

EAST CAROLINA TEACHERS TRAINING SCHOOL
Robert H. Wright, January 21, 1926

Chapel

CHAIRMAN
APPOINTMENT COMMITTEE

I want to give you a lesson in pedagogy this morning. I haven't looked over your reports and I don't know how many of you failed in pedagogy. I don't want you to fail on this lesson this morning.

For a long, long time I gave myself over to the belief that a lesson must cover a certain definite amount of work in mathematics, shall read a certain number of pages in history, a certain number of pages in English, numbering by the page, or in Latin or French, or any other subject and it was measured by the page. I am growing older in the number of days I stay on the earth, but younger in my thinking, and I have at last about reached the conclusion that the number of pages does not count. You take this passage of scripture that I have just read to you this morning. There are nine verses there, and if you will master every thought advanced in those nine verses you will have a clear concept of the Jewish religion and of the Christian religion and it is only nine verses. You may take one hundred pages of English, properly selected and find in the one hundred pages all of the principles of the English language and everything that one needs to know about the English language. You can get it with less than one hundred printed pages. You may take one hundred pages of Latin, and I don't care much which pages you select. You can take that very familiar "Omnia Gallia est divisa", whatever it is about Gaul being divided into three parts, and I never could understand why they wanted to divide Gaul into three parts unless it is for the same reason that a preacher wants to divide his sermon into three parts, the first, second and third, and a preacher does not know why he does that. You may start with that if you want to, and select carefully one hundred pages of Latin and get all the Latin there is, find everything that you need to know about Latin. You may take your arithmetic, and when you reduce it to the final analysis, there isn't anything in it but

addition and subtraction. You may take penmanship, something that people are fussing about all the time, and there isn't anything in it but a straight line and a left curve and a right curve, and so we may go through the whole category of things that are offered to us in large figures and we can reduce it to only a small amount. The trouble is that we do not see it and that we do not master the principles underlying the things that we are studying. Now, do not misunderstand me, I think you ought to study more than 100 pages of English, I think you ought to study more than one hundred pages of Latin, and I think there is a great deal to be learned in arithmetic other than addition and subtraction. You either have it or you don't have it and want to get it. You add it to what you have, or if you are in school with an account over at Mr. Spilman's office, you perhaps subtract it from what you have, or at least that is what my girl does. But there are a great many things that we need to know besides simple addition and simple subtraction. There is a great deal we want besides what we can get on one hundred pages. We want to increase our vocabulary, we want to increase our vocabulary in Latin, French, etc. If we were to reduce all of the facts of history to 100 pages, it would be so condensed that it would be like taking your breakfast in a capsule, and it is better to eat it the way we now serve it.

The thing that I want to get before you this morning is that we do not gather the truth out of the number of pages that we study. You read your Bible and I expect you read it like old Prime Roberts. Prime is an old negro friend of mine down in Sampson County, and every time I get a chance I talk with him. I was talking with him out under the shop one day. You girl's from the country know what I mean by the shop. He was talking about the Bible. He said, "Mr. Robert, don't the Bible say that he that debases himself shall be exhausted". I said, "I don't think it does". He said, "Go way fum here, you can't fool me. Ain't you done read the Bible from kiver to kiver?" I said,

I thought I had, but that I had never seen where it says, "He that debases himself shall be exhausted". *****

There are a lot of you folks who read your Bibles just like old Prime. You debase yourselves and are exhausted. I wonder if you know what he was driving at. We take this good Book and we just run over the words and we don't realize the great truths of life that are written in just a few words, If we would take those words with the thought that they carry and ponder upon them until they sink deep down into our hearts and until we grasp the great truth, we would get a new life and a new light, and the same is true with reference to everything that we study. If you would take your arithmetic or your algebra, or any subject in mathematics and just master, absolutely master the few great principles that underly that subject instead of "debasing yourself and becoming exhausted", you would "humble yourself and become exalted"; and you would see the beauty and the eternal Truth of God expressed in the simple fact that two and two are always four. You can't make it anything else. It is as eternal as God himself. If we just let the simple facts come into our lives in English and Latin, those little details that can be found on one hundred pages of properly selected English, then we could take that great field of English literature and turn our minds loose and let them wonder through the field and gather the rich thoughts and the beautiful speeches of those whose spirit lives on and will continue to live on as long as man lives. The same is true with reference to any study. There are just a few fundamental things that we must master and they are not very difficult, we are just afraid of them, but when once mastered they will become a part of us, The problems in that subject will cease to be problems. There are some few passages of Greek literature that are said to be almost perfect, but there are only a few people who have really mastered the Greek language, the ancient Greek, I am talking about, sufficiently to be able to see the beauty

of those passages. The same is true with reference to a great deal of English. Shakespear is not dead, but Shakespear reading is dead to a large number of people, because they haven't mastered the few fundamental principles that will enable them to read and enjoy that wonderful piece of literature, that author whose works have been translated into practically all the languages.

If you will just take this lesson in pedagogy this morning, it will help you and add joy to your work.