

Personal Reminiscences.

By Curator J. F. Smith.

The story of Kentucky University and of its beginnings with the ^{vestiges} ~~remains~~ of Transylvania University and Bacon College, has been told, ~~and will tell~~. In this procession of ^{dramatic} ~~of more than~~ ^{of} ~~century~~ events, we were of the young men who matriculated as students of Bacon College at Harrodsburg, in the year 1845; six decades ^{of years} gone by. This Institution had then reached its meridian of success, second in influence to none other under the auspices of our Brotherhood; ~~excepting~~ ^{save} Bethany College, to which the presidency and prestige of name of Alexander Campbell gave unquestioned precedence throughout what may be called the renaissance ^{period} of religion in the nineteenth century.

Our ^{comrades} student ^{were} mainly native to the Commonwealth, most numerous by re-enforced by the sons of planters from the Southern States; as we remember them ~~a representative~~ ^{body} of ~~young men of~~ ^{intelligent} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~cautious bearing,~~ ^{of} ~~a type of~~ ^{of} ~~manhood~~ ^{manhood} worthy of the virtuous citizenship from whence they sprang.

The Faculty of Bacon College was made up of men of reputation in their day, well qualified for the work of the respective departments of instruction to which they were severally assigned. James Shannon, of scholarly attainments, of untiring zeal and industry, and of loyal devotion to the cause of education and religion, was our honored president. He was, in physical stature only, a diminutive Irishman, born, reared, educated, and finished, in Ireland. There was not a space for remodeling under any new environment. He was an unterrified Democrat, and intensely Southern, and as sincere in his faith as was Saul in defense of Judaism or of Christianity. We will remember his oral debate of days, with Dr. John C. Young, president of Centre College, Danville, Ky., affirming that "Slavery is a divinely authorized institution." Some who give audience today, will wonder that the learned minister and scholar, Dr. Shannon, should have affirmed such a proposition. Had they lived in Kentucky six decades of years ago, they would have wondered that the learned minister and scholar, Dr. Young, would have had the temerity to deny the proposition before a representative Kentucky audience.

We need not say that the verdict of the majority was, a victory for Dr. Shannon.

Associated in the Faculty with president Shannon, were Dr. Samuel Hatch, professor of Natural Sciences; George Mathews, professor of Languages, and Henry H. White, professor of Mathematics, — the latter ~~was~~ will be remembered by many present; and whom ~~but~~ to know, was to admire and love. Venerated by the names of all! Had we as students, been as faithful in duty as they were as instructors, it would have been well for us. The good works they did live after them, even more than the fame they so well deserve. All have gained the great majority, and not now from their labors.

On the opposite border of the town of Harrodsburg from the site of Bacon College, was Greenville Institute, presided over by Samuel G. Mullins, as James then in its way, for the education of females, as Hamilton College is in the present day. This Institution was succeeded later, by Daughters' College, made famous under the presidency of John Augustus Williams. The chief aim and ideal of the education of woman in early anti-bellum days, were the attainment of the highest accomplishments for domestic and social life.

In this noble work, the teachers were eminently ^{successful,} as many devoted wives, and mothers and grand-mothers whom we have known, and a few of whom yet remain with us, bear ~~ample~~ evidence.

Those were stirring times. The annexation of Texas, and the threat of war with Mexico, deeply agitated the minds of the people, and formed the issues of contest between the great Whig and Democrat parties. Annexation became an accomplished fact, and war raged in earnest during the college years, 1846 and 47. Vividly do we remember the bright May-day, in 1846, on returning from the college-session at early noon, hearing the shrill martial notes of the fife and the inspiring roll of the drum-beats that echoed through the streets of the town. Hastening on to the public square, we beheld the great crowd gathered around the court-house, eagerly listening to improvised orators making patriotic appeals to ~~the~~ citizens to rally to arms.

The quota for Captain Phil B. Thompson's company was soon made up. Six of our fellow-students, William J. Withers, Robert Baker, ~~George V. Halbert,~~ Thomas ~~Howe,~~ and four others, whom we had learned to love as comrades, left our college ranks, and joined the ranks of soldiers in their country's cause. Of these,

William J. Withers fell in the front of battle, at Buena Vista, near by the spot where Colonel W. R. MeKeel and Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Celay were slain at the head of their regiment. He received a wound through the body, and lay for weeks in the hospital, lingering between life and death. He recovered and returned to us, to serve after as a Curator of Kentucky University, until his decease in Lexington a few years ago. Brave Bob Baker, of Bourbon County, received a fatal wound in the breast, and died upon the same field of battle. The others, after honorable discharges, returned, to become again our worthy fellow-citizens. It is a tribute of mention we owe to their memories.

Bacon College reached the perihelion of decline late in the decade of the 'forties; and in 1850, ended its career of usefulness, passing under the cloud, and closing its doors as our representative school for higher education in Kentucky, for want of adequate support on the part of the great body of fellowship, to whom its fortunes had been committed by its founders. We pause a moment, to enquire into the phenomena of this failure, so hurtful to the interests and prestige of the Christian church for many years. Do we hasten to lay the blame at the doors of our good brethren of Kentucky, and alledge that they were unfaithful to a

great trust? It would be an injustice to do so.

In the darkest days of this eclipse, a waiting Providence found for the Brotherhood the man and the opportunity to inaugurate the revival and reinstatement of the College, destined to ~~grow, and finally to~~ expand, into the purpose and plan of a great University, as the successor of the former simple college of Liberal Arts. John B. Bowman, a graduate of Bacon College, endowed with a splendid manhood, an ample fortune, and a rare gift for the work, entered the field as solicitor, and in two years of successful labor, secured for the endowment fund a total of nearly \$200,000. Including the subscriptions afterwards obtained for the purchase of Ashland and Woodland for the Agricultural and Mechanical College, the full amount thus secured, approximated \$300,000. Just preceding, and during this period, our Brotherhood in Kentucky gave to the Midway Orphan School, the Christian Education Society, and other educational institutions, over \$200,000.

We mention these details in evidence that our Brethren in Kentucky, during the interval of fifteen years from 1850 to 1865, with one-half the member-

ship and wealth of the present day, gave fully half a million for the promotion of educational enterprises. We have witnessed the passing of two generations since. The sons and grandsons of these noble and ~~sanctified~~ ^{worthy} sires, ^{with a few exceptions,} have done comparatively little in the same direction, though the resources for endowments are two-fold greater now than they were fifty years ago. It is not that our Brotherhood are less appreciative and less loyal to the great educational ~~interests~~ trusts committed to them, than were their sires and grand-sires. At no period in the history of the church have the membership shown themselves as responsive and liberal in the works of building and maintaining churches, supporting their ministers, and in contributing to mission work at home and abroad.

This ideal of a University took substantial form as the logical suggestion of the ~~marvelous~~ work of John B. Bowman. In its development, every stage of the movement was marked with the impress of his own strong personality. Yet, it is but just to mention that at every ^{opportunity} ~~formal~~ ~~movement~~, he wisely sought the counsel of that incomparable mentor, John Augustus Williams, in his day one of the most accom-

lished educators, especially of female mind and character, that America has ever produced.

Under the legislative act of January 15, 1858, thirty citizens of Kentucky were named therein as a corporate body, to serve as the first Board of Curators of Kentucky University, as follows: John B. Bowman, James Taylor, John Augustus Williams, Ben C. Allin, A. G. Kyle, A. H. Bowman, John A. Dearborn, D. W. Thompson, A. G. Vivion, Phil B. Thompson, W. A. Cooke, G. D. Runyan, A. G. Talbot, P. B. Mason, Charles J. Worthington, G. W. Givins, James C. Stone, A. G. Herndon, R. C. Graves, William Morton, Joseph Nasson, John Curd, W. W. McKinney, W. L. Williams, John Allen Gano, John J. Rogers, Zachary J. Smith, Robert C. Rice, Theodore S. Bell, and Enoch Campbell.

Of the thirty so named in the charter, twenty-eight have compassed the brief missions of life, have severed for awhile the ties of companionships with loved ones here, and passed to their rewards. It was our good fortune to personally know them, each one, and to serve with them in the first meetings of the Board of Curators; it is with pleasure now, that we bear testimony to the fidelity with they received and cherished the trust committed to their charges. But two of

of these original charter members of forty-seven years ago survive, ~~at this day~~ one of whom, Captain Phil B. Thompson, retired from the Board in the 'sixties, on removal from Harrodsburg. The other continues a curator, the sole representative of the original Body.

The first session of Kentucky University opened auspiciously at Harrodsburg, in September, 1859, under the presidency of that sainted ^{the venerable} man of God, Robert Milligan. But the idea of a University, in its most extended sense had been evolved, and ^{had} taken deep hold upon the minds of many friends. The difficulties of building up a circle of colleges around the central figure of a College of Liberal Arts, providing for higher education in the several learned professions and for the industrial utilities, at Harrodsburg, competing with the great universities of the country, appeared formidable. A more eligible and central site seemed an imperative condition of success. He shared this view of the situation with others.

Becoming a citizen of Lexington in 1860, and brought in touch somewhat with Transylvania University and its officials, the idea of a removal of Kentucky University to Lexington, and the union of the two

interests, took first form and found a first expression, in an interview with the venerable Benjamin Gratz, then president of the Transylvania Board, at his residence, 231, Mill Street, near by the University ^{campus}. The suggestion met with the enthusiastic approval of Mr. Gratz. We will remember his words of endorsement: "This," said he "is an opportunity for Transylvania such as we have long wished and waited for, after years of experiments and failures. Your young Brotherhood is made up of a membership who are wealthy, and strong and aggressive, and who have the spirit of enterprise to accomplish whatever they undertake. If such a consolidation can be effected, I would have hope that the University would again become, what Transylvania was in its earlier career, the leading institution of learning west of the Alleghenies."

A meeting of his Board was at once called by president Gratz, and a resolution adopted giving full power to present the matter for a union of the two institutions, at discretion. With Dr. Winthrop Hopson, then pastor of the Main Street Christian church, and also a Curator, we at once visited Harrisburg, and in a first interview, submitted the question to Curators John B. Bowman and John Augustus Williams. They were

favorably impressed, but would commit themselves no farther than to promise to leave the issue an open one for the Board to decide. The point was now reached, ~~to make public the purpose and policy of the change proposed, that a full preliminary discussion might be had.~~

At a meeting of the Curators soon after, a resolution was ~~formally~~ introduced, favoring acceptance of the overture of the Transylvania Board. As anticipated, the resolution met with earnest protest on the part of those most interested in retaining ^{the site} ~~the institution~~ at Harrodsburg. The question of vested rights was plausibly urged, and intimations of injunction and of obstructive legislation made. It was a stormy session. Whilst a majority admitted the great advantages of change, the Board deemed it unwise to attempt a move so serious, in the face of such adverse conditions. The matter was indefinitely postponed, and lay in abeyance until the destruction of the College Building at Harrodsburg, by fire, in 1864. This calamity, for that town became the opportunity of Lexington. The ~~resolu-~~ ^{was finally consummated,} ~~tion for removal and consolidation with Transylvania~~ ^{was finally effected.} ~~was~~ ^{and} voted with concessions to Mercer County.

~~By a decided majority.~~

The opening of the first session of Kentucky University in Lexington, in 1865, with the College of the Bible and the College of Law grouped with the College of Liberal Arts, to which were soon to be added the ~~College~~ Agricultural and Mechanical College and the Commercial College, was an event of its history. The Institution now assumed something of the dignity and proportions of the ideal of its founder. There was promise of a brilliant future, and patronage and prestige came soon to redeem the promise.

In 1865, a resolution providing for the office of Regent of Kentucky University, was introduced, and adopted by the Board of Curators, conferring unusual powers of control of the varied departments and interests ~~of the Institution~~ upon the person appointed. The measure was opposed by some Curators, on the ground that it would be a questionable precedent to centralize so much power ~~(of control)~~ in the hands of one person. The majority, recognizing the marvellous success which had been wrought out by the genius and energy of John B. Bowman, and having faith in his ability to carry forward the great enterprise he had promoted, voted

for the Regency. They did so, having in view the one person. Upon no other would they have conferred this office of extraordinary powers and distinction. He believed this concession he had justly earned, and well deserved.

The University continued for a few years a career of success. But discontent and dissensions appeared at times on questions of prerogative and policy, which gendred stripes beyond the power of the Board to allay. As interpreted by some, the authority conferred upon the Regency encroached upon the ~~inherent~~ precedent rights of the ~~presiding~~ heads of the several Faculties, and upon ~~the~~ discretionary rights of other officiators of the Institution. The unity of aim and purpose was seriously affected, whilst strife within spread its contagion of disaffection throughout the Brotherhood abroad. One effect of the creation of the office ^{of Regent} ~~of the creation of the office~~ with its almost supreme magisterial powers conferred, was, that, in the discharge of the varied and complex duties assumed, the entire time and energies of that Functionary were employed. No opportunity was given, after 1865, to resume the work of increasing the yet inadequate endowment.

We pass over the interval of thirteen years, from 1865 to 1878, when a majority of the Curators deemed it best for the Institution to abolish the office of Regent, without comment upon the intervening events. This action was not in any spirit of unkindness to Mr. Dorman, or with any purpose or desire to have him sever his first ~~relations~~ official relations with the University, on the part of his long-tried friends in the Board. It was the reverse of this. They were persuaded that the office and functions of the Regency had ceased to be in harmony with the interests of the University, and that the majority of the patronizing Brotherhood were unfriendly to a continuance of the same. It was the desire of these Curator friends that the feeling of friendship and confidence be restored (~~within and abroad~~), that the extraordinary powers vested in the Regency be distributed to the heads of departments, and that Mr. Dorman be left untrammelled to resume his work as fiscal director.

Misfortunes do not often come singly. One reverse does not complete the ordeal of chastening by trials which befalls the experience of measures, as well as of men. A reaction

ary policy was introduced, which in a comparatively brief time, kept the College of Liberal Arts of the sustaining presence of the adjunct Colleges, leaving it almost the solitary figure of the family group which had begun to fulfil the ideal of a University. But the processes of emasculation were destined to find a limit. The foundations of the Institution had been laid too real and substantial, for more than a passing disturbance in the career of its mission. Some valuable time, ^{and some profitable work} may have been lost, for which in return, we have learned some lessons of experience which we could as well have taken for granted before.

One fact stands to the credit side. Kentucky University has preserved an unbroken continuity of sessions, with an open door of opportunity to the public, since the beginning in 1859. Not a year has passed that it has not made record of noble work done in behalf of higher education. It has had its experimentum crucis, and not only survived; but has come forth through a new genesis, chastened in spirit and comely in presence, inspired with faith in its own possibilities to live up to the law of a splendid and worthy destiny.

With happy re-adjustment and harmony in all its appointments, with increasing prosperity and prestige, and again established in the confidence and fellowship of the Brotherhood and the public at large, the future of Kentucky University was never brighter with hope and promise than it is today.

KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

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Copy: Transylvania Records, by Mrs. W. T. Lafferty.

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"This Institution had then reached its meridian of success, second in influence to none other under the auspices of our Brotherhood; save Bethany College, to which the presidency and prestige of name of Alexander Campbell gave unquestioned precedence throughout what may be called the renaissance period of religion in the nineteenth century.

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