

JULY · 1897

To Henry Villard

Crawford House, Boston, Mass. July 5th, 1897

Dear sir: I should have sent an earlier reply to your kind favor of June 28th, but have been forced to be away from my mail for more than a week. I wish to thank you for your donation and shall see that it is used as you request.

I very much hope that you will take the time to look further into the work being done at Tuskegee. With me it has been a life work and I have tried to do things that I thought was helping my people.

I have seldom had occasion to discuss with any one the details of our course of study. I have always said that our course of study was similar to that of the Hampton Institute and as so many of our friends have been to Hampton and seen the work there, I have as a rule thought that this was the best way of explaining our course of study. If you will compare the course of study at Hampton with our own I think you will find little difference. So far from encouraging what are usually termed classical studies at Tuskegee I have always opposed the introduction of such studies there, and in doing so have for a number of years received the adverse criticism of numbers of my own race. Still I have never given way to this and expect to give my time and strength to the keeping of the work at Tuskegee in a simple form and trying to do well what we attempt.

You will find at Tuskegee as [at] most schools I think, those who have imperfectly mastered what they have gone over, especially will you find those who are weak in spelling and the use of the English language, and it is for this reason that I have never permitted any language to be taught at Tuskegee except English. You will find those at Tuskegee as in the case of the girl who wrote you, whose youthful ambition tempt[s] them to overestimate their own work and intentions. For example, she spoke of taking up "Rhetoric" soon. The fact is there is no rhetoric as a text book taught at Tuskegee. It was in the course a number of years ago, but I found that the students needed the time in the study of simple English grammar and so took rhetoric out of the course. This girl speaks of intending to study Civil Government. The term as it stands seems ambitious. To appreciate what it means at Tuskegee one would have to see the work done. There it means little more than the giving of the student an idea of the divisions