

Chapel, May 20, 1926

President Wright

I have recently spent two days at Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City, and have had one long conference with one of the leading normal school teachers in Teachers College. I just felt like telling you people this morning something about how our college ranks in the opinion of the leading thinkers in teacher training in this country. I knew that we had a fairly good standing, but when a man like Dr. Bagley stops you on the walk and says, after introducing you to some other person, "That man is head of one of the best, if not the best teachers colleges in this country," somehow your head sorter swells up, you know. And being a modest man, I said, "Doctor, let me give you an extra cigar." He said, "thank you, I am not charging you for that, I believe it to be the truth." I didn't have a long conference with Dr. Bagley this time, but I did with one of the other teachers, and it is interesting to me to see how those who are thinking and thinking seriously of the problem that confronts us in this country in working out the course of study and arranging the things that ought to be offered to students who want to train themselves for teachers; to see how nearly they are recommending what we are doing, how nearly their thinking follows what we are trying to do here.

You young women have an opportunity in teacher training here that really does not exist in but a limited number of teachers colleges. No thanks are due to me for it, I don't mean that at all, but thanks to the faculty of this institution, the men and women here who have caught the right vision, and who are trying to put it into practice. I know you are going to make good. I know those who catch the spirit of this college and carry the spirit along with the information you get, I know you are going to make good. And, young women, the world is waiting for those who are trained. Now some of you say, "Well, Mr. Wright, why haven't I got a job?" You will get a job, there won't be any question about that.

I am becoming more and more confident as I work with the problem, and as I think about it, that we need, all over this country, more teachers who have had at least four years of training for the lower grades. It is pretty generally accepted that you need four years training and in many places they require five years training for those who are to teach in the high schools, I mean five years beyond the high school. It is pretty generally accepted that the teacher who is to teach in the high school needs four years of training; it isn't generally accepted that it takes as long a time to train a teacher for the lower grades. I am convinced that we need our best trained teachers to handle our first grades. Much of the trouble that comes in keeping children in school and in advancing children comes because of the bad start they made. I will be glad to see the time when we will have large numbers of students training for grade work, and taking four years training. Of course, we have a large number training for it, but most of you are taking the two year work, and I will be glad to see the time come when we will go into it on a four year basis. "O, but that is so long!" Four years is not so long. The longer you stay on earth the shorter the four years will seem to you. The better your training before you begin the farther you can go, the more successful you will be, the easier your work will be, and the larger your salary or income will be. So, after all, it will really pay; though I didn't plan to talk to you this morning to advocate your staying in college longer than you had planned, but I want you to see what is out before you. There are people who believe that you can get the best that is to be gotten for lower grade work in two years, and later on they realize that it is not only four years' work, but sometimes they go on to get their master's degree and others work for the doctor's degree.

Starting a little child on his educational career is one of the most responsible jobs that comes to the teacher, because the good start means the life will go on and the bad start may mean that the little life will be headed in

the wrong direction. It is a glorious privilege to start a child, if we know how to start him aright. It is a terrific responsibility if we fail to give the child the right kind of start. Do you know, I believe a great many of the people who belong to the list of failures, who belong to life's trouble makers are what they are because they got started wrong, they got the wrong conception, they got a wrong idead; they may have gotten it in school, or they may have gotten it on the streets or in the neighborhood, but they got started wrong and for that reason we need the wise kind of teachers to help straighten those young fellows out and give them early in life a right conception of life's duties and of their relations the one to the other. In other words, it is in the early part of one's school career that we sow the seed that makes good or poor citizens.

I hope, young women, that you are going to get all you can out of the remaining weeks, and I hope when Mr. Austin posts that pleasant little bulletin that says "EXAMINATIONS" and you go through that part of the schedule that you are coming out on the right side and that you are going to pass on all of your work. I know some of you are because I enjoyed that most interesting musical concert that you gave me from the well organized glee club that I heard on the campus yesterday afternoon.