

# TEN CO-EDUCATED GIRLS TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO

By Mrs. H. M. Plunkett



Articles designed and made by  
Miss Mary Edwards.

Now in the Wadsworth Museum,  
Hartford, Conn.

ON November 6, 1694, Rev. Timothy Edwards, who had been chosen to become the pastor of a newly formed church in East Windsor, Conn.—sometimes known as Windsor Farms—was married in Northampton, Mass., to Miss Esther Stoddard, daughter of the minister of that town. There is no record of how the lady looked, nor of what she wore on the occasion, the chronicles of that time only noting the fact that Miss Stoddard had enjoyed superior advantages for education, having been sent to Boston for that

purpose. The husband was twenty-four, the bride twenty-two. All New England looked to Harvard College, at that time, to stamp the hall-mark on ability, and no doubt Miss Esther was duly proud of the fact that the man of her choice had been endowed with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in the morning, and that of Master of Arts in the afternoon of the same day, an unprecedented act on the part of the college, and a tribute to the unsurpassed scholarship of Mr. Edwards—a scholarship that we shall see was always kept bright, and never allowed to lapse into desuetude, during a long life. The wedding journey of the couple, including some family visits, lasted eight days, when they arrived in the town where he was to be pastor for sixty-three years, and where she was to live a beautiful and influential life as his helper, and where, even after her husband's death, it is recorded that she

was beloved for her Christian helpfulness in doing all that she could to increase the influence of his successor. Very few parishes could, in that primitive time, pay a salary adequate to support a minister, without some extraneous assistance—this assistance often taking the form of a farm. In Mr. Edwards's case, his father, who was a successful merchant of Hartford, made him the free gift of a farm and built him a house on it, but as this was not yet completed, the newly married pair occupied at first temporary quarters elsewhere. At length it was done, and it was an uncommonly fine and really "advanced" house, for the period. It stood with its long front to the street, the bare architectural blankness of this front being broken at the centre by a projection which formed a porch about the front door on the first story, and in the second, made a room of closet-like proportions, but called the "study"—within the walls of which were produced for sixty-three years the sermons that formed the chief intellectual pabulum of that people, outside the Bible. Few and small were the windows, made of tiny diamond panes set in lead, eloquent of the costliness of glass. Our ancestors held the theory that an air-space under a house made it cold, so this house had no visible underpinning, but seemed planted in the soil. The second story projected beyond the first—tradition has it, so as to be able to shoot Indian marauders, of which, in this vicinity, there were too many for the comfort of the intruding pale-faces. The roof was steep—made of "rived" shingles, which were never changed, and still serviceable one hundred and eighteen years afterward, when the house was taken down. The stepping-stone was utilized again by the man who built upon its site, but in 1834 it was bought from him, and made the corner-stone of the Theological Institute of Connecticut. The house had some very superior wood-work on the

inside, one feature of which was a bench, running round three sides of one of the rooms, and which has an important relation to our theme. As New England parishes were rated, at that time, this of East Windsor was esteemed one of the best. Nearly every parishioner was a farmer; even the owner of the only grist-mill and the storekeeper had their farms. An account-book belonging to a deacon, and the Rev. Mr. Edwards's "rate-book" (really the parish record) are still extant, and as the latter gentleman had a habit of making quaint and piquant memoranda in connection with some of the items of cash or produce paid to him, they throw a flood of light on the manners, customs, and ideas of the time. Payments were faithfully, but not always promptly, made, and the minister found it impossible to live on his salary without adding the labor of a tutor; hence he always had young men fitting for college in his family, and his rate-book shows that young men who could not spare time in the day, came to him in the evenings to be instructed in penmanship.

The meeting-house was not completed till three years after Mr. Edwards's marriage—the congregation meanwhile assembling in a barn—and although he exercised every function of the Congregational priesthood, he was not formally ordained until the two ceremonies of dedicating the church and the complete induction of the pastor, called *ordination*, could be combined in one joyful occasion. It occurred in 1698. Previous to this his house had been completed, and two of the young women, whose completed circle is ten, had appeared on this earthly scene. This double ceremonial was the happy goal toward which both pastor and people had been looking for many years, and, accustomed as we are to think of those early Puritans as leading austere and joyless lives, it is a surprise to learn that the religious ceremonies were followed by an Ordination Ball in the minister's house—one of the invitations in the young pastor's handwriting, bearing his autograph, being still in existence. A careful list of "provisions laide in at the house of Mr. Edwards for his ordination," is still extant in the account-book of his accurate deacon. Of actual viands sent, there were 88 pounds of "beefe," 14 of mutton, 18 of

veal; souger, 10 pounds; wheat, meal, cheese, butter, eggs, salt, pepper, sidar, rum, malt, hops, wine, and money distinctly called "wine-money" and also spice-money, while many gave actual cash. We feel justified in believing that "everybody who was anybody" was invited to partake of this generous feast, and we are certain that that parish had at least one "jolly good time" in its life.

Mrs. Edwards had a high ideal of the loftiness of the pastor's vocation, and, that her husband might be free to fulfil its duties, took upon herself the burden of their temporalities—so that her gifted and honored spouse could educate his young men, and care for the souls of his parishioners, unhampered by petty cares. When there was a question of how many and what hides the tanner ought to return to him, he says, "My wife knows;" and other references to her show that she "looked to the ways of her household," notwithstanding the superior Boston education she had received. Of her eleven children the fifth was a son—the celebrated and much-maligned Jonathan Edwards; the rest were daughters, the youngest born when the oldest was twenty-two. It was a busy and no doubt a lively household, and it is pleasant to read that "From the house the land sloped toward the east to a brook that flowed at the foot of a steeper hill, which was then crowned with a beautiful forest of primeval trees. . . . To this spot Mr. Edwards was accustomed to go for seclusion, and there his son Jonathan built the booth wherein he held soul-inspiring converse with God." We can imagine him escaping in desperation from such a girls'-nest as the house must have been to this precursor of the modern "den."

As the minds of the ten daughters began to unfold, and as there were no schools to send them to, the father undertook to train them himself. He did not stop to inquire whether co-educating his girls right along with the fitting-for-college students would lead to atrophy of the muscles, or of the affections, but just *did it*. He had a school, with a high standard, beneath his own roof. Harvard and Yale colleges accepted "Mr. Edwards's students" without examination; and that he held his girls to the same standard is proved by the fact

that when called away from home, as he often was in his capacity of eminent divine, he left the instruction in Latin and Greek to his daughters, and particularly directs that they shall not fail to hear the recitations of the young men, in the letters that he sends back. In his account-book he records every day's instruction to these young men, which was paid for at the rate of three shillings a week, and makes note of the time given to them by his daughters, for we may be sure that the money value of these services by the co-educated ten was not ignored by them. Among the credits in his account-book is a memorandum of a shilling paid by one North to my daughter Mary for covering a fan, and there are other similar entries. That a knowledge of Latin and Greek had not eradicated the fondness for distinctively feminine work is shown by the fact that specimens of Miss Mary's embroidery—a scarf, an apron, and a pair of slippers—now owned by the Connecticut Historical Society, can to-day be seen in the Hartford Athenæum.

For this work the lady first spun and wove the linen cloth of the foundation and created the wools, discovering the dyes with which to color them, in the flowers and leaves and barks and nuts of trees. The picture shows that she could conventionalize the flowers of the field; and, as Mr. Edwards credits Deacon Rockwell, who was a worker in wood, with two pairs of "heals," we can be almost sure they were to be attached to Miss Mary's embroidered slippers: only lately a pair of needle-pointed slippers, with heels two and a quarter inches high, contemporaneous with these, have been found in the vicinity. So even these co-educated women had their little weaknesses and did not wear hygienic shoes; and while we are taught to believe that the simple dietetics of that day gave people sounder teeth than ours, there are frequent credits to Deacon Skinner for drawing a tooth for Esther—or Abigail—or Lucy.

An effort has been made to discover the specific effect of the education above described, or the subsequent character, conduct, and lives of the women whose scholarly father had boldly reared his daughters in scholarly ways. He knew the advantage of travel and contact with

other circles than one's own, and one after another they were sent to Boston for some of the superior advantages afforded by that city. As Mr. Edwards had come to be a very influential man in all religious matters—in fact was *the* man to whom other parishes looked for counsel when in difficulties (which was not seldom)—his house was much frequented by ministers, old and young; and not a few were attracted thither by the charms of this galaxy of "Edwards's girls," seven of whom married. Two died—one at nineteen and one at twenty-one—we are led to infer from some swiftly fatal sickness, as Mr. Edwards's memoranda contain no allusions to any chronic illnesses, while he carefully notes all moneys paid for medicines and doctors' bills, which certainly were very small and infrequent. Of the seven who married, five lived to ages ranging from sixty to ninety-one, the one whose life was shortest living to sixty; so we must infer that the superior education did not tend to shortness of life; but we look again, and note that none of them married younger than twenty-four, and on studying the reason of this, we find that some of them had "long engagements," the fashion then being for a man to build a house before he literally brought a bride "home;" and of the three who married ministers, two had to wait till their lovers had been "called" by some parish, and proved worthy of that "settlement for life" that was then the fashion in ecclesiastical circles. It would be pleasant to know which of the daughters was affianced to a young Dr. Rockwell, who built a house in Windsor Farms, and had her initials moulded into one of the bricks of the chimney. Unfortunately, the course of love was interrupted, for the engagement was broken.

The one daughter who remained single was the support and helper of her father, living to the age of seventy-four, and outliving her sire by five years. Her epitaph reads thus:

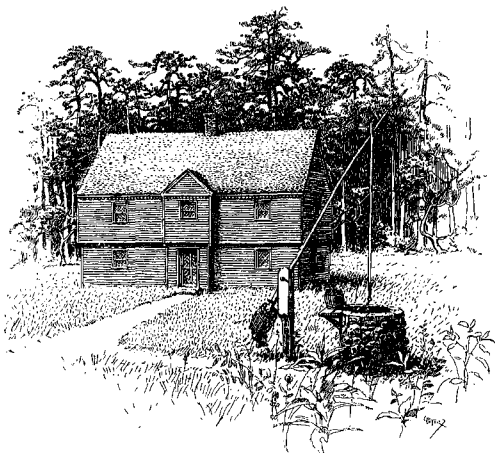
Genius, Knowledge, Prudence,  
Joyn'd with Social Words,  
By Grace refined, Adorned her life,  
Deserved a name  
Which few of either sex can claim.

These girls showed uncommonly good judgment in the selection of husbands, for we find them united to men of character

and high moral worth, who filled influential positions in their respective towns, even when not ministers, and at that time the minister was the dominant figure in every community. Mr. Edwards's oldest granddaughter—Elizabeth Huntington—was married to Abraham Davenport, of Stamford, of whom we find the following in the pages of Dr. Dwight: "The 19th of May, 1780, was a remarkably dark day. Candles were lighted in many houses; the birds were silent and disappeared, and the fowls retired to roost. The Legislature of Connecticut was then in session at Hartford. A very general opinion prevailed that the Day of Judgment was at hand. The House of Representatives, being unable to transact their business, adjourned. A proposal to adjourn the Council, also, was under consideration, when the opinion of Colonel Davenport was asked; he answered: 'I am against an adjournment. The Day of Judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for an adjournment; if it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. I wish, therefore, that candles may be brought.'"

Whittier's poetical transfiguration of this incident, familiar as it is, will bear reading again:

All eyes were turned on Abraham Davenport.  
He rose, slow cleaving with steady voice  
The intolerable hush. "This well may be  
The Day of Judgment which the world awaits;  
But be it so or not, I only know  
My present duty, and the Lord's command  
To occupy till He come. So at the post  
Where He hath set me in His providence,  
I choose, for one, to meet Him face to face—  
No faithless servant frightened from my task,  
But ready when the Lord of harvest calls;  
And therefore, with all reverence, I would  
say,  
Let God do His work, we will see to ours.  
Bring in the candles.



The House of Rev. Timothy Edwards, East Windsor, Conn.  
Birthplace of Rev. Jonathan Edwards and the ten co-educated girls.

We fairly envy the daughter of the co-educated woman who had had the wisdom to choose such a husband. Among ten girls, born of parents with very positive traits, it is reasonable to expect to find some "peculiarities" and "idiosyncrasies;" and the youngest of these ten is said to have been a woman of very peculiar disposition, and led her husband an unquiet life. Mr. Edwards ought to have been an expert in girls, and when the Rev. Mr. Tuthill, whom this "peculiar" girl married—after the custom of the time—asked of her father the privilege of soliciting Miss Martha's hand, her father expressed a fear that she might not be a suitable companion for the would-be son-in-

law. The matrimonial candidate supposed that the caution related to the spiritual condition of the lady's mind, and anxiously asked if "Miss Martha had not experienced the great change"—for it was thought a great hazard for a clergyman to be united to an unconverted woman. Mr. Edwards replied: "Oh, yes, yes, Martha is a good girl; yes, she is a good girl, but, Brother Tuthill, *the grace of God will go where man can't.*" When we recall how people in those days were judged by their neighbors, according to whether, in the language of the time, "they had experienced the great change," or "had passed from death unto life," we are pleased at the mention of the fact that Mrs. Edwards herself did not unite with the church till twenty years after her marriage, at a time of great religious interest, when also two of her daughters joined the visible church; and we feel sure that her husband did not nag or worry her, but waited "patiently for God" to complete His own spiritual work.

Of all this group of daughters who are



said to have grown up "to fill positions of eminence and usefulness," but one has left any personal memorial. This gives us a true picture of her mind and heart, for at that day it was a common practice to record and communicate spiritual impressions and states with a frankness which our more reticent time finds it difficult to understand.

This memorial consists of a diary, in her own handwriting, on small bits of paper clipped from the tops and bottoms of letters, sometimes on the back of an entire letter—for paper was a scarce and precious commodity—running through nearly fifty years. The whole is wrapped in a large sheet of actual animal parchment, folded carefully, and endorsed in her own hand, "Esther Edwards's Diary." There is a tradition that, previous to 1723, when she was twenty-five, she had passed through a season of deep spiritual darkness and doubt, but that upon taking a journey to Boston, she immediately passed into a peaceful and happy state. Some would argue that her trouble was a physical one that "a change of scene" would set right, and, some would say, possibly a Boston preacher had the happiness to present the old truth at a fresh angle. On February 20, 1723, she says: "I am much indisposed in body, and in a very dead frame of mind. Will the second Adam become a quickening spirit to my dead soul? I experienced something I want words to express. It was superior to what I have found these many years, and hope it was that peace of God that passeth understanding."

"Feb. 23d.—I have this morning been refreshed with divine consolations." Somebody has wittily said that the consciousness of being well dressed has a more sustaining power than religion itself for a woman; and the next entry shows a genuine human touch that makes us love her.

"March 7th.—I was this day, upon my looking more comely than ordinary, stirred up in thankfulness to God, whom I saw to be the Fountain of all Perfection, and that I might of His fulness receive every good thing. He appeared to me a God able and ready to help me."

There is much of introspection and a minute record of the states of religious feeling experienced at different times. She

made her petitions that "our negro fellow may be a blessing and comfort to us." This was a slave—and in making a comparison of the prices of the necessities, Mr. Edwards mentions that formerly he bought a servant for £90, but now must pay £200. Though bought like chattels, their souls were not neglected.

The second daughter had been betrothed and married in 1724. One of the invitations to her wedding is still extant and runs:

Sr. "This comes from myself and wife as an Invitation to y'self and Sister, to my Daughter Betty's Wedding, ye day intended for which is the next Tuesday. I therefore do hereby request you both to be at my house on that occasion that day, at about three of the Clock in the afternoon, whereby you will oblige

"Sr yrs to serve you,

"TIMO: EDWARDS."

Whether this precedence over Miss Esther had anything to do with some of her "low," "dull," and "dead" frames of mind is not known, but previous to 1726 there appear frequent allusions to a person who is not indicated even by initials, but certain cabalistic marks are made to do duty for the name of one who had evidently taken the first place in Miss Esther's heart. She still continues to pray for the "negro fellow," but every entry contains a petition for the cabalistic gentleman. A clergyman in those times looked for a parish before he allowed himself to think of marrying; and how long before the present date the Rev. Samuel Hopkins had been engaged to her we do not know, but on October 2, 1726, we find this entry: "I was enlarged in my thanksgivings because God had wrought the affair of my settling in the world to such a pass as it is. Also encouraged thereby to trust in Him still, yt He would appear and do great things, even as my case should require, in particular in respect to ——" (here the cabalistic mark). She occasionally chides herself for discontent, or pride, but the leading object in all is the cabalistic unknown, ——. She says, "My eyes were to God all day long for ——" and even in reading a treatise on the eternity of God she was pleased to discover "my happiness in ——" In

June of 1727 she was united in marriage to Mr. Hopkins, who had been settled as the pastor of West Springfield, Mass. She now records in her diary, especially on a communion Sabbath, that she "was enlarged in my petitions for my dear spouse that he may have all spiritual blessings, and all those ministerial accomplishments that may render him a man of God, thoroughly furnished." She passes forward in life through the experience of motherhood, and, as we should expect, is very earnest in prayers for the conversion of her children, but does not forget to pray for the "negro girl Filis" and "the younger one—Dido." In 1729 she was much reduced by fever and ague, and was advised to take a journey to New Haven. She started when so weak that she could hardly mount her horse, and reached Waterbury, where her husband's relatives lived, so exhausted that she stayed there two weeks, and, no sooner had she reached New Haven than she was met by a messenger bearing the news of the death of her daughter Esther. The entries in the journal show the tender mother, as well as the truly resigned Christian, and all along are notes of her earnest, anxious prayers for her sisters and children and husband.

In 1741 there occurred a great religious movement, known as the Great Awakening, which had spread from Northampton, where it began under the preaching of her brother, the eminent Jonathan Edwards. Whitefield's preaching had been instrumental in a great religious quickening and had inaugurated a new style of preaching. Barber—the historian of Connecticut—says: "The religious people were divided into the 'New Lights' and 'Old Lights.' The former were active and zealous in the discharge of everything which they conceived to be their religious duty, and were in favor of Mr. Whitefield and others itinerating through the country, stirring up the people to reform," etc. Whereupon the Grand Council at Guilford said: "That for a minister to enter into another man's parish, and preach, or administer the seals of the covenant, without the consent of or in opposition to the settled minister, is disorderly." Most of the council were "Old Lights," and expelled the "enthusiasts"—as they called them. Rev. Eleazar Wheelock—after-

ward President of Dartmouth College—when it was established to educate Indians for missionaries among their own people—and Jonathan Edwards were among the "New Lights" who approved of and took part in evangelistic services, supplementary to the regular services in many churches. "Dead" was the word applied to many churches that had fallen into routine. It is easily supposable that the irruption of an evangelistic "son of thunder" is not at all times the most welcome sort of a visit to a peaceful, steady-going pastor. Mrs. Hopkins records, on March 15, 1742, that she "has heard of Mr. Wheelock's arrival in Longmeadow," and the next day says she has "heard of some going round to get subscriptions for preaching in this place," and the next day says, "John Ely came to talk to Mr. H. about Mr. Wheelock's preaching among us; apprehends great danger to this people and much detriment to the interests of religion." One cannot repress a smile at the thought of that affectionate sister's requests at this time being chiefly for her distinguished brother, the great Jonathan Edwards—"that it would please God to enlighten him, and show him the way of truth, and that if he had embraced any error, that he might be recovered." On August 3, 1743, she says: "What is the matter? I was last night in company with one of the 'New Lights.' I could hardly bear the room." On March 12, 1744, she writes: "Some things occurred this morning which made it appear very doubtful whether my dear brother would ever come off of some principles which appeared to me were detrimental to religion."

The genuine New Englander *does* feel that he *is* the keeper of his neighbor's conscience, and the loving sister often poured out her soul in prayer for him, but he had a progressive mind, and in spite of Dr. Holmes's abhorrence of the extreme views at which he sneers, he calls him a "sweet-souled man," and evidently believes that he modified his views of "sinners in the hands of an angry God" before his untimely death, but intimates that they were suppressed by persons who thought it more important that Jonathan Edwards should be made to appear "consistent" than simply "true." Mrs. Hopkins survived eleven years after the death of the

husband, who had remained the pastor of his first and only parish for thirty-six years. The record on her tombstone is : "Mrs. Esther Hopkins, Relict of ye late Revd. Mr. Sam.ill Hopkins (in whom a superior understanding, uncommon Improvements in Knowledge, Exemplary Piety, and exalted Virtue combined to form a distinguished female character), deceased June 7. 1766 in ye 72 year of her age." The whole is surmounted by a cherubic face, surrounded by stars—indicative of a beatified spirit.

Wherever we trace the history and posterity of those vigorous Co-Educated Girls we find distinguished intellectual achievement and high moral worth. They stand at the head of one line of what Holmes calls the "Brahmin caste of New England." In describing those whom he thus classifies, he says : "Their names are always on some college catalogue or other, they break out every generation or two in some learned labor which calls them up after they seem to have died out. A newer name seems to take their place—but you inquire a little, and you find it is the blood of the Edwardses, or the Ellerys, or the Chaunceys, or some of the old historic scholars, disguised under the altered name of a female descendant." The second son of Esther—Rev. Samuel Hopkins—was the pastor for fifty-four years of Old Hadley, when that town constituted one of the most commanding parishes in Massachusetts, and at one time four of his

daughters were the wives of men filling four prominent New England pulpits. His college-bred son died soon after graduation, but another, Mr. John Hopkins—a merchant in Northampton—amassed a fine fortune, much of which was dedicated to religious teaching. He generously aided Austin Worcester—Esther's grandson—in preparing himself for a missionary to the Cherokee Indians, then in Georgia. He spent two years in a Georgia penitentiary, after the law forbidding the teaching of others than whites was enacted, and when the tribe went into what was an exile to them, accompanied them beyond the Rocky Mountains. His daughter, Mrs. Robertson, while an invalid in bed, translated the new testament and several of the more important books of the old into the Creek language, and many of our choicest hymns, and has been chief translator for the Indian Commission.

Mr. John Hopkins's son, Rev. Samuel, was the author of the three-volume work, "The Puritans and Queen Elizabeth"—a book that exhibits a wonderful industry and patience—a quarry of facts for the future historian. Members of the next three generations are still living, and it would be indelicate to characterize them further. The members of the seventh generation are still young, but give promise of maintaining the family standard of superior intellectual achievement and high moral worth—worthy successors of the ten Edwards girls.



Corner in the Oldest Graveyard in East Windsor.

Here are buried Rev. Timothy Edwards, his wife Esther Stoddard Edwards, and their three unmarried daughters.



She found a photograph of a man.—Page 459.

## THE BLUE DRESS

By Josephine Daskam

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JESSIE WILLCOX SMITH

I SHOULD never have dreamed of putting this in our Posterity Collection except for Ben. She says that stories about lovers—especially unhappy ones—last longer than any other kind and interest people the most. And after we have been to all the trouble, to say nothing of the cost of the paper, of writing down the really great events that took place in the Elmbank School and burying them in a sealed box far in the depths of the earth for people to dig up and read many, many years after we are dead and gone, I suppose we ought to try to interest them. Ben says that Laura and Petrarch, Launcelot and Guinevere, Romeo and Juliet will never die. (This is the first sentence of a composition she wrote and The Pie was very angry and wouldn't hand it back to her, even. The subject was The Love of Nature, and Ben said that human nature was the most important kind of nature, and so she looked up those people I mentioned and wrote about them. But she didn't care, because Miss Naldreth said it was a remarkable composition, and she needn't do another in its place, as The Pie said she must.)

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I think myself that Eleanor Northrop was a silly thing about her blue dress, and I can't see why so many of the girls should have admired her so much while she was keeping her old vow, although I must admit that she was really quite noble once or twice about not giving way. But Ben says that nothing is silly when you are in love, and as she had to look up a great deal about it for her composition, I suppose she knows.

The way we happened to know Eleanor so well, for of course she wouldn't naturally go with girls of thirteen, was because of the Society for the Pretender which her aunt believed in. You have probably heard that some people don't believe in Queen Victoria—as a queen, I mean—but in Prince Charlie. Well, that was the kind Eleanor's aunt was. And Ben got up that society in the school, and of course Eleanor belonged to it. So even after the society broke up—you may have read how it happened to—we still knew her, though she went with her own set, and was always trying to get in with the quite old girls. But I believe she really enjoyed going with us, after all, for just about half