

1898

# To The Graduate of '98: An Open Letter from Elizabeth Harrison

Elizabeth Harrison  
*Chicago Kindergarten College*

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# Chicago Kindergarten College

10 Van Buren Street



*"Religion without work is apt to be lost  
in empty dreams, worthless visions, idle  
fancies. Work without religion degrades  
man into a beast of burden, a machine."*

## To the Graduate of '98

YOUR College course is nearing its end. If you have learned its deepest lesson, that of growth through service, you are asking yourself the question, "How shall I best use this education, which has lifted me out of the petty world of frivolity and narrow prejudices, into the great world of thought and earnest activity, so that my own development may continue, and that I may, at the same time, enrich the lives of those who have been less fortunate than I?"

May I call your attention to one of the great avenues which has recently opened to women of superior minds and characters, demanding of them *their best*, but in return giving them an exceeding rich reward. After forty years of struggle and misunderstanding, the world now recognizes the thoroughly skilled and psychologically grounded kindergarten training, as a profession for women no less dignified and scholarly than that of lawyer, doctor, or college professor, and at present much more in demand. The founder of the kindergarten system declared that only intellectual women could put his idea into its right execution. "To learn to comprehend the nature of the child," said he, "is to comprehend one's own nature and the

nature of mankind; and in this comprehension, is there not involved the comprehension of all things else?"

The Baroness von Marenholtz-Bulow, Froebel's friend and biographer, in speaking of the true kindergarten training, has used these significant words: "By placing such instruction within the reach of women of all classes, the first step will be taken towards the full and perfect training of the female sex, of all who have care of children, of all future mothers in all ranks of society, for their educational vocation," Dr. William T. Harris, United States Commissioner of Education, has added his testimony to the value of the study in these words: "There is no philosophy for the young woman, to be compared with the philosophy that Froebel has put into his work on the mother's plays and games with the children." Such men as President Eliot of Harvard, President Draper of Illinois University, and almost every State and City Superintendent in the land, have added their testimony as to the value of the training for women. That the whole nation has awakened to a realization of the need of the work is shown by the fact that the demand for trained kindergartners, at salaries ranging from fifty to seventy-five dollars per month, is far in excess of the supply, and by the number of positions offering one thousand dollars and upward per year for kindergarten training teachers which are now waiting for properly prepared women to fill them.

Notwithstanding this great obstacle of lack of material, we would advise no one to enter the field who is not willing to consecrate herself to earnest and thorough preparation for the work, as the kindergarten is not a crèche, nor is it a pleasant place in which little children are entertained, but its life purpose is character building. "Underneath every game which is played, every story which is told, every song which is sung, every gift and occupation which is given, there is, or should be, a deep, underlying spiritual truth, intended to aid in unfolding the child's nature."

I send this open letter to you, as a representative of the more earnest and aspiring young women, who are now coming rapidly to the front in our nation's life, and ask you to consider its contents.

Cordially yours,

ELIZABETH HARRISON.