

## CHAPTER VI

## The Marriage with Columbia University

It was like a marriage in that it was a relationship entered into by the free consent of the contracting parties. And, as in many marriages, the two partners were widely different in wealth and power — as though a rich and famous duke had married a bright but impecunious girl from the country. And, as in many marriages, after some years together the two separated and went their individual ways again.

(Other colleges than Bard have become parts of larger institutions, but I know of no other which, once merged, broke loose and became independent again).

The years of this marriage were 1928 to 1944.

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The merger with Columbia brought St. Stephen's and Dr. Bell into close contact with one of the great personalities of the academic world, Nicholas Murray Butler, the president of Columbia University — often dubbed "Nicholas Miraculous." At the time of the merger Dr. Butler was 66 years old and had been president of Columbia for 26 years. He was one of the most widely-known Americans of his age: a Nobel prize winner; a strong candidate, and the favorite son of the New York delegation, for the republican nomination for President of the United States in 1920. He had known all the Presidents of the United States from Hayes on; "seven of them more or less intimately"; he was well acquainted with Popes and with the Kings and Prime Ministers of Europe. He had built Columbia into one of the great universities of the world. He had founded Teachers' College and the College Entrance Examination Board. He had won for education recognition as a

field for serious scholarly study in America; he dominated the American Academy, the Pulitzer Prize awards, and the Carnegie Endowment for World Peace; Upton Sinclair called him "the intellectual leader of the American plutocracy." His lifelong foe, Alvin Johnson, described him as "a stout figure, garbed in impeccable business suits, complete with derby, cane and "cold weather spats"; . . . "there is little of the absent-minded Professor or the dreamy scholar about Dr. Butler," says *Current Biography*. "In spite of his many activities, he always seems calm, composed and cheerful," and is noted for "a great and nearly imperturbable complacency." A contemporary described him as "splendid in appearance and speech . . . with all his faults . . . a great educator and a great man."

These two — Bernard Iddings Bell, President of St. Stephen's College for nine years and Warden for five, and Nicholas Murray Butler, President of this college for 16 years (for the President of Columbia was President of St. Stephen's/Bard during the years of the affiliation, and the on-campus head in Annandale was given the title of Dean or Warden) — these two were bona fide giants. At first one might be inclined to call their meeting in the affairs of this college the Battle of the Giants — except that there was no battle between them, for they did not fight with each other; their battle was with the world and specifically with the great Depression which cut down their scopes just as the chill winds of the Ice Age pushed back the range of the dinosaurs.

Ironically and sadly, both Bell and Butler were blind in their last years, and were led in and out of meetings by wife or nurse. It is perhaps the appropriate but still cruel fate of proud and self-sufficient men, of giants that is, to be helpless at the end, and dependent upon others. (A little lad led Samson, "eyeless in Gaza.")

The story of the Columbia-St. Stephen's merger is of course mainly the story of a significant educational venture. But running through it is also a very real tragedy, a tragedy of epic proportions — the tragedy of B. I. Bell, who was in effect destroyed partly by forces from without, but also in part by elements within his own nature.

If St. Stephen's were to become part of any university system, it was not surprising that it should be Columbia, for the paths of these two institutions had been intertwined during all of St. Stephen's history.

John McVickar, uncle of John Bard and prime mover behind the founding of the College, was a professor at Columbia and on several occasions a candidate for its presidency.

And on at least three definite occasions, — in 1887, 1899, and 1905, St. Stephen's trustees had seriously considered becoming part of Columbia.

And such a merger was consistent with President Butler's own thinking, for he was known on several occasions to have spoken or written substantially as follows:

"Nothing seems more clear to me than that during the next generation the separate colleges of the country, many of which are small colleges, will be forced by the movement of events and opinion, to reconsider their position and to face the alternative of becoming either junior colleges or colleges incorporated into the university. I can see not only Columbia, but Harvard, Yale, Chicago, Minnesota and California building up congeries of constituent colleges, each of which will continue to possess its own individuality, reflected in its operations, its traditions, and its point of view, — but which will have its standards of admissions and graduation, the character of its academic personnel, and its program of study guaranteed by the university in whose educational system it has been incorporated. In other words, I believe we stand on the edge of a new and important happening in higher education in this country."<sup>2</sup>

But despite the fact that the previous thinking of both parties was such as to make a merger proposal a congenial thought, the speed and suddenness with which this merger was consummated were nothing short of sensational.

Whose idea was it suddenly to merge St. Stephen's and Columbia at that time? And how was it done? — and how so fast?

Apparently it all began at the St. Stephen's trustees meeting of October 27, 1927. Pointing out that the annual deficit of the College was running at about \$80,000 per year, Dr. Bell went on to say:

"When I became president of the College eight years ago, it was with the distinct understanding that I was not to be responsible for raising the money wherewith to finance it. I was employed, as I took pains in my conferences with the board to make plain, to direct the College, to attempt to salvage it from the ruin into which it had then fallen; to restore its integrity and reputation in the academic world; to build up a reasonable body of students, to assemble a competent faculty, to work out principles and practices of administration and teaching. In other words, I was to be the executive and chief educator, not the financier. Nevertheless, increasingly and especially during the past five years, I have found myself assuming more and more financial responsibilities, and abstracted more and more from my proper educational duties.

"The growing burden, from which I have been unable to extricate myself, first resulted in a serious illness, with a consequent operation; second, at the same time, in such a withdrawal of my time and attention from my real job has resulted in a harmful student strike. During this last year, only about one third of my time has been spent on my real work in Annandale. I have not been able to make such contacts with the students as are necessary for personal guidance. I have not been able to give the time necessary to the leadership of the faculty in educational discussions. I have had to give up most of my teaching. . . . Personally I feel that some method of handling the financial needs and obligations of this work, other than that at present, which places the whole burden upon the president, must be worked out. . . . Some sort of fiscal agent would be a necessity. . . ."

The board voted that this matter be referred to a committee consisting of the Rev. Dr. Henry Darlington (an uptown Manhattan Rector and a new trustee), chairman, and Messrs. Albee, James and Fiske (these last being the

strongest members of the board):

The committee (probably with Dr. Bell's collaboration) arrived at the conclusion that St. Stephen's lacked visibility, and that it was just too small to project the image of strength and stability needed to inspire the confidence of donors. Apparently without much deliberation, the committee determined to recommend merger with Columbia at the forthcoming February meeting of the St. Stephen's board of Trustees.

January 10 — a month before the meeting — Dr. Bell had a conference with President Butler. Butler could not have been more cordial or cooperative. After all, he was an empire builder at heart, and he had no way of knowing that just ahead lay a great depression, which would bring many empire builders to their knees. But Butler was too good a politician and public relations man to get himself into the position of appearing to be a gobbler-up of small colleges, and so it was agreed that St. Stephen's should take the first step, and that a written record should be established making it clear that St. Stephen's was the initiator of the merger idea.

And so after talking with Butler, Dr. Bell that same day went down to the offices of the Treasurer of St. Stephen's College, F.M. Terhune, at 1 Madison Avenue, and there wrote to Dr. Butler this seemingly ingenuous inquiry:

"My dear Dr. Butler:

"I write this letter representing the board of trustees of St. Stephen's College.

"For some time there has been a growing feeling among us that in the future development of our College, it might be of great advantage if we could become an affiliated college of Columbia University in the same way that Barnard College is affiliated. We believe that this would be helpful not only to us, but also possibly to Columbia University. Could you give us information about what would be involved in such a possible affiliation?

"There is a meeting of our board of trustees early in February. If we may have some information by that time, it will be helpful to us in considering many of our problems.

I am, my dear Dr. Butler  
Most Sincerely yours,  
Bernard Iddings Bell"<sup>4</sup>

Amazingly, by the very next day Dr. Butler had received this note and had back in the mail a carefully worded answer four typed pages in length, explaining his feeling that the incorporation of small colleges into larger universities was the coming thing in American higher education, that it was like the Oxford set-up where individual colleges were parts of the university, and enclosing a copy of the corporate agreement between Columbia and Barnard. (Mind you, on the face of it, this was all accomplished on the very day following Bell's and Butler's conversation and the writing of Bell's initial note of inquiry!)

Two weeks later a special St. Stephen's faculty meeting was called to consider merger with Columbia. On motion by Prof. Duncan Foster, supported by Prof. Krumpelmann and Prof. Shero, it was voted that

"It would be a desirable educational experiment and would be to the mutual advantage of the College and Columbia University if the College were to affiliate with Columbia University and become a part of its educational system."

The only dissenting vote was cast by Horatio Garmier, associate professor of philosophy, who had already been notified that he would not be reappointed for the following year.

A week later the St. Stephen's trustees met, and the Darlington committee reported its recommendation for affiliation. Without a word of recorded discussion, on motion by Haley Fiske, it was voted

"... that the report of the special committee be received and the recommendations therein contained be adopted."

It looked for awhile as though technicalities might considerably delay action by the Columbia board, since a matter of this nature required the action of the university council before going to the trustees, and there was no council meeting scheduled until after the next Columbia board meeting. But Dr. Butler was equal to this emergency.

"We have hit upon a method", he wrote to Dr. Bell, "which we think will expedite the matter in which we are both so much interested. It is proposed to ask our trustees on their meeting Monday April 2, to take the necessary action, such action to become effective when the university council at its meeting April 17 passes upon the educational details of the project. If this is done, the matter will become fait accompli on the afternoon of April 17 and thereby save two weeks. You will be kept advised of the progress of the matter.

"I suggest that for psychological reasons it will be best to have the first public announcement of the matter from you," Dr. Butler continued (being mindful of the importance of making this not seem to be a Columbia power-play), "You might therefore prepare what you wish to say to the press and have it in readiness for release April 18."

Dr. Bell wrote back objecting that he would not receive official word of the council's action until the next day and that a release prepared after that would no longer be fresh news when received by the press. Dr. Butler had a solution for this difficulty also. It was agreed that Dr. Bell would go to the University Club and wait there while the Columbia council was holding its meeting, and immediately after adjournment of the council meeting, Dr. Fackenthal, Secretary of the University, would phone Bell at the University Club with word of the council action and Bell could then immediately give to the press the releases which he would have already prepared and brought with him.

"If you and he fail to connect," wrote Dr. Butler, "I am expected at my house that evening at about seven o'clock and could myself be reached there."<sup>6</sup>

"You would have been greatly pleased," wrote Dr. Butler the day following the council meeting, "had you been present . . . and witnessed the enthusiasm and unanimity with which the resolution was voted . . . I congratulate you, the trustees of St. Stephen's and the faculty, all of whom I may now count as new and valued colleagues, upon what I believe is a long step forward in the organization and effectiveness of American higher education."<sup>7</sup>

And so, with apparently little or no debate in any body on the substantive merit of this very major and important step, and without any apparent opposition anywhere along the line, and with communication and timing arrangements worthy of a project in international espionage, the amalgamation of St. Stephen's College and Columbia University was approved and announced to the world.

And here is the announcement:

#### A Public Statement

"... St. Stephen's College . . . is affiliated with the University and incorporated into its educational system on a parity with Columbia College and Barnard College . . .

"The arrangement is of advantage . . . both to the College and to the University. It enables the University to enlarge its field of influence in undergraduate education without making Columbia College larger than the best educational procedure of today warrants . . . Columbia University determined some years ago that its undergraduate unit for men, Columbia College, could not with advantage be enlarged beyond an enrollment of some two thousand students. Last year there were three times as many applicants for admission to the freshman class as there were places available. St. Stephen's College is to assist in some degree, in enabling the University to care, in another small unit, for some of these desirous men.

"The incorporation benefits the College in many ways; — chiefly in that it is enabled to avoid insulation of its teaching scholars from those mutually stimulating associations which are possible only in a university atmosphere, and to take advantage of library and research facilities exceedingly difficult in an independent small college.

"The degree granted will be the Bachelor of Arts degree of Columbia College, conferred in St. Stephen's College, and will in all respects be equivalent to the degree of the University, conferred in Columbia College.

"... The President of Columbia University, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, becomes also the President of St. Stephen's College, and is made responsible for the educational policy and effectiveness of the institution . . . Dr. Bell will become Warden of the College and Dean of Faculty . . .

"... The College will remain under the influence and patronage of the Episcopal Church, with the Bishop of New York as Chairman of the Board . . .

"... The incorporation involves no financial interrelationship. St. Stephen's College will continue to be entirely dependent upon its own funds and its own friends for support. Steps will be taken at once toward the securing . . . of \$2,000,000 needed for the newly assumed obligations and responsibilities . . .

"... The following members of the faculty of the College are appointed to be

members of the teaching staff of Columbia University:

Messrs. Bell, Shero, Harry, Davidson, Wilson, Corti, Krumpelmann, Upton, Voorhees, Libaire, Flournoy, Edwards, Obreshkove, Brown, Phalen, Coop, and Crosby . . .<sup>8</sup>

This was heady stuff!

Seventeen members of the faculty of a tiny country college to have "title and status" in Columbia University!

St. Stephen's, its warden and its faculty, gained new status and strengthened morale from being part of the University. One almost immediate benefit was the extension of the Columbia chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, the highly prestigious national scholarship fraternity, to include St. Stephen's. (This was not an autonomous chapter, and St. Stephen's eligibility for Phi Beta Kappa terminated when the College separated from Columbia in 1944).

Another honor came in Columbia's designation of Dr. Bell as head of its philosophy department.

And then just as doom swept across the land in the form of the October 1929 stock market crash and the start of the great depression, at the 185th convocation of Columbia, Dr. Bell was given an honorary Columbia doctorate with the citation:

"Persuasion tips his tongue when he talks".

At this point of the joining of St. Stephen's and Columbia we should pause and look at the times and conditions in which this action took place. In the years 1928-29 America stood on the threshold of great change. But people did not know this, for though they could see back over the way they had come, they could not then see the years following 1928-29, as we who live after them can. In 1928 no one knew that fifteen months ahead lay the October 1929 Wall Street collapse and a decade of depression years.

Just ahead too lay the end of optimism and abundance as "leading men" had known them, counted on them and used them in the 1920's. Pretty steadily since the end of the civil war, America had been growing stronger and richer. Especially in the country's brief and triumphant involvement in World War I, and then through the boom of the 1920's, nothing had seemed impossible for determined and forceful men in America. Buildings had been erected, businesses expanded, institutions founded, great endowments gathered. The years 1928-29 were the final years of this cycle. But people did not know this.

And these were the final years of the pre-eminence of The City. It is hard for us to realize 50 years later what the concept of "The City" had come to stand for in American life in 1928-29. There was the focus of decision and

power, the ultimate pinnacle of success in theatre, music, and the arts. "The City" was where the most important and successful men were gathered, where the money was held, the great businesses headquartered. And particularly was this true of the great City of New York.

Since he had become president of Columbia in 1904, Butler and Columbia had ridden this upward tide with brilliant success. "Columbia University in the City of New York" he proudly styled his institution. Butler believed in 1928 that Columbia was (or was sure to become) America's greatest university because it was located in America's greatest city, sharing in its partnership of brains, wealth, and power.

The unlimited optimism of the 1920's was never to be fully regained after the 1929 depression. Nor was "The City" ever again to be quite the focus of glamour, power, and success that it had been up to 1929. In fact more and more over the coming decades, the city was to become shabby and a problem child.

The 1928 St. Stephen's-Columbia merger brought together three proud and strong-willed men:

Nicholas Murray Butler, president of Columbia University and of St. Stephen's College, intimate of presidents — a world figure.

Bernard Iddings Bell, Warden and Dean of St. Stephen's College, foremost preacher, writer, and lecturer, and spokesman for Christian intellectualism.

William T. Manning, Chairman of the Board of St. Stephen's College, Bishop of New York, and directing power in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

These men stood at the apex of their careers in 1928. On Morningside Heights they were building the world's greatest university and the world's greatest cathedral. This was the new Acropolis of the New World; these were the institutions and monuments of the New Age. As Dr. Butler told the 175th anniversary convocation of Columbia:

"This great city has its Hill. On Morningside Heights pour down the beams of enlightenment and inspiration that come across the land and sea from the Mount of Olives, from the Acropolis, from the Capitoline Hill and Mount Sainte Genevieve. This Hill is the inheritor of their legacies."<sup>9</sup>

In October 1929, the Great Depression struck. It was to last until 1939 when the voracious appetite of World War II forced industrial production up again. In a very few years Dr. Butler was cutting back programs at Columbia as he had never had to do before. B. I. Bell was forced out of St. Stephen's and would never again hold a position commensurate with his fame and his

abilities. Through the thirties, Bishop Manning managed with difficulty to stretch his Cathedral to its full projected length and then it stood unfinished for 30 years, often referred to as a "white elephant." Meanwhile the urban ghetto pressed closer and closer around the great beleaguered university and the huge unfinished cathedral.

Perhaps, more than their builders realized, the monuments to the New Age had been somewhat monuments to power and pride. In any case, now they became in part monuments to heartbreak.

As the storm clouds were gathering about B. I. and his college, tragedy was impinging on his own personal life also. The Bells had only one child, Bernard (always referred to by Mrs. Bell as "Son"). He was six years old when they came to St. Stephen's in 1919. Recollections as to his abilities differ, ranging all the way from "the most brilliant boy I have ever known" to "very dumb." As a small child he sometimes went to the Red Hook schools and in other years was tutored at home. When he was 12 he went to a school in Cornwall, Connecticut, but did not like it. He was then entered in Choate School where he was enrolled for five years off and on, with periods out for illness variously diagnosed as discouragement, rheumatism, sugar in the urine, or a heart problem. The family doctor counselled avoidance of competitive sports at Choate, uninterrupted sleep, a room on the first floor, and a regulated diet. Next, he was home for a year, studying under private tutors (St. Stephen's faculty members). Then on December 2, 1930, at age 17, he died very suddenly of meningitis.

As is often the case with an only child, Bernard did not have the normal involvement in the world of children, and was removed from its demands and requirements, with their abrasive and maturing effects. At the same time, adult interests and motivations, which he did not have, were often imputed to him.

Dr. Bell had almost unlimited hopes and aspirations for his son. Almost certainly they were beyond Bernard's ability to fulfill, and in his more practical moments the father's good sense must have told him so. But Dr. Bell was a proud and brilliant man, and a large share of his heart's love centered on this boy.

"I have your report for the period ending November 29th 1929," he wrote to Bernard at Choate.

"Your marks, except in Geography, are not very good but I am inclined to think they are reasonably satisfactory with the exception of the mark in Arithmetic. A note from Mr. George St. John and also one from Mr. Shrides agree in saying that this particular mark in Arithmetic is wholly due to carelessness in details. In your examination

you showed a good knowledge of the rules and principles of Arithmetic, according to Mr. Shrides, but ruined your paper by sheer carelessness in multiplication and division. As you possibly understand, the purpose of studying Arithmetic is to make you accurate and careful about details. You are like me in this, you see large general principles easily but are impatient in application to details. I have always been so. When I was a boy I was more so than you are. The study of Arithmetic and, later on, the study of Algebra and Geometry did more to break me of this carelessness and inattention to small things than all my other studies put together. Force yourself to attend to the most minute detail in your Arithmetic. When you have finished a multiplication write the figure down and do them over again to be *sure* that you are right!

"I am glad, on the whole, to know that your failure in Arithmetic is not due to lack of ability to understand what it is about. I am glad to know that you have a good head. A person can learn to attend to details but a 'dumbbell' can never learn to think. I am glad to know that you *can* think. We are looking forward to having you back home next week."<sup>10</sup>

It is a bitter coincidence that John Bard and B. I. Bell, men so different in temperament and separated by decades in time, though serving the same college and worshipping in the same Chapel, should both have been heartbroken by the death of a young son, — "your Son" as God said to Abraham, "your only one, whom thou lovest."

Those who knew B. I. Bell intimately always said that the student strike of 1926 and the death of his son in 1930 were the two blows from which he never recovered.

Three months after Bernard's death, Bell wrote to his friend Julian Park:

"Bernard died very suddenly, — of meningitis — carried from great good health to death in four days. He had been doing very brilliant work in languages and mathematics, and had developed both an extraordinary mental capacity and an understanding compassion toward people, promising a future of usefulness. Medicine was his objective.

"It seemed to me at first that I could not bear his going. He was more than a son to me. He was an understanding friend such as I shall not have again. But gradually, by God's grace, — and I think too by Bernard's own prayers for me, I have come no longer to grieve. His life judged by quality rather than quantity of achievement, was a true success, and for what more can a parent ask? And is there much difference in the light of eternity between living seventeen years and living seventy? I am quite sure that nothing in God's economy is wasted, and I know therefore that his great abilities are being put to use in ways that are more fruitful than are possible for us who labor here, hampered and thwarted on every side. I cannot grieve that the boy is dead, — but I am most horribly lonely at times, for all that."

And then we get a glimpse of Bell's life, stretched between the pressures of administration and the wide-ranging demands of his writing and speaking, for the letter continues:

"I am sorry that I could not go to the meeting in Indianapolis. Things were too precarious just then for me to leave. Temporarily at least they are less critical, and I have been able to get away for a week to preach and lecture under the auspices of the University of Chicago. I am preaching on Sunday, Wednesday and Sunday in the

Chapel; addressing the Sunday evening Club in Orchestra Hall tomorrow night on the 'Degradation of Patriotism'; addressing three groups of theological students; and lecturing on 'Science, Humanism and Religion', on the William Vaughn Moody Foundation."<sup>11</sup>

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In the late 1920's, especially, St. Stephen's had a very special quality and flavor. A small college seemed apart from the world in those days, living its own life, unto itself. Wars were over for awhile, and for most students the career battle was some ways ahead yet, and for a while one could completely immerse oneself in college.

St. Stephen's students wore gowns to class and marched down the hill to Chapel each afternoon. Vistas of Hegeman, Albee, and Wardens looked like Oxford and one could almost imagine oneself there. "On the Oxford plan" was one of B. I. Bell's favorite phrases with which to describe the College. As at Oxford, one was referred to as "reading for honors."

Some students caught fire from their college courses and went on to new intellectual experiences and distinguished careers; others, as in all colleges, just drifted along and stayed out of trouble — but even these respecting learning and study, and they respected the things the College stood for.

A student of the late 1920's writes:

"I think what B. I. Bell gave us most of all was a sense of elitism. It is true that a lot of foolishness was going on as part of the twenties, but it is also true that a lot of serious work was being done by students . . . He took great pleasure in excellence for its own sake, — and that included his going to all the sports activities, — which were also attended by most of the teachers, — just to make sure that his boys were doing the job right . . . I would say that 90% of us went on to graduate studies upon graduation. He expected that of us."<sup>12</sup>

In an unpublished manuscript account of her childhood days on campus,<sup>13</sup> a faculty daughter of those years has left us a moving picture of campus life in the late 1920's: the rhythm of daily Chapel services; the inquisitive faculty children making their way into every nook and cranny of the campus, probing everywhere, missing nothing, making friends with the students, sometimes even fancying themselves in love with them. Life at St. Stephen's was an unforgettable procession of days and months and years, marked by births and deaths, tragedies and quiet little joys. Some years there was school for faculty children on campus, "and we used to pick up daddy's mail during recess," our narrator tells us. "The only person who shared the C box with us was Dr. C —, who never seemed to get anything but bills. We were thankful our name didn't begin with F. Dr. F —, it was rumored, read all the other F's post cards, and told the other F's what was in their mail before they had a chance to find out themselves."

And into this idyllic world of childhood, some of the real world's grief and pain intruded from time to time, in adult conversations overheard, or in tragedies too overwhelming to be hidden.

There was a Russian cleaning woman, Julia, who helped the ladies of Faculty Circle. She lived her life for her two sons, ages 10 and 12. One was killed when his sled, from which he had rolled off, careened back from the snow bank and the runner pierced his jugular vein, and he was dead by the time they got him into the house.

And the other son, at age 14, became enamored of an older girl at high school, and if he wanted her to be his girl he must buy her the fur coat she saw in a catalog. And how would he get \$200? The boy went without lunches all fall, and told his parents he needed much more money for books than he did; and also got money on his father's account from the Tivoli garage. He bought Sally the coat. Just before New Year's when he knew a huge bill was coming from the garage, and he could not face his father, he lay down on his bed and took poison. His mother went to call him and as soon as she touched his foot she knew that he was dead.

And there was the village girl who claimed to be pregnant and blamed it on the most popular student in College, because he had rich parents, but his friends all gathered round, and four of them were ready to swear that each of them also had been with her that night. And then it turned out she wasn't pregnant at all! "But we children had all gotten a dark view of the facts of life! . . . Faculty bridge parties began when the children were out of sight. John and I would listen from our beds."

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Bell's last three years at St. Stephen's were a race between the tightening grip of the great depression, which threatened to strangle the College, and its growing fame and educational quality, which might save its life. Bell felt that he had put together a distinctive and eminent little institution, and that its friends (especially those of the Episcopal Church) should now come forward with the support the College deserved.

Dr. Butler tried to help. (After all, his endorsements had usually produced support before for the causes he had backed, and it took him some time to realize that this depression was different.) "It would in my judgment be little short of calamitous" Dr. Butler wrote to Bishop Manning, "to sentence him [Dr. Bell] with his great abilities as a leader and teacher of men, to become a mere beggar for the money which St. Stephen's Collge needs to enable it to carry on."<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Dr. and Mrs. Butler were consistently

generous donors to the College from their personal funds.

Year after year in May, Bell went to the annual Convention of the Episcopal Diocese of New York, to tell of St. Stephen's growing academic recognition and to plead for support. But the depression was drying up both individual gifts and Church budgets. Year after year in the great Gothic halls of the Cathedral complex, we hear Bell's voice crying in the wilderness:

Money!

Money!

Money!

In 1927:

"We set about the almost impossible task of rehabilitation. It has taken 8 years . . . But, gentlemen, next to none of this rehabilitation has been due to the support of the Episcopal Church. During the eight years — indeed during our whole existence, — not one penny has been contributed by the Diocese of New York, or by the Province of New York and New Jersey . . . Nor has the National Council been much more generous. For the past few years it has contributed \$10,000 . . . We have saved St. Stephen's for the Church and have thereby saved the Church's reputation in the educational world. We have done it without the Church's assistance. This college has furnished more men for the ministry during the 68 years of its existence than any other college in America . . . What we need now is some enthusiasm, some cooperation! We wish money from the people who have money. We plead for such an adjustment of values in this Diocese as will make its only general institution for education more than a thing to be taken care of when everything else has been done. We must have two million dollars for the endowment and complete development of the College. . . ."

In 1928:

"This college must be supported by the Church. It is a college in poverty."

In 1929:

"The College is not asking for \$1,500,000 because it would like to have it, but because it must have it or be put to the shame of confessing to Columbia University and the City of New York that it has been offered one of the greatest opportunities in American undergraduate education, and has been unwilling to assume the responsibility.

"Until the \$1,500,000 of endowment can be raised, the College is in financial difficulties so stringent as to create positive alarm.

"We had to borrow on a note payable Oct. 15, \$30,000. In addition we shall have to raise \$50,000 to cover next year's operating deficit."

In 1930:

" . . . Except for Vincent Astor and a few thousand dollars which the trustees — none of them rich men — have collected to pay current expenses, there has been no money received this year from anybody in the Diocese of New York. How discouraging this has been to the faculty of St. Stephen's College who still are receiving \$1,000 to \$5,000 less than their colleagues in other parts of the University! . . . How discouraging to me as the warden of the College! I have felt it more fitting bluntly to state these facts. There is no use pretending that everything is beautiful and happy and glorious

in the Episcopal Church when it is not. Specifically, the College still needs two million dollars."

In 1932:

"The financial non-support of the College by Church people continues to be one of the extraordinary failures of this Diocese. Educators are quite unable to understand it . . ."<sup>14</sup>

In these dark days, the College turned to what may have been its most desperate ploy. A telegram went out over the signature of Franklin D. Roosevelt, then Governor of New York and soon to be President of the United States (and a St. Stephen's Trustee [1929-1933]) to ten of the most famous names in America: Thomas W. Lamont, Dwight W. Morrow, George Eastman, Harry H. Flagler, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Frederick W. Vanderbilt, Maunsell Crosby, Ogden Mills, and Miss Madeline Dinsmore.

"St. Stephen's College must close its doors to great detriment of community unless immediate funds can be secured. It has depended in the past largely on annual contributions which have almost ceased because of hard times. College has property worth a million and a half but non-negotiable because given in trust for college purposes. Its obligations are less than 100 thousand dollars, yet literally it has not funds to pay its professors through this winter. To prevent its closing and its distinguished scholars being thrown into ranks of unemployed. . . I urge you to see our Warden, Dr. B. I. Bell or our President, Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler . . ."<sup>15</sup>

There is no record of any response to this appeal.

The winter of 1932-33 was the year of the bank holiday, the very bottom of the depression. The College was running a deficit at the rate of \$50,000 per year, with barely 100 students. The University had agreed to underwrite half the deficit, if the College could raise the other half. The College managed to get together barely \$10,000.

"Dr. Bell wrote to President Butler: "I am my dear Mr. President, very tired . . ."<sup>15A</sup>

"The Trustees felt there was a real question as to whether plans could or should be made for the continuance of the College."<sup>16</sup>

At their February meeting, the trustees asked President Butler to appoint a committee of nine, to consider the present educational and financial problems of the College, with a view as to its future.

The committee consisted of three St. Stephen's trustees, three faculty members (Bell, Flournoy, and Phelan) and three Columbia faculty (among them Donald Tewksbury).

The committee prepared a budget for a considerably curtailed operation which would incur a deficit of only \$17,000 — with Dr. Bell alone dissenting.

At the board meeting, Dr. Bell said he felt that under the prevailing economic conditions the College could not be continued on a proper basis,

and recommended that it be closed. In the circumstances that the College should be continued, he stated that he should not be considered for reappointment. The trustees, by formal resolution, accepted this decision on his part.<sup>17</sup>

Having thus determined that continuance meant continuance without Bell, the trustees voted that St. Stephen's College could and should be continued, with an estimated enrollment of 90 students and a faculty of seventeen, and with economies in operating the physical plant. "... all members of the faculty . . . voluntarily accepted a very considerable reduction in their compensation."<sup>18</sup>

In accordance with his expressed desire, Dr. Bell was immediately relieved of responsibility for the next year's admissions, including scholarships and student financial arrangements, and these were placed in the hands of a special committee consisting of Professors Phelan, Davidson, and Voorhees. President Butler and Bishop Manning were requested to help in finding a suitable warden for the College.<sup>19</sup>

A few weeks later, Dr. Bell went down to the Cathedral and made his last report to the New York Diocesan Convention:

"I have resigned the wardenship because of these financial difficulties. . . . It appeared to me to be the wisest course to close the College. . . . The board thought it better to reject my proposal. . . . I was obliged to dis sever my relationship with the institution. The College as it is this year is a joy to behold. The methods we have used . . . have been expensive. . . but they have worked. It is delightful to see our hopes come to full flower, even if the frost must blight them over soon.

"As for myself, I hope to continue my labors on behalf of Jesus Christ, in touch with college and university administrators, teachers and students on a wider scale than heretofore, working at the greatest task of the moment. . . which is such presentation of the truth, beauty and goodness of God as may dissolve that disbelief of man in himself and in his high and happy destiny, which today is paralyzing youth, to youth's own sorrow and to the hindrance of the race."

And then these words to the convention which for so many years had been unresponsive to his pleas, and to Bishop Manning with whom he had so often been at odds:

"... In conclusion let me thank this convention and you, Right Reverend Father for the patience with which you have listened year after year to these reports of mine. I have been urgent, almost insulting, a general nuisance; and you have known that I was consumed with a righteous zeal, and have welcomed all the things that I said. St. Stephen's has always been to me more than a college; it has been a symbol of the union of faith and knowledge, a sign of revolt against superficialities in religion and education, a symbol of the fire and compassion of God, whereby he can consume and remake youth. Something of this you have understood. I ask your prayers for the College, and most humbly for myself.

Respectfully submitted  
Bernard I. Bell, Warden."

It would not be quite correct to leave the impression that finances alone, overwhelming though they were, were responsible for Bell's resignation. His many absences from campus, his arrogance when there, the lingering bitterness following the strike, faculty feuds, gossip which swirled around the President's House, empty now of child and often of husband, an unsympathetic board and chairman — all these were factors at the end. And as in a Shakespearian tragedy, the seeds of greatness helped to produce the fall.

On May 26, 1933, President Butler appointed Donald Tewksbury Acting Dean of St. Stephen's College. Four days later Dr. Tewksbury wrote to Dr. Bell, and they discussed arrangements for one's moving out and the other moving into the President's House, the interim care of the grounds, and of Dr. Bell's dog. Both men agreed that it was "of the utmost importance. . . to maintain a satisfactory student body."<sup>20</sup>

Commencement day was June 14. When the exercises were over, Dr. Bell wrote in the Chapel record book:

"Laus Deo. Here ends the 73rd year of the College.  
Laus Deo!"

There has long been a legend, among those who were in the College at that time, that at his departure B. I. Bell wrote in the Chapel service book a curse (called in theological language a "Commination") which he called down upon the College for its apostasy. For years no one could be found who had actually seen the Commination or could produce the book in which it was written. In the course of moving the Bardiana collection to the New Kellogg Library, the book has been found, and for the first time it is possible to give an accurate record of this incident.

Thursday, June 29, 1933, Dr. Bell walked down the hill for the last time to officiate at the College Chapel. Counting himself, there were seven present at the service. When it was over he dipped his pen into the bottle of purple ink which he habitually used, and wrote back and forth clear across the page in the Chapel record book:

"With this service I, Bernard Iddings Bell, completed my fourteen years as Warden of this College, convinced that it is the will of God that I go elsewhere in God's kingdom and persuaded that it is probably not the will of God that the College survive; grateful for many masses offered at this Altar and for visions of God's mercy and pity granted me here; commending to Him and to Our Lady my son who here made his first communion and whose body was buried from this Church; and with the giving of the College and all who here have lived and worked into the hands of SS. Peter and Paul, our Holy Lady Mary, St. Stephen the patron; the Holy Innocents, St. Edward the Confessor (my own patron) — the little Brother Francis, that they may ever pray as I do, a poor priest, for this College to the most Blessed Trinity. Pax!

— Bernard Iddings Bell."

It is immediately plain that legend had dealt unfairly with Dr. Bell in this matter, for clearly this is no curse, but rather a thanksgiving for spiritual privileges enjoyed at the Chapel Altar, and a commending of the College to the prayers of the saints.

When he had finished writing, he pushed the ink bottle back on the shelf. It caught against the edge of the service book and overturned and the bright purple ink soaked back into the leaves for 15 pages.

The stains are still there to be seen in the Chapel service book, in the Bardiana room in the Library.

Leaving St. Stephen's, Dr. Bell went to Providence, where he served as Canon of St. John's Cathedral for 16 years. He then moved to Chicago where he was the representative of the Episcopal Church at the University of Chicago — "a Baptist institution where Jewish professors teach Catholic doctrines to atheist students."<sup>21</sup> In the 1940's he edited a Sunday School course called the Saint James Lessons, — an assignment arranged for him by his former student, Horace Donegan, later Bishop of New York.

B. I. Bell never set foot on the campus proper again. But he did visit his son's grave in the cemetery. A former administrative officer of the College has written:

"I can remember seeing B. I. Bell park his car up on the edge of the highway (9-G) . . . and I have watched him as he walked across the field to the cemetery. He was always dressed in his black clericals, and he walked as a tired old man would. After about half an hour he would reappear, get into his car and head south again. . . ."<sup>22</sup>

Dr. Bell died in 1958 and was buried beside his son in the College cemetery. Mrs. Bell returned to the campus in 1962 to receive, on Dr. Bell's behalf, a posthumous honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

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With the appointment of Donald Tewksbury as Dean, Columbia assumed a larger role in the affairs of the College. And these years (1933 to 1944) saw more frequent change in the campus leadership of the College, with four Deans (Tewksbury, Mestre, Leigh, and Gray) during the next eleven years.

When Donald Tewksbury moved to Annandale in August of 1933, he was 39 years old, the son of Presbyterian missionary parents in China, a graduate of Oberlin College, with a Doctorate from Columbia. He had developed his Doctoral thesis into what is still the definitive treatise on the founding of American colleges and universities before the Civil War. (It was reprinted as recently as 1966.) For the five years before his coming to St. Stephen's he had been assistant professor of education at Teachers' College, Columbia

University, and lecturer on Far-Eastern affairs at Sarah Lawrence College. Having lived much of his life in China, he had Chinese mannerisms and thought patterns. He gave the impression of tucking the ends of his fingers into his sleeves like a mandarin with his kimona, and the students called him "Old Ling Po." They found him hard to understand, and said "he didn't think like a westerner." It was sometimes said that carrying on a conversation with him was like talking with a man through a screen door.

Dr. Tewksbury did not see himself as being at St. Stephen's for a life-long career commitment. He pictured this as sort of a consultancy assignment, — "a place to be put to rights." This is shown by the fact that he did not resign his Columbia position, but took a leave of absence, planning to return there, as indeed he did.

Dr. Tewksbury started off swiftly, with sureness and great good sense, to create a climate of friendliness and openness, and to build up campus morale. Five days after his arrival, the first issue of a campus news sheet appeared, telling of plans and programs being inaugurated, and giving personal news and notes of faculty and staff members.

"The present year" he said, "is a year of transition." And he set right to work. A month after the opening of College in the fall of 1933, St. Stephen's classics requirement was dropped, and compulsory chapel was cut back to three times per week. The following May the name of the College was changed to Bard, after John Bard, its founder. It was said that a religious sounding name hindered the College in its attempts to get grants from the Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations, though it did obtain a \$10,000 grant from Carnegie for the Tewksbury curricular development.

This change of name did not go unremarked by Dr. Bell. A year after his departure from St. Stephen's, he arrived in New York on the liner *Manhattan* from two months of ecclesiastical study in England. He showed his usual pungency with the reporters: "I see that my old college has changed its name," Dr. Bell said, "and has abandoned religion for the fine arts and the Saints for the Bards. . . . If Bishop Manning is satisfied, I see no reason why I should object." In his room at the University Club Dr. Bell had further comment. He said he did not blame the trustees for voting the College's secularization, but added that had he been a trustee himself he would not have so lightly regarded his trust. He presented his usual harsh criticisms of the large universities: "The American universities are content with mediocrity," he said. "If they do turn out a really educated scholarly man, it's an accident. All they believe in is a wide dissemination of utilitarian knowledge."<sup>23</sup>

Dr. Tewksbury was an educational philosopher of surpassing ability. He

devoted his first year at the College to the drafting of a new educational program for the institution.

The *Tewksbury Educational Program for Bard College* of March 1, 1934, is one of the classics in the literature of modern American higher education. Because the College's situation was such that Tewksbury's authority (backed by that of Nicholas Murray Butler) was, to all practical purposes, absolute, the new Educational Program was put into effect immediately and completely. With only minor changes, it determined the shape of the College's educational enterprise for the next thirty years and still probably sets the format of the Bard academic operation to a larger degree than does any other single policy statement.

Written in a clear and almost understated style, and running only to 18 printed pages, the Educational Program is a pioneering piece of work. It drew upon the insights of William James, John Dewey, and William H. Kilpatrick, but it is in no sense an adaptation of any other curricular formularies.

Dean Tewksbury set forth these three principles for the College:

"The student's approach to his college work should be made through the individual abilities, interests and purposes which he has discovered through the years of his previous educational experiences.

"These motivating elements in the life of the individual should be the center around which he should proceed to build his curriculum.

"His college education, following the lines of expanding interest and changing purpose, should culminate in a broad cultural outlook."

"This program," Dr. Tewksbury wrote, "is based on the general thesis that a broad cultural outlook and understanding is a progressive achievement involving in most cases concentration of purpose and interest during the early years of the college course, — rather than an initial acquisition to be gained through the taking of a specified group of 'required subjects' or a series of 'survey courses' covering an encyclopedic range of knowledge, at the beginning of one's college course.

"... Instead of proceeding from generalization to specialization, it is proposed that specialized experience along the lines of one's abilities during the early years of the college course be made the means of approach to general culture.

"Under such a program, the development of the mind of the student would be analogous to the growth of a tree, which roots itself thoroughly in some particular plot of ground, develops in time a trunk of stable and living proportions, and finally reaches out through its branches toward the fulfillment of its life purpose.

"Such an analogy stands in contrast to the usual conception of the college

curriculum as a pyramid covering a wide area at its base and narrowing to a point at its apex. It is apparent that we are employing not merely a mechanical figure, but one which fails to correspond to the laws of mental growth."

(Dr. Tewksbury used to say that if the pyramid analogy were to be used at all, it should be an inverted pyramid!)

Other principles in Tewksbury's Educational Program were (1) full curriculum status for the creative and performing arts. (No longer should the arts be relegated exclusively to the marginal status of extra curricular activities); at the end of the first two years a (2) substantive examination, termed the intermediate challenge, (later called "The Moderation"); and at the end of the four years (3) "a final demonstration" — later termed "The Senior Project." There was to be a (4) mid-winter Field Period from Christmas to Lincoln's birthday, during at least four weeks of which the student should be engaged in an off-campus job, one relevant to his field of concentration, if possible.

Students would normally participate in no more than four two-hour seminars in any one period, — each a two-hour-a-week meeting with ten or twelve students around a table with an instructor.

The plan also envisioned a growing exchange and interrelationship between the College and the University, involving both faculty and students. Dr. Butler was quoted:

"It is my hope and desire that there may be a true interdependence quickly established between the work of St. Stephen's College and that of Columbia University, both parts of one and the same educational system. Time and again it might well happen that a student registered at St. Stephen's would profit by a term or a year spent in New York, and similarly it might easily happen that a student registered in Columbia College would profit by a term a year, or even a longer period spent in the country. Moreover I hope that we can quickly establish an interpenetration, so to speak, between the two undergraduate faculties and that the University can find ways and means to provide for part-time service of a number of its scholars to visit St. Stephen's College from time to time, and to enrich the work by their teaching and their personal contacts."

Less of this sort of contact and exchange took place than was envisioned. Actually most Bard people of the period recall Bard faculty serving on the Columbia University Council, — and not much other interchange or "interpenetration".

It took some time for Tewksbury's Bard and the world at large to determine just what sort of college this was, and where it belonged in the spectrum of new and reordered educational programs of the day. Specifically, was it or was it not a "progressive" college? The word "progressive" in 1934 was

not a loosely applied adjective of general meaning, but a very specific designation. It referred to a school based on the methods of John Dewey and Francis Wayland Parker. There was in the United States a very active and well-organized Progressive Education Association, the magazine of which in every issue printed on the back page of the Table of Contents a statement entitled: "The Principles of Progressive Education." They were:

- (1) freedom to develop naturally;
- (2) interest the motive of all work;
- (3) the teacher a guide, not a taskmaster;
- (4) scientific study of pupil development;
- (5) greater attention to all that affects the child's development;
- (6) cooperation between the school and home to meet the needs of child life;
- (7) progressive school — a leader in educational movements.

And there was a group of colleges that were usually termed by their spokesmen or by the public as "progressive colleges," among them, Bennington, Sarah Lawrence, Antioch, Reed, Rollins, Black Mountain, and one or two others.

Dr. Tewksbury himself did not use the term "progressive" to describe his college. He said that he "drew inspiration from the best he saw in the great English universities." "He preferred not to consign his program to the authority of the progressive movement in this country."<sup>24</sup>

But from the first, the students who came to Tewksbury's Bard saw it as a "progressive college." They suspected that the faculty were less committed to the principles of progressive education than the students were, and felt that they must be constantly vigilant against any attempts on the part of the faculty to weaken or phase out the true progressive education features. By the time Louis Benezet wrote his study of the progressive colleges (1942) Bard was clearly enough in the progressive camp, so that he used Bard, along with Bennington and Sarah Lawrence, for his three case studies of progressive colleges in operation.

In fact, with the coming of the "Bennington men," (Leigh and Gray) in 1939-40, who were genuine "true believers" and from a college professedly so, Bard in its own thinking and in its public image was undeniably a "progressive college". The issue continued to be litigated, however, and as late as 1944 when Bard broke away from Columbia, there was a militant editorial in the *Bardian* signed by Stanley Falk, bitterly castigating Nicholas Murray Butler for not being really committed to the gospel of progressive education. (As a matter of fact, the real veterans of progressive education were them-

selves by this time of the opinion that the movement had pretty much spent its force. Dr. Leigh wrote in 1942: "What was identified as progressive education ended, I think, as a major movement with the war. Its positive contributions will continue, but not, I think, in the forms that flourished from 1910 to 1940, and especially in the period between the wars."<sup>24</sup>

Both Tewksbury and Butler were authoritarians at heart. They sincerely respected the insights of John Dewey and his followers as to the nature of the learning process, but they had little truck with student determination of academic policy or campus governance.

Dr. Sottery, who came in 1929, speaks of telling Dr. Tewksbury: "The faculty won't like some of these changes;" and Tewksbury replying: "They will."

"Of the six dean/presidents under whom I worked at Bard," Professor Hirsch writes, "I have always felt that I learned the most from Tewksbury. . . . He was not an easy man to get along with at times, although I had no personal conflicts with him. He was demanding as far as the work of the library was concerned, and had an enormous wealth of educational ideas, sometimes more than one could carry out. . . ."

The new academic directions of the Tewksbury program necessitated new faculty appointments, including three who were to serve for two or three decades each.

A Bowdoin alumnus with a Columbia doctorate, Artine Artinian came in 1936 and stayed for nearly 30 years, teaching French, serving on national and international learned boards, and carrying on important literary scholarship, especially concerned with Proust, Flaubert, and de Maupassant. Over the years he built up what may be the world's finest collection of de Maupassant materials.

Harvey Fite, who had attended Bard as a student, joined the faculty in 1934 and stayed until his retirement in 1969. After initial work in drama he began to concentrate his energies on sculpture, and developed over the years a strong Bard program in the field. Also, out of an abandoned quarry in Saugerties, he created, by his own physical labor and unaided by either power machinery or other helpers, a vast sculptured arrangement of stone and space, which was both his life interest and his enduring monument; it is known today as "Opus 40."

William Frauenfelder, one of the College's longest-serving and most indefatigable faculty members, also came to Bard in these years as a teacher of languages. A Swiss native, he had received his elementary education in that country, but came to America as a young man of 18, and went to high

school in California. He graduated from Columbia and, following doctoral work there, was brought to Bard in 1934 by Dr. Tewksbury. "Willie," as he was affectionately known, not only taught Spanish, Spanish literature in English translation, and German, but he also extended unlimited hospitality to students, counselled student organizations and groups, and directed the Foreign Student Summer Orientation Program 1951-55. He spent two years at the University of Trieste as a Fulbright professor. In addition to chairing a Bard presidential inauguration committee, he served as director of one of the happiest and most successful special projects in the College's history, the 1957 orientation program for the refugee freedom-fighting students of the Hungarian revolution. Dr. Frauenfelder's personal warmth, and the rapport developed by this program in the neighboring community, made "Willie" one of the College's best known and most popular community figures.

Leaving Bard in 1957, Dr. Frauenfelder did 12 years' duty as director of United States Information and Cultural Centers in Latin America and Europe, and then returned to Bard in 1969 for another round of teaching.

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At the end of his first year, with his Educational Program drafted and going into effect, Dr. Tewksbury had some major assets on his side. In addition to the program, the College was an integral part of one of the world's great universities, — a university which was generally recognized as having made as large a contribution to the profession and philosophy of education as any institution in the world.

But there were also negative factors in the Bard situation. The world was now in the fifth year of the great depression, and no one could then know that the depression would continue for another five years, and be left behind only when rearmament for World War II revived industrial production, or that that war itself would produce a whole other set of dislocations in higher education. And then there were problems peculiar to Bard. Believing that denominationally-based higher education had outlived its time, the College had turned away from its old Church-centered program. But that step was now beginning, understandably, to lessen the interest and support of the old Church constituency, which was having increasing difficulty keeping its own purely religious enterprises financially afloat. For example, Bishop Manning was finding it harder to carry forward the construction of his great Cathedral of St. John the Divine — and he could scarcely be expected to lead in and support Bard's fund-raising efforts in the New York churches!

And then there was the factor of Dr. Tewksbury's own interests and

concerns: history of education and philosophy of education were the two fields of his special knowledge and skill, and he had no great talent or experience in fund-raising or personnel administration or property and business management. He sincerely believed that the excellence and quality of the Bard educational program would attract students and financial support. He did not see himself as the ultimate financially responsible officer. Only with bitter experience did he learn what many other small-college administrators have found to their sorrow: no matter how good the education is, financial support will seldom come unless the president makes the financially crucial decisions, and personally sets forth the appeal, and himself seeks and obtains the important gifts.

At first things went well. Fees were increased and enrollment rose to 138, equalling the peak of the Bell years. Close associations were developed — particularly by the students — with Bennington College, which had had longer experience as a progressive college. The College's cultural resources were enriched in 1934 by the installation of a magnificent new four-manual Austin organ in the Chapel, the gift of the Rev. Dudley Barr of the class of 1913. (Extensive modernization of the organ was also the gift of Mr. Barr in 1955). Bard increased its dormitory capacity by the construction of South Hall in 1936, financed by a loan from Columbia. But the deepening depression was beginning to restrict even Columbia's scope. The great university and its "miraculous" president were beginning to find they could no longer do the things they had done before. Two of its experimental units, New College and Seth Low College, began to be phased out at about this time.

By the spring of 1937, after a little less than four years at Bard, Dr. Tewksbury was exhausted. We continue the story in the terse form in which it appears in the minutes of the Bard board of trustees:

"On April 16th, President Butler called an informal conference . . . consisting of several of the Bard trustees, several of the University trustees . . . Dean Hawkes, Dean Russell, Dean Tewksbury and Mr. Kent. The President stated that the purpose was to discuss the affairs of Bard College, informally, freely and frankly . . . At the request of President Butler, Mr. James also spoke in some detail, reporting developments in the financial and administrative situation during the past few months, and giving budget figures. . . The question was then asked whether Dean Tewksbury expected to continue as Dean of Bard College. The latter then stated, as previously, that he had not come to a definite conclusion about what he himself would do . . . and that he thought that it had been unwise for the Bard trustees to vote to continue the College without a longer-term program and some guarantee of carrying it out. President Butler then suggested that Dean Tewksbury should leave the room temporarily. After some comments about the strain of the past few years upon Dean Tewksbury and his need for a rest, it was unanimously felt . . . that . . . Dean Tewksbury should take a leave of absence for his health, until January 1, 1939.' "

It was agreed that Dean Hawkes of Columbia should serve as acting dean of Bard College, visiting the College every week or two. He volunteered to serve without compensation. Dr. Harold Mestre, who had come to Bard from Yale the year before, was appointed Director of Studies. He was a Columbia and Stanford-trained biophysicist, with public health experience.

To the November 8, 1937 trustees meeting, Dr. Tewksbury sent a letter of resignation, stating that "owing to the present status, especially in regard to the finances of the College," he found it impossible to continue his services as Dean. Dr. Mestre was then appointed acting dean beginning January 1, 1938. Dr. Tewksbury returned to Columbia, serving for a time as Director of New College, an experimental unit for teachers associated with Teachers College. He continued the rest of his career at Columbia, with leaves of absence for various programs, including wartime service in Washington; he was given a Bard honorary doctorate in 1954, and he died in 1958. In 1962, the "New Dorm" was named Tewksbury Hall in his honor.

In many ways Tewksbury and Bell stood for contrasting values in the life of the College, yet in other ways they were strangely close. Both were incisive thinkers, concerned with the ideas and substance of education, and contemptuous of its popular "sideshows." They served consecutive terms in the College's presidency and they died within three months of each other in 1958. Their deaths marked the close of a major segment of the College's life, — just as the deaths of Bard, Fairbairn and Hoffman had of another and far different epoch.

After Dr. Tewksbury's departure, there followed what may well have been the most traumatic 21 months in the College's history. The country was still in the midst of the depression years; the threat of war was growing steadily more grim in Europe, and at the helm of Columbia — and hence at the helm of Bard — was a president 76 years old, with failing eyesight.

With practically no funds in sight, the trustees voted on January 26, 1938, to close the College the coming July 1 — at least for the duration of the current emergency.

Now began frantic meetings both on campus and in New York. Dr. Mestre reported to the faculty that the New York trustee group had practically ceased to function as an organized body. Students, faculty, and community people held various drives and appeals "to save Bard." The local Masonic lodge staged a great benefit "for the cause." Finally it was reported that the campus and the neighboring community between them had raised \$11,000 in cash and \$9,000 in pledges. On March 22 the trustees, apparently impressed by these grass-roots efforts, rescinded their vote to close the

College. The Rhinebeck Gazette reported that word of the decision "was flashed to the campus community immediately. The students built a huge bonfire on the campus, and decorating more than 50 cars with streamers and bunting, met Dean Mestre and party at the Barrytown station and conveyed them, in a gigantic processional to the College!"

Dean Mestre and his colleagues set about doing the best they could to recover from their four months of trauma and to put the College back in working order. December 14 the student newspaper editorialized:

"The one thing needed is for the trustees to guarantee some continuance."

New trustee leadership seemed to be called for, and on March 29, 1939, Bishop Manning was replaced as chairman of the board by James Freeborn, a New York insurance man with a country home in Tivoli.

But the following month, on April 12, 1934, tragedy struck in the form of the drowning of three students<sup>25</sup> in a boating accident on the Hudson. Then, on the second day after the opening of College in the fall, Dean Mestre died of a hemorrhage developing from a violent bronchial cough, after a three day illness, at the age of 55. Professors Edwards, Harry, and Davidson were appointed an emergency committee to administer the College until more permanent arrangements could be made.

At this point, good fortune at last smiled on the little college, in the form of two eminently competent leaders. First, Dr. Butler named Dr. John Leigh, president of Bennington College, as acting dean for the fall semester. Dr. Leigh, on a semester's sabbatical from Bennington, was one of the ablest and most experienced academic administrators in America, especially in the field of small and experimental colleges.

He was a 49-year old native of Nebraska, a summa cum laude graduate of Bowdoin, with a doctorate from Columbia, and teaching experience at Reed and Williams Colleges. From the latter professorship he had been chosen to be the founding president of Bennington College in 1932. That he happened to be available and willing to come on such short notice was a piece of great good fortune for Bard.

Dr. Leigh entered upon the acting deanship of Bard for the fall 1939 semester, planning to make it his main business to prepare an analysis of Bard's total situation, and recommendations for its future.

He knew what to look for, and he worked fast and thoroughly. He delivered his report in the form of three oral presentations throughout the fall to the campus community, and a final 148 page written report to the board of trustees on March 10, 1940. The Leigh report is almost certainly

the most complete, informative, and perceptive analysis of Bard College in all its aspects that has ever been produced.

Bard College, Dr. Leigh said in his report, has two major assets, its educational program and its connection with Columbia University. Its liabilities lie in a vicious circle of factors related to size and costs. In 1940, the year of the Leigh study, there were 99 students and 24 faculty members, for a financially ruinous faculty-student ratio of 4:1. But the College had a student capacity of 160. Even with an average faculty salary of \$2,500 (\$1,500 to \$2,500 below that of comparable institutions), total expenses were outrunning income by some \$40,000 per year. Dr. Leigh estimated that it would take a student enrollment of 200 to 240 to break even. The reason that there were only 99 students was not that the College was rejecting possible students, but that more had not applied: the College was accepting practically all applicants. This did not, however, mean that the students were of poor quality. On the contrary, the average ability of the students was roughly equal to that of comparable colleges. It was true that Bard had a small group of students less able than would be found in other, better colleges — but it also had a group who were more able than would be found in any but the most selective institutions. Bard's enrollment problem lay with the size of its applicant pool, not with the quality of the mix.

Dr. Leigh estimated that if Bard's operations could be stabilized, and a sound institutional life assured for a minimum of four years, its enrollment by the end of that time could be built up to 160, then the maximum capacity.

"If the Bard trustees and Columbia University are convinced," he said, "of the value of a demonstrative unit of qualitative individualized education on the College level for men, then the investment of funds in developing Bard for this purpose is not great; \$160,000 contribution to budgets and for plant improvements during the stabilization period; \$150,000 for modernization and enlarging equipment; \$250,000 to clear away liabilities incurred during the period of trial and error. The total is \$570,000 needed during the next six years or longer.

"Funds totalling three million dollars," Dr. Leigh continued, "more than five times the amount suggested above have been given during the last 15 years, to set up two similar qualitative units for women [presumably Sarah Lawrence and Bennington]. Ten to fifteen million dollars have been spent to create small residential units at Harvard and at Yale. Potentially Bard, as a small residential unit with all the teaching and living advantages and facilities of a great university, is more significant as a demonstration center than Bennington or the Harvard and Yale House plans."

Dr. Leigh not only gave the Bard and Columbia trustees a plan — he gave them a man to carry it out. For he nominated as the next dean of Bard College Charles Harold Gray, vice-chairman of faculty at Bennington College.

Harold Gray was 47 years old, a graduate of the University of Washington in Seattle, and a Rhodes Scholar with a Ph.D. in English from Columbia. He

had taught for four years at Reed, for a year at St. John's, Annapolis; and eight years at Bowdoin. He had been at Bennington since 1933 and had served as acting president there during Dr. Leigh's previous sabbatical in 1935. Mrs. Gray was a Reed graduate and a biologist, and they had two sons attending Reed.

"As a personality," Dr. Hirsch writes "Dr. Gray was my favorite among all my presidents, truly a scholar and gentleman, less happy as an administrator, I admired Dr. Leigh in another way. He was a brilliant administrator from whom I learned a great deal and with whom I maintained friendly contact also in later years when he was at Columbia. Bard was for him of course just a minor adventure in a great career."

The Leigh-Gray succession gave Bard something it desperately needed, a strengthening of morale and a relaxing of tensions. Dr. Leigh's thoughtful analysis of the Bard situation, as he had delivered it in those three evening reports, had deeply impressed the campus community.

"I know of no man in the country," said Dr. Gray, "who could have done so swiftly, so imaginatively and so practically the job . . . which my high school mate, my friend and my counsellor, has done."

"Dr. Leigh worked with the trustees of the College," Dean Gray said, "strengthened their confidence, roused their wavering enthusiasm, and finally enlisted their active support." His next move was to convince Columbia's trustees of the possibilities of the College. This he did "with the hearty and understanding support of Dr. Butler."<sup>26</sup> (Dean Gray believed that Dr. Leigh had obtained a firm commitment from Dr. Butler and the board of trustees for the necessary financial support of the College for the definite period — presumably four to six years — which support was to be jointly contributed to by the trustees of the College and of the University.)

"On the basis of this scheme," concluded Dean Gray, "the students may be assured of a continuing college, which will surely be there when it comes time for them to graduate. The faculty are free once more to consider themselves secure while they teach and work out the educational program."

And so in early 1940 Dean Gray set about his job, estimated to take the four to six years he mentioned, at the end of which time the enrollment, housing capacity, and budget were to be stabilized at the 200 to 250 enrollment level, estimated to be the break-even point. He saw his task as that of building carefully, step-by-step, according to a sound plan. He could not know that there was to be only a year or two in which the plan could be followed before the war would reduce all college planning to chaos; that the next crisis for Bard would result in its disaffiliation from Columbia and its adoption of coeducation.

Gray was greatly aided in his work by one of the most devoted and hard-working trustees in the College's history. Ward Melville had come onto the Bard board in 1930 through "the Columbia connection," (he was a graduate of that university). His father had built a large and very profitable shoe business (Melville Shoe Company, Thom McAn shoes), and the business continued to grow after Ward Melville took over from his father. As a trustee in the 1930's, Melville interested himself actively in the operation of the College, down to and including such details as the level of student fees, the numbering of successive issues of the catalog, the most advantageous time in the year to buy coal, the tendency of a particular horse used in the College riding program to stumble, the reconstruction of the heating system, the use of campus buildings by College personnel for projects of their own interest, — and even the question of Dr. Butler's using or not using his own car for official visits from New York to the Bard campus.

As his interest and involvement in the College's affairs deepened, Melville became more and more a special counsellor on College policy for Dean Gray. Starting with about 20 letters per year between Melville and the Dean, the interchange rose to the level of a letter every other day for long periods. Altogether about 1,000 personal letters went back and forth in this handling of College business, half of the total concentrated in the six-and-a-half years of Harold Gray's leadership.

In addition to his involvement in the policy management of the College, Melville was a very important financial backer of the institution, often "making up the difference" so that some important project could be launched or continued. As late as the 1950's he was making generous annual donations of securities to the College; and in the 1960's was gathering small luncheon groups of affluent New Yorkers to meet with the president on his New York fund-raising trips. Ward Melville was active in the affairs of the College for nearly 50 years, up until his death in 1977.

Dean Gray was an unusual combination of deeply committed liberal, thoroughly trained scholar, and incorruptible idealist. He was in every sense of the word a gentleman. These qualities soon started to show themselves in the improved tone of campus life. Lectures and other gatherings began to evidence a new urbanity; campus governance (much of it in the hand of students, according to good progressive principles) manifested new dignity and integrity. The campus periodical (a combination of news-sheet and literary journal) achieved what was probably its all-time high of careful editing and significant content.

Students in these years were passionately committed to the Bard educational

program. They militantly resisted any changes which they thought were attempts to water it down for expediency's sake. They participated seriously and energetically in the functions of campus governance which were assigned to them. A reading of the campus publications of these years gives evidence of the substantial role and considerable influence of students in shaping the College's basic policy and educational program. In a very real sense, they were playing adult roles as students, and students who subsequently became very prominent as alumni or in their professions came to the fore and developed their abilities in these community leadership roles — for example, Anthony Hecht, William Rueger, Thomas Strongin, Richard Rovere, Alvin Sapinsley, Daniel Ransohoff, James Westbrook, and Stanley Falk.

Student participation in campus governance often meant frequent and contradictory shifts in policy, and it may not have been the most efficient pattern of institutional management, but almost indisputably it was excellent education!

And also at this time a thoughtful review of the kind of college Bard was committed to be, made fraternities and intercollegiate athletics seem out of place, and they were finally phased out. A planned program of building refurbishment began, increasing the amenity of campus living. Joint conferences on college music and on educational policy were held with Bennington, and an Inter-American conference held.

Movement in so many directions at once, and the coming and going of personnel, created some problems as well as solutions. "Bard was a great place to be in 1938-41 when I was there," writes Roger Gay, a former registrar. "There were the old St. Stephen's people, the Tewksbury-Columbia-TCC group, the ones brought in by Mestre, then the faculty triumvirate, the Bennington semester, then Harold Gray. It was a major diplomatic exercise to bring together four couples for dinner and a peaceful evening."<sup>27</sup>

And amidst the signs of renaissance, the fact that the country was at war began also to show a contrary and grimmer set of effects. After Pearl Harbor, students were in general allowed to finish their current college year, but then they either were drafted or began to volunteer. By early 1943 it was obvious that unless the College was assigned a war training program by the next September, it would at that point be nearly bereft of both students and operating funds.

On April 24 board chairman Melville came to a campus meeting in Albee Social and reported the decision of the trustees: that if a war training program were not obtained by the following summer they would have to close the College on September 1st.

But in June, just in time, Bard was assigned a 250-man unit of the Army

Specialized Training Program. (Its strength was subsequently increased to 294.) The campus "went military"; the *Bardian* took on the tone of an army post journal; Albee Social became the "USO Lounge"; and neighborhood women signed up as hostesses and baked cakes "for our soldier boys."

"This was in many ways," Felix Hirsch recalls, "the best year Bard had in my days. The army unit which had been selected for us was an elite group chosen from the brightest among the available capable soldiers, including undergraduate and graduate, also at least one N.Y.U. instructor, but also some student-soldiers who had not been to college but came from many European backgrounds — Greek, Hungarian, Polish, etc. — and with high linguistic abilities. To put a large faculty together for them was a big assignment for Dr. Gray." For these almost 300 students were to gain in less than a year full command of either German or French and wide knowledge of German and French history, government, and economics (the so-called "area program"). The linguistic task in German was in the able hands of Dr. Frauenfelder, in French in those of Dr. Artinian. For the area studies, which presented many problems, Dr. Gray chose Felix Hirsch, who also continued to administer the library, then so busy that it was kept open till midnight. Military director of the whole ASTP program was Lieutenant Colonel Harvey Brown, a very cultured man, energetic but not overbearing. Hirsch received funds to bring in many lecturers and outside speakers, among them Jacques Maritain, Paul Tillich, Hans Simons (later president of the New School for Social Research), — and above all, William Sollmann, a former German minister of the interior and member of the Reichstag, who stayed for a week and was especially popular with the soldiers; he returned as a visiting professor of international relations in 1947-48. Also Hans Rothfels, one of Germany's most famous historians of the era, who had been severely wounded in the first World War, came for a day of lecturing. Rarely before had the College such a galaxy of luminaries gathered on the campus.<sup>27A</sup>

The College took special steps to keep in touch with its students and graduates serving in the armed forces. A mimeographed newsletter was started in February 1943, at first edited by Dan Ransohoff, Tony Hecht, Phil Green, and Dave MacDonald. It carried news of the campus and excerpts from letters of Bard men in service. The heading of each issue read:

TO CENSOR: This is a paper put out every four weeks by the students of Bard College and sent to the boys in the armed forces. It is intended to comply with the President's request that civilians uphold morale by keeping the boys informed of the whereabouts of their friends. Anything that comes through the censor once into the country is repeated only because it has passed through the censor once, so if there is anything that is not in accord with your regulations please let us know at once. We

will make sure that no stations and places outside the country are mentioned, and we will keep all news of a personal nature.

Beginning in June, each issue carried an article from the campus by Dean Gray. From time to time the College's lengthening casualty list appeared. (It was eventually to grow to a total of 16 names, as compared with seven in World War I.) Professors Sturmthal, Artinian, and Frauenfelder appear to have kept up an especially wide and active correspondence with their former students, and letters to them were the source of much of the material in the Newsletter. In April 1946, the title of the little publication was changed to the *Bard News Bulletin* — news of Bardians by Bardians; — and in October 1947 it became a printed publication, devoted to general College news.

In early 1944 Bard was notified that its government program would be phased out at the end of that academic year. The College had been mindful of this possibility for some months, and the administration and trustees had been studying the rather grim alternatives which the College would then face, and exploring the attitudes of Columbia and other involved parties.

The question was a complex one. (Like most major human issues it involved women!)

Admission of women — in other words, coeducation — had long appeared as a solution to Bard's enrollment problem. As far back as 1942 the Bard faculty had adopted a resolution that

... it is the opinion of the faculty that women should be admitted to the College as regular students, and that the board be requested to authorize the administration to make arrangements for the housing and instruction of women students and begin to recruit them at once.<sup>28</sup>

There was a real pressure from young women for places in colleges with the sort of educational program offered by Bard, Bennington, and Sarah Lawrence; and officials of the latter institution had assured Dean Gray that they had so many applicants that a whole second entering class could be constituted from the applicants they had been forced to put on their waiting list.

However Bard could not become coeducational and remain within the structure of Columbia University. There was an agreement between Barnard and Columbia that Barnard should be the only unit in the University system granting degrees to women — and Barnard had steadfastly refused to waive this provision.

In a letter written April 11, 1944, Mr. Melville, chairman of the Bard board, laid the situation before President Butler in these words:

The trustees of Bard College have before them several alternatives:

(1) They may close the College permanently.

- (2) They may sever the affiliation with Columbia University, announce coeducation, and proceed independently with the funds at their disposal.
- (3) They may continue in the University family, either with a suspension for the period of the War, or a weak struggle with 40 male students.

The trustees stated that it was their best estimate that if they were to pursue the third course — to continue as they were for as long as they could last — their funds would be totally exhausted at the end of two years and they would be without resources with which to rebuild the College into an effective educational enterprise after the War. On the other hand, if they were to separate from Columbia, they would have to assume as a debt the \$350,000 cumulative subsidy which Columbia University had advanced to the College in annual loans since 1928.

With all these facts before them, the Bard board made their decision and voted to assume the \$350,000 debt, to end the affiliation with Columbia, and to become a coeducational college.<sup>29</sup> To secure the \$350,000 debt, Columbia took a mortgage on the Bard campus, but in 1948 this claim was put in the form of a reverter which required no payments of principal or interest and which would become operative only if the College property were to cease to be used for educational purposes; finally in 1976 a settlement was made with Columbia which eliminated the reverter and any Columbia claim on the Bard campus.

On May 1, 1944, the following announcement went forth:

Bard College announces that beginning with the Fall term of 1944, women students will be admitted as regular students and as candidates for the Bachelor of Arts degree.

From May 1, 1944, the College will return to its regular status as an independent college, and will withdraw from the affiliation with Columbia University.

Under its own Charter, granted by the legislature of the State of New York in 1860, it will henceforth give its own degrees. Its educational program will from now on be open to both men and women.

And so the College, which had never in its life been bigger than 138 students, and which had always been part of the larger entity of either the Episcopal Church or Columbia University, was for the first time in 84 years completely independent and “on its own.” From 1860 to 1919, half its income had come in the form of annual grants from Church agencies for the education of future clergy. And during B. I. Bell’s 14 years, a small group of wealthy Episcopalians had contributed over \$600,000 for new buildings. But coeducation was to do what none of these others had done: it was to carry the College to a viable size in student capacity and student enrollment.

From the Columbia affiliation, there were to be two priceless legacies:

- (1) the soundly based and highly respected educational program developed by Donald Tewsbury; and
- (2) the visibility, — the almost world-wide visibility — resulting from being for 16 years part of one of the world's greatest universities.

These three — coeducation's larger student base, the educational program, and the greatly increased recognition — were the necessary elements for Bard's future growth and strength.