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Antionette Brown Blackwell

On the platform of the new chapel in Oberlin last June, with fifteen others present in response to an invitation similar to the one which brought her there, sat a little woman whose quiet, refined face gave no suggestion of the unusual situation in which she found herself. She had been introduced to the president of ceremonies as "one of the first two women in America to complete a course in Divinity," "one who," the speaker had added, "as preacher, as pastor, as writer, as the champion of more than one good cause, has in the past conferred honor upon her Alma Mater, and who today confers upon it no less honor by an old age as lovely as it is venerable;" she had been invested with the degree of Doctor of Divinity; and in the dignity of the new honor, the highest that the College could bestow, had again taken her seat. The fifteen others were all distinguished men. Five were ministers to important churches, three were college presidents, three professors in large universities, and one was a scientist of recognized ability, one a managing editor, one a United States district judge, and one a member of Congress who has since that day accepted a college presidency.

More than sixty years earlier Antoinette Brown had asked in Oberlin that the opportunities of the College be given to her simply as student among other students, and though that was the published, and no doubt sincere, ideal of the College, she had found more than once that, in respect to that ideal at least, the College was but building better than it knew. The actual grasp of the good fathers in Oberlin was as yet far behind the reach of her woman's faith. Even Lucy Stone, the one spirit there who usually sympathized with her, could not see quite so far as she. More than once these two young women found themselves leaders in protest against the sometimes unconscious, always (to them) unfair discrimination of the College in favor of men. For instance, they wished to take part in the college debating society. The faculty reminded them of St. Paul's estimate of women as given in his letters to the Corinthians and to