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SIMMONS COLLEGE—THE CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT OF DR. SIMMONS'S LIFE

BY OSCAR H. COOPER

SIMMONS COLLEGE was the dominating interest of Dr. James B. Simmons during the last six years of his life. The writer came to the College in 1902, entering upon the work of president on June 10 of that year. Four days later came a letter from Dr. Simmons saying, "Our trustees write me enthusiastically of their joy that you are now President of our College at Abilene. And I am up 'a great while before day' to join them in welcoming you. God bless you a hundred-fold!"

This letter was followed by about two hundred others, relating to the administration, perpetuation, and enlargement of the
Simmons College, covering all the important events in the progress of the institution during these years, and outlining the policies which, Dr. Simmons thought, should be followed in present and future years.

These letters are of permanent value and should be edited and published. They were a source of constant encouragement and inspiration during the trying years when the foundations were being slowly laid and the standards established which have made Simmons College an enduring seat of learning of high rank among Texan institutions.

The policy most persistently and strenuously urged by Dr. Simmons during all the latter years of his life was that of securing adequate endowment of the College. In more than half of his letters this policy was discussed and emphasized. Endowment was the chief feature of his "Foundation agreement" with the Trustees of the College; nearly all of the money given by him to the College during his life was given for endowment; and his entire estate at his death was devoted to this purpose, subject to a life provision for his son, Dr. Robert
S. Simmons. He believed that a vigorous, persistent, wisely-planned campaign for endowment should be undertaken in Texas as early as 1902, and was keenly disappointed when the Trustees thought the time inopportune. Yet he never lost heart or became critical, when his ideas were not followed—he simply changed his line of attack, keeping his main object steadily in view. Thus it came to pass that the necessity for ample endowment was permanently fixed in the ideal of Simmons College and a beginning was made which will grow with the years. The immediate success of the effort made soon after Dr. Simmons's death to raise endowment for Biblical Instruction demonstrated conclusively that he was right in believing that the time was ripe for the endowment of the College.

As the years went on the love of Dr. Simmons for the College became a passion. Every detail of its progress was read with avidity and evoked a letter to the writer or to Dr. Hanks, or to Pastor Scarborough, or, less often, to other members of the Board of Trustees. When the student enrolment
passed two hundred (in 1903) he wrote a jubilant congratulation; when the plan for building a dormitory for girls was under consideration, he was keenly interested. At his suggestion, Dr. Robert S. Simmons, who has been the chief contributor to the excellent library of the College, transferred his contribution of $1,100 from a proposed Library building to this dormitory, which was named the "Anna" hall in honour of the daughter of Dr. Robert S. Simmons. He gave attention to the details of the curriculum and made many useful suggestions, usually closing with an exhortation not to forget the Book of Books—the English Bible. His satisfaction and confidence grew as the student roll lengthened from one hundred to one hundred and eighty-nine, in 1902, then to two hundred and eleven in 1903, then to two hundred and twenty-nine in 1904. The enrolment has continued to grow steadily. In 1905 the enrolment was two hundred and forty-nine, in 1906-07 it was three hundred and twenty-six, and in 1907-08 it was three hundred and forty. The enrolment in 1910 up to the present
date (March 1) is three hundred and thirty-eight.

These years were not less noteworthy in the history of the College for advance in numbers than for corresponding advance in the standard of scholarship. In 1902 the standard for graduation was little above the requirements of the best high schools; in 1908, a graduate of Simmons College was admitted, without examination, into the Senior Class in Yale University and graduated there in 1909 with high standing. In 1902-03 the only college class was a class of Freshmen; in 1910, twenty-five per cent. of the students are of college rank, all classes are well-filled, and ten Seniors are candidates for graduation.

Dr. Simmons rarely suggested a candidate for a position in the faculty of the College; yet he often manifested a keen interest in the members of the faculty. His ideal was that of the self-sacrificing scholar who chooses service on a small salary in the College, because he loves God and feels that the glory of the Master is the chief reward of his days and nights of strenuous labour. His own personal
needs were so simple that he had little sympathy with the teacher who taught only for the pecuniary reward. He felt elated when he found that men had been secured for the College whose university training was of the highest rank, and he often grew enthusiastic over the fact that the students of the College were being taught by graduates of Yale, Berlin, the Sorbonne, and other leading universities of our own and other lands.

The growth of the College in buildings, equipment, and endowment in recent years has been noteworthy. In 1902 the valuation of the entire plant and endowment was about fifty thousand dollars; in 1910, it is about two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, divided about equally between buildings and grounds and endowment. The contributors, large and small, number many hundreds and the list is constantly growing. The total contributions made by Dr. Simmons and his devoted wife to Simmons College amounted to about fifty thousand dollars.

Simmons College is the most notable achievement of the long and useful life of
this devoted man. It has reached a stage of development in which it is secure against premature death or decay. Its location—just above 32° N. latitude, eighteen hundred feet above sea-level—is ideal. For several years its endowment has exceeded that of any other denominational institution in the state; nor can it be doubted that its friends, far and near, will continue to add to its permanent funds, for they believe in this mode of building—in a long time, for all time to come. These friends, some old and tried, some new and enthusiastic, face the future with strong faith that, under God's guiding hand, this "College of Christ's Love" will ultimately hold a high place among American universities and encompass the globe with its influence.

The College campus is hallowed by the graves of Dr. James B. Simmons and his wife. For, after the death of Dr. Simmons in New York his remains were conveyed to Abilene, and funeral services held in the College Chapel, where fitting eulogies were pronounced by Pastor Scarborough, Judge K. K. Leggett, Dr. Hanks, and the writer.
There, under the cloudless sky of a Christmas afternoon, in 1905, Dr. Simmons was laid to rest beside his beloved wife.

James B. Simmons has left an indelible impress upon many thousands of people in his own generation—chiefly by his great work as a founder and builder of colleges. It is a suggestive thought that this impress will be wider and possibly deeper on the next two or three generations than on his own; for the fruits of his far-seeing planning, giving, and working will hardly reach full fruition within a shorter period. His memory will be a blessing to Simmons College forever.

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