

June 14, 1903.

Graduation

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To my mind the greatest honor paid to
the Pres. of the Ass. is the privilege granted her
to address you on this most important occasion.
It is an honor which I gratefully acknowledge,
deeply appreciate, and heartily dread! And just
why this privilege is granted I have not yet
fully understood, except it be - that you are
what we were - and we are what you
will be.

ARCHIVES
HUNTER COLLEGE

After the learned speeches delivered by
these distinguished men, what is there left
for me to say! And yet there are two distinct
thoughts which come to me, and which I will
try to express to you.

In these very complex and changing times,
when the machine age, & Economic conditions have
caused an upheaval in the very roots of our
living, & something has been born, called
Science, & our every effort must now be bent
towards the understanding of this new faculty,
& the best way to use it.

In these last years when the tempo of

2 living has been so quickened, we dreaded even the mention of slowing down. But since the crash of a few years ago we are trying to adjust our lives to a slower tempo, & maybe approaching the time when we can actually enjoy the stopping of activities, & when a Pause will be a treat. In the East, moments of silence are more significant than moments of sound, for it is ⁱⁿ these moments of silence that the listener is related to himself.

The great poet-philosopher Lao-Tsze explained the theory by using the simile of a vase: — "A vase is useful, not because of the thickness of its sides but because of the empty spaces they enclose." — The Emptiness of the vase — which is life — becomes more useful when we forget the material surroundings which make it. And we enhance the value by the beauty — not with which we fill it.

In ~~ordinary~~ ^{normal} times, many of you would have gone out into the woods & found positions, but to-day all fields are overcrowded, & you may find yourselves without occupation. How will you fill those many empty-hours?

3. Unless you have within yourselves the potentialities for happiness and service, what will become of you. Most colleges to-day are recognizing the trends must be towards a less vocational objective, a greater correlation of knowledge, a recognition of the principle of self-education, + a stimulation of more vivid ~~mental~~ intellectual interests. In other words - the purpose of a College Education is not so much to fit you for a position, as it is to develop your faculties. For it is more important to teach you how to think, than what to think. Few come to College with any ardent thirst for any particular subject, and that desire you must acquire here.

And so to-day you are going out to begin your Education, so that within yourselves you may have sources of joy, + intellectual interests, which can fill the leisure you have had thrust upon you. But you must know what you desire, for knowing that, is more important than getting the desire. Thoreau said - (when he went to Walden Pond) "I went because I wished to live deliberately, to front the essential facts of life, see if I could not learn what it has to teach, + not,

4) when I came to die, dis'cons that I had not lived."

And my other thought is this:—
That to-day when all established orders are either toppling or ^{have} already fallen—when Kings are no longer popular, when our Capitalistic system is on its trial for life, when our Marriage laws are being threatened, and the Peace of the world is in the balance, it is to the younger members of our Society to-day that we will turn for inspiration and relief. And if you are to help cure the ills of the world what must your qualifications be? First, last, and at all times, Character. For with all your fine mental equipment, your technical knowledge, what impress can you make without a noble character? What is character? It is that combination of qualities within us which enables us to meet successfully the problems of our day. And as the years change, so these qualities change, and to-day you need, unselfishness, moral courage, & the force of an ideal. Some one said to me the other

(5) day, Americans are always protesting against something, the implied criticism being that they don't protest for something. Well, if one protests against the wrong, then the next step must be, the fight for the right. So that is my second thought for you.

Build your character so strong, and fine and valiant, that it will be impossible to tolerate anything but what is honest, fine and noble. And fight for the Right. Fight for it with all those qualities of mind, and heart and spirit, that will make men call you great.

And now, as Pres. of the Alumni Assn — to which I hope soon to add all your names, I bring to you our love, our congratulations, & our very best wishes for a full & happy future.

June 14, 1933.

Leslie Graff – President of the Alumni Association
Commencement Address
Hunter College
June 14, 1933

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After the learned speeches delivered by these distinguished men, what is there left for me to say! And yet there are two distinct thoughts which come to me, and which I will try to express to you.

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