

Presentation at Blackwell House

Mrs. Elizabeth Smith Miller Gave a Portrait of Elizabeth Blackwell for Girls' Dormitory

In celebration of the formal presentation of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell's picture by Mrs. Elizabeth Smith Miller a dinner was given at Blackwell House last evening.

The dining room and tables were decorated with flowers, and the green shades on the candles made the scene very attractive. Those present at the dinner were Miss Alice Stone Blackwell, a niece of Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, Mrs. Elizabeth Smith Miller, Miss Anne Fitzbush Miller, William Smith, President and Mrs. L.C. Stewardson, Prof. and Mrs. Turk, Prof. McDaniels, Prof. and Mrs. Durfee and Mrs. Deschwirtz, who is now visiting at President Stewardson's.

After the dinner the trustees and professors were invited to be present at the ceremony of the unveiling of the picture.

After the guests had arrived, the program was opened by a selection from the Glee Club and then Mrs. Miller presented the picture, Miss Sorg, the president of the class, removing the veil. It is a portrait, framed in mahogany, and pictures very beautifully the sweet but strong featured woman for whom the first dormitory at William Smith College was named. Before the acceptance of the picture by President Stewardson Miss Miller spoke very briefly on the character of Dr. Blackwell and also read a letter from Dr. Blackwell's adopted daughter in which she spoke of her love and loyalty to Miss Elizabeth Blackwell. The letter also contained a photograph on which was Dr. Blackwell. The letter also contained a photograph on which was Dr. Blackwell's signature and the date 1849, which was the year she took her doctor's degree. This picture Miss Miller gave to Blackwell House, which was a delightful surprise to all.

After this President Stewardson accepted the gifts in the name of the College. Then a duet was sung by Miss Smith and Miss Dingley.

Miss Alice Stone Blackwell then spoke on the life and work of her aunt, in which she told of the difficulties under which she received her degree. Elizabeth Blackwell's father was a sugar refiner, and when he came from England went to New York, where Mrs. Blackwell started a school in which Elizabeth taught, and it is said of her that when she came into the room her determined and stern manner immediately quieted the pupils. From New York they moved to the West where Mr. Blackwell started his business in beet sugar refining. It was not until much later that Elizabeth decided to study medicine, however, and then it was not from the love of the profession but from charitable reasons. She believed it her duty to take up the profession for the benefit of her sex. And so she tried to gain admittance at several medical institutions, but they rejected her applications some even believing her demented. At two colleges, they agreed to take her as a student if she would disguise herself as a man, but this she would not do, for she wished to take her degree in an honorable way.

She finally applied at Hobart College, at that time called Geneva College, when the faculty said they would allow her entrance if they could gain the vote of the entire class. The class then was rather boisterous and wild, and the thought of having a young lady as a member quite pleased them, so a unanimous vote was secured, and much to the displeasure of the president word was sent to Elizabeth Blackwell telling her she could be admitted. And so she made her long journey to Geneva, and began her study of medicine, the first woman in the United States to take up the profession. It was said that when this awe inspiring and noble woman entered the class for the first time the room which had always been boisterous and noisy, immediately quieted down, and thereafter those wild students became quiet and gentlemanly.

She went through the four years of the course, graduating in 1849, with high honors in her degree. But this was not accomplished without many difficulties, for it is said that even the women meeting her on the street would gather their skirts up, in order not to touch her in passing, looked down upon her as she was.

She then went to England where she made her home, and practiced her profession, with which she has done much good.

She is now a woman 89 years old, and until recently has been very active, but a short time ago she suffered a slight accident, which has somewhat disabled her.

After Miss Blackwell's address, which proved to be very interesting, not only because of the subject, but of her delightful manner of speaking, coffee and sherbet were served in the dining room.