

President Wright's Address

Chapel, June 4, 1926

I have a little memorandum here to talk to you about this morning, and the first thing I have on it is, the year is not over, but will be soon. It has been a most enjoyable year. The commencement occasion is right on us. I hope you are through (spelled correctly) with your examinations and that you will have no more trouble. We will get the grades to you as soon as we can, not until after commencement, except to a select few, not so few either, a select few in front here. We will get them to you so you will know something definite, and I suspect you already know.

Commencement, girls, is a happy occasion, and it is one that I know we are all going to enjoy this year. We have a wonderful program. You know about it, so I am not going to take the time to talk to you about that. Let's enjoy the commencement. I want to just say one thing only in the way of warning. Let's not do anything during commencement that we are going to be sorry for afterwards. That happens quite often in colleges and in other places, and the person then regrets it the rest of his life perhaps. Don't do that, I don't know what it is, but let's so conduct ourselves with our friends, because those who come here are our friends, let's so conduct ourselves that they will have a correct impression of us; and when I say <sup>me</sup> you, I mean student body, teachers, and officers of the college.

It has been a wonderful year; to me, it has been the very best college year I ever spent, and I suspect that that is true with you, because we have had such a wonderful spirit in the student body. We have had such a wonderful attitude toward our work that I just feel like I want each one of you to know that you have just somehow made me love every one of you. Of course, I don't know you personally, and some day you are going to meet me away from here, and

especially is this true of those who are not coming back here. When you come up and speak to me, don't say, "Mr. Wright, you don't know me, do you?" You can go right out here in the corridor and say that if you want to. You know that I do not teach you and I do not know you individually. I want you to come up and say I'm so and so and I was in the class of so and so. I think I have told you this once before, but I want to tell it to you again. It happened to me when I was principal of a high school. A man came up to me and said, "Mr. Wright, I have a girl going to school to you (I had over 800)". I said, "Is that so?" He said, "How is she getting along?" I said, "Fine". Then he said, "Do you know her?" I said, "No". Then I said, "don't look that way, if your daughter wasn't getting along all right, I would know her. The fact that I don't know her is a credit to her." He said, "O, I suppose they send all of those who do not do so well into your office." So it may be a credit to you that I do not know you. Of course, I know a great many of you, but when you come to speak to me, tell me who you are and what class you were in. A lot of these folks come to speak to me and I have to say, well, what's your name now? And sometimes I guess it right, it isn't what it was. Some of you may change your names, and even though I know you personally, don't try to embarrass me by saying, "You don't know me, do you?" No, I don't, but I love a lot of women I don't know.

I want you girls as you go back into life, some of you are going back not to be here any more; I want you to carry back into the life that you are going to live all of the good things out of your experiences as a student in college. I saw some correct figures the other day that were so interesting to me, I think I will give them to you. I knew that just one per cent of the entire population of the United States were college men and women. Seventy-two per cent of all the leaders of the world, in America I mean, in all the professions, in

all the business, 72 per cent of the leaders are college men and women. Eighty-five per cent of all the leaders are graduates of high schools, but 72 per cent are college men and women. Twenty-eight per cent of the leaders in the world come out of the 79 per cent who did not go to college, and seventy-two per cent of the world's leaders come out of the one per cent of college men and women. Now that means, young women, that you have a much better chance to make good in life than the young woman who hasn't had the opportunity to go to college. It carries with it, of course, a much greater responsibility. The world is torn up today, perhaps more than it has ever been torn up. All of our social order is broken down. The whole plan of a generation ago is undergoing considerable change. The world is not looking to men and women with hair the color of mine. It is looking to the -- I can't talk about hair, because I understand you even change the color of your hair. I will have to change my figure of speech, because this generation is changing so fast you see a black haired girl today and a red haired girl tomorrow. But the world is looking today to the young men and the young women. There is a great responsibility that is coming to you as college women, to reach out and take hold of the opportunities that the world is offering you to help pilot this world, at this adjusting period, to the place it should go. I don't know what is coming next, I don't understand a lot of things. I got a letter this morning. Here is all I got. It is the envelope and the letter and everything else -- just one piece of paper. I opened it and tried to find out what was in it. Then I saw some writing. That is my youngest sister announcing the birth of a child. Another generation coming with an entirely different idea and standards from the ones that I was brought up with. Even the courting is done differently from the way it was done. It used to be done behind old Molly in the buggy or in the parlor. Now Molly doesn't pull the buggy, and the parlor is reserved for preachers, school teachers and college professors. It is a new

generation with new ideals and new standards. But I am glad to say, young women, I believe you are making your adjustments. I have absolute faith in this generation of college men and college women. You show that you have right ideals, you show that you have right standards. They are different and I am glad of it. I am glad you don't have to live like we used to have to live. When I was a boy it took all day to drive twenty-four miles. I have already been this morning twenty-four miles from here and back, and done a whole lot of work beside. I am glad the change is coming. If we use these changes as college men and women must do, we are going to have the greatest world to live in that we have ever had. The world is before you, and, I say it reverently, thank God you are looking to the future, that your eyes are on the future and that you are building in religion and in government the kind of spirit life and the kind of temporal government that people ought to have. You young women have the right, the privilege ( and I like that term better) of voting. They are selecting candidates now to make the laws for us in North Carolina. You have a certain responsibility as college women, and I am talking to you strictly as college women. You have a responsibility that rests upon you that hasn't rested upon the preceding generation of women to see to it that the state in which you live goes forward and not backward; that we build the kind of institutions that a state like North Carolina ought to have, whether they be educational or ~~some other kind~~, charitable, and to build them large enough to meet the needs of the youth of our state who want to get into the one per cent class instead of the 99 per cent, in the group who are going to control. X I hope to see some of you in the legislature, I want to get you on the appropriations committee. I bet I will know you then. And I want you to take hold of the problems which confront our state and do the things that ought to be done for North Carolina, and I believe you are going to do it. If you are going to elect the leaders you must read <sup>the daily papers</sup> the magazines and

keep yourselves posted. I want you to vote and not to be voted. There is quite a difference. I want you to express on the ballot your judgment of what should be done in the selection of candidates for political positions and not simply let some one else tell you how to vote, and to do that you must keep up with what is going on in the community in which you live, in the county in which you work, and in the state in which you are a resident. It's the college men and the college women of today who will shape the destiny of the state for tomorrow. I was sitting on this stage night before last, talking to a prominent citizen of this community as the boys and girls in the Greenville High School were receiving their diplomas, and he turned and said to me, very much to my surprise, but he is a good citizen, he said, "If you and I don't give them a chance, they are going to take the thing away from us and make a chance." I told him that I agreed with him and said, "It behooves us to give them a good chance." He said, "In just a little while they will be running it, and it is the way it ought to be." I said, "I agree with you, and if the state doesn't get what the state ought to have until they get into power, the sooner they come, the better I like it." He said, "I am with you, the boys and the girls in high school and college today are going to control."

Young women, I have talked to you along this line this morning, because many of you are going out into the world without any further college experience, and it is the earnest desire of the speaker that you go into the state, and that you make your state a better state. I do hope you experiences here with us will enter into your life in just such a way that you will see to it that the best things are done for the good of all concerned.

Again I want to say that it has been a real joy to be your president during this year, and to have the privilege of just working with you and for you, and in some little way being of service to many of you. I trust you all remember, "The Earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they

that dwell therein." And also remember that "The Lord is my shepherd", and when that is true "I shall not want". And that is true for every one, the earth is the Lord's and the Lord will be our shepherd if we will live aright, and may His richest blessings rest upon each one of you is the earnest wish of your president.