

TO MY DEPARTING STUDENTS by Edna Riley

Beware of the gifts that come to you,
Colossal, big, and wide;
The outside may not speak so true
Of the values found inside.

Small packages oft contain the best
Of jewels rich and rare.
So do be sure as you go along
To choose with greatest care.

The outside may be ever so smart,
Gay and shiny and bright.
But the only things worth living for
Are things that are true and right.

On this last day of our wonderful year,
I wish you a simple adieu.
To wish you the best, and in prayer,
I shall still be travelling with you.

And when life on earth is finished and done,
I'm sure we shall meet again
To tell of battles we've fought and won
When all were women or men.

I want so much to hear the best,
To see the fewest tears,
As you tell of the struggles and the tests,
And the joy of your wonderful years.

So be true to yourself and the God above.
Live faithfully for Him each day.
Use your Bible as your real road map;
Read it well and pray.

Invest your life in the very best
Of art and science and truth.
You'll be so happy you settled it now
In your precious unspoiled youth.

Where ever I am, I'll be praying for you,
Though mostly out of sight.
That God will surely give you strength
To ever stand for the right.

Yes, we will meet again in a new Schoolroom
Across on the other side.
Another will sit in the teacher's chair,
But we'll stand by the teacher's side.

He will lay his hand on each tousled head
And gaze deeply into our eyes.
And to each one who's faithful and true
He'll give the richest prize.

NOTE: After serving as Missionaries in South Africa, the Rileys returned to the States, graduated from College, then John was pastor in several rural towns in Nebraska. Edna said she did not want her pastor to have to work a second job. So she graduated from Keaney Teacher Training College. She then taught all eight grades in one room schoolhouses in several communities where they pastored. Bible reading and prayer were encouraged by the School Boards. Edna, my mother, gave copies of this poem to her departing students.

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