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DR. JENNY B. MERRILL

A complete list of graduates of Hunter College from 1870 to 1934 would include many distinguished names—none more so in the field of education than that of Dr. Jenny B. Merrill, whose productive life and distinguished service to education came to a close February 19 last.

In touch with Thomas Hunter, Dr. Douai, Elizabeth Peabody, G. Stanley Hall, Dr. Sheldon, Frances Willard, Earl Barnes, and other great educational leaders, Jenny B. Merrill was herself one of the great influences in the educational world for over fifty years.

She was the daughter of Benjamin B. and Jane Anne McBride Merrill, and was born in New York on September 4, 1854.

After graduating from Hunter (then Normal) College in 1871, she was appointed to the Training Department, first at St. Marks Place and later at 68th St. and Lexington Avenue, being named Critic Teacher in 1874, and Third Assistant in 1875. Also in 1875 she studied with Mme. Marie Kraus-Boelté, the first to practice Froebel's kindergarten methods in America, who later wrote an appreciation of Dr. Merrill in the *Pedagogical Digest*, rejoicing in her success as

student, teacher, and supervisor of kindergartens.

In her annual address as President of the Associate Alumnae, an office which she held from 1875 to 1877, Dr. Merrill urged the need of training kindergartners, foreseeing the establishment of kindergartens in the public schools long before their realization.

In 1877 President Hunter, believing little children should be trained, organized the first free kindergarten in the United States and established it at the Training Department of Normal College, with Jenny B. Merrill as teacher. Recognizing the rare quality of her personality and teaching ability, he appointed her teacher of methods in the College proper in 1878, and here for eighteen years she influenced successive classes of appreciative and devoted students who, as teachers, carried her message into the schools.

Three years before the Board of Education adopted kindergartens as part of the regular public school system, the New York Kindergarten Association, which Dr. Merrill had helped organize, established a kindergarten in the old mission-house of the Baptist Church, on the corner of 63rd Street

and First Avenue; Miss Mary A. Wells, a graduate of Hunter and of the Kraus Training School, was appointed teacher. Dr. Merrill, Miss Jenny Hunter, Miss Wells, and Miss Marguerite Merington, then President of the Associate Alumnae, collaborated with Miss Brooks of Teachers College, Dr. and Mrs. Nicholas Murray Butler, Mrs. Grover Cleveland, Hamilton Mabie, and Richard Watson Gilder, representing the Kindergarten Association, in the establishment of this pioneer "Alumnae Kindergarten". Three years later it developed into "Alumnae House" in East 72nd Street, and this little house in turn formed the nucleus of the present Lenox Hill Settlement in East 70th Street.

Dr. Merrill received the degree of Doctor of Pedagogy from New York University in 1892, four years before she was appointed Supervisor of Kindergartens in the Public Schools of New York City, under Superintendent William H. Maxwell. In that capacity she gave unparalleled and devoted service to the children of Manhattan, Richmond, and the Bronx for fourteen years.

Her unique characteristics as teacher and supervisor were her encouragement of individuality, her recognition and generous appreciation of strength and power in others, and her vital interest in world affairs. For instance she wrote the first articles on Montessori published in America, and helped support the first experimental group of Montessori work in New York, conducted by Miss Lileon Claxton at the Scudder School.

As contributor to educational magazines, and frequent speaker at university and national education conferences all over the country, Dr. Merrill kept in touch with the functional points of education in the United States, influencing and often determining the appointment of leaders in the kindergarten training-schools of the various universities.

Dr. Merrill's Sunday School classes, held for many years at the old Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, were renowned. Teachers and visitors from far and near came to observe her methods of teaching little children. For these she published two volumes of Bible Stories and a hymn-book.

In later years, after her retirement in 1910 from her post as Supervisor of Kindergartens, she devoted her time to the International Daily Vacation Bible Schools, rejoicing in the contact with the children of Europe, India, China. A true and rare lover of childhood, Dr. Merrill was interested in all children, however remote.

To the nephews and nieces of her own family, of two generations, she gave unswerving devotion, receiving from them in return the greatest happiness and satisfaction of her last years.

Her life like all others had its full share of trial and trouble, but with characteristic philosophy she wrote of these: "All my depths have had deep meanings."

ESTELLE FORCHHEIMER.