

# THE ALUMNÆ NEWS

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It was decided at the latest meeting of the Executive Committee of the Associate Alumnae that the ALUMNÆ NEWS print the following letter, sent by the Hon. Thomas W. Churchill to the principals of all our city schools:

HALL OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION  
Park Avenue and 59th Street  
New York

October 22, 1915.

To the Principals of All Schools:

Ladies and Gentlemen: If it consists with your own desire, will you find it convenient the coming week to pay such tribute to the memory of the late Thomas Hunter as will make effective in civic instruction for your pupils the personal qualities and public services of this distinguished member of our profession? I have found, as you have, that modern biography, talks about real men, spoken, not read, by a live principal, are among the most efficient assembly exercises we have. Would something about like the following, modified and amplified as your experience suggests, serve the purpose?

**BOYS AND GIRLS:** You have heard it said that the greatest real wealth of a country consists in the kind of men and women who live in it. I shall speak for a few minutes about an eminent citizen of New York who has recently passed away. Dr. Thomas Hunter is the name I would like to have you remember. He was first a boy living in Ireland, where he was born 84 years ago. That was in 1831. Ireland was then a very unhappy country. The people felt that their rulers did not understand them. The government was in the hands of men who did not live in Ireland. Every young man of spirit hoped to do something to improve conditions in his country. Young Hunter spoke boldly, and wrote such patriotic articles in a newspaper which he published that a warrant was issued for his arrest. He was in peril of his life. He had to run away.

When only nineteen years old he reached New York and tried to get work. He had been a good scholar in the Irish school, and when he applied for a position as teacher in a New York school, his earnestness and intelligence made such an impression on the school trustees that the boy was given a three months' trial as a teacher of drawing. You may be sure he missed no opportunity for making good. He prepared carefully for every lesson. He learned the names of his scholars and interested them to do their best. He was of a remarkably good-natured and merry disposition and enjoyed a good laugh with his class. He did so well that at the end of the three months he was made a regular teacher of reading, writing and arithmetic. He was sorry to see his drawing class discontinued; so he said to the principal:

"Let me keep the drawing class, too; the boys would like to stay after school to draw."

"But we can't pay you an extra salary for that."

"Never mind about the salary; I like to teach and I like the boys, and I believe they like me."

So he carried both kinds of work and in four years he was elected assistant principal of the school.

Three years later, when the head master died, the trustees gave the position to this young man, only twenty-six years of age, but

so enthusiastic, so industrious, and so general a favorite that the selection met with general approval.

Under his direction this old school, No. 35, New York, began to be famous for the quality of its work. Parents living in distant parts of the city asked permission to send their boys to Thomas Hunter's school. His pupils, when they grew up, rose to positions of eminence in the community. Among them are former Governor Charles E. Hughes, now a Justice of the United States Supreme Court; Mr. C. B. J. Snyder, architect of the Board of Education, who has built all the New York public school buildings for the past twenty-four years; judges, magistrates, Mayors of the city, eminent physicians, clergymen, prominent business men and leading citizens.

Some years ago these men organized a society called the Thomas Hunter Association, and every year they meet to talk over old times and to testify to the influence Thomas Hunter had upon their lives.

Forty-five years ago the city established a free college for young women. Its first President was this schoolmaster, not yet forty years of age. He built up this college with the same energy and loyalty that he had bestowed upon his school. He was its President for thirty-six years, and then retired under the title of Honorary President, or President Emeritus. He had then been upon this earth seventy-five years, but he said: "I am seventy-five years young and I have found this a beautiful and cheerful world."

Why did the world seem beautiful and cheerful to Thomas Hunter in his seventy-fifth year? The world is like a looking-glass. Be cheerful to it, direct toward it beautiful thoughts and actions, and it will reflect them back and seem to you a beautiful and cheerful place.

The city and the state so respected this man that even while he was still alive they decreed that the college should be named for him, and so it is known as Hunter College, and will continue to preserve the name of one who was at all times a loyal and efficient public servant.

When you think of a life like that of Thomas Hunter it makes you realize how much the world regards a man who is sincere and unselfish and human. He was not only good—he was good for something. He did not whine and complain of his hard luck in having to run away from his native land. He did not despise the humble work of a teacher of drawing. He threw his whole soul into whatever came to him to do—little things and big things. He valued the friendship of boys and so invested in the maturing gratitude of men.

A life like this is possible to every boy and girl in every school in the city. It is not achieved at a single bound. But each piece of work, each opportunity that presents itself has in it the power to make a worthy life.

If the principal will present something of this kind or better, and then ask the boys and girls what they remember of what was said, I shall feel that the occasion can be made well worth while.

Very truly yours,

THOMAS W. CHURCHILL,

President, Board of Education,

New York City.