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THE COLLEGE WOMAN'S IDEAL.

*** On Commencement Day, June 21st, 1905, the following oration was delivered by Stella Fisher of the graduating class.

This is offered in the hope that it may help the present day students understand their college grandmothers. ****

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Kalamazoo College Ph. B. 1905
Kalamazoo College Litt. D. 1933

The Modern College Woman is a product of the last quarter of a century. As yet there exists in the mind of many some uncertainty as to what she really is. Multi-colored college posters present her as an anatomically impossible personage with short skirt, hair flying, racket or golf stick in hand. Another so-called type is that of the social butterfly, all frills and fads. Philistine journals picture a third type: drooping shoulders, anaemic look, near-sighted eyes forever on a classic volume, "sober, steadfast, and demure." Daily she is clad in a scholar's robes "..... of darkest grain, flowing with majestic train, O'erlaid with black, staid wisdom's hue." *

But behind these caricatures is the college woman as she really exists forthy thousand strong in our educational institutions. She is a normal, wholesome girl impelled to spend four of her best years within college walls by the constraining power of the ideal which she has set up for herself and others.

* Il Penseroso

point of the college woman's ideal.

But, is the objection raised, "This is every noble woman's ideal whether in the home, at the typewriter, or behind the counter; but what of the coveted goal of the college woman?"

Looked at in a broader light, the ideal is the same, to be a thoroughly womanly woman. The stars are ever stars, though one be twice another's magnitude. Granted that their aim is identical, the conception of that aim on the part of a trained, developed mind is broader, deeper, richer. A college woman is such because she feels that with a closer grasp of the facts in God's physical and moral universe, with interests widened and sympathies deepened, she may more nearly approach her ideal of womanhood. The pessimist's prophecy of an aristocracy of wealth can never be fulfilled so long as our states are plentifully besprinkled with women of collegiate training. They are society's safeguard, for their Utopia is, not an aristocracy founded on money values, but a democracy where character and worth shall be the qualification for part in the commonwealth.

There is one crowning characteristic in every noble woman; it is supreme in the college woman's ideal. It is unstinted, limitless giving, a love for God worked out in service for fellowman. Just here lies the ultimate reason for devoting four years to receiving from the world's treasure-house of knowledge: that she may give it out to others with its vital energy increased.

At the entrance to the oldest university in our land there is an imposing gateway under which pass yearly thousands of students. Every freshman approaching the campus for the first time reads on the outer side, "Enter, and with all thy getting get understanding." And at each commencement as seniors march out, diploma in hand, on the inner side they read, "Depart not to be ministered unto, but to minister." To minister, this is the culminating point of the college woman's ideal.

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The world with good right is asking, What is this ideal? To put it in the homely fashion of a laboring man, "What for do you girls go to college? What's the use of it?" His question demands an answer in dollars and cents, and truly the "What for" from that point of view is not easily answered. But take for our criterion one which will bear the test of time, of life-long, eternity-long use.

The modern college woman seeks a higher education, not because she hopes thereby to usurp a man's place and prominence, but because she would become more nobly a woman with all the dignity and "vital grace which breathes of the eternal womanly." * She proves herself an apt scholar, not for the sake merely of asserting a mental equality with her rival-brother, She knows that the interests of the two sexes are at bottom the same, that civilization is the product of their co-partnership. If she follows the goddess of wisdom, it is for the efficiency which learning develops. She aims to gain, not scraps and leavings of ornamental arts and decorative accomplishments, but a grasp of fundamental principles, a mind trained to see relations, a well-stocked mind ready for emergencies. Her purpose is to go from college not an intellectual aristocrat, but equipped to live life intensely and seriously.

Her college training makes her a student, but, higher still, it helps her to approach her ideal of "a perfect woman nobly planned." To be strong without rudeness, individualistic without eccentricity, reserved yet self-respecting and forceful, self-poised yet with no touch of priggishness, energetic, buoyant, and withal to possess "a heart at leisure from itself to soothe and sympathize", a faith undaunted in men and God - all this is included in a college woman's ideal.

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