer to taxes.

Many people in the lower income brackets are receiving social benefits such as free or less-than-cost clinic and hospital service, library service, municipal baths, public concerts, work relief, direct relief, and numerous other benefits. Does it occur to you that inability to pay for such things, recognized as necessary for health and decency, is in itself evidence of an unsatisfactory standard of living? By and large, people prefer to pay for what they get. They do insist upon having something to eat.

Those of us who pay taxes and make our voluntary subscriptions to welfare agencies, pay for relief, less-than-cost hospital and clinic service, public baths and other social benefits. We must seriously ask ourselves the question whether it is better to pay for them in taxes or in wages. If commerce, industry and all kinds of employers are unable to pay wages to guarantee economic security, the state will call upon industry to provide at least a makeshift. Phrase it as you will, that is the big social question before the American people today.

And when I say "American people," I mean the American people; I do not mean any political party. This is what Gerard Swope, President of the General Electric Company meant when he said that industry must evolve and make effective those measures which will ameliorate and ultimately eliminate unemployment. This is what Glenn Frank, former president of the University of Wisconsin meant when he said, "The key to a renewed economic life is realization that the income of the little men will ultimately decide the poverty or prosperity of the economic order." This is what C. A. Dykstra, the present president of the University of Wisconsin meant when he said that if the taxing power is to be used in the employment field in cases of emergency caused by the business cycle, it should be used in the field of unemployment prevention. This is what William Leiserson of the federal Mediation Board was striking at when he said: "Responsibility for labor that has not been able to make a living, has never been assumed by the community in a forthright manner."

It is not my purpose to discuss current programs for the amelioration of the severe social and economic conditions confronting us. Democracy must express itself in large-scale action. While striving for justice and freedom by the processes of democracy, we must organize our knowledge and experience for the pursuit of happiness which is one of our inalienable rights. While struggling with legislation, law enforcement, and social experimentation, it is incumbent upon us to remember that social and political action, proving to be either well or ill, impinges upon the individual life. We reject the ideology of the totalitarian state. The object of good government is to afford security, opportunity and happiness to citizens, and citizens are individual human beings. The social stake is commingled with the individual stake. "In this twisted, topsy-turvy world where all the heaviest wrongs get uppermost," (as Mrs. Browning phrases it),

we face adventure in terms of social hazards and fortuitous circumstances, requiring boldness of action.

Very briefly I refer to three "pieces" of spiritual equipment. The possession of these should help the individual in his social adventure.

First, a man does well to recognize the value of companionship. He who is without friends is poor indeed. College life is the open sesame to new friendships. The choice of friends is sometimes accidental, is generally volitional, and is often determinative in the development of habits of thought and action. Exchange of thought, by the device of conversation, results at least in the satisfaction of hearing one's own voice. It does more than that. I have learned much in stag sessions of graduate students. In chance meetings with members of the faculty at lunch, I have received much education. We have renovated the European problem. We have torn the government of the United States apart and put it together again. We have demonstrated our superiority to the Congress of the United States. We know, with nicety of discrimination, just where the Supreme Court is in error. We are adept at coaching football games - after the games are over, I mean. We have done what even the trustees of the University have not yet been able to do, namely, elect a president. We have humorously and very seriously discussed the economic plight of the country we all love. We have agreed and disagreed. In it all, we have discovered there is kinship and great advantage in adventuring together.

My reading of the Iliad brought out the adventure of Diomed. Agamemnon, commander-in-chief of the Greek expedition, called for volunteers to make a dangerous night trip to the Trojan camp. Diomed rose and said: "I will go, but it is well that I should have some one with me. For to have a companion gives a man courage and comfort; also two wits are better than one."

Then Agamemnon said: "Choose, O Diomed, the man whom you would most desire

to have with you; think not of any man's birth or rank; choose only him whom you would best like for a companion."

Then Diomed said: "If I may have my choice, Ulysses shall go with me. He is brave, he is prudent, and the gods love him."

Ulysses answered: "Do not praise me too much, nor blame me too much. But let us go, for the night is far spent."

Sit down with your friend or friends and talk over the adventure of life. God forbid that it must be about war. There is much spying out of the land to be done. We need to develop faith in each other, the only cure for the social cancer of intolerance.

Second, we need to develop faith in God. I bring you no systematized theology. I suggest religion. There is a difference. Theology is a razor to split a hair. Religion is a knife to cut a slice of bread.

When the Queen of England on September 27 assisted in launching the Cunard Line's Queen Elizabeth, she said: "The launching of a ship is like all great enterprises: it is an act of faith." The launching of a human life is an act of faith. I should link that faith with a God of order and purpose. If you can make some such adjustment in your personal thinking, it will help. I call you to your faith, not to mine.

Too many of us look upon religion in some such way as Abraham Lincoln wrote out his testimonial for a dubious mouse-trap: "For the sort of people who like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing that sort of people will want." There is nothing constructive in that attitude.

There is sustaining power, however, for him who adjusts his thinking and behavior in terms of faith in the unseen God. The concept of the fatherhood of God, with its cooperant concept, the brotherhood of man, smacks of social salvation.

Third, I invite you to keep firm hold upon sentiment. By sentiment, I mean "a spirit favorable to idealistic rather than utilitarian considerations." Do not think I am foolishly understimating the value of money. Most of us are able to see a dollar a mile away without the aid of field glasses. I am not advocating poor eyesight. I am intimating that adventurous experiences in our complicated social relationships should not be allowed to sour life. I am not espousing false, emotional values and invalid principles, nor do I fail to realize that rationalization constitutes a felony before the court of logic. I venture to say that law, medicine, engineering, social administration, business, and all the arts and professions allow plenty of room for a spirit favorable to idealism, while not crowding out the highly necessary, desirable and practical considerations centering around the bread-and-butter problem.

"Without sentiment, there would be no flavor in life at all," says Thackeray. A little sentiment now and then is relished by the best of men. Sentiment is a sort of refined appreciation of the niceties of life, exemplified in delicate nuances of behavior, that commend themselves to the artistic temperament. Without sentiment, life would be dull and prosaic, the moon-light would cease to be an institution for the delectation of the amorofo, and Cupid, Eros, Venus and Aphrodite would wait in vain for their cues to play their stimulating roles in the great drama of life.

As there are people struggling along in the adventures of life, having failed of the blessings of companionship, and of the sustaining hope that comes from faith in God, so there are people who, in the language of the bridge-player, hold a void in sentiment. Such people are pragmatic. They are stiff and cold and matter-of-fact. They may get there, but they don't have any fun on the way. They get things done, but they never wear gloves. They are effective but they are not winsome. They wear a sandpaper suit when velvet would do just as well,

providing, in addition to protection, the beauty of supple smoothness. Sentiment saves society from arteriosclerosis.

Summary and Conclusion

The newspapers carry a comic strip in which modern customs afford the setting for the behavior of men and women of the stone age. They do the things we do, but under conditions then prevailing. Their life is a series of adventures. Except for a noticeable dependence upon physical prowess, their experiences match ours today. So, I say, life is as full of adventure as it ever was. Do you ask me whether or not I read the comic strips? I am not saying whether or not I read the comic strips. Let it suffice for me to give you a definition. It concerns the intellectual who sometimes is inelegantly referred to as a "high-brow." A "high-brow" is a university professor who reads the comic strips only when nobody else is looking.

The complicated social conditions of the twentieth century constitute our wilderness, our seas for exploration, our pioneering opportunities for persevering and fascinating adventure. We do well to remember the words of Ray Stannard Baker: "There are no miracles in progress; there is only the plodding but beautiful adventure of inquiry and education."

Also, we do well to remember that an adjusted individual life is the requisite preparation for effective social service. We can not do much without companionship. We must have confidants. The hermit is aberrant. It may be hard to equate divine Providence with social disorder and suffering, but the motivation of religion is a force to be reckoned with. In the individual life, idealism and utilitarianism may be brought together for working purposes. Such being so, our own lives may be a bit finer, and other people's lives a bit sweeter.

In Maeterlinck's drama, "The Sightless," the sixth blind man says, while

he and his blind companions are in a fearsome situation: "I like to go out at midday; I suspect great brightness then, and my eyes strain to see the light."

Men and women, as we contemplate the none-too-happy social life about us, let us welcome the summons to adventure. Why not go forth at midday when the sun is at the meridian?