

The BOOKER T. WASHINGTON Papers

Now may I venture to repeat and to carry a point further what I took the liberty of saying to you on the football field that victorious afternoon:

Don't end your work with a mistake! Don't cut short, as General Armstrong cut short, in the case of Hampton, your unique personal contribution to the applied solution of these problems to which your life stands dedicated. Don't do it of your own volition, and don't be persuaded to do it. Confess to your Trustees and other advisors and benefactors that even your endurance has its limit: learn to yourself recognize that limit: and then steadfastly refuse to permit yourself to be pushed or constrained beyond it.

Boards of direction and conditional givers are forever sacrificing to a Cause devoted and heroic men, and thus, unwittingly, sacrificing the Cause itself. They do this, sometimes through sheer inability, or careless failure, to sense a breaking load; and sometimes through criminal neglect to ease that load, or to ease it in time. You have no moral right to permit to be thus cut short by a single day the influence of your own living personality, and your priceless personal service to Tuskegee and the Negro race, and to the Nation.

I know you will pardon this freedom of speech, because I know that you will recognize its friendliness and utter sincerity. And I believe that, in your heart of hearts, you will also recognize that the suggestions offered are sane and timely: — this entirely apart from any resulting benefit to yourself, but solely in the interest of the Cause itself, a cause which you represent and embody as no other man represents and embodies it.

We wish you all a Happy New Year, and many happy New Years, and may God long keep you in health and vigor, and continue to bless you and bless your work.

In our united behalf, Sincerely yours,

Geo. R. Lyman

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¹George Richards Lyman (b. 1844), a Minneapolis merchant in the wholesale drug business for many years, and president of Corporate Investment Co. beginning in 1892. Lyman and his wife and daughter visited Tuskegee Institute, where he addressed the students in the chapel and at several smaller gatherings. (*Tuskegee Student*, 23 [Nov. 25, 1911], 2.)