

The MICHIGAN ALUMNUS

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The Alumni—"In a very just sense and in a very large degree the fortunes of the University are committed to your hands"—Dr. James B. Angell.

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The Class of 1927 Become Alumni

Speech of the Honorable Nicholas Longworth at University's Eighty Third Commencement

THE largest Commencement audience in the University's history gathered to witness the final ceremony of the University year and listen to the Commencement address, delivered by Honorable Nicholas Longworth on Ferry Field, June 20, 1927. For the eighty-third time graduates of the University were receiving their diplomas, though the contrast between the first class of twelve in 1845 and the 2,014 whose names appeared in the official program this year constitutes a striking measure of the growth of the University since that time.

As usual, the senior classes assembled on the Campus and marched in a long line, which extended almost from the Campus to Ferry Field. The Regents, Faculty, and President Little, accompanying the speaker of the day, formed the end of the procession, taking their places on the pavilion before the south stand as the seniors were being seated.

Following the invocation by Reverend A. W. Stalker, '84, the Commencement address was delivered by Mr. Longworth. His speech was as follows:

IT would be hopeless to attempt to express in words my appreciation of the great honor that has come to me through the invitation of your President to deliver this Commencement address.

The University of Michigan is one of the great institutions of learning in America; approaching in size the largest, and comparable in the excellence and scholarship of its curriculum with the oldest; it has stood for many years, and stands today in the very forefront of the teachers of the arts, the sciences, and the law.

Seniors, to the Total of 2014, Since January First, Receive Diplomas from President Little

I am a loyal son of my Alma Mater—Harvard. I was a member of a graduating class numbering some four hundred—the largest class in Harvard history until then; and as I recall, one of the largest classes that up to that time had graduated from any of the great universities. Yet now, I am bound to confess, as I survey this scene, that I am amazed at the tremendous institution this University has become, and to acknowledge my pride that from this day on it will be my right to take profound interest in the increasing growth, success, and prosperity of the University of Michigan.

I am addressing a graduating class numbering, as I am told, some twenty-four hundred. In my college days I could pretty accurately count four hundred; in my recent years, as Speaker of the House of Representatives, I am able to count four hundred and thirty-five with great accuracy, but in this case I must take somebody else's word as to the number of this class that sits before me.

You young men and women from now on must face the world on your own responsibilities. So far your daily lives have been molded in large degree by others; your daily tasks, in large degree, imposed upon you by others. You have not been entirely free agents. After today you become so. Your lives will be as you see fit to live them. Your careers will be your own as to fashion.

Most of you, I imagine, have already decided what your occupations and your careers shall be. Many of you, probably, are still undecided. Some perhaps, have not given the subject a thought. All of you, though, I hope, even though your ambitions may still be vague and your plans still unformed, have in mind a fixed purpose, to accomplish something of advantage to your country, whether it be by way of increase of its wealth and prosperity, or by the way of contributing to the uplift and welfare of its citizenship.

To all so minded, I wish success. It may not come in full measure. It is highly probable that many of you will



Courtesy Detroit News
BENNIE FREIDMAN
As Flag Bearer

fail to achieve your ambitions in completeness; that is only human nature. But comparative failure should not cause you to be embittered or disheartened. It is far better, I think, to have lived to see your highest ambition ungratified, than to have gone through life with no ambition at all.

It is probable, too, that some of you may not find success in the careers in which you are now planning to embark. This should not of itself bring your discouragement. There are, doubtless, other professions of occupations in which you might well achieve pronounced success.

May I illustrate what I mean, by reciting the experiences of two college mates of mine at Harvard. One of them led his class through college, and graduated first at the law school. Apparently he had everything that promised a distinguished career at the bar; but whether the work palled upon him, or for some other reason, he abandoned the law, and is today a highly prosperous and successful shoe-maker. The other left college with every expectation of eventually succeeding to the business of his father, who owned a large shoe factory, but only a few years had passed before he abandoned the shoe business and is today a highly successful and prominent lawyer.

TO achieve success in any walk of life in the learned professions, in finance, in business, in politics,—using the word in its highest sense—there are three qualifications, to my mind, absolutely essential. They are, *character, perseverance, and courage*. Lacking the possession of all these three in marked degree, no man or woman may rise to high position among their fellow-countrymen.

An all-wise Providence has given proof to the world, within the last month, that there are in this country two Americans who possess these essentials in noble completeness: the one a mother, the other a son. No finer examples have ever stood forth in all history more worthy of emulation by the young womanhood and the young manhood of the nations.

It was courage, sublime in its dignity, that enabled the mother to speed the son away on a voyage appalling in its probable danger, without a tear. It was perseverance and character, sublime too in their dignity, that enabled her from the moment of his departure until his triumphant return to pursue with enthusiasm and efficiency her noble profession, that of teaching, without the loss of a day. And during the supremely trying though happy times since their greeting on the Memphis, what woman could have borne herself with more unaffected poise, more gentle dignity of manner? It has been perfection.

Of the son I shall not attempt to speak. No one could add one iota to the glory of his accomplishment. May I be permitted to say this one thing only. His services to the Nation, I think, are not to be measured even half way by his lonely and unprecedented flight across the Atlantic, gorgeous though it was; their pre-eminent value will lie, I think, more in what he has since accomplished through his own personality, and his rifle-like sureness of his public utterances to bring about the restoration of the friendship

and goodwill of the people of Europe, none to evident before his arrival. He did more in ten days to lay the foundations of permanent good-fellowship and peace among the nations than all ambassador conventions, leagues, and treaties could do in a decade. Fortunate, indeed, is a country which in one generation of citizenship can produce such a man.

WHILE I have had no opportunity of consultation with my colleagues, I hope that one of the very first acts of the next Congress will be to pass through the House of Representatives a resolution carrying the highest honor that the American people can grant to a citizen through their chosen representatives, an honor almost unprecedented, except in the case of those in high public office—I mean the award, by the same act, of the

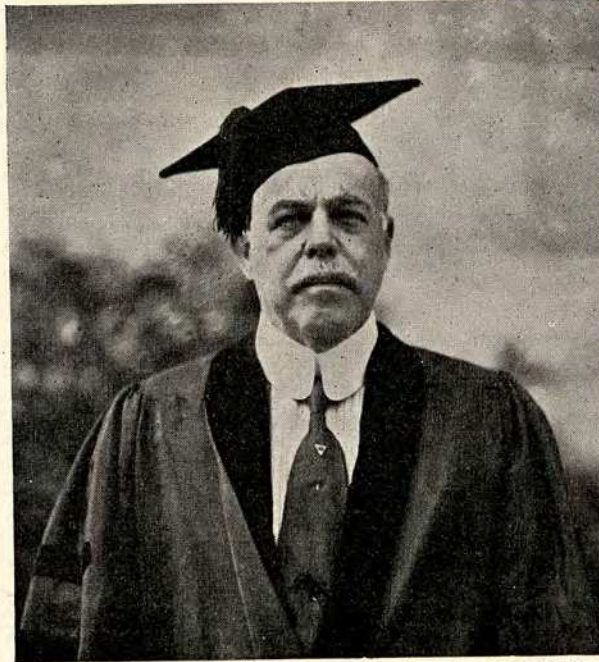
Congressional Medal of Honor and the thanks of Congress to America's most beloved private citizen, and the world's most attractive young hero, Charles A. Lindbergh.

A success so brilliant and spectacular as that of a Lindbergh is, of course, only within the reach of the infinitesimal few. But success which will make life infinitely well worth living is within the reach of any American who has the perseverance to persist in some chosen career, the courage to surmount difficulties, and the character to gain the respect and confidence of his fellowmen.

Of course, the Goddess of Chance will influence your lives, as she does those of every human being, but somewhere, some time, the big opportunity will come to you, if you keep your mind on the game, and stand ready to seize it. It came to Lindbergh and he seized it while others were talking about it. If you study the careers of great men, leaders in public

life, in finance, in industry, in the learned professions, you will almost invariably find that at one time or other the great opportunity came to them, and they saw it and unhesitatingly grasped it. You are standing today on the threshold of opportunity. I counsel you to be ready when it comes to you, to jump at it. Thus, your lives will not have been in vain.

The members of this class, as well as those of the graduating classes of all American universities, have this particular and peculiar advantage over those of the other universities of the world. The accident of birth, in so far as it may affect your present material welfare, or govern your religious beliefs, will not of itself make or mar your future. In all countries but ours the accident of birth may be all controlling. There, class distinctions, social prestige, religious prejudices, may be vital elements; with us they are mere incidents. There, men and women may be equal in intellect and character with the best, but by reason of birth, race or religion, there are certain positions to which he or she may never aspire. There, some start out in the race of life way out in front, others may start already hopelessly outdistanced. They have no chance to win. Each of your here are starting out with exactly the same chance to win, in so far as the accident of birth is concerned, as any of your comrades. The prizes will be awarded to the winners without regard to who or what



Courtesy Detroit News

THE COMMENCEMENT SPEAKER

The Hon. Nicholas Longworth, Speaker of the U. S. House of Representatives who Received the Honorary Degree of LL. D.

their parents were. It will be the courage, perseverance, and character of the individual that will bring victory in the end.

THERE never can be class consciousness and class distinctions in a country like ours where all young people start in life with absolute equality of opportunity. There never will be, so long as we support and defend the Constitution of the United States, and revere the precepts, and abide by the ideals of the Fathers of the Republic.

It is my hope that many of you will eventually devote your whole time, or at least a great part of it to the public service. The country needs the services of graduates of the great universities. I don't mean, of course, to say that a college education is an absolute requisite for worthy public service—many great Americans have been without the advantage that a college education brings;—but that a thorough grounding in the fundamentals, a good working knowledge of history, of science, of political economy, of the classics, is an advantage to any public servant, no sensible man, I think, can dispute. And if it be an advantage to the conscientious public servant, it must inure to the advantage of the country.

I know of no nobler profession than the profession of politics, and by politics, I mean the holding of office for the benefit not of oneself, but of the public. Yet very few young men start out with the idea of adopting it as a profession. As a career it seems too precarious. Real success seems very remote. Moreover, there can be no hope of ultimate financial reward. No honest man ever grew rich in the practice of the profession of politics. But the real reward to my mind is the greatest of them all, for I know of no satisfaction greater than the knowledge that one has served one's country honorably and well. If the public servant be honest and responsible and brave, he can lead his fellow-countrymen to the heights. Who have been the greatest Americans? You will all say Washington and Lincoln, and perhaps will mention many others; but almost every man you name will have been engaged in public life. And yet, compared to the number of men that devote their lives to business and the professions and the industries, an infinitesimal few only enter public life as a profession.

Success in politics rarely comes in a hurry. The great rewards await the men who have done the most faithful work over the longest periods of time; but eventually they are well worth waiting for. Perhaps more well worth than any others.

To those of you who have definitely decided not to devote your whole lives to the public service, may I be

permitted to offer this word of advice. No matter how exacting your duties may be in your chosen calling; no matter how onerous your responsibilities; give as much time as you can spare to the study and discussion of public affairs. Talk with your neighbors, consult with your representative in your city council, in your Legislature, in Congress; take an interest in your national and local governments. Time after time, what seems a public affair turns out to be your own private affair. If you take no part in the government of your town, your city, your State, and your nation, what interest do you think the government can be expected to take in your opinion? Unless you take an interest in the meetings of your local organization, vote in the primaries, as well as in the elections, how can you be sure that honest, brave and intelligent men are going to represent you and make your laws? I think one of the most unfortunate conditions that exist in America today is the apparent lack of interest that the average citizen takes in elections, not only primary but general. The fact is that barely fifty per cent of the qualified voters of America actually do vote, even in presidential elections, and almost a negligible percentage in local and primary elections. The President of the United States has called attention to this condition a number of times within the past year or two in public speeches, and has strongly urged that the public at large take an active interest in the elections of their public officials.

THIS graduating class, the graduates of all American colleges can perform a great service to their country by setting the example in their communities, by taking an intelligent interest in public affairs, and particularly by participating in all elections as a matter of patriotic duty. I have always observed that the bitterest criticism of Congress, of State Legislatures, and of men in public life, comes from those persons who take the least active interest in public affairs. The attitude of most persons who have the right to vote, but neglect this almost sacred duty of the citizen of a great republic, seems to be, "Oh, well, what difference would my vote make among so many?" As a matter of fact, it might make all the difference. Certainly the mass effect of this form of indifference is tremendous.

I have the greatest confidence in the American youth of today. Our young people impress me as being on the whole of higher intelligence, of better education, of clearer vision than they were when I was one of them. Surely they ought to be, as it is they who are to inherit the government of this greatest, most prosperous, most influential country under the sun. As our resources are further developed, as our industries expand, as our world trade

and international commerce grows, the problems of government will become increasingly complex and difficult, thereby placing heavier responsibilities each year upon all of us. If the young people to today prove worthy of this responsibility when it comes to them, we shall go forward, playing a leading part in the affairs of the world, giving friendly service to our neighbors less fortunately situated, unfettered always by any foreign alliance or obligation, to a future of a brilliancy never dreamed of by the Fathers of the Republic.