

Chapel, February 9, 1927
President Wright

Powder Your Nose, Rouge Your Cheeks, and Apply the Lipstick

We do not realize sometimes how a little act may set in motion in a human being thoughts that sometimes take possession of us, and carry us on and on into unexpected fields. One morning sometime ago, I stepped out into the corridor in front of my office and saw a rather pretty, attractive young woman, a student in the college, powdering her nose and putting something on her cheeks, -rouge, I suppose it was, -- just an ordinary everyday occurrence. I said, "Where do you go next?" She said, "On English." I said, Well, I hope you have a good lesson, or some other such remark, and went back into my office and began to think. The girl was doing something that was perfectly all right as we do today, and I approved of what she was doing. She wanted to look well when she went on class, and I think that is perfectly proper. I have no complaint to make with what she was doing. I rather commend her for it.

But I got to thinking about education and these are the thoughts that came to me that I want to give you this morning. You know a lot of folks are accused of "sticking their noses" into all kinds of things. That is what you are doing here in one sense. You are looking into new fields. You are getting acquainted with new thoughts and new ideas. You are gathering information. You are getting knowledge such as you have never had before. It is a good thing to do, but keep your nose of inquisitiveness well powdered, so that when you stick it into something, it will come out looking all right, and you won't go around the world with people saying, "She just sticks her nose into everything." People do not object to having you make inquiries and they do not mind giving you information, if you ask for it in an attractive way. Keep your

inquisitive nose well powdered so the world will be glad to give you the information you want, so the world will be pleased to help you. We can get much more out of the world if we go at it in the right way. I am going to ask you to keep your inquisitive nose well powdered.

Rouge your cheeks. Your college education will cause you to know much more than many of your friends and neighbors know. When you go back home do not appear to have too much "cheek". Do you know that that ~~very~~ thing puts a lot of college people to a tremendous disadvantage. It is a real handicap. I have known boys and girls to go back home and feel that father or mother does not know, and let it be known that they feel that way. I have known young people to go out from college so "stuck up" that what they had acquired in college was for the time being a handicap. As William Jennings Bryan said in substance on one occasion, it is all right for a boy to have the "big head". Let him go out into the world with a big head, expecting to do a lot of big things in the world. The world will soon whittle his head down to its right size. If he doesn't have big ideas, the world will never make his head any larger than he thinks it is. Rouge your cheeks so that the knowledge you get will be of service to you, and not cause offence to others. That is the thought that came to me. Get all the knowledge you can. Acquire every piece of useful information you may, and use it in such a way that it will be to your advantage and a help to other people who have not had so good an opportunity as you have had. There goes with every opportunity a tremendous responsibility, and a part of the responsibility is being able to use to advantage the things that you acquired when you had your opportunity. Do it in an attractive way. Make your mental life attractive. Make it helpful. Rouge your mental cheek so that people will not say, she has too much "cheek".

Then the other thought that came to me was -- apply the lipstick. Make the words of your mouth as well as the meditations of your heart acceptable in the sight of God and acceptable in the sight of human beings. Dress up your thoughts in well chosen language. I am giving you that advice because I have failed to do that all through my life. No one ever gave me that thought until I finally stumbled upon it myself. I went out from college convinced that the big thing was to think out something clearly and then bring it to pass, but I did not realize that the best way to bring it to pass is to study how to present it. Dr. Alderman, President of the University of Virginia, stands out in America as one of America's truly great men, and justly so. One of the big things in his life is that he studies how to present the thoughts that come to him. I heard him say on one occasion that a man has no right to make a public address unless he has taken time to word his thoughts carefully. He was right about it. You are acquiring information. You are gathering knowledge here. In a large measure the usefulness of what you gather depends upon how you apply the lipstick in your thought life, the way you word your thoughts. The way you say what you think is almost as important as what you think. Apply the lipstick to your lips so that the utterances of your lips will be attractive.

I wonder if these thoughts will help you. I hope they will. Powder your nose, rouge your cheeks, and apply the lipstick to all of your thought life. And that is what the girl set up in my mind when I stepped out into the corridor that morning.