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ADDRESS

DELIVERED AT

THE COMMENCEMENT  
OF  
THE NORMAL COLLEGE

OF

THE CITY OF NEW YORK,

*JUNE 21, 1894,*

BY

RANDOLPH GUGGENHEIMER,

CHAIRMAN EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, NORMAL COLLEGE.

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PUBLISHED BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

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NEW YORK :  
HALL OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION,  
146 GRAND STREET, COR. OF ELM.

1894.

MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

IT is a sincere pleasure to hand to the fortunate winners of prizes these testimonials of study, perseverance and scholarship. It is my opinion, however, that each young lady who to-day receives her diploma is also the recipient of a prize, the value of which she can scarcely estimate and which will grow each year as she lives. If those who are fortunate enough to receive an education within these walls would reflect for a moment upon the fact that it is only within the last thirty or forty years that the higher education of women has become general, they would appreciate the great boon that is here granted. Since the close of the Civil War this movement for the higher education of women has grown and developed, and now all over our land there are to be found great institutions of learning with laboratories for the study of science where the courses of instruction are equal to those in colleges for young men. The fear expressed in the early stages of the battle for the higher education for women, that college life would make women masculine, has been dispelled. It has been found by carefully compiled statistics that with increased culture and greater opportunities for

women there has been developed a noble influence, uplifting those who come in contact with them, as well as giving a character to woman herself, which until now she did not possess.

It is an especial source of pride to me that in my humble way I have done what I could towards placing this College on a par with the City College, so that it now receives the same appropriation for its support from the city, and I think I am correct in stating that this is the only college for women in the United States supported entirely by public funds. There are, of course, in other cities high schools for girls, but this is the only complete college supported by public contributions; and as America has led the world in throwing off so many of the traditional features which shackled humanity, in this respect also—that is, in the higher education of women—she stands foremost. There are some people who think that girls are different from boys, and do not need the same training, but in the words of Sydney Smith, “As long as girls and boys run about and trundle hoops together, they are precisely alike.”

It has been found that the fear that the health of our girls would be threatened by study has no foundation. It is reported that at Girton College, in England, the special apartment provided as a hospital for those who might break down has never been used except as an examination room. It will be to the credit

of our century that its highest distinction will be that it was the one in which woman approached her emancipation. The "Victorian Age," if we may so call it, will be known not only as that in which science has made so many marvelous strides, but that in which many privileges so long denied woman have been given to her because they are her rights.

This College, then, is to prepare women for the many opportunities that are now open to her in the fields of medicine, law, journalism, commerce, literary work, and many others that are now receiving her on equal terms with men. And if she do not enter into any profession, as the guide of the future generation what a great field is open to her! But a few weeks ago a monument was erected in my native State to Mary Washington. This is one of the few statues that have yet been erected to a woman. It typifies the advancement of the age. The immortal Washington used to repeat again and again: "All that I am, I owe to my mother's influence." And the second saviour of our country, Abraham Lincoln, reiterated that testimony. Read the biographies of the great men of the world, and you will find that all noble men had their minds formed by the influence of noble women. It is woman who gives the tone to society; it is her influence that is most powerful in court and camp, and often in the council chamber. How important it is then, that she should have her judgment

trained and her intellect developed by the highest education that can be given her.

This College, particularly, is a college for the training of teachers. Ninety-one per cent. of the teachers in our schools to-day are women. It is they who are moulding the growing generation, giving form to their plastic minds, planting the seeds of sound citizenship, really determining whether our Republic shall be one that will last, or, like the ancient republics, be subject to decay. I sincerely believe, that owing to the part that woman is now taking in the life of the republic, our nation is one that will endure. The gift of teaching is naturally woman's. Woman is gentle and patient. She is quick to discover new avenues to the mind; she is more sympathetic than man, and of all the professions, none is so important as that of the teacher. The ancient Roman preceptor was right when he said: "Do not despise the teacher's influence. It is the teacher really who governs Rome." And he proved it in this way: "The women rule the Senators of Rome; the children rule their mothers, and I rule the children."

I congratulate you upon the completion of your Collegiate course, and your entry upon the activities of life. In your hands is placed an important trust; so use the education you have received here that your example will be cited, and as the years roll on increasing opportunities will be given to women for com-

pler and fuller education. It becomes your duty to continue your studies. Remember this is the commencement of life. If you are teachers, study the best methods and acquaint yourselves with the most progressive ideas, so that your scholars may reap the benefit. It is said that in the time of Cato women caused an insurrection only to obtain the privilege of wearing the same kind of clothes as men. In this College you have received the privilege of decorating yourselves with the highest and most valuable diadem—the crown of knowledge.

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MR. PRESIDENT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

No one who has sailed up the River Rhine has ever been disappointed in his expectations. It is not that there are no other rivers broader and deeper, longer and swifter, with loftier banks and more imposing scenery, but the combination of the beautiful, the majestic and the historical can be found in no other place in the same impressive degree ; there is no Ehrenbreitstein or Rolandseck on any other river to impress the imagination with its history and pathetic charm.

A feeling akin to this comes to me as I view this vast audience, see this army of students, and think of the theories of the founders of this College.

We have all been greatly interested in the exercises to which we have listened. The papers read by the young ladies have been of great merit, but it is not only that to which I refer ; there are other colleges in which students are equally well instructed and in which are to be found those even the equal of our graduating class in knowledge and intellectual attainments ; and some of these institutions, I rejoice to say, are for the education of women ; but the crowning jewel of *our* College is that she is not only intended to educate those who take her degrees, but to educate for the profession of teaching ; this is essentially a Teachers'



College ; a professional school. There is no profession higher or more important than that of instructing the children of free America so that they will be intelligent, broad and patriotic citizens ; this idea makes *our* Rolandseck ; it is the union of the ideal College with the ideal aim of a College, the continued propagation of her teaching.

I regard this College as the greatest feature of our city. This I say without unkindness to any sister institution of learning ; certainly not to Columbia or the University of the City of New York, from one of which I hold two degrees and from the other one ; and not to the College of the City of New York, to which I bear the same relation as to this one ; but it is this feature of the education of teachers for our public schools which impresses me ; if the three men's Colleges I have named did not exist at all, comparatively little injury would be done to our common schools, but without this Normal College we could not hope to have a highly educated corps of teachers in our schools.

It is often said that whether the judges of a court are eminent and learned or not, depends much upon the character, learning and diligence of the lawyers who practice before them ; to a much greater degree is it true that the character of a school system depends upon the institution that educates its teachers.

So I say, that I regard this College as the greatest feature of our city.

New York is indeed an imperial city. In her parks, which have been designed and laid out with a broad and liberal hand ; in her great museums of art and history ; in her magnificent libraries ; in her great public and private buildings ; in her superb residences ; in all these respects this city is surpassing her associates ; they all are desirable and necessary, but better have less playground and less wealth of the beautiful and antique ; better have the plain homes of New Amsterdam than dispense with the institution that educates our teachers ; *that*, in my judgment, should be our *vade mecum*.

Indeed, the museums and the libraries of the Old World were relatively as valuable as ours are now, when the people, the common people, were in densest ignorance.

In the days of Socrates, Plato, Aristotle and Zeno, Greece was in the zenith of her learning and fame ; but that meant knowledge only for the few, the many could neither read nor write and were in dense ignorance ; were serfs and slaves, oppressed and neglected.

In the brilliant days of Cicero, of Seneca and of Marcus Aurelius, Rome possessed all learning ; but again the many were in absolute ignorance, untutored and neglected.

The England whose literature had risen to the dizzy height to produce a Chaucer, a Spenser, a Shakespeare and a Milton, was a land in which the com-

mon people were steeped in ignorance and in which the boasted colleges and schools were intended for the paltriest few.

The hope of our republic is universal education. The possibility of its accomplishment is sufficient, well equipped schools, with well-trained teachers; to obtain such teachers we must sustain this College.

If this is more important in one part of our common country than another, that place is this metropolis.

Through immigration, the difficulties of teaching are far greater here than where the population is more homogeneous.

According to the census of 1890, New York contained over 639,000 foreign-born inhabitants: nearly 238,000 Germans (including Austrians), over 75,000 Russians (and other Slavs), nearly 52,000 Italians (and other Latins), and is, therefore, one of the greatest German, Russian and Italian cities in the world. It is self-evident that special training is needed by teachers in such a cosmopolitan city.

This College has been especially fortunate in being presided over from its foundation by a single head; one who saw the need in 1869 and 1870 of such an institution has guided the policy and the advancement of the work from the beginning till now, and we rejoice that Dr. Hunter is as alert and vigorous to-day, on this twenty-fifth Commencement, *his Silver Jubilee*, as at any time in his useful career, and can lead the

College to results constantly better in consequence of his riper experience and scholarship.

The past year will be a memorable one in matters relating to public education in this city. Never before have so many commodious, healthful and well-designed new school houses been building; they are rising all over the city, both in the new parts and in the old. In April of this year there were 8,797 more children in the public schools of this city than in the preceding April, and in another year the increase will be even greater. All this has been done with care and economy; schools no longer needed because of a shifting of the population have been closed or consolidated, thereby effecting a large saving to be used for new schools where needed; more money has been allowed and spent on the schools of New York during the past year than ever before, and all with such care that I have yet to hear the suggestion that one dollar has been unwisely spent.

It is true that more schools are needed and that some old ones need new buildings, but it is only just to say that all branches of authority are working together to accomplish this result. Never before in the history of this city have the schools been as numerous, the attendance as great, the standard and methods as advanced, or the discipline superior.

It is easy to criticise. Glittering and general criticisms are cheap. It, however, must not be forgotten

that last September, when the city press waxed eloquent on the lack of school accommodations, the Board of Education had an actual count made of vacant places in schools, and found that there were 45,240 more sittings for children in the public schools of New York city than were used ; nor is it a fact that the excess was all in the lower part of the city ; there was no Ward which did not have many vacant seats ; but these vacancies were not in the schools nearest to the children who would like to have filled them. If children would now be permitted to go as far to school as children went a generation ago, or as they still go in the country, the school accommodations of this city would be ample.

I am not recommending that children should go that far ; but on the other hand, am aiding in every way the building of new schools ; yet it is only just that the true facts should be understood.

A tendency of the human mind seems to be to decry what we ourselves possess, and to be impressed with what others have. Criticism is healthful, but it sometimes obscures valuable truth. While our system is by no means perfect, I have no hesitancy in saying that in no place in the world, where the conditions are as complex and the numbers approximately as great, is there a superior school system to that of our city, or teachers better equipped or more faithful and earnest in their noble calling.

I am happy to think that such defects as exist are caused more by antiquated laws than lack in administration. It was unfortunate that the final recommendations of the Commission appointed by the Mayor were made so late in the last legislative session that there was not sufficient time to discuss and pass them; that Commission has performed a most valuable public service in a thorough and appreciative manner; its recommendations will be as timely next year as this, and I hope that within a twelvemonth they may become law.

The eligible list has been in successful operation during the past year; it is designed to insure the appointment of competent teachers and at the same time to do justice to all, so that every applicant will be judged fairly on her merits.

The Kindergarten classes established eighteen months ago have been successfully continued, and the Commercial classes started last September for those wishing to prepare for a business life have proved a great success.

For many years it has been the dream of our teachers to have suitable provision made for infirmities and old age. It was a perplexing and difficult problem; it is not two years since one of the foremost educators in the city told me that it was useless to spend time in its consideration; for that never, no never, would the public, the Board of Education, the Legislature or Governor consent to such a measure; and yet the Teachers' Retirement Bill, in its final shape, is conceived so wisely

and drawn so deftly that the dignity of teaching is preserved; nothing is taken from the taxpayer, and still ample and sound provision is made for the old age of our worthy teachers, and withal no one can justly criticise any of its provisions. If nothing else had been accomplished this year I would regard this act of justice to the teachers as sufficient honor for one year in itself, and yet it is but one of many incidents of the year.

For years this College has needed more money to carry on its work; attempts have been made to obtain more; it could only be had by legislative action; and we are happy to-day that at the urgent request of the Board of Trustees the Legislature has passed and the Governor has signed an act which provides \$25,000 more a year for the needs of this College.

The new Compulsory Education Law which increases the required age of study from 14 to 16 years should not be forgotten; all these constitute a worthy record.

It is my purpose, however, to speak principally to the young ladies of the graduating class.

No day, not even a wedding-day, will impress you more than the day on which you can breathe free and know that you have run successfully the gauntlet of an entire College course, and hereafter can affix the cabalistic letters A. B. or B. S. to your names.

It is no easy task to accomplish this. One cannot graduate from the Normal College without an immense amount of hard and honest study. It is a happiness

to study our favorite subjects ; but the human mind is so constituted that few enjoy all studies ; the enthusiastic student of the Calculus or Astronomy seldom equally masters languages ; one who is fully at home in the Classics and in present languages usually has no especial aptitude for Mathematics, and yet all must be mastered by the graduate. Then, too, it is a happiness to study when in health ; but in a College course there will be to every one some time when the health is poor, and then marks count the same as at other times. But all these vicissitudes are past for you. Like Alexander, you have conquered ; and, like him, you feel that all has been accomplished.

I would not detract any from your elevation ; many of the world's greatest events have occurred on mountains. Ararat, Sinai, Nebo and Calvary were the forerunners of Thermopylæ, Gibraltar, Sebastopol and Lookout Mountain.

And yet, to-day is not an end, but a beginning. I hope it is the intention of every one of you to be a teacher, and of that purpose I wish to speak.

My first suggestion is — never be satisfied till you reach the top of your profession.

It is often said that all callings are overcrowded. This is true of a mediocre place in them ; but I have noticed in the mercantile depression of the last few months that the person who is a first-class mechanic or stenographer or artificer of any kind has been busy,



while those who are handy at anything, which usually means knowing nothing thoroughly, are the ones who deplore the times.

There is just as much demand at all times for thoroughly trained and experienced lawyers, physicians and teachers.

Some teachers cannot soar above the machinery and drudgery of teaching; they teach so many hours a day for so much compensation; such a teacher will never succeed; her place can always be filled, and she holds her position only on sufferance.

*Will* to be at the head and you will get there; find out what your imperfections are and overcome them, as Demosthenes did the impediment in his speech, as Milton did his want of sight, or as Disraeli overcame the prejudices of the proudest aristocracy in Europe.

If you will aim high and work to attain your goal, I will guarantee your ultimate and complete success.

My second suggestion is—be original; be yourself, do not try to imitate somebody else. Many a life is wrecked by imitating the peculiarities of a great man without having the other qualities of the hero. There never was but one Edwin Booth, no actor who affected his style succeeded. A Beecher, a Talmage, an Ingersoll, a Sheridan cannot be copied; you may develop the genius of a Madame de Stael or the drolleries of a Charles Lamb; but if you do, it will assuredly be

different from theirs and original with yourself. Many a life is wrecked by being modeled on some other.

My third suggestion is—never be depressed nor elated. No saying is truer than the homely one that it is darkest just before the dawn. No matter how much your plans may be shattered, how great a failure your life may seem, you can always rest assured that in an unexpected moment a change will occur and you will find your fondest hopes realized. Equally true is it that when success is ours it ill befits us to be overbearing, for constant success falls to the lot of no one.

It was fortunate that when Mr. Cleveland was defeated for President he was so especially courteous to his successful opponent, and escorted him in his own carriage to the inauguration; for that led to General Harrison's returning the compliment four years later, and I will not prognosticate as to what may take place at the next inauguration.

My fourth suggestion is—do *one* thing only; few, if any, are able to do more than one thing at a time well. It has often been said that Lord Brougham was the exception to this rule; that as statesman, scholar or scientist he was equally at home; and yet he was not an exception. While he dazzled at the time by his gifts, his fame in no department is lasting; the school-boy of to-day has forgotten him, while the memories of his cotemporaries, Palmerston and Gladstone, will ever be green. Without making any special inquiries, I

feel sure that the young ladies who graduate at the head of their class to-day have devoted their powers during their College course to study to the exclusion of everything else.

When you go out into life, select one aim and live for that alone ; a girl in this country can be anything she determines to be if she devotes her life to the object.

My last suggestion, and the most important of all, is — rely only on hard work and merit for preferment.

I know many who consider themselves geniuses ; hard work, patient, plodding study may do for the common herd, but not for them.

My observation and belief is that there are no geniuses. I once knew a girl who pretended not to eat ; her family became greatly alarmed about her, until it was discovered that she robbed the pantry on the sly and eat in secret ; and I have the authority of no less a personage than Alexander Hamilton that a genius must work hard.

Hamilton says, “ Men give me some credit for genius. All the genius I have lies just in this. When I have a subject in hand I study it profoundly. Day and night it is before me. I explore it in all its bearings. My mind becomes pervaded with it. Then the effort which I make the people are pleased to call the fruit of genius. It is the fruit of labor and thought.”

But I hear some one say, True I am not a genius, but I have many friends who are School Trustees, and

they will see that I get an appointment and so I will be provided for. I may surprise you when I say that such a girl is to be pitied. If I were one of you, and had my choice, I would rather be the girl who has no influence at all, but who has determined to succeed by hard work. It may be slow, but such a one is sure to succeed ; while one who is unduly assisted always deteriorates.

Those of you who have visited the Yellowstone Park have noticed that the soldiers who act as park policemen constantly watch the geysers. If a tourist visits even a remote geyser he will suddenly find that a soldier is at his elbow. To one not knowing the reason, it seems strange. It would not be possible to steal a geyser, and there is nothing else around that one could steal. But on inquiry one learns the reason of the activity of the soldiers. It seems that by throwing a piece of soap into a geyser the alkali of the soap will so act on the alkali of the water as to cause the geyser to play in a partial way, although it might be hours or days before it would regularly play, but with the result that its periodicity is interfered with or changed—and in some instances the geyser thereafter ceases altogether. It is just so with the teacher who uses the soap of friendship to see the geyser of teaching. Such a teacher usually becomes like the geyser, only partial ; and often, still like the geyser, becomes changed and ceases altogether to be

useful to the system or an ornament to the profession.

There is no question that any girl who has aptitude for teaching will be appointed, and will be given the opportunity on her merits if she will only persevere and rely on her merits alone.

I hope that these suggestions which I have made will be heeded and put to a practical test.

I cannot resume my seat without recalling the musical voice and earnest words of my distinguished predecessor a year ago. He loved this College and was justly proud of his relation to her; he would greatly have enjoyed being here to-day. If he had lived, there is no doubt that he would still have been the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. His was an honorable life, full of high and noble aims, devoted to philanthropy, education and religion; a life that is an example worthy of emulation. In the height of his usefulness, almost as a translation, he is wafted to the better world; but although he is with us no longer, the name of ADOLPH L. SANGER will ever live in our hearts and in the archives and annals of this College as one of the most forcible and successful leaders that education in New York has ever had.