

The Skidmore School of Arts—1911

By 1911, the Young Women's Industrial Club had attracted so large a clientele that the Regents of the State of New York were persuaded to grant it an educational charter as the Skidmore School of Arts.

Charles Henry Keyes, entering office in 1912, found in Skidmore fertile soil for the shift from secondary to collegiate education. With energy and vision, he rapidly transformed the new school, far exceeding the expectations—or indeed, authorizations—of the Regents. While retaining the practical subjects and the fine and performing arts, he began upgrading them to the collegiate level, and speedily added such academic subjects as biology, chemistry, and educational psychology to the curriculum.

This rapid shift from the secondary to the collegiate level for a while sharply reduced enrollments and for a longer time strained the finances of the ambitious but struggling school. Although well-off by the standards of her day, Lucy's income was insufficient to meet these

financial strains. Lucy's physical resources also were severely taxed in this period. Indeed, she was once judged to be dying from pneumonia, and a prominent medical consultant was summoned from New York for consultation. Of this occasion her nephew, G. Hinman Barrett, who served on the Skidmore Board for four decades, writes in his memoirs:

"I have ... started a mission that I believe God approves of and I am sure that He will give me strength to carry on. So if you will excuse me, I must bid you good afternoon."

"As he entered the room, Mrs. Scribner ... roused herself and said: 'Doctor, it was kind of you to come all the way from New York to see me ... and I know what you are going to tell me. It is that I am not going to live. But with all respect for your profession, I don't believe it. I have ... started

a mission that I believe God approves of and I am sure that He will give me strength to carry on. So if you will excuse me, I must bid you good afternoon.'

"A somewhat puzzled doctor returned to his fellow consultants. 'Well,' he said, 'I've never seen anything quite like it. With a faith like that, she just might recover.' And so she did." ■

Adapted from *Such Growth Bespeaks the Work of Many Hands* by Joseph C. Palamountain Jr., 1976.

