

HISTORY OF FLORAL COLLEGE.

(Continued from page two.)

them they had their May day observance. The May Coronation was a gala day in the community. The May Queen was elected by vote from the whole school and was of course the prettiest and most popular girl in school. It was quite an honor to be the May Queen. The Queen, the Maid of Honor, with her attendants (the four seasons, flower girls, cupids, etc., made the pageant. The throne was placed in a conspicuous place in the college grove. Here the Queen graciously received her crown and scepter from the hands of an eloquent speaker. On either side of her Majesty's stand, Spring and Summer were seen. Each was dressed in white gossamer robes, Spring in her beautiful wreaths of snowdrops and violets, her baskets overflowing with narcissus, buttercups, and daisies. She indeed impersonated "The voice of Spring, I come, I come, you have called me long, I come o'er, the mountain with a song." Then Summer in her crown of roses and lilies and bearing ripened fruits spoke. Autumn portrayed the wealth of brown and russet, her baskets filled with grapes, apples, and pears. Winter in her white robes, with a crown of snowballs, was soon on the scene. Next in order of the exercises were the beautiful May pole dances. After the May pole dances, a band of boys and girls appeared, singing gay songs, and strewing flowers along the pathway of the Queen. After this scene the whole assembly repaired to a feast under the grand old trees. The table was filled with tempting viands—numerable quantities of sweets, the whole family of cakes and pies, etc. After the feast had been finished they repaired to the college hall for a few hours of social intercourse. The evenings of the commencement season were given to concerts or social intercourse. At the concerts they always had good music. The music of the college was always good. The hall was beautifully decorated and lighted these occasions. Large crowds always attended the concerts. It is said that during one of these concerts it was announced that Major Watson would sing a solo. Major Watson lived right near the college and was a privileged character in the neighborhood. He was famous for his jokes and as a "spinner of yarns." He was a good singer, however, and the people waited with eager expectation and excitement. The major stepped upon the rostrum and turned to the audience and said, "My song consists of sixteen verses, but they are short and I hope you will enjoy it." Then he began singing,

"John Darling, he dreamed
His Daddy was dead,
And his Daddy he dreamed
John Darling was dead."

This he repeated sixteen times. The audience, of course, was "sold," but it was so ludicrous that they applauded very heartily.

At the social functions the young men from Davidson and the University played a very important part. They were just home from college with their dress suits and white kid gloves. Dancing was not allowed at the college but there were several cotillions in private homes in the village.

Everything was done to make the life of the students as pleasant as possible. The steward in charge of the dormitory was required to furnish all necessary conveniences for the rooms. He was also required to supply a sufficiency of wholesome, well prepared food. The rooms were large and each was occupied by from four to six girls.

During the college year entertainments of various kinds were given. Many of these were concerts given by the girls. These were open to the public. They had a debating society which met from time to time, and from which the girls received a great deal of training. They discussed live questions and the girls always entered very heartily in the discussions of the query. Very often in the evening after supper the girls would gather around the piano in the parlor and sing. Another occasion which the girls enjoyed very much was the annual picnic given by the trustees. They took them over to Red Springs in wagons. The girls laughter and song always told of their enjoyment.

The students of the college were required to attend religious services at Centre church on Sunday, and on other occasions, when deemed proper by the president or professors, unless directed otherwise by the parent or guardian. They were also required to assemble at sunrise for the service of prayer and reading a portion of the Scripture, conducted by the president or some one of the instructors. The college exercises were closed in the same way. All students were required to observe the Sabbath sacredly, and when they did not attend religious exercises their absence was carefully noted and reported.

Another interesting feature of the college life was the time for study. They were kept busily engaged for the greater part of the day. In summer, study hours began at sunrise and continued till seven then ceased till half past eight. At half past eight the collegiate exercises began and continued till twelve, they had intermission then till two. At two o'clock they resumed work and continued till five. From five to eight they had recreation, study hour from eight to nine, and at nine they retired. In winter, study hour began at the

dawn of day and continued till half past seven, and then intermission till nine o'clock. At nine o'clock the collegiate exercises began and continued till twelve, then recess one hour. At one o'clock they resumed their work and continued till four. Then intermission till seven, study hour from seven to ten, and then they retired.

It is also interesting to know some of the rules of the college. These are some that were used in the early days of the college:

"All young ladies must conduct themselves in a respectful manner toward the faculty, and each other, and also in a lady-like manner in every place, and under all circumstances, while students of this institution. No young lady shall be permitted to go beyond the college grove, or absent herself after candle-light, without the special permission of some instructor.

"All pupils of this institution, in their visits, and in their associations with any company must previously obtain the consent and approbation of the president or his lady.

No student shall be permitted to trade with servants except for fruit or melons. The young ladies must, under no circumstance, carelessly deface or injure any room.

"Male boarders shall not be received into any house on the college premises, except a member of the faculty.

"No person, unless by special permission of one of the faculty, shall be admitted to any room, except the school room and parlour.

"It is recommended that the trustees frequently visit the halls of instruction.

"Students shall not be permitted to contract debts except by permission of their parents or guardians.

"No concerts, exhibitions, or lectures by strangers shall be hereafter admitted into the college or premises, except such as are calculated to illustrate some branch of science, and then by permission of the board of trustees.

"The president shall be permitted to adopt measures not in conflict with the preceding rules, and subject to the control of the board, which he may deem proper for the improvement and government of the young ladies." As I have said before, work was suspended at the college when the war broke out. In the summer of 1865 Rev. Luther McKinnon D. D. another of Robeson's noble sons was elected president. Dr. McKinnon was a well-educated man and was later president of Davidson College. He is now living at Clinton. Though perfectly helpless, his mind is very active and I have been told that it is a pleasure to hear him talk.

Having selected a number of competent and experienced teachers as assistants, Dr. McKinnon entered, in January 1866, on the work of reviving the college. Friends of its older days, in a remarkable degree, rallied around the new effort and in a short while success was achieved. Hard indeed was the struggle, for the country was on the throes of reconstruction and the devastation, marked by our defeat in war and the march of the victorious enemy. The college was without money, and the enemy had destroyed everything that was of value within its walls. They issued bonds to raise money to carry on the work of the college. Provisions were very high and board was from seventeen to twenty dollars per month; tuition was ten dollars a month.

In the summer of 1867 Dr. McKinnon resigned as president of the institution in order to devote his entire time to the preaching of the gospel. He was succeeded by Rev. John H. Cobble. The school continued to prosper till 1871 when it had to be sold to meet the bonded indebtedness executed to raise funds to properly equip it after the war. Robert Lilly and John M. McKinnon were the purchasers. Neither of these men took very much interest in the school and for this reason it began to decline.

In 1871 the doors of the college were once more opened under the management of Jesse R. McLean and continued under varying successes till 1878, when the doors were closed forever as a college. Among others who had charge of the college during this period were Rev. Arch Baker and J. L. McLean.

In 1887 Rev. H. G. Hill, D. D., purchased the old Steward's hall, the dormitory, and altered it for a dwelling and has been living in it since 1888.

In 1888 Dr. Hill, prompted by the desire to restore to the original owners and give back to the community the school that once exerted such an influence for good in that section, organized a stock company and purchased the property, consisting of twelve acres of land and four buildings. In 1889 the charter was amended as follows:

"An act to amend Chapter 33, Laws of 1841, relating to the charter of Floral College. The General Assembly of North Carolina do enact: Sec. 1. That Section 3, of Chapter 33 of the Laws of North Carolina of 1841, the same being entitled "An Act to Incorporate a Female Literary Institution in the County of Robeson," be, and the same is hereby stricken out and the following inserted in lieu thereof: "That nine trustees shall annually be chosen by the stockholders of said institution on the first Thursday in August five of whom shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business and Rev. H. G. Hill, D. D., Lucius McRae, James McBryde, J. G. McCaskill, E. F. McRae, McKay McKinnon, J. L. McLean, W. S. McNair and Alex. McKinnon are hereby

appointed said board of trustees, who shall hold office until the first Thursday in August, 1899, and until their successors are elected.

"Sec. 2. This act shall be in force from and after its ratification this 9th day of March A. D. 1889."

They designed opening the college again and put upon the buildings a considerable amount of repairs. It was opened as a day school for a while and afterwards tendered to Fayetteville presbytery to be maintained as a college upon condition the Presbytery raise four thousand dollars to put it in thorough order for this purpose. The Presbytery accepted it on this condition and part of the money was subscribed, but the committee having charge of it did not agree, and there was delay in raising whole amount. Then it was proposed other places be allowed to make bids for the Presbyterian college and Red Springs was chosen. The trustees held Floral College for some years after this, keeping it open as a day school, since it was not deemed wise or practical to open it as a college for girls in competition with Red Springs.

About three years ago as the property was decaying, the stockholders advertised it for sale. It was bought, nine acres of land and three buildings, by the trustees of Centre church. Two of the college buildings left have been sold and part of another torn down. The part left standing is used for a district school. The old music building has been given to Dr. Hill by the trustees of Centre church.

Very little is left of the college which once had such a great influence and which was so dear to students who attended it. There are many students of its later days and a few of its earlier days scattered over the South and elsewhere. The average attendance was from one hundred to one hundred and fifty students. These students came from Robeson and adjoining counties, from more remote sections of the State, from South Carolina and other Southern States.

Floral College had exerted a great influence on the lives of the people of that section and other sections where students came from. At the time of its zenith, women teachers were beginning to be demanded. Many of its students responded to this call. The influence was not only felt in its school room but was felt and is felt today in many of the homes whose mothers attended the college. Its influence in the homes will continue to be felt for many generations. Floral College not only lasts in its influence, but its work is being continued today at Red Springs in the name of the Southern Presbyterian College and Conservatory of Music.

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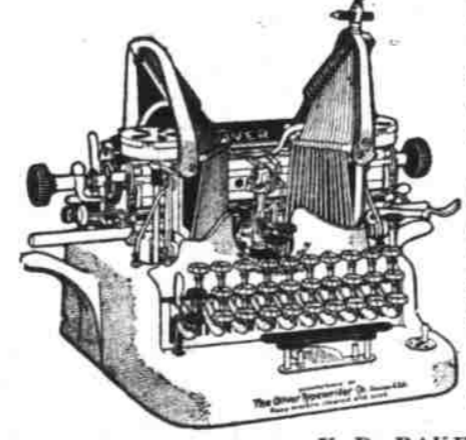
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