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Co-education in American Colleges.

No one for many years now has attempted to prove that woman does not possess that ability and desire which is required of minds in order that they may attain the highest intellectual development.

Already the thinking world has admitted that woman should have the right to the privileges of a higher education and yet in searching for the proper facilities all eyes were must be convinced that adequate equipments for the most liberal instruction are not to be found among female institutions.

By contrasting Harvard withassar, Yale with Wellesly and Princeton with Mount Holyoke

we are forced to acknowledge that the privileges of female colleges are positively poor as compared with many male institutions. Yet who will deny that with her capacity and craving for learning woman is not justly entitled to the best instruction and most perfect facilities for obtaining it the country can afford.

At present, then, coeducation would seem to be the most economic method for the instruction of woman in the higher departments of learning. For in order that female institutions may be made equal to male colleges in point of available appliances, one of two things is necessary; either that time of long duration be permitted to furnish for the one

what is already possessed by the other, and thus women, worthy of better things, be in the meanwhile compelled to put up with privileges too poor to serve her purpose; or, that at once, according to her demand and intellectual worthiness, we expend large portions of our nation's resources in the establishment, for women, of dormitories, laboratories, observatories, libraries and gymnasiums none of which shall be surpassed in the land. Neither is impossible in our country but both are impracticable. Such outlays of the nation's wealth as either would necessitate would be simply useless. There is already provided in our land every thing which science has

been able to discover or has needed
in its investigations. We already have
many colleges of high standing and
remarkable success. Proud Yale and
Hoary Harvard join hands with a
thousand others and lift their worthy
heads to receive the nation's benediction
for the noble part they have taken in
the advancement of American civilization.
And these institutions which are today
the pride of the country are now, more
than ever, capable of fulfilling the high
ends for which they were established.
This is the duty to lift American
citizens to the plane where dwells
lofty wisdom, and in them, there is
room for man and woman.

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The folly, here of expending time and money in increasing the facilities of female institutions is manifest. Woman does not need here. The country and ^{the age} with a regard for utility cry out against the needless use of obulence which would be occasioned by the duplicating of our educational appliances.

And it is the duty of men, as citizens of a nation the economy of which is so important, not only to permit but to strongly advocate the admittance of women to these halls of learning. It is an obligation which they owe to themselves. For it means increased opportunities for men as well as women, and adds new resources

to male institutions. Co-education is an economic measure and as such reason recommends it to the American heart.

But again; woman secures through the system of co-education the only means of obtaining a knowledge which is best fitted to meet her present requirements. To-day, in the ordinary affairs of life, woman is thrown more in contact with man than at any previous period in the history of the race. She no longer regards herself as "too frail a thing to tread the thorny path of life and not feel its sting." Bravely she mingles in the more than ever busy whirl of commerce, of science

and of literature. Her arena of action is circumscribed only by the limits of individual strength and desire.

With the age her duties have changed. Invention in mechanics has relieved her of tasks arduous and long; the knitting needle and the spinning Jennie are no longer the necessity of the home; shuttles and spindles now weave the fabric for the clothing of the household; machines are the laborers of the country; cessation from domestic industries and family duties occasioned by these things is the explanation of woman's present position. The leaving of the home, consequent upon changed conditions, has forced her into the avenues of

business life, and in this new world in which so many women have suddenly found themselves contact with man is unavoidable; preparation for it is a necessity. If then there is to be struggle with man in the ups and downs of life, and if, too, woman is to obey the same trumpet-sound which calls him, she needs more than the dainty training of a female school. She needs the stronger and more severe discipline which equips mind and body for the encountering of stubborn realities. Nay more, she imperatively needs a thorough knowledge of the habits and methods of men in order that she may successfully

contend with men. Here is the true merit of the system of co-education and this is its chief charm that it offers to woman in early years; the opportunity of observing the practices of men, while it also affords a season of real strife for personal honors and intellectual superiority. We are glad that so many women of America, realizing this fact, are making use of the opportunities thus brought to their knowledge. More women in our colleges and universities struggling with men for honors and distinction mean a greater future for our country. The cry of the nation is for brains, not for men or for women but for brains, that

shall be able to solve its approaching
complexities; for minds thoroughly prepared
and ready to grip with mighty grasp
the mysteries of the ages; for skill
that can penetrate the dark corners
of the universe and bring to light
the hidden forces in nature's labyrinth
lurking. The demand of America is
for intellect, stalwart and active, intellect
too powerful to be overcome by any
resistance. The need of our proud land
is for sons and daughters in whose
heart shall burn the fires of liberty
and in whose minds shall sit
the conqueror of the ages to come -
Lofty Reason. The almost purely aesthetic
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little who would hearken to this voice
of her country. Practical knowledge and
rigid discipline are the weapons with
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a necessity of the age; it follows in
the wake of advancing Christianity; it
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evolution's day and it sounds the
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it makes woman's equality with man a possibility; it gives to her the means by which she may attain a development of her intellectual nature which shall increase her happiness throughout all ages. We rejoice that America is in the forefront of this grand movement to exalt woman to a plane of absolute equality with man. We are glad that American colleges have become the intellectual workshops of women. We rejoice in the progress which co-education makes possible and we prophesy a time when the added usefulness of the female in commerce, in art and in science shall bless the nation and crown with laurels the

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gifted women of the age.

Frank Moore '91

Dickinson College
June 18 1891

Commencement Oration of Frank Moore, Class of 1891
Transcribed by Christine Rosenberry, May 2002
Edited by Don Sailer, November 2009

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