

"I WILL NOT BE ANOTHER SOCRATES"

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The mistaken conception of some perverted minds that teaching is a degrading profession has always discouraged many promising young men and women from choosing this noble career. A great majority of teachers now in our schools are high school graduates. I know a great many teachers who have left the teaching profession to look for a more remunerative job. Some of them have served as teachers patiently for years, but seeing the same treatment and prejudice accorded them year after year, I can not see how they could have done otherwise.

There is also a prevailing but wrong notion among the less-informed that only lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, engineers, dentists, etc. are professional men. This is a gross error. A real teacher undergoes an intensive and thorough preparation for the great responsibility she is to handle in rearing the youth of our land. If other professional men are required to undergo a thorough and rigorous preparation for their work, do teachers not undergo a similar course of training? Do they not study science, art, philosophy, history and ethics of education before being permitted to "practice"? Is a teacher not required to pass civil service examinations before being classified as a qualified civil service eligible? Let anyone who thus criticizes the teachers and the teaching profession try to qualify in the rigid entrance examination required of applicants for admission to the Philippine Normal School and study there for even one semester in order to find out for himself how a teacher is made; or

let him qualify in the civil service examinations required of teachers and see for himself if such things were as easy as saying "teacher only."

I am a teacher, too, but I will not tolerate anyone to affix the word "only" to my profession. I consider my chosen profession as noble as any in existence. Those who would look down upon a teacher with derision, contempt, and mockery are ingrates of the worst type. Let anyone who would call me a "teacher only" come to me, and I will ask him, should he possess some education, if he had become a professional man without being taught by a teacher in the grades. If my critic is a parent, I will ask him whether he has a child in school. I wonder if there would ever be lawyers, doctors, pharmacists, engineers, etc., if there were no teachers. That would be tantamount to climbing a tree without beginning at the bottom.

I am revolted and my blood boils whenever I think of this great injustice done to teachers and the teaching profession. The eagerness for a square fight which has not left me since the tragic days in Bataan still surges within my veins. I cannot remain silent now. I will not be another Socrates who calmly submits to his fate by drinking a cup of hemlock. I know I am teaching day after day, not for my own good but for the good of my country and my people. I am not afraid to assert, much less ashamed to be called a teacher. I can face anyone squarely, may his station in life be high or low, and proudly raise my head and say, "Yes, I am a teacher!"