

Dr. Park's Address

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THE woman's college is a separate growth in the history of education in America. During the sixteen and seventeen hundreds the colleges for men were being founded, not for a moment to provide the opportunity of a liberal education to all who sought it, but as professional schools, allowing the colonists in Massachusetts or Virginia to attend on a governor or sit under a learned divine of their own brand of training. The less fortunate young men and most of the young women of both groups were given over by the authorities to the joys and sorrows of an unlesioned life. Even the sisters of Harvard and Yale students were either given no liberal education or occasionally as a mark of special grace were taught the humanities by their brothers' tutor or by an indulgent father. Several generations later, when the anxious pioneer period was coming to an end, the intelligent fathers, and perhaps the intelligent daughters, combined for efficiency's sake and the boarding establishment opened its doors. These early schools were designed to prepare the young lady for life in her own home. That is, they were, after their kind, professional schools. To quote from the prospectus of an early catalogue — "What is the profession of a woman? Is it not to form immortal minds and to watch, to nurse and to rear the bodily system? Is not the cradle of infancy and the chamber of sickness sacred to women alone?" Gradually and especially in the more serious schools like the Ips-

wich Seminary where Mary Lyon held her first position, a new problem appeared. As new branches were taught and the studies of the young ladies became more advanced in character it grew hard and then impossible to find teachers, and little by little, largely through the apprentice system, the pupil teacher method, such schools began to teach young women to teach while they continued at the same time the education of the ordinary pupil. They were ephemeral. They often began, prospered and died with a gifted principal. Unlike the man's college they were not founded by the community to meet a need of the community. Their origin was in the demands of the pupils and the foresight of the teachers. The shrinking statements of their catalogues indicate that they were sometimes carried on in the face of real opposition from the public, and usually without any encouragement from it. Out of such schools and under the influence of women trained in them grew directly or indirectly most of the present group of women's colleges. The mark of their origin is curiously lasting.

Before most of them were on their feet many State universities had been founded in the Middle West. The passage of the 200 years between the foundation of Harvard and the foundation of the University of Michigan left its mark. The institutions of the second great pioneer period of the country were based on the principle of an open door in education and among the sons of the mid-

dle border the importance of the woman in a young civilization was too fresh in mind to be ignored. One by one as the universities opened they connected themselves directly with the public school system, interpreting liberally all entrance requirements, and they admitted men and women alike. The women's colleges in the older East, both in their founding and in their growth, were unaffected by the new university system. They presented themselves as a small group with a tradition on the one hand of suffrance from the community and on the other independence of it, and thus they stood by themselves with their own way to make. Now, as the number of undergraduates and alumnae begins to roll up, more especially as the women's colleges find themselves turning to ask from a mighty army of small givers the great sums which the one benevolent individual used to give, they are coming into a nearer relation to the communities surrounding them, yet even now to a surprising degree they remain a law unto themselves.

Like the privately endowed colleges for men, the women's colleges have as we know, steadily remained unconnected with the educational system maintained by the State and their control has remained vested in their own trustees and faculties. They have, for instance, stubbornly maintained against the wish of the public schools their entrance tests and the regulation of the subjects in which their entering students must be prepared. They have kept to a curriculum more or less rigid. They have increased, not diminished, their fees for tuition and residence.

Further, it might well be expected that in the absence of actual public

control a large and various body of patrons, parents and guardians and interested family connection, would through the sum of their interest and concern in the college, come to represent a kind of indirect control in the name of the whole community, a representative committee of the public, as it were. This has not taken place; for numerically the women's colleges have remained a relatively small factor in education. Nor is the numerical limitation the only one. Due largely on the one hand to the system of fixed entrance requirements, on the other to the maintenance of relatively high tuition fees, coupled with lack of opportunity to earn any considerable part of the expense while in college, a limitation to certain classes of society has sometimes taken place as well. Hence the number of families in the country who have direct connection with the women's colleges is relatively small and the public fails to exercise any supervision of the college in this way.

Again, the community not only does not control college policy, but, as it happens, it does not even use its strongest indirect method of influence. It is the distinct purpose of almost every woman's college that the student shall be closely under her hand for the period of the college course and with few exceptions that residence on the college campus or nearby is made compulsory. The students are thus automatically themselves removed from the ordinary give and take of life in their own homes and towns and this during four impressionable years, years when they are clay in the hand of the potter, when they are ready listeners to doctrine and ripe for the appeal of feeling. Mount Holyoke

and Vassar in their beautiful river valleys, Wellesley in her wooded seclusion, Bryn Mawr in her quiet lawns with only the panting of the heavy trains and the northern sky made rosy at night by the glare of the furnaces at Conshohocken to remind her directly of the problems of industry—they all yearn to isolate the student and direct her thoughts to the subjects of their curricula, the training of their choice.

Again the women's colleges have kept each student to a carefully defined course of study; she must spend a definite time in studying something of each of the great branches of learning and in that branch in which she shows special aptitude she must do more than elementary work. There is no democracy in their catalogues. Philosophy and community singing will never be equal before their bar and they hesitate no more for the public outcry than for the protests of agonized parents.

The woman's college justifies her existence by claiming to do a service to the community—by claiming to send back women well trained for life in their little worlds. With all her independence of the community in her policy and practice, she despatches her graduates at the end of their four years of training back to their old homes or to new homes of their own, retaining only a few to carry on within her walls the tradition of instruction in their turn. She even believes and asserts that the women who have been educated in her independent traditions go out to be leaders in the groups outside!

What then is the situation? The woman's college is independent of the community's control through its ordinary educational system, represen-

tative of numerically few of its families, anxious to remove her nurslings from its direct influence for the term of their training, compelling them to walk in a road of her own choosing, yet expecting them to be received again after her work with them is done. Certainly the public has a right to watch jealously organizations of such independence and to make its requirements of them great and constant.

The college on her side is conscious of wise traditions and high purposes. She has been hard at work for two generations. The requirements she has made of herself are the result of experience and of thought. What must she add to them? What must she assume further as her duty to the public? If its demands be really just, the college should, indeed must, make these demands of herself.

First of all, has not the community a right to require that the student of true ability who chooses to enter the college shall be given a fair chance to carry out her intention, that the barriers set up only to exclude the less well prepared in favor of the better prepared candidates shall be invariably surmountable by a straightforward and active intelligence plus diligence, that the path however narrow shall be straight, that there shall be no possible charge of a shibboleth of training administered by schools of a certain kind or special teachers who are in the secret.

And again, every college must be a going concern, must pay its bills, but its policy should always be toward the lesser rather than the greater expense for the student. It is harder for the college administration than for outsiders to know the sad loss which the college suffers in

receiving only one type of student. Its tiny melting pot is in the way of being an extraordinarily effective one. Within the small circle of college life, closeness of acquaintance, which in the intelligent person is the foundation for democracy, is especially possible. North and south, professional and artisan, rich and poor, rub unaccustomed elbows, and probably in no other four years of the lifetime of the individual is she open to such complete change in her attitude toward persons and beliefs or is she so stimulated by what she sees. Every intellectual exercise in the classroom, every discussion on the campus, shows the value of variety. The lack of it deepens and makes permanent all the old ignorances.

Secondly, as the women's colleges have largely kept out of their curricula everything but the academic subject, their delightful wares, each summer's graduating class, are not always immediately ready for the market. Their students go through further training or apprentice years if they wish to practice the vocations or professions. But an immediate contribution if not of expert workers at least of expert work is nevertheless possible. Mr. Dewey has pointed out recently that before our knowledge will warrant our speaking of an art of education—an art we all hope to speak of before we die—we must expect to go through a complex process. With all available biological and psychological data in hand, as lamps unto our feet and lights unto our path, we must courageously make the experimental step which those data indicate. We must then watch the experiment intelligently and criticize it honestly. In that criticism, we may perhaps make a solid con-

tribution however small to that future art of education. A college compactly organized to give an academic training can make a valuable contribution to the public in such experiments and in such discriminating criticism of the experiments once made. It is not enough to say that a woman's college cannot settle into a routine of method or curriculum; it should be willing to make its own method of teaching, the methods of learning which it imposes on its students now and again experiments in education, combinations of caution and daring. Again, it should be ready to make constant new adaptations of academic work, such as the Training School for Social Work at Smith or the Summer School for Women Workers in Industry at Bryn Mawr. Again it should use all its own capacities; while giving its students the groundwork for professional training, teaching, medicine, law, it should present to those choosing the profession and to all others the opportunity for contact with advanced academic work itself, with the scholar in his study, the scientist in his research laboratory. And it is especially the business of the women's college to keep in mind the profession of the teacher, to call out and encourage the student who shows that combination of intelligence and imagination necessary for the good teacher, and to see that she is directed into the proper preparation.

The residence college sets arbitrarily its physical requirements for admission, it is able to regulate the food and exercise and it is equipped to watch the effect of the environment on its students. It should establish itself as an important ally in

all study of public health and it should be required to contribute for the public its information on the health of young women. It is in a position to accumulate for its own use and for use outside, a body of facts relating to conditions among normal women which in completeness and accuracy can hardly be otherwise reached. The truth is that such a study, which to be valuable must be kept up to the minute, can be made only with an expenditure of time, money and intelligence that the women's colleges have not dared to volunteer nor the public to demand. Nor have they made sure that every student went out with the information about herself and about the conditions of health which would make it possible for her to keep herself fit to do hard work not only for a limited period but for a long working life.

What advantages of training can the community demand for the young women whom it loans, not gives, to the college? Two, from the college requirements which are most criticized. If it is part of the traditional value of admission by some form of test that, in this way, a girl learns to face a period of intense mental and physical effort, meet it, go back to her routine and go through the same process again with less difficulty, then the community has a right to expect that a woman so trained will later on be better prepared mentally and physically to pass from an ordinary routine and to meet a crisis, and that she will use this hardly won power for the common benefit. Less nervous breakdown and more joyous attack on her work. Again where the student has been set to do intensive work in at least one subject, she may fairly be expected to have developed

methods of work that will enable her to tackle problems of some complexity, whether she finds them in her undergraduate Latin or later in an executive office, a political organization, or in ordinary community life. Her mind should be equipped to deal objectively with a matter and she should be prepared by instruction and by actual experience with some method of attack on a problem whose factors are at first unknown to her. The college which trained her believes she can do this more easily than the same student choosing a wide range of more elementary subjects. The life of the ordinary young American of the day differs from that of his parents chiefly in this—that he demands and has more variety, more acquaintance with a number of subjects. To stabilize this demand the American colleges should see to it that they offer not only the pleasure of opening a door into a new art or science but the companion pleasure of deeper penetration into the recesses of knowledge. “The first man knew not wisdom perfectly; no more shall the last find her out, for her thoughts are broader than the sea and her counsels profounder than the great deep.”

And lastly, if for four years the student is to be often shut away from the busy human activities to which in the end she will return, the community has a right to ask not only that her intelligence should be trained but that in that important period her social imagination should not be dulled, that her sympathy should not be played upon and lessened but should be set on broad and strong foundations; that she learn respect for her own spirit and for the spirit of each individual she meets. They

can demand that she come out to her life as a member of society with perceptions quickened, no sentimentalist, no moral bully, demanding and rejecting in accordance with her own standards alone. There is only one way to make sure this result. Within its narrow classrooms the college must see to it that she is taught with breadth of view, and this not only in so-called safe subjects, but in so-called dangerous subjects, in economics and history and psychology and religion; taught with sincerity which will call out sincerity in her; with imagination which will create for her a true and breathing picture of the world she is to meet; and with liberty of spirit which will make her all through her life demand ceaselessly for herself and others the same quickening air. I have said that the community must demand this of the college; at the moment it is more often true that the college must create the demand.

These demands and others, too, the public may make of the woman's college. The college has it in her power to meet them. If we did not sincerely believe that she has met many of them and that with good will she can meet them all, we should not have gathered at Bryn Mawr today. As for Bryn Mawr's own part, it is not for me to say, except as any daughter of the college, if she were called upon, might speak for her, that Bryn Mawr longs in the coming years to send her graduates to the world outside her tranquil boundaries, a group of increasingly reasonable, reasoning,

just-minded women with health and energy and persistence and intelligence. But I cannot go home today and vaguely trust my hope to that personification of the college that my sentiment evolves so easily—a mother beautiful, beneficent and wise, receiving and sending out again one generation of students after another. We all know that, in the nature of things, that personification will resolve itself, tomorrow, into the monotonous machinery of a complicated organization, trustees, faculty, graduates, freshmen, janitors and watchmen, committee meetings, group systems, entrance requirements, wheels within wheels. For though President Rhoads and President Thomas could call up for us and for themselves no doubt that vision of Bryn Mawr, it was out of a laborious and complex routine that they met the demands of the community. It is out of that laborious routine that President Thomas's successors must meet the same and, I hope, increasing demands. If as the years go on the intelligence and sincerity and fervour of President Thomas's love for the college reappear in her successors and make them now and again see the light which the earlier generations saw on the mountain top and quicken in them the endurance of drudgery and the tireless thought which carried her through the day's work, then, at the close of their terms, they in turn can speak with something of finality, can point out with authority their anxieties for and their confidence in the college.