

AL/1885

Bedford College

25 May 1884.

My dearest Mother Father & others,

I thank you all for various letters especially Father, for his received yesterday.

I have treated you very shabbily this term, I think, for the first few weeks I had nothing to say, so could not write proper letters, & last week when there was plenty to say, I could not write because I was away.

Next Sunday too I expect to be away, as Aunt Rebekah has asked me to Godstone for Whitsuntide, so I must make the best of my opportunity to-day.

I did not nearly finish describing the presentation last week, so though it is not so fresh, I will try now.

When everyone had come in, & the place was about ~~even~~ full, in fact so crammed that nearly a dozen youths in the gallery had climbed up to stand on the window ledges, in a most conspicuous position, there was a stir & in walked the grandees. We were disappointed at not seeing Lord Granville in his gorgeous old woman's costume but Sir James Paget as Vice Chancellor wore a black & sort of dressing-gown with bars of gold braid, & the Registrar a similar one with bars of silver braid. With them entered Sir John Lubbock with a gouty foot & a crutch, Lord Sherbrook, Husley, & a number of other people "that I don't know".

Sir James Paget began by apologizing for the absence of Lord Granville, who was at a Cabinet Council, & then called on the Registrar to read out — the results of Exams. &c. The arrangement was that the Registrar read out the numbers of that had passed the various Exams. during the year, beginning with Matriculation & working up to M.D., mentioned how many had got honours, & then called by name for ~~those~~ ~~the~~ undergraduates who had won prizes, & the new graduates: ^{each} ~~these~~ as ~~his~~ his or her name was called came out, & was met by the great (or small) givers who was to present them, & who taking one hand led them to Sir James Paget; he gave them the Diploma, & in some cases shook hand: for all the ladies he both rose & shook hands. Most of the people were presented by ~~the~~ one of the authorities of their College or Hospital, Our girls

were presented by Lady Dingen, a member of the Council & a nice old creature. Mrs Garrett-Anderson presented the one female M.B. Dr Falding was there to present someone from Rotherham College. Those who had prepared by Private Study or otherwise had no friend, were presented by Dr Schmitz, one of the professors at University College who was most inattentive to his duties, & often left the poor creature standing forlorn & helpless in the middle, while he (Dr Schmitz) was searching his list to see when his turn came next.

Each person as presented was clapped by their friends if they had any present. The girls all got pretty well clapped: we did a good deal of it, & the men presentees, hepped also, but I regret to say, - only for the pretty girls.

For three or four people there was mild shouting as well as clapping: two of these were women, - & not specially pretty ones either! one was Miss Anna Buchanan a B.A. who passed with splendid honours, & who is the first woman elected a Fellow of University College: the other was Miss Emily Tomlinson, the only medical woman presented on this occasion.

Bessie Doone got a very vigorous clap too, - as a B. Sc.

^{Beside}
~~Except~~ our girls there was no one whom I knew presented, except Hobday, for B.A. He being "Private Study" was one of the unfortunates who got no clapping at all.

When that ceremony was all over, Sir James Paget rose to speak. He is a nice old man, very tall & thin, & rather frail looking, with a slight stoop, & a voice that was not quite loud enough.

He began by soft soap, - which is a commodity much in request on Presentation Day, - about Lord Granville

& about the Members of the Senate who had died during the year, & those who had been chosen to fill their places. Huxley was one of the latter, & Sir James caused great amusement by saying about his value on the Senate, by saying that "notwithstanding his ^{immense} scientific knowledge, he had a great deal of ~~good~~ sound common sense." He went on to make a very nice little speech, warning the graduates not to imagine their work was done now, - it was only just beginning &c. He said that some years ago he had collected information as to the comparative success in life of 1000 of his former pupils, & without giving details he said that the general result was that it was very rare indeed that a really idle student became an industrious or successful man. He said a little too, - rather nicely about the admission of women to degrees, & he tried to make out that it was wrong to call the University simply an examining body, - it had a marked influence on teaching too.

Next Sir John Lubbock delivered his address to his constituents, - not a very interesting one, partly ^{showing} John Morley's proposal to disfranchise the Universities & ~~partly~~ chiefly about Proportionate Representation which he did not explain fully or attractively. When he sat down there were cries of "Sherbrooke", so after some hesitation "Bobby Lowe" who looked very funny with his thick white hair & eyebrows, got up & made an amusing little speech to say he wouldn't make a speech. After he had done there were loud & persistent cries for Huxley which we clapped energetically, but as it was late & Paget had already left the chair, it would hardly have done, so Huxley looked at his watch & shook his head. #

We got out with great difficulty, & wandered about till we found our girls, to whom we talked for a little. I saw Holday standing solitary so I went & congratulated him. Then we came back here.

Our nine graduates went off to Mayall's to be photographed in a group. The proof of the

photograph came the other day: it is a splendid photo., & nearly all the girls look very nice, - but the price is 5/-, - which is a good deal. Still I think I must get it. They are all in their gowns of course: Bessie's yellow hood shows much better than the others which are russet brown.

I have written such a rignmarole about that that I shall hardly be able to tell you about the other things. The Diploma giving ~~place~~ to the "Associates of Bedford College" was not a very interesting performance. Sir Thomas A Farrer's speech was pretty good, only his voice ^{so} often trembled with emotion where there was not the slightest necessity. Mr. Shaen read the report which was very incorrect, & there were speeches from Mr Kegan Paul, & Miss Swanwick, a nice old lady whom I had heard of as ~~the~~ author of very good translations of Aeschylus & Sophocles, & who described her vain longings to go to College when she was a girl.

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On Thursday that week there was the meeting here of the Home Study Society, a Society ~~of~~ whose object is indicated by its name. Girls who have left school study certain subjects, & yearly prizes are given for painting, for mathematics, for a historical essay, for industry &c. This time they had a Lecture on Art Decoration by Miss Scott, a professional decorator, said to be all the rage at Clifton. She is a substantial elderly lady, extremely decided & positive. She showed us specimens of carpets, curtains, tiles, wall papers, chair coverings &c. holding them up & pronouncing "That's good, very good," or "That's bad, - but it's not English" &c. Her great objection to modern art is "It's too servile imitation of nature" which rather astonished some of us. Her tastes are decidedly expensive, I should think. She said impressively "You can't get anything good that's not dear." But added "the best of the lowest class is far better than the 2nd best of the highest class." If you can't afford an Axminster at 35/- the square yard

you'd much better get a Kidderminster at 7/- than a
Wilton at 9/-, for the Kidderminster looks what it is,
but the Wilton pretends to be an Axminster."

Though I did not agree with all she said, much
of it was very good, & she made me think it must
be an ~~awfully~~ very interesting & altogether delightful
business to be a house decorator, if you've got the
taste & talent.

Last Tuesday we had our entrance papers for
the ~~Internal~~ London Exams. to fill up, so now the
deed is done, & I'm beginning to tremble. I know
there's a lot of stiff work to do in the next 8 weeks.
I daresay Oliver's finding out that an Exam like other
things looks bigger & more appalling the nearer
one gets to it. I hope he is getting on all right for it.

Much love to everybody. from

Your very loving

Helen.