CHAPTER X

THE FAMOUS "UNIVERSAL EDUCATION" SPEECH
(Birmingham, Ala., April 4, 1912.)

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am extremely gratified at the terms in which his excellency, the Governor of Alabama, has seen fit to present me to this magnificent audience; it is very gratifying; it is very satisfying. I knew, of course, that what he said about me wasn’t the truth. (Laughter.) I am not afraid to say that the Governor does not tell the truth, because I have been a Governor myself and I know what I am talking about. (Laughter.) But I enjoyed it the more because it wasn’t the truth. (Laughter.) You know, it does not make a pretty woman glad to tell her so; she knows it before you tell her; but if you want to see joy irradiate a woman, you get an ugly woman — not in Alabama, for you couldn’t find her here (laughter) — but you go up in New England and find an ugly woman and tell her so (laughter) — just tell her she is pretty and she will be the happiest, gladdest woman in the United States. (Laughter.)

And this is the way I feel to-night when the Governor says that I have done more for education in the South than any other Governor in it. After listening to his magnificent address it would be vanity on my part to believe it, but I am proud of the fact that we have built a schoolhouse in North Carolina every day since I was inaugurated as Governor, including Sundays; and I am here to-night to tell you that I am a thorough believer in education.

I believe in universal education. Did you hear what I said? You see, I am not a scary man. I believe in universal education; I believe in educating everybody. I will go further, and say that I believe in educating everything; and so do you when you come to think about it.

What do you mean by education? You mean bringing out of a thing what God Almighty put into it. I repeat that I am in favor of educating everybody and educating everything. Why, we have educated the Irish potato. You know what an Irish potato is now; but what did the Irish potato used to be when it was ignorant and had never gone to school? Why, it was a little thing, and it was tough and bitter, but some wiser man than the average found it, and he says, “I believe this thing has got good in it, and I will fetch it out.” “Fetch” is a good word in North Carolina, but I do not know how it is in Alabama. I taught school myself, and I know “English as she is spoke.” He said it is not good and I will fetch it out, and he proceeded to educate it; to bring out of it what it had in it. He planted and fertilized it and cultivated it, and planted it and fertilized and cultivated, and planted it, fertilized it and cultivated it, until the Irish potato has become so good that we have it three times a day, every day in the year, and we thank God when leap year comes and
gives us one more day in which to eat Irish potatoes. (Laughter.) But you must understand that is an educated Irish potato, and that is not an ignorant Irish potato. You would not eat that old-fashioned, ignorant Irish potato on Saturday.

So education is good for a vegetable, and it is good for animals, and it is good for a mule. You know the most dangerous thing in this country is an old, unbroken mule. Josh Billings said if he had to preach the funeral of a mule he would stand at his head. (Laughter.)

But that is your unbroken mule. We call it "breaking" them. What is "breaking" a mule except training him, educating him, bringing out of him what is in him? Why, when you buy a mule fresh from a drove it takes two white men and one Fifteenth Amendment to hitch him to a plow. (Laughter.) And when you get him hitched up he plows up more cotton than he does grass; but after you have broken him, trained him, developed him, educated him, why that old mule goes right along. He used to, in our State, when I was a farmer. Why, that old mule would go right along down the side of this cotton and when a clod dropped over on it she would keep her head so you could lift it off. (Laughter.) I have done it and I know how to do it; I say what I believe because I know that if you don't let me make a living practicing law or in politics I can plow it out.

Well, if it is good for a mule it is good for a dog. Does anybody hunt foxes in Alabama? If it were daytime I could look in your faces and tell, because if there is any lovely man on the face of the earth it is one of these old time fox hunters. (Laughter.) When I used to travel up and down North Carolina, making political speeches, and night would be coming on and I didn't know just where I was going to stay, I would begin to look out on the roadside, and if I came to a nice place but didn't see a dog there I would go right on through; but if I got to a place and found about fifteen hounds reclining in the declining rays of the sun, I drove right in and stayed there, because I know there ain't a man in North Carolina that will feed fifteen hounds but will be glad to feed me and want me to stay a week with him.

Now, take that hound puppy, a hound puppy that hasn't run foxes. He would get up before breakfast and start a rabbit before being told to. But when you want this hound to hunt foxes you take that puppy and break him, train him, educate him. You take him out on some beautiful moonlight night in the cold crispness of the early fall or the late fall or early winter, with the old hound — and you take the boys along with you too, if you are a good-hearted man — and you won't have been out more than fifteen minutes before every one of those dogs will be going, "Yow, yow, yow," and the old fox hunter says, "Shut up, that is no fox; it is nothing but a rabbit." You wait until you hear the music. And by and by, away off yonder on the hill a mile away you will hear the music come, and your fox hunter says, "Stop, hush!" He waits until she given mouth again. He says, "Hush up there." He sends the other dogs in because he knows a fox has gone along there as well as he would if he had seen the fox put his foot down there, because that music is educated and
she speaks the truth. Let me say to you teachers that
that is the very first essential of all true education, the
personal verity of it, the truth telling that comes out
of it. (Applause.)

Good for a hound dog? Then it is good for a pointer.
Maybe you think, you bird hunters, these pointers
always did point birds. No, they didn't any such
thing. Why, the pointers used to hunt birds, but they
hunted birds to eat, for a pointer loves a bird just as
well as you love quail on toast. But away back yonder
the man said, "I will take this instinct of the dog to
hunt birds and I will make him hunt birds for me in-
stead of for himself."

And he took him and trained him and taught him and
educated him, and he developed, generation after gen-
eration, generation after generation. And some years
ago a man who loved hunting told me that he had this
experience with his dog: He took him out in the field,
struck the track of a covey; he followed it down to a
high rail fence. The dog jumped up on the fence and
got to the topmost rail and discovered that the covey
was just on the other side, and he couldn't keep his
position on the fence. He knew if he sprang over that
he would flush the covey; and he let himself down, step
by step, until he quietly got on the ground and ran up
the fence fifty yards and jumped the fence and came
up on the other side, and sat, and never stirred at all,
with every nerve a-tingle, with the saliva dropping down
his mouth, because he wanted to spring upon the bird;
but he wouldn't spring until his master said go, because
he had in him the second power that comes with all
true education; and that is the power of self-restraint,
the schools; I am going to send them through the college; I am going to send them through the university; if they show any high turn I am going to send them abroad; I am going to train my boys and girls. Don't be uneasy about that."

Oh, my friends, I thank God Almighty, who is no respecter of persons, that you cannot get the best for your boy and your girl until you are ready to give the best to my boy and my girl. You can take that boy of yours and send him through the schools, send him through the college, send him through the university, send him abroad, bring him back home, head and shoulders above his friends and neighbors, but he won't be very high when he is head and shoulders above his neighbors if his neighbors are ignorant and untutored and weak. You cannot get the best out of your boy unless other people's boys are educated nearly or quite as well as your boy; you have got to get the best out of your boy by competing with other boys that are near about as good as he is but not quite.

If you want to get the best out of a horse do you put that horse on the track by himself? By no manner of means. How did they break the record below two minutes? When they began training horses away back yonder when I was a boy they got him down to 2:40, and the record stayed at 2:40 so long that it became a proverb. Whenever the old folks would say a man had started to the devil by the short road they would say he was going a 2:40 gait. How did they get it below 2:40? Did they train one horse? No. They trained 10,000 horses, all over the world until they found one that broke it at 2:38, and then they trained 10,000 more

Thoughts on Education

1. Should be universal
2. Because we do not know what it is in the boy or girl we must educate our children
3. Because of the spirit of competition
4. Because of the spirit of appreciation

2. Consist in development of powers already existing but dormant
3. Can only be attained by sacrifice
   a. This sacrifice brings joy
4. Must be with a view of deriving from which arise the highest ideals, the noblest work, the most perfect happiness.

OUTLINE FOR GOVERNOR AYCOCK'S UNIVERSAL EDUCATION SPEECH
until they found one that broke it at 2:36, and then
10,000 more until they brought it step by step, and step
by step until they got it down to two minutes, and
when they got it down to two minutes and a half second
they trained 10,000 other horses and some man said, "I
have found one horse that I think will do it." And
then did they put her on the race track by herself? No. They put her on the race track and put a boy on
the running horse, and put the runner behind her, and
with whip and spur he pressed her, pressed her, strong
in her determination that she would win the day, that
she would give up the last breath she had before this
running horse should beat her under the wire, and so in
one grand last burst of speed she went under the wire in
less than two minutes with the runner at her heels.
Your boy is going to run a race; he wants to run a race
with a race horse and not with a scrub. (Applause.)
Suppose he can outrun his neighbor; if this neighbor
can't make more than two miles an hour, your boy is
not running much is he? Suppose he does stand head
and shoulders above his neighbor: if this neighbor is not
more than five feet high, he is not tall. Suppose he can
throw his neighbor down, but his neighbor can't lift
more than twenty-five pounds, your boy is not much
strong.

Oh, no, if you want the best for your boy, thank God
you have got to believe in this splendid, grand demo-
cracy and give to my boy and other people's boys the
same opportunity that your boy has got, and if then
your boy outruns our boys in the race he will be a
winner that is worth while and he will be something that
is worth being proud of.
You are going to educate your girl; I know you are. You are going to sit up all night to educate her; you are going to save to educate her; going to economize; going to be stingy to educate her. Maybe you want her to make a musician. Well, I am going to tell you. You can send her to all the schools; you can let her burn the midnight oil; you can let her study under great musicians until she is almost blind; you can send her to the conservatory of music, you can send her abroad until her whole soul thrills and feels the glory of her gifted music, but she cannot make music to people that do not understand. You cannot talk to an audience that cannot hear. Governor, did you ever try it? Well, I have. When I was Governor I made speeches all over North Carolina. I canvassed the State for four years in behalf of the education of the children of the State, right straight along; sometimes on Sundays they would ask me down to the churches to talk, and I always talked about education —

(At this juncture the speaker fell dead.)