

marked the close of the struggle for existence and opened the era of growth. Two decades have changed us from a little chapter of five to a great national organization; her members, chosen from among the brightest and most intellectual of America's college girls, remember with warmest gratitude, that courageous little band of founders. They impressed upon our society its character. Their courage, their sympathy, their womanliness have descended to us. They gave us the standard of that high scholarship which was demanded by their own girl pride. Dear to our hearts is the memory of those girls of '70, and this glance at the past gives an impulse to the future of Kappa Alpha Theta.

BEGINNINGS OF KAPPA ALPHA THETA AT DEPAUW.

[The Literary Editor acknowledges indebtedness for the following from the pen of Dr. John Clark Ridpath, an article doubly interesting on account of the prominence of the writer and his connection with Asbury at the time of our founding.]

The germination of Kappa Alpha Theta is a thing of much interest, and will be of greater interest hereafter. The birthday was in the winter of 1870. The circumstances which gave rise to the fraternity are still preserved in the memories of some who were witnesses of the event. It is well that these memories, now passing into tradition, should be preserved. At the date of the founding of the fraternity, only a few colleges and universities had been opened for the admission of women. Among these, Asbury University, now DePauw, was one of the first. It was the peculiarity of the event that the gate was opened half way; and the first girls were allowed to squeeze in as if by the compression of their skirts.

Nor was the welcome altogether cordial. The University authorities had agreed that ladies might be admitted, but had laid the restriction upon them that only the College classes proper, and that in the classical department, were open to the girls. This made it necessary that the applicant should have preparation in Greek and Latin. So the comers at the first were few and far between.

But they were also courageous. Otherwise, they could by no means have endured the fight. It was on the side of the students that the greatest opposition was experienced. The Alumni were also known to look with much disfavor on the new departure. The result was that the few ladies who entered the University in the fall of 1867 were met with a frown. They were set in the corner and scrutinized with something of the same interest which is given to curiosities in a museum. The prejudice against the women students was quite intolerable for several years. It was the hope of many that the enterprise would prove a failure—that no girls would venture to run the gauntlet, or if they should make the trial that they would be scowled out of the contest.

The event proved otherwise. A few brave girls entered the Freshman class, and presently made their way toward Seniorhood. Nor was the evidence apparent that they were lacking in scholarly attainments. The circumstances here sketched produced their natural results in the minds of the young ladies who had now taken a permanent place as students of the University. They learned many things in the first two or three years of their journey through College. Among the rest, they clearly perceived

the advantage of fraternal organization. They could but observe the workings of the family of fraternities. It was plain that those who were protected by such a relation fared better, and perhaps lived longer in College, than they could otherwise have done. This, perhaps, was the first suggestion of a ladies' fraternity at DePauw. The women perceived that they might as well have the advantages of organization and sisterhood as those who were at the time their persecutors.

Many incidental circumstances conduced to the founding of the fraternity. Social courtesies were not extended by the classmates of those who were foremost among the ladies, or at least not extended to all; and it was rumored that at least one favorite member on the girls' side of the hall had been initiated into one of the men's fraternities! It was under these circumstances that Betty McReynolds Locke, Alice O. Allen, and Mary E. Simmons, of the Junior class of 1870, and Betty Tipton, of the Sophomore class, conceived the project of establishing a women's fraternity.

The enterprise was embarrassed with many difficulties. How could four girls make a secret fraternity, anyhow? There was nothing with which they could affiliate, and only a few to whom they could safely appeal in such a trying crisis. But the founders of Kappa Alpha Theta had discretion and wit. They sought counsel of a few friends, and learned how such things were done. Among those who were thus consulted and who sympathized with the project were Dr. John Clark Ridpath, at that time Professor of Belles Lettres and History, and Dr. John W. Locke, Professor of Mathematics. The latter was the father of Betty McReynolds Locke, who may be regarded as the leader of the enterprise. After learning the primary lessons in such business, the young ladies drew up their Constitution, obtained the address of a competent badge maker, and set up house. The intent of the parties was well concealed, so that the apparition of the fraternity had all the brilliancy of a new morning risen on noon-day. Every circumstance attending the institution of the fraternity was auspicious; and it must be confessed that the result was favorable both to the young ladies themselves and to the rank and file of the girls in College.

The ladies thus associated in Kappa Alpha Theta found themselves at once under the protection of fraternal bonds. They had no difficulty in getting recognition from the Faculty and a place at Commencement. This gave opportunity; and opportunity is the thing most needed under such circumstances. The first anniversary after the establishment of the fraternity was observed in public; and though the old prejudice had not yet fully abated, the ladies who appeared, wearing their badges in honor of the new sisterhood, acquitted themselves in such manner as to win universal applause. It thus happened that the appearance of Kappa Alpha Theta subserved a double purpose. It gave vent and opportunity for the natural disposition of the women students to associate themselves in fraternal relations, and at the same time made sure their position in College. After the establishment of the Alpha Chapter, it was never seriously questioned at DePauw University that the women would hold their place, that they would be admitted henceforth to all the advantages and honors of the Institution, and would share equally in all particulars the benefits which it gave.

DR. JOHN CLARK RIDPATH.

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