

THE ALUMNÆ NEWS

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A Tribute to Dr. Emily I. Conant.

We are pleased to be able to present to the friends of the College a report of the tribute paid by Dr. Jenny B. Merrill to Dr. Conant at the graduating exercises of the Harriette Melissa Mills Training School for Kindergartners.

The commencement was held in the assembly hall of the School of Pedagogy as the Mills Training School is affiliated with the N. Y. U. and holds its sessions during the year in the room of the School of Pedagogy on Washington Square.

Dr. Merrill had been invited to give a few parting words of advice to the young women graduating as kindergartners. As Dr. Conant holds her degree of the doctorate from N. Y. U., and as she was the first New York City teacher to study kindergarten methods, Dr. Merrill thought a brief biographical sketch of her former associate in the Normal College would be an inspiration to the young women.

She spoke somewhat as follows:

"Recently my attention has been called to the biography of Alice Freeman Palmer. I understand that at Wellesley College it was President Palmer's custom to recommend to each graduating class the biography of some good woman and to advise in general the frequent reading of good biographies.

It is my pleasure to-night, young ladies, to give you a brief sketch of a New York teacher who is about to retire from her educational labors of nearly forty years. It is especially appropriate that I should do so, as Dr. Emily Ida Conant, of whom I speak, was the first teacher connected with the public school system of New York City to graduate as a kindergartner in 1874.

Dr. Conant is a woman who has done

several "first things" of educational import.

Shortly after her appointment as one of the first critic teachers in the Training Department of the Normal College in 1871, Dr. Conant presented the first paper on the kindergarten and its advantages before a woman's club, the famous Sorosis. I well remember reading the paper. Dr. Conant prescribed a broad view of the subject, showing the value of the kindergarten to the community as well as to the child.

She also recognized the beginning of manual training, then in its very infancy, in the kindergarten occupations.

Dr. Conant appreciated the principle of continuity so earnestly urged by Froebel, and at a later day, this led her to be the first woman teacher from this city to go to Maas, Sweden, where she spent two summers in learning Swedish 'wood sloyd.' Dr. Conant conducted classes in wood sloyd at the Normal College for several years after her return while at the same time she was tutor in psychology. For several years previous to this work, Dr. Conant had taught Latin in the college, and later the principles of education. The simple naming of these various subjects indicates the breadth of Dr. Conant's scholarship.

When N. Y. University established its School of Pedagogy, Dr. Conant joined it promptly and was a member of the first class graduating with the degree of Doctor of Pedagogy.

During these years Dr. Conant found time to act for a term as president of the Associate Alumnae of the Normal College. She has been chairman of some of its leading committees, namely, the Lecture Committee and the Committee on Child Study. She has always remained on the executive.

Some of us remember that it was when Dr. Conant was chairman that the Associate Alumnae secured Prof. John Fiske as one of its most noted lecturers. Never was there a larger audience in the chapel nor a more vital historical lecture.

It was when Dr. Conant was chairman of the Committee on Child Study that the work was broadened by inviting leading principals of schools to present their experiences with children in different sections of the city. Among these principals were Mary R. Davis, Dr. Hannah De Milt, Katherine Blake and Emma A. Johnson. Dr. Conant found time during several winters to conduct the Children's Sewing School belonging to the Normal Alumnae Settlement.

After Dr. Conant specialized in psychology, she spent several summers studying and working in the laboratory of Cornell University.

Being impressed that she was a fitting candidate for a professorship in the Normal College, it was my privilege with her consent to secure letters of approval of her work from Dr. G. Stanley Hall, Prof. Earl Barnes, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, Dr. Tichenor and from Dr. MacCracken, president of this university. Dr. Tichenor mentions Dr. Conant's work in the Cornell laboratories in the preface of one of his text-books on psychology. I mention these facts to advise you young women to continue your studies as far as you are able from time to time in connection with our leading colleges and universities. I consider you most fortunate in belonging to a kindergarten training class affiliated with a university even while under-graduates.

Dr. Conant has been a friendly teacher. She has not held herself aloof from the social affairs of the college and the alumnae. She is a lover of the best music and of the best books.

In recent conversation with her concerning her retirement from active educational work after a serious illness, a remark I made called out this telling reply: "I shall have plenty to think about after

I leave college." It is a sign of culture and character not to fear the leisure hour.

Study the lives of good women and do not neglect those of good men, is my word of advice to you to-night, young women of the class of 1910. You need not always go to books for these lives. You may find them among your associates or in your community. It was my privilege to be closely associated with Dr. Conant in her work for nearly twenty years and I am simply telling you what I have seen and know in this city of this noble woman."

A Birthday Party.

Each season the first "At Home" takes the form of a Birthday Party at the Settlement to keep in mind the number of years since we founded our "house by the side of the road." On Friday, November 18th, we will celebrate our sixteenth anniversary and, as young people of that age require more food and equipment than the children of five or six, so we need a more generous allowance for our work and our pleasures. If they have had proper training young people of sixteen are able to give to others better help and greater pleasure than undeveloped children and we have keener vision and broader views than in past days and feel a greater burden of responsibility towards our neighbors who are looking to us as their social centre.

We are particularly poor at this time of year since a good many subscribers who received their bills last January have not yet paid them. So we ask that you will each do your share towards filling our empty treasury and make us glad by remembering our birthday party.

Come with a package, or come with a bill, Or come without either to show your good will.

THE FALL REUNION.

The annual Fall Reunion is in progress in the Chapel. An account of the meeting and of the Hon. George McAneny's address will appear in the December issue.