

Huguenot University College,
Wellington, South Africa.

My dear Florence Snell Scholar.--

I am so very glad that it is you who have won the Florence Snell Scholarship, glad for you and for Oberlin and for me. I am writing to tell you so at once to forestall any feeling that may be yours at the moment as a reaction from the hard work you have done--a feeling that some one else may have deserved it more than you. I want you to know from me that that cannot possibly be true.

You see, my dear, I wanted very much to have the Scholarship given for scholarship--that true scholarship that is no mere matter of marks, but that can come only to those who show the promise of the right qualities of mind and spirit and character for its making. For this reason, it is given not at the entrance to College but at the end of the first year, that we may be sure of finding the one who will best use not only the opportunities which Oberlin so generously gives us, but the life and the environment which is Oberlin.

When the plans were completed, President Wilkins wrote me thus of such an one as would some day qualify for it:

"Her first days at Oberlin were of almost unbearable excitement and pleasure. The inevitable problems of adjustment soon came upon her, and she knew hours of perplexity, even of grief; but she met them with good will and with good mind, and came through them with increased steadiness and maturity. She had come to work and she worked, stimulated by the fact that many of her companions seemed equal to her in ability, some even superior. The curriculum gave her a chance to enter fields of thought which were new to her; and she retained and developed a gift of expression which soon won approval. She was eager in all her reading, in all her beholding, in all her listening--eager in classroom, in chapel, as she crossed the campus. And in the Spring . . . "

You will not be able to see yourself--as President Wilkins saw you,--a girl in the future, in her first year at Oberlin, but you will, in his characterization, see two things; the careful watchfulness and sympathetic understanding with which the girls working for the Florence Snell Scholarship were going to be considered, and the consequent sureness of the President and other members of the Committee that you are the very one to whom it should be awarded. So you may accept it with a joy untarnished by doubts, carry it thus to your family and friends, and after a summer, happy in the reward for work greatly accomplished, return to Oberlin, your Oberlin and mine, linked with me by this gift from an Oberlin girl of an earlier to one of a later time, to work out in your life all it can ever be to you.

The gift comes because of my great love for scholarship and for College girls: it comes through my work with my own College girls in South Africa in our search for scholarship together in the College on whose paper I write, in the joy of our work in what to me is the greatest of all subjects,--English Literature. It comes to you in Oberlin because, at the 1937 centenary, I found there College girls akin to mine in those qualities that count for most in the promise of the things that make life great!

As you come back to Oberlin in the Fall to take up your work as the Florence Snell Scholar, I send you my affectionate greetings. I see you as you go along the road you have already marked out for yourself, knowing increasingly the joy of your work; knowing, too, its discouragements and perplexities--those growing-pains of life--and the added strength they bring. The years will open on into each other; they will bring you increasing joy in your increasing knowledge. Always, you will be gaining in the fineness of your accomplishment: always, you will be adding the lustre of your own scholarship to the scholarship whose name you bear, as your gift in your own Oberlin name to pass on as an incentive and a pride to others, after you, to whom it comes.

I hope for you in Oberlin and in Oxford, if it be your choice, and in the years beyond, abiding joy and a love of life and its living. I look down the years to you, my dear, with great happiness and with a deep content.

Across the years, I send to you my love.

(Signed) Florence Snell

January 17, 1938

Written at Northampton, Massachusetts.