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THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN
TO THE
UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

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THE PRESENT POSITION

THE British democracy has already thought fit to sweep away most of the barriers of sex in the political and public life of this country; and only one University—that of Cambridge—still debar women from membership.

The question has been voted on three times. On the first occasion, in 1897, the proposal that women who had passed Tripos examinations should be given a titular degree was defeated by a very large majority. Girton and Newnham accepted this decision, and for more than twenty years no attempt was made to re-open the question.

During and after the War, however, there was a great change in public opinion. Women were given the Parliamentary vote, they became eligible for membership of the House of Commons and of the Inns of Court, and finally they were admitted to full membership of the University of Oxford. Encouraged by the general movement, some resident members of the Senate brought forward a proposal to admit women to full membership of the University. The proposal was defeated in December, 1920, by a considerable majority. An analysis of the voting, however, showed that the resident members of the University were almost equally divided, the opponents of the concession being in a majority of three, while among those resident members who were actually engaged in teaching and lecturing or in administrative work for the University and the Colleges, those who supported the admission of women were actually in the majority.



The voting, therefore, though adverse, showed that, omitting the outvoters who were much less directly concerned in the question, Cambridge opinion was almost equally divided; and shortly afterwards a proposal to admit women to the University, without membership of the Senate, which represented a compromise with the supporters of the wider proposals rejected in the previous December, was brought forward. Some points in this compromise—the exclusion of women from the Senate, and the scheme for a Board of Women elected by women only, which seemed to be intended as a step towards the creation of a separate department for women—were in the opinion of the women's colleges most unsatisfactory, but they recognised that the scheme would confer substantial benefits and accepted it in the hope of avoiding further controversy. The compromise was rejected by the Senate on 20 October, 1921, by a majority of 214. On the same day a Grace which included a provision giving power to the University to confer titular degrees by diploma upon women was carried by a large majority. An analysis of the voting showed that the compromise was supported by a majority among the resident members of the University, and by a still larger majority of those actually engaged in University work, the figures being as follows:

	PLACET	NON-PLACET	MAJORITY
Electoral Roll ...	328	279	49
Those engaged in University work...	258	174	84

The majority of the resident members of the University therefore are prepared to admit women to a limited membership, but the question was decided against them by the outvoters, and the women secured only the promise of titular degrees, which would do little to remove the difficulties which hamper the work of the women's colleges. (See below, p. 9.)

THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE ADMISSION OF WOMEN TO FULL MEMBERSHIP

The chief arguments which have been advanced against the admission of women may be briefly summarised:

1. *That a form of education designed for men is not always suitable for women.*

This argument is easily disposed of. Cambridge women have repeatedly stated that they prefer to share in the same education and be tested by the same examinations as men; 2500 of them who have been through a Cambridge Tripos examination course are unanimously in favour of it, while their record in the Tripos examinations is a proof of their fitness for that education. The present large choice of subjects devised by and for men at Cambridge offers a wide enough field for women also. Moreover they prefer even their inferior status at Cambridge to membership of a separate women's university conferring a degree which would never be regarded as the equivalent of a Cambridge degree.

2. *That men's education should be managed by men.*

The desire of women to have a share in University work is not due to a desire to change, still less to control education, but to a desire to learn from the knowledge and experience of other teachers and administrators. Moreover, owing to the fact that the staffs of Girton and Newnham number less than 50, the men would always be in such an overwhelming majority on Boards of Studies that it is inconceivable that women should ever control men's education in any way.

3. *The alleged disadvantages of mixed classes.*

This argument would involve the removal of Girton and Newnham students from Cambridge, a retrograde step that could hardly be contemplated, since they have been taught alongside men for more than 50 years.

The testimony of Cambridge professors and lecturers in Universities where equality has long been the rule may be quoted here on this point from a flysheet dated 19 November, 1920:

We see that in the course of discussions at Cambridge as to the full admission of women to the rights and privileges of the University, it has been suggested that joint education at the Universities has, or may have, drawbacks from the point of view of men, or of women, or of both men and women. As teachers in Universities where complete equality has long been the rule, we wish to state emphatically that we have noticed no drawbacks of the kind suggested from any one of these points of view. Our experience is of institutions in which men and women are more equally balanced in numbers than they are now, or are for some considerable time likely to be, at Cambridge, so we believe that this experience should reassure those timid persons who, while they admit that joint education at Cambridge has not injured man's interests hitherto, have hinted at certain vague consequences which may result in course of time from an increase of women students and teachers there. Both as students and as colleagues we have found that the women in the Universities where we now work, or have worked, contribute to the academic life of men elements by which that life is both widened and strengthened. That educated women see no drawbacks, from their own point of view, to the academic equality of the sexes needs no testimony from us. On this point their unanimous opinion should be decisive.

W. S. ALDIS, Trin., formerly Professor, Newcastle, also Auckland, N.Z.

W. B. ANDERSON, Trin., Lecturer, Manchester.

W. N. BAILEY, Trin., Lect., Manchester.

W. E. H. BERWICK, Cla., Lect., Leeds.

R. C. BOSANQUET, Trin., Prof., Liverpool.

F. O. BOWER, Trin., Prof., Glasgow.

A. L. BOWLEY, Prof., London.

G. E. K. BRAUNHOLTZ, Emm., Lect., Manchester.
S. BRODETSKY, Trin., Lect., Leeds.
J. BROUGH, Down., formerly Prof., Aberystwith.
C. H. BULLEID, Trin., Prof., Nottingham.
A. B. BULLOCK, Trin., Prof., Rome.
S. J. CHAPMAN, Trin., Prof., Manchester.
J. M. CHILD (B.A.), Lect., Manchester.
D. C. COLBORNE (B.A.), Chr., Lect., Newcastle.
R. S. CONWAY, Cai., Prof., Manchester.
J. F. DOBSON, Trin., Prof., Bristol.
W. G. DUFFIELD (B.A.), Trin., Prof., Reading.
E. FIDDES, Pet., Pro Vice-Chancellor, Manchester.
M. FLETCHER, Trin., Prof., Newcastle.
P. FRASER, Qu., Lect., Bristol.
E. A. GARDNER, Cai., Prof., London.
J. GIBSON, Joh., Prof., Bangor.
A. J. GRANT, Kgs, Prof., Leeds.
W. W. GRUNDY, Kgs, Lect., Cardiff.
H. R. HASSÉ, Joh., Prof., Bristol.
T. H. HAVELOCK, Joh., Prof., Newcastle.
A. E. HEATH, Trin., Lect., Manchester.
C. H. HERFORD, Trin., Prof., Manchester.
S. J. HICKSON, Down., Prof., Manchester.
C. S. S. HIGHAM (B.A.), Trin., Lect., Manchester.
W. N. JONES, Emm., Prof., London.
H. KNAPMAN, Emm., Lect., Reading.
J. S. MACDONALD, Emm., Prof., Liverpool.
J. MACDONALD, Emm., Lect., Newcastle.
D. H. MACGREGOR, Trin., Prof., Manchester.
A. MAWER, Cai., Prof., Newcastle.
E. H. NEVILLE, Trin., Prof., Reading.
H. A. D. NEVILLE, Emm., Prof., Reading.
G. NORWOOD, Joh., Prof., Cardiff.
J. PERCIVAL, Joh., Prof., Reading.
H. T. H. PIAGGIO, Joh., Prof., Nottingham.
M. C. POTTER, Pet., Prof., Newcastle.
H. E. K. REYNOLDS, Pet., Prof., Bristol.
E. WAYMOUTH REID, Prof., St Andrew's.
O. L. RICHMOND, Kgs, Prof., Edinburgh.

W. J. SEDGEFIELD, Chr., Prof., Manchester.
 P. E. SHAW (B.A.), Joh., Lect., Nottingham.
 J. E. A. STEGGALL, Trin., Prof., St Andrews
 W. STILES, Emm., Prof., Reading.
 H. STROUD, Joh., Prof., Newcastle.
 D. G. TAYLOR, Joh., Prof., Cardiff.
 A. HAMILTON THOMPSON, Joh., Lect., Newcastle.
 H. TODD, Pemb., Lect., Bristol.
 G. W. TODD, Emm., Newcastle.
 P. N. URE, Cai., Prof., Reading.
 G. N. WATSON, Trin., Prof., Birmingham.
 A. N. WHITEHEAD, Trin., Prof., London.
 A. WOLF, Joh., Reader, London.

4. *The overcrowding of laboratories and lecture rooms.*

This is a serious difficulty at Cambridge, but the right way of meeting it is to increase the accommodation available. Two of the professors who suffer most from the overcrowding welcome the presence of women. The following extract from the flysheet issued by Professor Pope and Professor Rutherford on 6 December, 1920, may be quoted:

Many have based their objection to Report A on the ground that acceptance would lead to a great influx of women to our already over-crowded laboratories. The two laboratories over which we have the honour respectively to preside are the most frequented in the University and are indeed congested, but we have not shrunk from seeking the obvious remedy, which the University and our external friends have never withheld: our laboratories are being rapidly extended and when the demand for extension ceases we shall recognise that the time has arrived for younger men with fresher minds to assume control. But our experience, gained in this and other Universities, leads us to anticipate that the women students, here and elsewhere, will inevitably remain a small minority, even without the help of the restrictions indicated in Report A.

The sister Universities of Oxford and Cambridge have influenced every branch of human activity more pro-

foundly than has any other institution in our country. For our part, we welcome the presence of women in our laboratories on the ground that residence in this University is intended to fit the rising generation to take its proper place in the outside world where, to an ever increasing extent, men and women are being called upon to work harmoniously side by side in every department of human affairs. For better or for worse, women are often endowed with such a degree of intelligence as enables them to contribute substantially to progress in the various branches of learning; at the present stage in the world's affairs we can afford less than ever before to neglect the training and cultivation of all the young intelligence available. For this reason, no less than for those of elementary justice and of expediency, we consider that women should be admitted to degrees and to representation in our University and should be invited to assist in maintaining Cambridge in close contact with every aspect of human affairs.

Our friends among the opposition seem to forget that every broadening of the University interests—the abolition of the disabilities of nonconformists and of the restrictions concerning the marriage of College Fellows, the provision of teaching and research facilities in science—has been the starting point for rapid extensions in the usefulness of the University.

We write these few lines, in the hope of inducing some, so dazzled by the glories of Cambridge that they foresee no future grander than the past, to reflect that there is a great world outside for whose needs we have to cater, and to join with the supporters of Report A in their determination to minister to those needs in even greater measure than before. We cannot afford to retain the women seen but not recognised in this University nor to leave them at the mercy of another University which is not yet planned.

(Signed) E. RUTHERFORD.
 WILLIAM J. POPE.

6 December, 1920

5. *That women might seek, in the future, to enter the men's colleges.*

It is difficult to realise that this argument can be seriously advanced, since the whole strength of women's opinion and of public opinion generally is ranged against such a proposal. It may be refuted, however, by the explicit statement of the heads of Girton and Newnham Colleges: "We do not desire, and we have never met with or heard of, any past or present member of our Colleges who desires that women should be admitted to membership of men's Colleges or of the body of non-collegiate students." (*Cambridge Review*, 28 May, 1920.)

Moreover, now that attention has been drawn to the point, any scheme for the admission of women accepted by the University would impose legal safeguards, which at present do not appear to exist, to prevent women from being admitted into men's colleges.

6. *That women would not be prepared to accept the financial obligations of membership.*

This argument is disposed of by a letter in *The Times* of 31 November, 1920, stating that Girton and Newnham Colleges would "gladly contribute the necessary fees, capitation tax and other payments, to which they may become liable if recognised as Colleges or Public Hostels of the University of Cambridge."

ARGUMENTS FOR THE ADMISSION OF
WOMEN TO MEMBERSHIP

1. *The limitations of the titular degree.*

A titular degree would no doubt remove some of the disadvantages felt by past members of Girton and Newnham Colleges in their professional work, especially by those in the teaching professions, though it would not satisfy even these. If, however, as is possible under the terms of the Grace passed on 20 October, 1921, titular degrees should at any time be given on examinations which differed in any way from those imposed on members of the University, the suspicion would arise that Cambridge women's degrees rested on inferior

qualifications, and their value for professional purposes would disappear.

2. *The disadvantages of non-membership.*

The efficiency of the Colleges is impaired by their position of isolation. Members of the teaching staff are excluded from all participation in discussions, from all first hand knowledge of the organisation of teaching in their subjects, of changes in the curriculum or in the examinations for which they prepare their pupils. They are debarred from such voice as their small numbers would give them in the decisions made by the University on matters which vitally concern them as students and teachers. University prizes and studentships are closed to women students, who are also ineligible for the grants given by the Board of Education to intending teachers. Moreover, every University post, however unimportant, is virtually closed even to women who have achieved real distinction. These conditions tend to discourage those who work under them, and to deter the women of other Universities from accepting posts at Cambridge. These disadvantages are enhanced by the admission of women to membership of the University of Oxford. The prestige of Oxford and Cambridge in some degree counterbalanced the disabilities involved in exclusion from membership; but the removal of these disabilities at one University only emphasises their continued existence at the other, and a falling off in the average quality of the students, especially of the scholars, at Girton and Newnham, is to be feared. Parents and teachers will prefer to send the most promising students to the University which gives them full privileges, and the most able women lecturers will, in future, seek positions that give them full scope elsewhere.

3. *The results of the admission of women at Oxford.*

The best evidence that Oxford University does not regret the admission of women is to be found in the following letter (7 December, 1920) signed by 33 of its most distinguished members.

To the Editor of *The Times*.

Sir,—Our attention has been drawn to a document which has been circulated among members of the Senate

at Cambridge, in which it is stated that Oxford in admitting women to matriculation, and degrees has "embarked on a dark and difficult adventure, the outcome of which no man can foresee"; the writer asks whether Oxford is "whole-heartedly satisfied to-day with the course she has chosen," and hints that supporters of the change are already repenting.

We have no wish to interfere in the domestic affairs of the sister University, nor can we, of course, speak for the whole body of Oxford residents, but as persons closely connected with the teaching and administration of the University we see no reason to change our emphatic belief that the admission of women to membership of the University has been to its advantage. The change has been accomplished almost unnoticed, and has caused no friction whatever. Women have taken their places naturally both among graduates and undergraduates.

We can assure our colleagues at Cambridge that we are satisfied, and that as far as we can judge from the experience of the first term after the change, they have nothing to fear.

We are, Sir,

E. ARMSTRONG, Pro-Provost of Queen's.
REGINALD W. MACAN, Master of University.
J. A. R. MUNRO, Rector of Lincoln.
C. H. SAMPSON, Principal of Brasenose.
ARTHUR L. SMITH, Master of Balliol.
HERBERT WARREN, President of Magdalen.
JOSEPH WELLS, Warden of Wadham.
W. G. S. ADAMS, Gladstone Professor of Political Theory and Institutions.
G. C. BOURNE, Linacre Professor of Zoology and Comparative Anatomy.
W. M. GELDART, Vinerian Professor of English Law.
GILBERT MURRAY, Regius Professor of Greek.
JOHN L. MYRES, Wykeham Professor of Ancient History.
EDWARD B. POULTON, Hope Professor of Zoology.
J. A. SMITH, Waynflete Professor of Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy.

H. H. TURNER, Savilian Professor of Astronomy.
C. BAILEY, Fellow of Balliol.
P. V. M. BENECKE, Fellow of Magdalen.
A. J. CARLYLE, University.
H. W. C. DAVIS, Fellow of Balliol.
H. T. GERRANS, Fellow of Worcester.
J. S. HUXLEY, Fellow of New College.
A. H. JOHNSON, Fellow of All Souls.
A. D. LINDSAY, Fellow of Balliol.
R. W. LIVINGSTONE, Fellow of Corpus.
P. E. MATHESON, Fellow of New College.
W. H. MOBERLY, Fellow of Lincoln.
A. E. J. RAWLINSON, Student of Christ Church.
W. D. ROSS, Fellow of Oriel.
N. V. SIDGWICK, Fellow of Lincoln.
J. L. STOCKS, Fellow of St John's.
B. H. STREETER, Fellow of Queen's.
M. N. TOD, Fellow of Oriel.
E. W. AINLEY WALKER, Fellow of University.

4. *The social and political responsibilities of women: the intervention of Parliament.*

The great historic Universities are admittedly national institutions. It was the national will which changed them from purely clerical seminaries into mixed universities of clerics and laymen. Parliament again imposed upon them the mixed character of an academy open on equal terms to Nonconformists and Roman Catholics; and if they are to remain truly national they must not only reflect the modern sex equality in politics and society, but must also welcome those women citizens who are capable of profiting by the education of the place, and of contributing to it in proportion as they profit. Nor is it irrelevant to point out that women citizens ought not to be excluded from an educational institution on which public money is spent, and that since the Universities receive public money, public control is legitimate.

As women's political and public responsibilities have increased, their need for the best possible education has in-

creased also. Moreover, now as formerly, it is women who mainly influence the minds of boys as well as girls at their earliest and most impressionable age. The supply of educated women is a question of national importance, which makes it desirable to remove the disabilities which at present hamper the educational work of Girton and Newnham Colleges.

Every extension of the privileges of the University hitherto has been beneficial, though the intervention of Parliament has sometimes been necessary. The outcry that was raised against the inclusion of Nonconformists and Roman Catholics, the conscientious resistance of those who feared the degradation of time-honoured ideals; the final interference of Parliament, the now universally confessed emptiness of the old misgivings, which twenty-four years ago, debarred women even from the titular degree; the tide of national thought that has set more and more steadily in the same direction, all these things give strong ground for maintaining that the recognition of equal opportunities for men and women at Cambridge must not be longer delayed.

WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT

1880