

THE ALUMNÆ NEWS

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THE BREAKFAST

More than six hundred Alumnae and guests celebrated the seventy-first birthday of Hunter College at the annual Breakfast on Saturday, February 15, in the Hotel Astor.

Mrs. Theodore E. Simis, President of the Associate Alumnae, who presided, read from Helen Gray Cone's "Valentine to Alma Mater", and called on Miss Mary F. Lindsley, an Instructor in the English Department, to read her winning Valentine to the College.

Dr. Ordway Tead, Chairman of the Board of Higher Education, observed that the college was "so consistently doing that which it has the opportunity to do" in providing increased scholarship help of various kinds. Dr. Tead favored "a regional interchange of students on a scholarship basis". He said that he saw no defeatism in youth to-day; they will "face and cope with the world they see". The Presidents of all the City Colleges, Dr. Tead reported, had stated their belief that the colleges must develop the emotional, physical, appreciative, and spiritual aspects of the boys and girls no less than the mental.

Since Dr. George N. Shuster, President of the College, had to attend a National Defense Conference, he sent his greetings through Professor James M. Hendel. In his letter to the Alumnae the President wrote, "All of us at Hunter know very well how to appreciate the cordial geniality with which you have undertaken the art of being helpful." This help may be seen in material symbols of Alumnae interest and in the readiness of the graduates to share in the college work, ceremonies, and festivals, the President said.

"Need I remind you," his letter continued, "that human society has changed and is changing, that education has a fateful rendezvous with American destiny? . . . The fortunes of a college are not those of a college merely, but of a country, an age, a decision."

The Alumnae, the President concluded, "are the living present of our city, even as the students of to-day are its living future."

Madame Tamara Daykarhanova, Director of the Tamara Daykarhanova School of the Stage, said that she looks on the theater as a means of exploring and developing the creative powers of youth. The training youth receives in the theater will bring out "all its potentialities of mind, spirit, and body".

Mrs. Jean Starr Untermeyer interpreted the invitation to read her poetry as an answer to those who believe that poetry is not essential to-day. She read a poem written in light vein for the occasion, "A Parable of Poetry," and other poems from her new volume, "Love and Need".

Mrs. Letitia Raubicheck, Director of Speech of the New York City Board of Education, stressed the special burden of speech teachers "to dissolve sectional prejudice and build a conception of national unity". She pointed out the need to strengthen the common bond of language among the varied national and racial strains, and to develop individuals who would use free speech as an effective means of preserving the democratic way of life.

Mrs. Gertrude Hanauer presented the gifts of the Silver Anniversary Class, 1916, present at the Breakfast one hundred and two strong. Their gifts included an electric tea urn for the Student Lounge, a bridge table and chairs for the Alumnae Room in College, and a fund of five hundred dollars to be administered by the Dean to pay fees for students in need.

Miss Louisa Bruckman, bringing the greetings of the Golden Anniversary Class of 1891, read Mary Cromwell Low's poem written to her classmates for the occasion, and presented a fund to be used for the completion of the Wadleigh Memorial Room.

The Sixty Year Class greeting took the form of the presentation to the College of a picture of its first faculty. A watch won fifty years ago as a literature prize is to be presented to the College by Mrs. Heiden.

Arline Carmen of the Class of 1942 sang. Instrumental music was provided by the Hunter College Trio, including Shirley Fichler, violinist, Lucille Fisher, pianist, and Harriet Silverstein, cellist.

The traditional birthday cake was presented by the Alumnae Committee of the Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association as the children sang happy birthday to Hunter.

Mrs. James A. Crotty was Chairman of this successful breakfast. Her committee included Mrs. Michael Curtin, Miss Dorothy Doob, Mrs. Robert Draddy, Mrs. Leslie Graff, Mrs. John Heintz, Miss B. Elizabeth Kallman, and Miss Babette M. Levy.

JULIA DUFFY.

MRS. ROOSEVELT'S VISIT

More recent generations have heard with awe not unmingled with envy of the distinguished guests whom it was our Alma Mater's privilege to entertain during the first thirty-five years or so of her existence. The Visitors' Book of Dr. Hunter's "glorious days" contains many a signature to thrill present-day readers. Perhaps these achievements go in cycles, for it now looks as if these good old days were returning. Last semester Hunter College was visited by the President of the United States, and this semester by the First Lady. The date of her coming was February nineteenth.

Mrs. Roosevelt came on the invitation of the Education Association of the College, as the second of a series of speakers on the subject "Education in a Democracy". Her speech was preceded by a luncheon in the Faculty Lunch-room enjoyed by members of the staff and student body invited by the Education Association, and was followed by brief exercises in honor of the College Birthday. In the course of the latter Mrs. Simis announced the generous gifts from the Silver and Golden Classes that had been presented at the Breakfast, a gift from the Westchester Chapter of \$100 for needy students, and the Alumnae birthday gift of \$1000 for the salary of a Hunter graduate to work under the Bureau of Occupations at the task of finding employment for other Hunter graduates. Miss Bella Savitzky, President of the Student Self-Government Association, then presented the student gift of two lace table-cloths for the Student Lounge and the Alumnae Lounge. Miss Jenny Hunter received an affectionate ovation.

Gifts are always pleasant things both to give and to receive; but the real interest and enthusiasm of this particular Birthday Assembly were for our First Lady, and that stirring personality—a vivid picture in the bright red dress and hat that had graced the Inauguration—was the center of all of Hunter's eyes.

Introduced by President Shuster to the accompaniment of thunderous applause both for him and for her, as one who "personifies the coming to age in a new social order of the kindness of womanhood", Mrs. Roosevelt, with a preliminary statement of a sense of her own great responsibility, plunged right into her subject—what democracy means, and the part in it that students must play. Democracy implies freedom, and this in turn implies personal individual responsibility, discipline, and participation. The real enemy of democracy is indifference, apathy. Our democracy is not yet perfect, but it is well worth defending, and to have it we *must* defend it and live for it.

Students must know their institutions and how their government functions, in their community and in the country as a whole. Young people may often feel, as Mrs. Roosevelt herself has often felt, that we do not move forward fast enough; yet the truth is that we have grown up rather rapidly in this country, and are just now reaching maturity. Before starting to change conditions, we must know what we are doing.

To-day we face a crisis, which demands on our part education, and willingness to understand what is happening in the rest of the world. We are one of the few nations with time to think about what we are willing to do when peace comes, and the rebuilding of the world, whereas the nations fighting can think only of their immediate objective, war. In a democracy, no one else does our thinking for us; youth must accept responsibility for doing its own thinking.

Also, it is very necessary to read and understand our own history. We must know what our forefathers did, and live and fight as they did. What they did, they did not do with timid hearts, with apprehension of what might happen next day or next year; they lived their lives day by day, year by year, with the courage to meet their obligations, because life had to go on—even as it has to go on to-day. Only those with courage and determination to do their job to the limit really deserve to live in this period of adventurous history. Youth, then, must prepare itself to take a responsible and active part in shaping the future of its country.

At the close of this stirring address, delivered in a ringing voice without a note, without a moment's hesitation, without even the change of a word, Mrs. Roosevelt graciously consented to answer questions from the students, and devoted a generous amount of time to the process. The questions, which were handed up in writing (the decipherment of which occasionally demanded co-operation from President Shuster), were interesting but perhaps rather disappointing, in the first place because they were frequently statements of personal belief rather than genuine questions, in the second place because of the lack of variety—and presumably therefore of originality and independence of thought—which a number manifested. That most of them represented only a minority would seem to be indicated by the outbursts of laughter with which the students met many of the questions, and the rounds of applause with which they acclaimed many of the answers. To all the questions Mrs. Roosevelt responded with the clarity, the promptness, and the precision that stem from a combination of intelligence and honesty.

Some of the questions were couched after the manner of the well-known "Are you still beating your wife?" In such cases Mrs. Roosevelt, refusing to accept as axiomatic premises unproved hypotheses, dealt with them point by point, revealing and healing the lack of straight thinking that made a categorical answer impossible. A typical instance ran as follows: "Since the majority of the American people oppose war and the lend-lease bill No. 1776, why were not the peace groups allowed to be heard in opposition to it?" To this she carefully responded that she believed a majority of the American people did oppose war, but she did not think a majority of them opposed the lend-lease bill, before she went on to discuss the treatment of the peace groups. Peace groups, she said, *have* been heard; those which were not, had in some way neglected or violated the rules for appearance. She added that the groups which protested the most at not being heard were those which themselves insist most rigidly on their own rules' being observed.

Of the thirty questions which were answered by Mrs. Roosevelt before the lateness of the hour forced her to stop, five were

protests against compulsory labor camps for girls, or the conscription of girls, supposed either to be contemplated by the government or advocated by Mrs. Roosevelt, and which were likened by three of the questioners to conditions in Hitler's Germany. In response Mrs. Roosevelt painstakingly explained that the subject had not been discussed by the government, but that agitation over it had grown out of something which she had once said, to wit, that if we should find it wise and necessary for boys to give a year to training (and she hopes it would not be purely military in character), she personally thought—and still thinks—that girls too might be asked to give a year's service, not in camps but in their own communities, perhaps in the field of sanitation or nursing, and on a purely voluntary basis. Unfortunately she had been misquoted in the Communist papers. To the question whether a demagogue might not introduce compulsory work-camps here as had been done in Germany as a forerunner of the Hitler régime, she explained that Germany had had but little experience with democracy, but it would be extremely difficult for a demagogue to hold power here, and possible only if the people abdicate responsibility. In regard to the frequent comparison of camps here with those in Germany, she emphasized that the forced labor camps in Germany are entirely different from any institutions here. She added incidentally that Russia has a two-year period of forced labor for its youth.

Four questions dealt with conditions of the Negro, and advocated for the sake of the Negro the passage of the anti-poll-tax and the anti-lynching bills. In regard to the former bill, Mrs. Roosevelt declared she opposed poll-taxes anywhere, as an infringement of the rights not merely of the Negro but of the people as a whole; she said also that perhaps its passage state by state was a better method than by a Federal bill, but that the two methods might well be combined. In regard to the anti-lynching bill, she declared that she had been for it right along, but doubted none the less whether it would really accomplish what was wanted. She believes in moving forward slowly when this is wiser, since sweeping changes if handled too rapidly may bring a greater set-back. She outlined gradual gains in the Negro's condition that have already been made, and expressed the hope that if these turn out well—and she thinks they will—they will be broadened and extended. (Possibly in speaking thus she did not seem to be going far or fast enough to suit the impatience of eager youth, yet to some of her hearers wise maturity as well as deep sympathy seemed implicit in her words.) To the question, "Can and will the Negro continue to be loyal in the face of discrimination?", she answered in ringing tones, "I have never known a case where any Negro citizen of the country showed a lack of loyalty."

Four questions assumed that education was

being threatened, the source of danger being assumed in two cases to be the Rapp-Coudert investigation (which one questioner linked to the expulsion of students by the University of Michigan), and in two cases to be expenditures for national defense. Mrs. Roosevelt explained that she was not in a position to discuss the Rapp-Coudert Committee, since the President's wife may not comment on the action of state governments. Expulsion of students she termed always a mistake, since students are young and will change. As for educational budgets, she did not think they should be cut, nor need they be: "you can safeguard education if you show willingness to pay taxes for both education and defense."

Naturally a large number of questions dealt with the war. Two of these were attacks on the lend-lease bill. One has already been quoted. The other ran: "How can we defend democracy when it is being curtailed by things like the lend-lease bill?" Mrs. Roosevelt's answer to this was that Congress represents the majority of the people; that it acts as it does to make democracy function more efficiently; and that the power that is being granted to one individual can be removed by the people at the next election.

Other questions and answers on the war and defense were as follows.

"Can we do anything for defense at a liberal arts college?" "Only if you put in special courses."

"What is the rôle of the college woman in defense?" "To be a leader—to use the training received to help keep stable the thinking of the country, and keep out hysteria."

"Do you believe in abridgment of the N Y A?" "Work projects are useful for defense, but I think the two should go on together. We can't afford to curtail education."

"Will the limitation of commodities aid in the struggle?" "I hope we shan't have to limit many things. We may have to do without so many aluminum pots and pans. We have learned a lot about some economic things."

"If we enter the war, can we think about peace?" "We shan't have time if we enter the war."

"Would you enter the war rather than let Great Britain be beaten?" This was probably the question that Mrs. Roosevelt treated with the greatest seriousness. Very earnestly she replied that she was opposed to war, that she hoped the country would wake up sufficiently to provide Great Britain with what she needs to win the war—"she doesn't need men, for this is a different kind of war, in which more women and children are killed than soldiers." She does not want to see her own four boys go to war—no woman wants to see war. "But there are some things that one would rather die than see happen. I haven't faced that question yet, but I will face it if I have to—and so will you."

The remaining questions, which were miscellaneous in character, may be epitomized as follows.

"Have students in a democracy any part in shaping democratic ideals?" "They certainly do; that is what I have been talking about."

"How can we best serve?" "Do your job to the best of your ability. Do not deny responsibility."

"Will woman's work in the future be materially different?" "No, but there are always new things for women to do."

"What do you mean by a new social order?" "Nothing ever stands still; democracy is not going to be the same five years from now as to-day. We are developing a different form of society all the time, but that does not mean violent transformation."

"Have there been many changes since you went to college?" Mrs. Roosevelt explained that she had not gone to college, but had studied abroad for three years with a woman who gave her students curiosity about the world as a whole.

"The American Student Union was much stronger in this school at one time than now. Are you in favor of abolishing it?" "I don't know. I should think you students would know more about it than I. But I should say its leadership is a controlled leadership, probably not giving young people an opportunity for discussion."

"Is it unwise for girls to join organizations with poor reputation even though they sympathize with their principles?" "Why should an organization with principles you believe in have a poor reputation?"

"Please give suggestions as to how a majority may break the power that the minority A S U has over the majority." "My only suggestion is that the majority should assert itself."

"Which is worse—intolerance or indifference?" "They are equally bad. Intolerance is intolerable. Indifference is the only thing that allows us to be intolerant. If one realizes what intolerance means, one never could be indifferent to it."

After this barrage, Mrs. Roosevelt finally was obliged by lack of time to cease, to the obvious regret of her audience, and apparently to her own too. She graciously remained as a spectator and auditor of our birthday celebration, and then left the Assembly Hall for a brief tour of the building with President Shuster, accompanied as she went by great applause that was surely accorded her not only as the First Lady of the Land but also as an honest, fearless, clear-thinking woman who has the courage and the integrity to be whole-heartedly herself.

E. ADELAIDE HAHN.