

THE WOMEN'S COLLEGES OF THE UNITED STATES.—No. 8.

A GIRL'S LIFE AND WORK AT BARNARD COLLEGE.



IN 1885 Columbia College took the first step toward opening her doors to women. The offer was utterly inadequate, considered from the standpoint of fairness, but it was eagerly seized upon by the ambitious few, and accepted as a forerunner of what would yet be. The trustees decided to offer the Columbia degrees to all women able to pass the eight examinations which take place, one at the end of each term. The women might study how and where they wished—that important matter was left entirely to themselves—their work was to be judged only by the results of the examinations. Of course, the unsatisfactoriness of this arrangement was soon demonstrated, for under it the training which college instructors and college classes give was wholly lacking. To demand an equal amount of work without providing equal facilities for instruction was a manifest absurdity. So this order of things passed away, and in 1889, owing to the efforts of a few earnest men and women, led by one who had experienced the unsatisfactory system, Barnard College came into being.

These wise advocates knew better than to ask for co-education. They had considered with the utmost care the three forms in which collegiate education was offered to women—in the co-educational, in the separate and in the affiliated college. "The true essential of the co-educational college is identity of standard in education; the true essential of the separate college for women is the simplification of the social machinery as compared with that of the co-educational college. These are combined in the affiliated college." As a result of such consideration, a memorial was presented to the trustees of Columbia, asking for "official sanction to a Society for the Instruction of Women by the Professors and other Instructors of Columbia College."

The proposed College was to be called Barnard, in honor of President Barnard, of Columbia, who had always had the higher education of women close to his heart. It was to have its own board of trustees, half of them men, half women; and it was not to expect any financial support from Columbia. But its work was to be regulated by her standards; the examinations were to be identical with those prescribed for the male classes, and degrees were to be conferred by Columbia upon the graduates of Barnard, on the same terms and at the same time as those given to the men. In short, Barnard College was as nearly as possible to be Columbia in every respect, save that the classes for men would be held in the buildings at Forty-Ninth Street, those for women in the house at Forty-Fourth Street. All these arrangements were approved by the trustees of Columbia in February, and in the following June half a dozen applicants for admission took the entrance examinations. The latter were held at Columbia, for as yet Barnard College was only a name, with no buildings or rooms to represent it. But in July, 1889, the house at No. 343 Madison Avenue, was secured and a few rooms fitted up, and here the college is still located. In the September following this beginning other students came to the new quarters for the Autumn examinations, and then Barnard College was a sober, working fact.

That first year brought a hard question to the trustees—should special students be admitted, or not? Columbia's example was for their admission; and in the Harvard Annex (now Radcliffe College), the other important affiliated college, out of the one hundred and sixty-four students then in attendance, one hundred and nineteen were "specials." But the trustees decided definitely and emphatically against following these examples. It was found, for instance, that Greek was a bar to many a woman, and it was urged that whoever was not resolute enough to surmount this obstacle was not serious enough in purpose to enter Barnard. In short, it was determined that general education should precede specialization, although the latter should be allowed in its proper place, *i. e.*, in graduate work. The result of this decision was at once visible. Those already in the college turned their attention to becoming regular candidates for a degree by making up their deficiencies, while those who were applicants either gave up the effort or else waited until they could fulfil the requirements, so that the next class numbered but seven. And just in this fact lay the early difficulty of decision. There was a "great temptation to prove our right to be by big classes and overflowing rooms." But, on the

other hand, when it was found that the only way to win the advantages of a college training was by sincerity of purpose, the change in preparatory work was immediately felt; and so, despite Greek and mathematics, the classes grew, thoroughness increased, and the vagueness of secondary education gave way to the definiteness which an end in view always gives.

Barnard could afford to take this independent position because of her connection with Columbia. There, ready at hand, was a corps of instructors from which her own must be recruited; there was the advantage, a great one for a young college, of access to an excellent library and large museums; and lastly, there was the precedent of Columbia requiring of her candidates for a degree a fixed number of compulsory studies. Now, Columbia herself was just at this period undergoing regeneration. Her lately elected president, Dr. Seth Low, was advising that broader curriculum and larger choice of electives which were to make the college a great university. The requirements for entrance were advanced; and, though during the first two years the old plan of required work was adhered to, the junior studies were nearly all elective, while those of the senior year were entirely so. In the last year of the college course the work of the student comes under the jurisdiction of the university faculties, which give a choice of over three hundred courses, exclusive of the professional schools.

Of these courses, about ninety-two are open to Barnard College. Her students are admitted in many of the courses to the class-rooms at Columbia, with the same privileges and duties as the men. Most of this work lies in the domain of the faculty of philosophy. It must be understood that the university work in Columbia is directed by three faculties—the one just mentioned, the faculty of political science, and the faculty of pure science, which is the most recently created of the three, being but a year old. Two years ago the first two were given permission to admit women, but as yet the faculty of political science has not availed itself of the liberty. The youngest faculty has not thus far received official authority to open its doors, but it seems probable that, were it permitted, it would follow the wise and liberal lead of the faculty of philosophy.

All this work done under Columbia's guidance has its fitting recognition in the "A. B." degree; and it is to be observed that Columbia bestows the degrees. In this respect Barnard stands alone among affiliated colleges. As she was the first to establish official relationship with the parent college, so she is the only one whose graduates receive the same degree as the men. Radcliffe college bestows its own degrees, not those of Harvard, just as Evelyn's are not those of Princeton; but Barnard has no right to confer a degree. She is virtually a department of Columbia, and, as is fitting, the work performed by her students receives the same acknowledgment as does an equal amount done by men.

There are three features to which Barnard points with especial pride. These are the chemical and the botanical departments and the graduate courses. The chemistry laboratory was the gift of an individual. Miss Hitchcock, who was for several years a private pupil of an

THREE SPECIAL FEATURES.

instructor in the School of Mines, learned that there was no place in New York where a woman could study chemistry. By means of subscriptions and her own contribution she made up a sum sufficient to equip a small laboratory, and its success has been phenomenal. Every inch of working room has been occupied, though the laboratory has grown very much since its founding, and applicants are being continually turned away. As in the botanical department, the gift came with the understanding that special students were to be admitted to the courses; and these two laboratories form the sole exceptions to the college rule of refusing "specials."

The botanical laboratory was equipped by the generosity of the Torrey Botanical Club, of New York City. It is one of the completest laboratories of its kind, and has proved so attractive to women that it is quite overcrowded. A great part of its success is due to the efficient work of Dr. Emily L. Gregory, who is at its head. She received her doctor's degree from the University of Zurich, having studied abroad under the ablest professors; and her work in Smith College, Bryn Mawr and the University of Pennsylvania has been of the same careful kind as that which has so largely contributed to make the botanical department of Barnard the boast of its friends. The course which has been planned by her extends over four years, two of which are regarded as part of the graduate work for the "Ph. D." degree. The work done is of a practical

THE COLLEGE COURSES.