To Graduates of 1930
CHECKING UP ALONG THE WAY

To assign values to a college course in relation to the achievements of later life is looked upon as a faculty pastime, none too alluring to the student, and often admittedly boresome to the graduate. With this fact confronting me as I began meditating on what to say to the graduating class of 1930 my desire to philosophize was restrained, though perhaps unfortunately for you, not entirely suppressed.

Of your four years work in this institution, there is however for me a factual foundation. I have witnessed your contributions to the numerous developing activities of student life on the campus, and bear testimony also to your successful efforts in guiding wisely the growing sentiments and traditions of the University. From no book on college and university administration, not excepting the most recent one from the pen of Dr. Little, our Commencement speaker of a year ago, have I learned as much about my job as your class has taught during the past four years. Four years of life and work here constitute a laboratory of higher education challenging to any serious researcher, and basic to the future administrative policies of this institution.

The university on the one hand desires to share with you your present justifiable solicitude over what you are going to do now that you are done with your work here, but, on the other hand, the University must also carry on a process of continuous research to find out and interpret what you have done. Your achievements in building up new student organizations and in improving those already
existing merit sincere congratulations, but the future alone will reveal your total contributions to the larger educational life of the University. You have had enough confidence in this institution to take your four years of college training here, and now our faith in you personally is sufficient to warrant a thoroughly optimistic view of your permanent contribution. The University will seek to pay the large debt it owes you by doing everything in its power to provide more adequate higher education for the students of the future. You in turn will discharge your total obligations to the University by rendering your very best service to the state. The suggestion is being made by some that the student be required after graduation to pay back in full the total amount of the cost of the education received. The suggestion, I believe, is based on a wrong conception of the nature and function of our government. It is one of the fine influences in our personal lives to owe an obligation that cannot be paid in dollars and cents.

The state also will receive values from your services which cannot be measured in economic terms.

I am confident that as graduates your work for the University will continue, and since you are the largest class which ever graduated from this institution you may be expected to do larger things than your predecessors have accomplished. If, before the close of your festivities tonight, you should create an organization of some kind by means of which you could continue your services in some way in behalf of the University, you would thereby at once become pioneers in the most important field of alumni relations.

In any event each one of you can say and do much that will
help the University next year and in the years ahead.

It seems to me at times that this institution has suffered too much by unfavorable comparisons with other institutions which have been long established; and yet a certain measure of this kind of suffering is inevitable unless we prefer to be educational quacks and hypocrites.

On the other hand it is certainly not silly and infantile sentimentalism to rejoice in each new step taken toward that goal which other universities reached long ago.

Regents, faculty, alumni, and students have a right to dwell not boastingly but proudly on each advancing step, whether it be the national recognition of our Extension Division, or new buildings, or improved campus, or a broadened curriculum, or a better equipped laboratory, or a larger graduating class, or a better team, or greater achievements of our graduates when they enter other institutions, or a scientific contribution by a student or professor, or a new experimental school, or a larger oil well, or an increase in legislative appropriations. Surely we cannot go wrong by pausing at each of these steps, if it is our purpose thus to acquire vision and courage needed in taking more and longer steps toward the goal that lies ahead.

This is exactly the way other and older institutions have become established, and the most interesting and to us the most significant thing about it all is that we are the ones to whom has been given the privilege of taking these steps.
Pausing long enough to make an appraisal of progress, checking up on errors and successes, and charting as best we can the way that leads on, these are the processes which characterize the life of this or any other educational institution.

And, I suggest (not advise) that the method just mentioned may have value for the individual, whether in college or out of college.

At the risk of a more serious charge than that of falling from grace, I am going to suggest to the members of the graduating class, that pausing long enough to appraise what you have done, checking up on errors and successes along the way, and charting even though dimly the road ahead, is a procedure that may be helpful to each one of you in life.

A story which I heard recently illustrates this procedure.

A negro delivery boy working for a large retail store in a southern town went into a nearby drug store to use the telephone. He called up his own boss and in an unnatural tone of voice, applied for a job as delivery boy. His application was unsuccessful due to the fact clearly established by definite queries from the applicant that the one who had the job was altogether satisfactory. As the negro boy was leaving, the druggist called to him and offered him the job of delivering for the drug store. "New sir", said the boy, "I doan want no job; I'ze done got me a job; I jes been talkin' to my own boss; I doze that ever' now and then jes to check up on myself."

The attempt to chart the road ahead is not easy for the individual of today. Conflicting opinions are heard on every side on almost every important subject relating to our modern civilization. The machine is praised as our saviour and condemned as our destroyer; science, government, religion, philosophy, all realms of our thought—
life seem split up into factions. The lines which separate our thought-life today have greater significance for the future of human society than have the lines which separate nations and races. The individual who would find a way ahead in this difficult thought-world will find that intellectual honesty and tolerance of the opinion of others are most essential. If I trust that every one of you will find and follow an intelligent way of life, and that your way may be marked by acts of helpful human service which will bring to you the higher joys of living.