

THE ALUMNAE NEWS

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by
THE ASSOCIATE ALUMNAE
OF HUNTER COLLEGE

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The pages of the NEWS can suggest many suitable and admirable New Year's Resolutions to us. Let us herewith highly resolve to contribute to the support of Lenox Hill and of Alumnae Hall, to arrange a table for the Victory Breakfast, to win at least one new member of the Associate Alumnae. The Editor resolves to do her best to get the NEWS out on time. And won't the contributors help her by resolving to pay a bit more attention to the dead-line, which is the eighteenth of the month?

MARGARET BARCLAY WILSON,

A. B., M. Sc., M. D., Sc. D.

Born Dunfermline, Scotland, Aug. 28, 1863
Died Washington, D. C., October 6, 1945

The memory of a distinguished graduate and loyal alumna was honored in a most moving service, on December 4th, 1945, in the Hunter College Library before an impressive gathering of sympathetic friends, students, and former associates. The Periodical Room was transformed for the occasion into a charming chapel decorated with evergreens and autumn flowers.

The life of Margaret Barclay Wilson, rich with the fruits of labor and abounding in good works, is well known to all of us. At the age of seven, she came to the United States from Dunfermline, Scotland, with her family. When she was graduated from our College in 1884 as valedictorian and as the recipient of all the honors and prizes which were then open to her she attracted the attention of Mr. William Wood, President of the Board of Trustees, who introduced her to his close friend, Andrew Carnegie. Mr. Carnegie was intensely proud of the achievements of this promising young scholar who came from his own birthplace, and their meeting was the beginning of a rare and beautiful friendship which continued throughout Mr. Carnegie's life.

Dr. Wilson began her teaching career in the Biology Department in 1887 as a Tutor, and advanced through the ranks of Instructor and Associate Professor to Full Professor in 1910. In the early years of her teaching, in order to prepare herself to teach physiology, Dr. Wilson entered the Women's Medical College of the New York Infirmary and obtained the degree of Doctor of Medicine in 1893. It was her medical training and educational vi-

sion which enabled her to impress upon the administration the importance of establishing an independent department of Physiology and Hygiene; of this she was Professor and Head, and in addition Professor of Home Economics as the interest in Home Economics spread, until her retirement in 1933 when she became Professor Emeritus. As a teacher she not only was at home in her own academic field but also revealed an amazing grasp of classical and medieval literature and art. For many years Professor Wilson spent her summer vacations in travel abroad and made pilgrimages to the homes and birthplaces of the famous writers, artists, and other men of note with whose works she was thoroughly familiar.

Her initiation into the study of Latin she owed to Professor Dundon, a graduate of the University of Dublin; and the development of her own linguistic gifts enabled her to read fluently both ancient and modern languages. During the last years of her life she spent many enjoyable hours reading classical Greek and Latin and chuckling over the witticisms of Galen.

To Professor Wilson the challenge of the unknown was irresistible, and her unrelenting search for truth conquered all obstacles. She enjoyed a reputation for the highest intellectual probity. Among other things, Dr. Breithut said in his reference to Dr. Wilson as a scientist, "If interest and integrity of mind and purity of motive and unselfish devotion and love for one's fellow beings are the characteristics of a true scientist, then Margaret Barclay Wilson was in every sense a true scientist."

Much concerning her personal philosophy of life is revealed in her discriminating selection of excerpts from the speeches and addresses which she compiled from Mr. Carnegie's writings as an expression of her deep appreciation of his friendship. This was privately printed as the Carnegie Anthology in 1915.

The "Recollections" presented at the Memorial Service paid sincere tribute to the memory of Dr. Wilson as "The Teacher", "The Scientist", "The Colleague", and "The Humanitarian".

Few teachers have left so deep and permanent an impression in the minds and hearts of her students as Professor Wilson. Professor Sally E. Kutz, a member of a class whose admiration for Dr. Wilson developed into a lasting affection, referred to her former teacher and chief as one who had an inexhaustible power to interest her students and to stimulate their curiosity.

Professor Wilson could present even the most intricate problem in terms so simple that a student would not realize she was mastering a difficult subject. Her love of beautiful things inspired her students to love the beautiful. Indeed it was her belief that the contemplation of the beautiful was the one certain means of directing their thoughts from their own private confines to higher levels. To Professor Wilson each lesson in her courses in Home Economics, in Homemaking, and in Textiles, afforded her an opportunity to in-

roduce more beauty into the lives of the students; and she generously shared with them her priceless collection of art treasures and beautiful fabrics. In 1922, after thirty-five years of service at Hunter College, she received a volume entitled *Essays and Studies in Honor of Margaret Barclay Wilson* "as a token of the affection, gratitude, and esteem of her pupils and friends".

Dr. Wilson was internationally known as an authority on nutrition, food chemistry, and unusual foods. Visitors from all parts of the world found their way to her laboratory to ask her advice on a variety of problems, and to view her interesting collection of books and food specimens which she kept on display. During World War I, when England was faced with a drastic food shortage, Dr. Wilson was called upon as a consultant. At the request of the British Food Commission she unhesitatingly undertook a perilous journey across the Atlantic, and in England she prepared a memorial for Parliament on the treatment of the various flours used in bread-making. This report was instrumental in changing the food laws concerning the utilization of the different flours for the making of bread, which in large measure helped to solve the existing food problem of the English people.

In 1917 Dr. Wilson's expert knowledge of food economy served in the preparation of Daily Bulletins released by the Department of Health emphasizing the value and the preparation of the less expensive foods. She gave special lectures to a group of about 200 nurses from the City Hospitals who came weekly to be instructed in Nutrition and Food Economy in Wartime. At the height of the influenza epidemic in 1918 Dr. Wilson prepared large quantities of nutritious soup which she herself distributed to the families in stricken homes. She helped organize among the students groups of nurses' aides who under the supervision of an instructor went into homes in Riverdale and other parts of the city to assist with the care of the sick.

In the preface of numerous textbooks on Physiology and Hygiene and Chemistry of Nutrition authors have acknowledged their indebtedness to Dr. Wilson for her invaluable assistance in the preparation and correction of their manuscripts.

The account of Professor Wilson in *Who's Who in America* includes a long list of learned societies in which Dr. Wilson held fellowships and memberships, and she had also the honor of being an associate member in the Harvey Society.

In addition to her numerous other responsibilities Professor Wilson served the College as Honorary Librarian from 1915 to 1928. Professor Reilly, whom she selected to succeed her as Librarian, in his eloquent tribute to Dr. Wilson said, "She had vision, reliance, and faith in Hunter's present and future. She was generous in instinct and independent in action. She had discipline of mind and spirit and a sense of duty. Hers is a great name among memorable names. She was a perfect

woman."

Of her it can truly be said she did "good by stealth and blushed to find it fame". Among known benefactions are the ambulance which she gave in the name of the students in World War I, contributions to the Roosevelt House on several occasions, gifts to the Alumnae, and the William Wood Memorial, the income on which is used to purchase new books on English Literature for the Library. In 1929 she turned over to the New York Academy of Medicine for the use of research students her extensive collection of more than four thousand works on food, cookery, and nutrition in over thirty different languages, including references which date back several centuries. The following year she presented to the Academy the ninth century manuscript of the Apicius, the oldest known manuscript of this ancient book on cookery, which she had seen on her trip to the famous Phillips Library in Cheltenham, England, in 1928. Dr. Wilson's art treasures, gems, ivories, vases, textiles, and decorative fabrics she presented to the Johns Hopkins University to found a Museum of the Decorative Arts. "Even these gifts are nothing in comparison with what she gave of herself."

In conferring upon Professor Wilson the honorary degree of Sc. D. at Commencement on June 27, 1945, Dr. Shuster said, "Margaret Barclay Wilson: Graduate and Professor Emeritus of Hunter College; pioneer in the teaching of physiology, hygiene, and dietetics; one who lighted the way for women to study medicine; indefatigable worker for the improvement both of the human body and of the human mind; a lover of books and art, and an eminent collector of Orientalia; builder of one of Hunter College's great departments of instruction, and teacher of Hunter students over a period of forty years; now a gracious friend of wisdom, retaining her affection for all good things past the ripe age of eighty years."

Those of us who had the good fortune and the privilege to study under Professor Wilson and subsequently to be prepared under her excellent tutelage for a life of service in our Alma Mater appreciate how great a debt of gratitude we owe. It is not easy to find in words adequate expression for the language of the heart.

The College is fortunate in possessing a portrait of Dr. Wilson painted by Mr. Takuma Kajiwara, which all of her friends declare faithfully reproduces the Dr. Wilson they all knew and wish to remember. It is to hang in the Library of Hunter College.

BERTHA G. GOLD
Dept. of Physiology, Health, and Hygiene

A copy of the portrait of Professor Margaret B. Wilson is available to all who wish one as a memento. This may be obtained at Hunter College, 695 Park Avenue, in Room 517. Copies may also be secured at the Alumnae Breakfast by those who request them.

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