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Oxford, from a Woman Student's Point of View.

"A citie seated, rich in everything,
Girt with wood, water, corn and hill."

OXFORD, as one of her admirers has said, is "rich in everything," but she has no richer possession than the devotion she inspires in her sons and daughters. She herself is so generous a giver that it is of her own wealth that her children give to her. Beautiful with that revered beauty which is perfected by age; dignified with the dignity begotten of a long and noble history; wise with the wisdom that transcends mere knowledge, the old grey city casts a spell that no lapse of time can break over the men and women whom she molds and teaches!

Yet it must be confessed that Oxford looks askance at her daughters; nay, rather, that she hardly admits their relationship. Till within the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Oxford had opened her gates to none but men. Then a few women modestly and timidly sought entrance. It was a monstrous innovation this admittance of women, and to many an old-fashioned don it marked the first step of Oxford's decadence. Two colleges for women were founded—Lady Margaret Hall, on Church of England lines, and Somerville College, on an entirely unsectarian basis. There are now in Oxford two other residential halls for women, St. Hugh's and St. Hilda's, and also a large body of home students who live in their own homes or in selected lodgings. All these various bodies are connected with the Association for the Education of Women, which transacts with the University all the necessary business concerning examinations and lectures for women students. But though the University will teach and examine women, though the libraries and laboratories are open to them, though some of the most illustrious dons will coach them, yet the degree is withholden. There are no women graduates of Oxford University, though there are hundreds who have qualified for graduation, both in pass and honors and hold University certificates of the fact.

Congregation may tinker away almost unheeded at any other statute of the University constitution, but at the first mention of women's degrees an army of veteran Oxonians stream up to defend with their last vote the sanctity of their Alma Mater. They fear—homoecio referens—that the bold invaders, if admitted to the Bachelor's degree may, go a step further and force a reluctant University to make them "Masters," and to give

them thereby a vote and a voice in the government of the University. "Petticoat government in Oxford—perish the thought!" Yet those who watch the signs of the times note that the opposition is weaker every time that the question is debated, and are content to wait till conservative Oxford is converted by time. Meanwhile the degreeless women suffer comparatively little inconvenience, since every up-to-date educational authority looks rather at the candidate's place in the class lists than at the letters after her name. Yet it is a little galling when, as is sometimes the case, an indiscriminating public accepts honors in the local examination lists as equivalent to a place in the honor lists of the final examinations of the University proper.

Almost all the women students in Oxford are reading for honors, and one at least of the colleges will receive no "pass" students. Between pass and honor work there is a world of difference—different set books, different lectures, different examinations. The pass candidate cannot take honors, though the honor candidate is occasionally "gulfed"—that is, he is allowed to pass. In speaking of this calamity, one naturally drops into the masculine, for "gulfing" is exceedingly rare among women. A very fair proportion of the coveted "firsts" falls to the women students, and an unusually large proportion of "seconds"—a fact which denotes good brain power and plenty of steady work. "In the first class," it has been said, "are the friends of the examiners; in the second are the steady plodders; but the third class is reserved for the careless magnificence of original genius." And it may be taken as an axiom that "careless magnificence" will secure a low class in any examination for all geniuses, "original" or otherwise. The friendship of the examiners—so essential to an aspirant for first-class honors—is obtained by displaying a thorough grasp of the subject of examination, together with methodical arrangement of facts; and a careful attention to style, and, above all, by a legible handwriting.

History is the favorite subject with women students, though many take English language and literature or classics, and it is very seldom that a class list is published which does not include the names of one or two women. The tendency at Oxford is towards specialization, and the standard of work for honors is very high. In history, for example, one cannot aspire to first or second class honors without a detailed knowledge of English constitutional and political history, and of a given period of continental history, with all the geography necessary for illustrating answers with maps.