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## Early Colleges

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## CHAPTER V

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY has not as yet been able to decide upon a specific definition of the term college which would be satisfactory to everyone. Therefore it is hardly surprising that the educators of the nineteenth century were not unanimous in their statements of the characteristics which taken together make up a college. Indeed it may be said that they were scarcely conscious of the need of a definition. The growth of the college had been so gradual, its aim so definite, its traditions so assured that it hardly became conscious of itself until after the middle of the century. It was largely the institutions of later growth, the scientific schools and the colleges for girls which stood in need of that self-analysis which would culminate in a definition. Especially was this true of the colleges for young women. Of traditions to adhere to there were none. It was extremely hazardous to avoid the traditions of the colleges for men and equally as hazardous to follow them. Public opinion ridiculed any college of lesser scholastic attainment than Yale or Harvard. At the same time, it intimidated the ambitious by a consistent condemnation of the young women who aspired to acquiring the knowledge which was thought fitting for a man to know. Throwing every obstacle in the way of the establishment of colleges for girls which would conform to the best academic traditions, society criticised the schools which girls did attend and the so-called colleges which showed an awakening desire to offer to the students a more thorough training in scholarship.

Of these institutions, colleges in name only, there were many in the south which claimed that they were entitled to the same consideration as was accorded the colleges for men. But, in the light of their limited endowment and the insufficiencies of their faculties and equipment, this claim cannot be allowed.<sup>1</sup> In the west a few colleges for men had opened their doors to women. They gave, on the whole, good training but were sadly limited by pioneer conditions and poverty. In New York and in New England there were a number of girl's seminaries of such high grade that the claim was made by their partisans that they were entitled to be ranked with men's colleges. Although superior to the rank and file of girl's seminaries, their requirements and standards were far from measuring up to this aspiration. The fact that such a statement should be made repeatedly is but another indication of the vagueness of the conception of what constituted a college.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the demand for an education for girls better both in kind and in extent to what was usually given

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<sup>1</sup> Taylor, James M., "Before Vassar Opened," chapter one.

became very insistent. To meet this demand many schools advertised their qualifications to offer advantages to girls who felt the need of a more extended course than was offered in the fashionable seminaries of the day. These schools were the usual academic institutions of secondary grade with special classes offered to those who had completed their preparatory work.<sup>2</sup> Others more pretentiously offered two or three years of work which claimed to be college work and "to afford young ladies the same facilities for acquiring a good English and classical education that are provided for young men at the best collegiate institutes in the country."<sup>3</sup> No degrees were given, but, in some instances, a diploma was awarded upon the completion of the course.<sup>4</sup> The course of study was organized in various ways, viz.: preparatory, academic and collegiate,<sup>5</sup> or preparatory, sub-collegiate and collegiate<sup>6</sup> or the work might be offered simply as postgraduate work.<sup>7</sup>

The curriculum was a strange medley of secondary work, college work and the so-called ornamental branches. Mathematics, algebra, and geometry, music, the languages including Latin, all kinds of philosophy, Butler's Analogy, astronomy, literature and history<sup>8</sup> together with painting in water colors and crayon, Oriental painting, oil painting, tapestry, embroidering and ornamental needlework, artificial and wax flower making were all included.<sup>9</sup>

Although these schools for superior education may seem more pretentious than thorough yet they must have played a part in keeping alive the ambitions of girls for more academic training. Furthermore by accustoming the public to the idea that girls could and would be interested in higher education, they paved the way for the woman's college.

Before 1870, nine so-called colleges to which women were admitted had been incorporated by the New York legislature. In New England, one college for women had been founded and one university had opened its doors to them. Of the eleven, six were co-educational, one was a man-

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<sup>2</sup> The New York Independent, March 15, 1860. Mrs. Williams French and English Boarding and Day School.

<sup>3</sup> Brooklyn Female Academy. Circular 1846.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Packer Collegiate Institute. Circular, 1854.

<sup>6</sup> Stiles, H. R., "The Civil, Political, Professional and Ecclesiastical History of the County of Kings and the City of Brooklyn; The Athenaeum Seminary for Young Ladies and Girls," p. 957.

<sup>7</sup> The New York Independent, January 3, 1856. Monsieur and Madame's Separate Courses of Advanced Instruction for Young Ladies.

<sup>8</sup> The New York Independent, May 15, 1856. Spingler's Academy.

<sup>9</sup> Buffalo Express, September 2, 1863. Holy Angels Academy for Young Ladies.

ual labor school, five were outgrowths of secondary schools, five were exclusively for girls but only two, Vassar and Boston University, had endowments sufficiently large to enable them to undertake work of first-class college grade. The other institutions in spite of earnestness of purpose and high ideals, were seriously crippled for lack of funds with which to pay teachers, construct buildings, assemble a library and the other accessories so necessary for the making of a standard college. However it was not long after this date that other colleges shared the honor of being of the first rank with Vassar and Boston. In 1875, Wellesley and Smith, both in Massachusetts, were opened for the exclusive education of girls and Cornell in New York and the University of Vermont reported girls as being in attendance at their classes.<sup>10</sup>

Of the incorporated colleges of New York, Ingham University, Rutgers Female College, Alfred University and Genesee College were the outgrowths of secondary schools. Elmira Female College, St. Lawrence University, Vassar College, Wells and the Central College of New York were established as colleges. In New England the Female College connected with the Maine Wesleyan Seminary was the outgrowth of a secondary school while Boston University was a well-established institution which opened its doors to girls.

The privilege of incorporating colleges for girls was not won without a struggle. The LeRoy Female Seminary in New York, as a pioneer in the struggle, made application for a charter to the legislature of the state in 1851 but was refused on the ground that there were no colleges for women.<sup>11</sup> Undaunted by this rebuff, four years later Elmira College made the same request of the legislature and owing to a change in popular sentiment was granted what it asked. A decade later the tide of opinion had so advanced that a special committee of the regents was appointed by the legislature to frame a suitable course of study and "appropriate testimonials for females in the higher institutions of the state."<sup>12</sup> The task was an ungrateful one, undertaken simply because the regents felt that the increased number of those "who would demolish all distinctions, political, educational and social between the sexes, ignoring alike the providence of God and the common sense of mankind" could no longer be ignored.<sup>13</sup>

As was inevitable in such a conflict of opinion, the report submitted

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<sup>10</sup> Report of the U. S. Commissioner of Education, 1872.

<sup>11</sup> Laws of State of New York, 75th session of the Legislature, chapter 151, p. 196, quoted in "Historical Sketch, Ingham University."

<sup>12</sup> Report of the Regents of the State of New York, 1868.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

by the committee was a compromise. It was based on the assumption that woman's sphere did not "cover nor embrace the entire field of human activities or obligations but that her mental organization, her tastes and her destiny are peculiar to herself," therefore the curriculum must be adapted to these limitations.

The committee examined various schools and one college, Elmira, and found a wide divergence in their courses of study. Being unable to find any curriculum which exactly fitted their views, the committee then recommended one which they felt would meet the situation. It was to include Latin but no Greek, no modern languages but Paley's Evidences of Christianity and the Bible.<sup>14</sup> The report of the committee was received by the regents but there is no evidence that the curriculum recommended was ever forced upon any institution applying for a charter as a college.

While the New York legislature was debating whether it was seemly for women to receive a college education, three co-educational colleges were chartered in that state each priding itself upon its liberality to women, and one such institution in New England. These colleges were St. Lawrence University chartered in 1856, Genesee College 1851 and Alfred University 1858, each one the outgrowth of a secondary school, all in New York, and Boston University, 1869, in Massachusetts.

Not unaware that their position was in advance of the prevailing opinion in reference to co-education, some colleges took measures to draw the attention of the public to the fact. Alfred University, for one, advertised that its students were of both sexes who "in the prosecution of their studies had equal tasks, duties and responsibilities. For instance a young lady is not foolishly excused on account of her sex from rising before a public audience and reading her essay herself instead of putting it into the hands of some 'white male citizen' to be read for her."<sup>15</sup> The radicalism of this statement can only be realized by remembering that women were objected to as foreign missionaries on the ground that, on their return from their labors, they might wish to tell of their experiences from the public platform.

St. Lawrence University was equally proud of its advanced views and took care to call the attention of the regents to the fact that it was a co-educational institution.<sup>16</sup>

Such protests, it is to be feared, were more verbal than real. The truth seems to have been that Alfred maintained a "ladies course," the first class of which was called "protomathians" while St. Lawrence conferred spe-

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> The New York Independent, July 9, 1868.

<sup>16</sup> Report to Regents, 1869.

cial degrees of Laureate of Science and Laureate of Arts on women, divergent courses suggest that some allowance was really made for "female talents."<sup>17</sup> Evidently the standards set for men and women were not the same in either institution. Genesee College had no stated difference in its courses<sup>18</sup> while St. Lawrence required the girls to pursue the same course as the men with the exception of surveying and political economy.<sup>19</sup> Alfred University had two distinct departments, one for males, the other for females. The "Ladies Course" has a suspicion of inferiority about it and there is a marked difference between the two departments in the scientific course. Here the men studied physical geography, meteorology, natural philosophy, rhetoric, German, chemistry and astronomy, while the curriculum for the girls comprised physiology, music, painting and natural philosophy. However both sexes were admitted to the schools of law and theology,<sup>20</sup> which showed a greater spirit of progress than most of the colleges of that day.

But the only really radical of these so-called colleges was the Central College of New York established in 1851 by the Baptist Free Mission Society. It was organized along Fellenberg lines, a manual labor school in which the students worked part of the day to support the school as well as to pay their own expenses. Two years after it was established, the legislature chartered it as a college.<sup>21</sup> Its aim was the liberal education of both sexes and it was the only institution in the state which did not regard distinction of color or race.<sup>22</sup> In fact it drew a certain amount of criticism to itself because of this liberal view which extended even to the employment of one colored man as a teacher.<sup>23</sup>

Very frankly the college disclaimed any ability to meet the standards set by other colleges. It claimed only that it gave a good useful education at a cheap rate.<sup>24</sup> In spite of such frank honesty or perhaps because of it, the college received very little support and did not long survive as such. It became an academy<sup>25</sup> and later the first Union Free School in Cortlandt County, New York.<sup>26</sup>

The four colleges just mentioned were small, struggling institutions

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 1863.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 1869.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 1863.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid, 1868.

<sup>21</sup> Report of Regents, 1855.

<sup>22</sup> New York Independent, November 1, 1855.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid, November 21, 1851.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, November 1, 1855.

<sup>25</sup> Report of Regents, 1860.

<sup>26</sup> Fourteenth Annual Report, Superintendent Public Instruction, 1868.

striving to work out a higher type of education for girls under the same conditions as boys but handicapped by insufficient endowment and limited by the narrow environment in which they were organized. All credit should be given them for attempting a difficult task in the face of great popular prejudice. For if society had set a taboo on college education for girls its condemnation of co-education was still more drastic.

In New England, before 1870, Boston University was the only endowed college for men to open its doors to women. In taking such a step, the college was far in advance of public opinion in this section of the country. So liberal indeed was Boston that women were not only admitted to the college course on equal terms with men but to the school of theology as well and were there entitled to the same privileges as the other students. Not content with opening her own doors to aspiring girls, the college reached out and agitated successfully for the establishment of a Latin school for girls in the city of Boston.<sup>27</sup>

Antedating the establishment of co-educational colleges, certain secondary schools for girls had been founded and had grown strong enough to enter the ranks of the colleges. Ingham University and Rutgers Female College in New York and the Female College connected with the Main Wesleyan Seminary at Kents Hill, Maine, comprise the list. They started as ambitious attempts of successful seminaries to assume the rank of colleges without any very clear notion of what a college should be or of the large endowment necessary to carry out such a pretentious design.

Ingham University ranks first in point of time and is indicative of the influence of New England on education in western New York. In 1835 two enthusiastic young women from Saybrook, Connecticut, journeying to the wilds of western New York, opened there a seminary for girls in the village of LeRoy. Such was their success that, in 1851, a charter was sought from the legislature which would raise the seminary to the rank of college. But the petition was refused on the ground that there were no colleges for women.<sup>28</sup> As a sop to soothe any wounded feelings which this refusal might cause, the school was incorporated as the Ingham Collegiate Institute and made subject to the visitation of the regents. Five years later, however, the legislature relented and granted the institute a charter as a university with the privilege of granting degrees.<sup>29</sup>

Something of the atmosphere of the so-called university may be gleaned from a report of its achievements given in the annual symposium for the year 1857. "The legislature, at its present session in Albany, awarded and

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<sup>27</sup> Bush, George G., *op. cit.*, p. 343ff.

<sup>28</sup> *Supra.*

<sup>29</sup> *Supra.*



amplified our charter" and "appreciating our steady growth as well as the glory of our object and the enduring brightness of our prospective, created the school with full powers into a university for the ample education of women."<sup>30</sup>

In stating the aim of the college the language used savors of the same sentimental verbosity. "To educate the same person through the entire course regular to the degree; to encourage all of them (the students) with due reflection and patience, to aim high at what is desirable, useful and excellent; to renounce the fashionable and impulsive folly that grudges the time necessary to mature and solid erudition; to regard their days of study as equally pleasant, privileged and profitable and so to improve them with study and principled persuasion as to reap in after life the ripe fruit of so wise a preparatory course."<sup>31</sup> Such flights of rhetoric must have had a popular appeal for eight years later the university was still in existence together with the original seminary.<sup>32</sup> The next year six departments had been formed in addition to the classical and the scientific, viz.: art, normal, domestic, health and medical, Christian ethics and commercial.<sup>33</sup>

Owing to the fear of public disapproval which, it was felt, would not countenance so bold a step as calling the classes by the same nomenclature as that used in men's colleges, a special terminology was coined. The entering class was termed "Novians," just matriculated; the second, "Cardians," advancing; the third, "Amphians," maturing; and the seniors, "Palmarians," candidates for a degree. The degrees conferred were equally as unique. A.P., Prunarius Artium, shorter course; A.A., Altior Artium, classical course; A.C., Clarion Artium, both courses (this degree was intended to take the place of the customary A.M.), A.E., Excelsior Artium, honorary degree.<sup>34</sup> In addition to the degrees peculiar to the University the usual titles of distinction, D.D. and LL.D. were conferred on men, some of whom seem to have been willing to be so honored.<sup>35</sup>

There is no indication that the work offered was of college grade nor is any mention made of entrance requirements or of any special requirements for the degree except the very general statement affixed to the degree itself.

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<sup>30</sup> Annual Symposium of Ingham University of LeRoy, 1857.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Report of Regents, 1865.

<sup>33</sup> Thirty-second Annual Catalogue, 1866-67.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> The New York Independent, August 2, 1860.



As an academy Ingham University enjoyed a certain wide-spread fame. From 1842-72 twenty-nine different states sent pupils there as well as Canada, Bermuda, France and Greece.<sup>36</sup> But when the attempt was made to raise the work to college grade, the girls either dropped out or became special students. The feeling of the college itself was that "few of the young ladies in our colleges are anxious to obtain diplomas or to gain the name of having finished a collegiate or literary course."<sup>37</sup>

Ingham University furnished the best example of the worst form of women's so-called higher education during the first half of the nineteenth century. Sentimental and pretentious, poor in endowment and equipment, certain of its aim but lacking courage to live up to it, the college was subservient to the conservatives while trying to placate the liberals and failed in both endeavors.

A second institution not very unlike Ingham University was Rutgers Female College in New York City, a purely local product. In 1839, this school was incorporated as the Rutgers Female Institute and as such it enjoyed much local fame. The long yellow building at 42nd Street and Fifth Avenue opposite the reservoir became one of the landmarks of the growing city.<sup>38</sup>

As was usual when a girl's seminary attained any degree of excellence, some of its admirers would claim that the work done was equal to the course of study at a college for men. Rutgers was no exception to this rule. With the exception of the dead languages, its course was said to be of college grade and on this ground appeal was made to the legislature that permission be given it to grant degrees. Mention was, also, made of the value of its property, its patronage, its collegiate classification and its standard of learning as entitling it to this privilege.<sup>40</sup> The legislature saw fit to grant the petition in 1867<sup>41</sup> and the first college class was graduated the same year. But the first degrees were not conferred until three years later.<sup>42</sup>

The opening of a college for girls in the metropolis of the state was attended with great enthusiasm. High hopes were entertained that friends would provide money to buy the Watt estate bounded by 117th and 119th

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<sup>36</sup> Historical Sketch, op. cit.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Floyd-Jones, "Backward Glances," p. 116.

<sup>39</sup> West, Charles E., "Address on Retiring from the Office of Principal of the Rutgers Female Institute.

<sup>40</sup> To the Senate and Assembly of the State of New York, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Peirce, Henry M., "Address to the First Graduating Class of Rutgers Female College."

<sup>42</sup> Lossing, Benj. J., "History of New York City," p. 442.

Streets and Ninth and Tenth Avenues as it was felt to be an ideal location for the new college.<sup>43</sup> While waiting for such a benefactor to appear, a branch of the college was opened at Second Avenue and 124th Street. Here there were enrolled eighty students about half of whom were in the college proper.<sup>44</sup> But it was many years later, when Rutgers College had ceased to exist, that a college of high standards for girls was erected upon the historic hill which was so coveted by the friends of this pioneer institution.

There were nine professorships in this college each one working in related fields, such as ancient language and literature, modern language and literature, fine arts, mathematics, history, mental and moral philosophy, chemistry and natural history, physiology and hygiene and applied science or home philosophy, Biblical literature and Christian Evidence.<sup>45</sup>

The course of study was divided into required and optional work and covered the fields indicated by the titles of the professorships named above.<sup>46</sup> There were, however, some studies which suggest a very modern point of view. The Legal Rights of Women, home philosophy and the relation of the mineral, vegetable and animal kingdoms suggest many possibilities quite foreign to the thought of the Victorian era. It is to be regretted that in spite of earnest work and the backing of some of the most influential citizens of the city, the college was not able to secure a sufficiently large endowment to carry on work of college rank and was forced to give place to other better endowed schools.

In New England, of the many excellent seminaries found there, only one, before 1870, was ambitious enough to definitely set itself the task of founding a college for women. To the comparatively new state of Maine, one must look for this achievement.

When Maine became a state, one of the first acts of its legislature was to incorporate a school for boys. Agriculture was to be the chief study although other fundamental work was not to be neglected. In 1831 this Wesleyan Seminary opened its doors to girls and, about thirty years after this date, in 1860, it determined to enlarge the curriculum to include a college course for girls. Handicapped by poverty and dependent on the good will of the legislature for support, the step was courageous. But strong in the faith that they were right, the trustees increased the number in the faculty, advanced the principal to the rank of president and obtained the right to confer the degree of A.B.<sup>48</sup> Although the course cov-

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<sup>43</sup> Report of Regents, 1868.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid*, 1869.

<sup>45</sup> Report to Regents, 1868.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>48</sup> French, E. R., "History of the Main Wesleyan Seminary."

ered only three years and only forty-eight units were required for a degree, the work was well systematized and fairly comprehensive. Greek was offered as an elective which was decidedly a forward step in the education of girls, and there was large freedom of choice among the subjects offered in the junior and senior years.<sup>49</sup> But the obstacles to be overcome were too great. The college was a poor, struggling enterprise, always overshadowed by the seminary and in 1909 it ceased to exist.<sup>50</sup>

Kents Hill, as the Maine Wesleyan Seminary was called in familiar conversation, was the last of the seminaries which, before 1870, expanded their work into college grade. Public opinion had become so informed that it was not considered an unheard of event for a college for women to be incorporated as such. Elmira and Wells Colleges, both in New York State, were chartered by the legislature without any protest. More than a decade separated the incorporation of the two colleges, yet their charters represent the same tendencies and the same limitations. Elmira came first, in 1855, when college education for girls was too young to be taken very seriously. The date of its incorporation was only three years distant from 1852 the year when the legislature refused to charter Ingham University because there were no colleges for women. Elmira did not have to meet this refusal but its path was by no means smooth. Much ridicule was aroused by the idea that a girl could comprehend college mathematics or master the Greek verb. Philosophy was held to be beyond her grasp and the rumor that girls were being trained to speak from the public platform was held to border on the vulgar.<sup>51</sup>

Elmira was founded by the Rev. Samuel R. Brown and Mr. Simeon Baldwin. For three generations the women in the family of Mr. Brown had hoped and prayed that a college for girls might be opened. It was in response to this inherited desire that the founder acted and, with the financial aid of Mr. Benjamin, was able to carry through the ideal so long cherished in his family.<sup>52</sup>

The charter granted to Elmira by the New York legislature stipulated that no degrees should be conferred without the completion of a course of study equivalent to a full ordinary course of college grade as pursued in the colleges of New York should have been completed. The new college was, also, to be subject to the visitation of the regents of the University of the State of New York in the same manner and to the same extent

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<sup>49</sup> Catalogue, 1865.

<sup>50</sup> History, *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Pamphlet published by Elmira College.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*

as the other colleges of the state.<sup>53</sup> In addition the legislature gave the college an appropriation of ten thousand dollars which is said to be the first instance of state aid for the collegiate education of women.<sup>54</sup>

The founders realized that there were no traditions to refer to in undertaking such an enterprise and felt the sense of deep responsibility which comes to those who are really blazing a trail for future generations to follow. In their dilemma they sought the advice of five of the leading colleges and universities of New York and of New England, viz: Yale, Harvard, Union, Rochester and Columbia. From this source a course of study was evolved which was put into operation and followed without change for five years. As was to be expected of a curriculum assembled from such a source, the studies outlined were those to be found in colleges for men: the classics, mathematics, history, rhetoric, the sciences, English and philosophy.<sup>55</sup> However, there was little inclination on the part of the Elmira itself in seeking advice from colleges for men to make or to encourage radical changes in the social position or employment of women. Its object as stated by the college was simply to give a higher and better education at a lower cost than had been generally accessible to "females."<sup>56</sup>

Owing to the inchoate condition of girl's education, Elmira College was forced to open a preparatory school where prospective students of the college were prepared in the usual entrance requirements. Even after college was entered it was found difficult to arrange the students in regular classes. There was still an inequality in preparation as well as an absence of any desire to pursue a continuous course of study for a period of time long enough to accomplish a college course.<sup>57</sup> In this point of view, society upheld the students and the college, later, bowing to the opposition, established the "elegant accomplishments which were so universally esteemed in social life." The purpose of this step being to secure both a thorough course of study and such "a measure of elegant culture as to meet the demands of a refined Christian education," it was planned to make aesthetic culture as thorough and the standards so high that it would serve as valuable a discipline as mathematics or the classics.<sup>58</sup>

Like Ingham University and, doubtless, for the same reason the entering class was called "protomathians" instead of the more masculine title of freshman. But unlike Ingham, the other classes received the cus-

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<sup>53</sup> Taylor, James, "Before Vassar Opened," p. 76.

<sup>54</sup> Report of Regents Memorial on the late Simeon Benjamin, 1870.

<sup>55</sup> Pamphlet, op cit.

<sup>56</sup> Report to Regents, 1862.

<sup>57</sup> Report to Regents, 1864.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 1870.

tomary designations. The course of study was entirely compulsory, no electives being offered and no choice allowed.<sup>60</sup> However with the introduction of aesthetics, the course became more elastic.

The founding of Elmira occurred at an unfortunate time. The college had hardly established itself when the civil war broke out and the thought of the state as well as the nation was completely absorbed in saving the Union. The town of Elmira suffered the further disadvantage of being the seat of a prison camp where many contagious diseases were rife thus making the place totally unfit as a place of residence for young women.<sup>61</sup> In addition the lack of endowment and a certain narrowness of view in its founders kept the college from becoming a first-class institution.

A more auspicious beginning awaited Wells College, the spiritual sister of Elmira. Founded by Henry Wells and chartered by the New York legislature in 1868 as the Wells Seminary for the Higher Education of Women, its name was changed, in 1870, to Wells College. The act of incorporation granted the privilege of conferring degrees similar to those granted by any university, college or seminary of learning in the United States.<sup>62</sup>

A very definite idea of the kind of institution which Wells was intended to be may be gathered from the address of the founder at the laying of the corner stone. In this address Mr. Wells stated that it was not his purpose that the college should be "regarded or conducted as an ordinary boarding school" neither was his object to establish a manual labor school "where young ladies may obtain a knowledge of domestic duties which can be more effectively learned under a mother's instruction" or a "fashionable collegiate institute in which dress and deportment claim chief if not exclusive attention." The ideal presented to his mind was a "Home" in which, "surrounded with appliances and advantages beyond the reach of separate families however wealthy, young ladies may assemble to receive that education which shall qualify them to fulfill their duties as women, daughters, wives and mothers and to practice that pleasant demeanor, to cultivate those womanly graces, to express that winning courtesy which so befit those whom our mother tongue characterizes as 'the gentler sex.'" <sup>63</sup>

There is very little advance in the above statement over the aim of the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 1861.

<sup>61</sup> Pamphlet, op cit.

<sup>62</sup> Prospectus, 1869.

<sup>63</sup> Extract from Founder's Address delivered at the Laying of the Corner Stone, Prospectus, 1869.

boarding school which had been mis-educating girls for over a century. Nor is there any clearer conception of what a college for girls should be than was apparent in the views held by the founders of Elmira College at a date ten years or more previous. No conception of the radical changes which were taking place in society, no idea of preparing girls to meet those changes, is visible in the statement of the founder. Rather would it seem that Wells like Elmira was trying, if possible, to offset the progressive tendencies which were gaining headway throughout the country.

Suffering under the same limitations as handicapped the other pioneer colleges for girls, a lack of preparation on the part of its applicants for admission, Wells was forced to open a preparatory school. Here classes were conducted in the studies in which the pupils were deficient. The college course was four years in length, the first class of which was called "Novians"<sup>64</sup> following the spirit if not the letter of the procedure at Elmira. Three degrees were given—A.B. to those who finished the regular or classical course; B.L. or B.S. at the end of the special courses which differed only in the amount of Latin and mathematics required.<sup>65</sup>

The curriculum comprised the usual studies found in colleges for either sex, the classics, mathematics, English, Science and Art. Greek, Spanish, Italian, elocution and bookkeeping are noteworthy additions to a feminine course of study. Some degree of selection was planned to meet "the needs, capacities and tastes of each pupil" while "due regard was paid to symmetrical culture" phrases which might mean a just regard for individual differences or which might suggest that the college had not outgrown the boarding school ideal.<sup>66</sup>

That Elmira and Wells fell short by a narrow margin of the rank of first-class colleges may be attributed to the smallness of their endowment and to a certain timidity on the part of their founders. They were, it is true, of a higher type than the usual "female" seminary or college which has been considered but it seemed impossible for either college to throw off completely the boarding school ideal. Their plan of work was mediocre because it consisted largely of compromise.

A similar criticism may be made of all the colleges which have been considered in this chapter. In the founding of each of them are discoverable a lack of endowment, a narrowness of vision and timidity in breaking away from tradition. To the larger number, these defects were fatal. Two only, Elmira and Wells, survived their limitations and continued in the twentieth century their pioneer work of the nineteenth.

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<sup>64</sup> Prospectus, 1869.

<sup>65</sup> Lowe, Walter I., "Wells College and Its Founder."

<sup>66</sup> Prospectus, 1869.