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He was an influential member of the Mississippi constitutional convention of 1868, where he led the successful movement for a compulsory education provision. He was elected to the Mississippi Senate in 1870. (Wharton, *The Negro in Mississippi*, 148-51, 173-74, 262, 271-72.)

⁸ Le Roy Percy (1860-1929) was U.S. senator from Mississippi from 1910 to 1913, filling the vacancy left by the death of Anselm J. McLaurin.

⁹ Charles Scott (1847-1916), a large planter in the Mississippi Delta. Scott fought against the McLaurin machine and ran unsuccessfully for governor in 1907. One of his planks was the promotion of Italian labor to compete with blacks on the plantations.

A Sunday Evening Talk

[Tuskegee, Ala.] November 1, 1908

THE YEARS OF CONCENTRATION

I want to impress upon you as strongly as I can, that, for the most part, during the next two or three years, or four or five years, or whatever length of time you may have to spend here, are years of concentration. I want you to bear in mind that the years immediately before you, in connection with your work here, are to be, or should be, years of concentration. You are going to get hold of habits that are going to help you, or injure you — habits that are going to cling to you all through your life. You must not grow discouraged, or disappointed, if you find yourself leading a very active and strenuous life through the next few months and years. That is what you are here for. That is what the teachers are here for — to help you to put all of your energy, all of your strength in certain directions, so that within a few months, or a few years, at most, there may be such concentration of life, such concentration of activity, that your characters in the larger sense, may be so formed, that what you get here will stay with you and influence you all through your life.

Let me say again, this is the time for concentration, for hard effort and you must not grow discouraged while trying to get hold of things, while trying to crowd into a few months or a few years that which is going to stay with you all of your life. You are going to get habits or should get habits, that should cling to you all through your life.

Many of you should get, for example, the inclination for clean-