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Letter to Mrs. L. Crozier French from Dr. Brown Ayres

Brown Ayres

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September 6, 1916

Mrs. L. Crozier French,
Knoxville, Tennessee

Dear Madam:

I have just received from Mr. Bolton Smith, of Memphis, a copy of the communication addressed, under date of August 23 "To the Special Committee appointed by the Trustees, etc." and signed by you. In this communication, of which you failed to honor me with a copy, the following words are used: "I therefore had a long interview with Doctor Ayres on the matter. Doctor Ayres stated he believed the professor was a moral man, that he would not do anything to injure the students. I therefore had a long interview with Doctor Ayres on the matter. I considered that my responsibility ended with my report to the President of the University".

I beg to call your attention to the fact that when, in a telephonic conversation, you stated to me that you had called my attention to objectionable teaching by Doctor Schaeffer, I told you at once and emphatically that you had not done so; that you brought me two books and talked on a subject germane to the question of double sexual standard, but did not refer to Doctor Schaeffer or any one else in the University as publicly advocating or teaching such double standard; that you might have intended to speak to me about it but did not actually do so. To this statement you replied "Is that so? Well, well, well, that is strange", or words to that effect, but did not reiterate the statement.

In view of the fact that you knew that I categorically denied that you had given this information to me and that you then proceeded to make a statement in writing to members of the Board of Trustees of the University that you had given me such a statement, I am compelled to construe your written statement as giving me the direct lie, and as being intended to convey to the members of the Board the impression that I had neglected to perform my duty.

Being a gentleman by birth and culture, I can use no stronger words to a lady than to say again emphatically that your memory has failed you. If you insist on making the matter a question of veracity between us, I am quite willing to let my reputation for honorable character and truthfulness speak for itself.

Yours very truly,

Copies to members of special committee of the Board of Trustees

President