

Indiana University Forty Years Ago

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*(Read before the Monroe County Historical Society)**The Early Courses—The Faculty and its Heavy Work—Literary Societies—Chapel Exercises—Old-time Mischief—Estimate of Faculty—Traits of the Old Professors—Elisha Ballantine.*

COMING to take pastoral care of the Christian Church of Bloomington in January, 1865, I enrolled at once as a student in the University classed as a Junior. It was not an unusual thing, in those days, for a student or a professor to fill a pulpit in one of the churches. My ministerial predecessor James H. McCollough was also a student. Doctor T. A. Wylie, at the time professor of Latin and Greek, was the regular minister of the Reformed Presbyterian church which stood where the U. P. church now stands. Professor Elisha Ballantine, when he returned to the University in 1867, preached some for the New School Presbyterian people, and President Cyrus Nutt, who had once been pastor of the Methodist church here and later a Presiding Elder, preached much of the time somewhere on Sundays.

Our present High School building is the same in outward form and nearly the same in internal structure that it was when it stood as the only University building on the campus at the south end of College Avenue. I use the term University, for that was its official designation, but there was little about the institution to differentiate it from the ordinary western college except its small law class of seven Seniors and eight Juniors taught by Professor Bicknell. The smallness of college attendance was partly caused by the war of the rebellion which was then in full career and had drawn away many both actual and prospective students to the Union army.

There were two regular courses each leading to graduation and a degree, the one "classical," with Greek and Latin as chief studies and the goal of A. B., the other "scientific," which required one year less time and was generally supposed to be easier. There were 79 in the four regular classes that year. Adding the 15 law students and it made 94. Summing up preparatory and all, the catalogue of 1865 announced an attendance of 189.

The faculty as shown by the catalogue of 1865 consisted of six members: Rev. Cyrus Nutt, D. D., Professor of Mental, Moral and Political Philosophy; Rev. Theophilus A. Wylie, A. M., Professor of Greek and Latin; Daniel Kirkwood, L. L. D., Professor of Mathematics; Richard Owen, A. M., Professor of Natural Philosophy and Chemistry; George A. Bicknell, L. L. D., Professor of Law; James Woodburn, A. M., Adjunct Professor of Languages and Principal of the Preparatory Department. These six men covered the whole ground of University instruction as then provided for. Doctor Wylie besides teaching the advanced Greek and Latin classes served the institution as librarian. The library, having lost heavily by the fire a few years before (1854), was quite small, consisting of a few hundred volumes (possibly a few thousand) procured since that disaster, the "Derby Donation" and about a thousand volumes loaned to it by Dr. Richard Owen. This diminutive library found plenty of space in the room on the second floor, west wing, which I think Prof. Kirkwood later on used as a recitation room. Dr. Owen, while carrying all the Physics, Physiology, Geology and Chemistry also (since Professor Marquis had lately resigned), taught all the German and French that was called for, and the History, too, and was Secretary of the faculty besides. There was no need of a Registrar as each professor recorded his own grades in a record book with his own hand, and performed any other clerical work that was necessary.

The contrast between *then* and *now* appears most striking when President Bryan lately announces the University in an advertisement thus: "Twenty Departments, co-educational, seventy-one members of the faculty," and the enrollment this year is found to be 1538.

If you wish to be impressed still further with the change, pass through the present admirably equipped chemical department in Wylie hall, then go down to the High School and peer into the little dark basement furnace room at the east end of the building where Dr. Owen taught chemistry. But no doubt many a good scholar got his chemical start there under the teaching of that admirable man.

The catalogue of 1865 mentions three literary societies, but I have no recollection of a third. The two that chiefly occupied

the ground were the *Athenian* and *Philomathean*, the one having a room in the east wing, third floor, the other in the west. There was little difference in the merits of these organizations. Believing as I then did (and do now) that a literary society offers the student an excellent means of culture, I hastened to attend their meetings and soon found myself enrolled as an Athenian. I was greatly surprised on entering the Athenian hall at seeing rows of boots (many of them cow-hide) standing around the room. Some of the owners had put on slippers, others had socks as their only foot wear. I must explain that boots were the regular thing for men in those days. Only women wore shoes. On inquiry I learned that the society had lately bought a fine carpet and as Bloomington walks were bad, they had adopted a protective rule that members should remove their boots on entering the hall and attached a fine of ten cents for non-compliance. It was expected that they would provide themselves slippers and some did so. The state of the atmosphere with a hot stove and a score or two of empty boots and a lot of stocking-footed youngsters sitting around may easily be imagined. Just before adjournment the program provided for the assessment of fines which the president announced and the treasurer recorded unless the house by vote excused the offender. The regular exercises of the society consisted chiefly of essays, declamations, debate, and sometimes of extempore speaking. In this last named, the member would be called out and given a subject after reaching the floor. It was the effect of this practice to teach a young man to invent his material and think on his feet. Finally the critics report bestowed praise or blame (chiefly the latter) upon each performance.

It must be admitted that there was much of boyish crudity about the whole thing, but that was to be expected. Some members would not be prepared and would be fined for failure. Some would take a perfunctory part to avoid the fine. But there was always a goodly number of ambitious men who did their best. The essays, probably, were the weakest part; the debate, perhaps, the strongest. But here too, was a weakness. The program committee would sometimes report for debate one of those comparative old questions (peurile to begin with and already worn threadbare) such as "Resolved (every proposition for debate had

to begin with a 'resolve'), "That Columbus was a greater man than Washington"—in debating which the great discoverer would be praised and the first president belittled by the affirmative and vice versa as to the negative—or again "Resolved, That the Indians have been treated worse than the Negroes," or still again, "Resolved, That the pen is mightier than the sword." I remember ridiculing such questions and may have partially succeeded in getting them discarded.

The miscellaneous debate and contention over parliamentary rules and over the excusing or remitting of fines would often hang on so long that the janitor, acting under instructions, would come up at midnight and put out the lights, turn out the society, and lock the door.

The fraternities were few in number and made but a comparatively small showing in those days. I think the Betas, the Phi Deltas and the Sigma Chis were all that were in existence. These had been running for a few years. Their great aim, so far as an outsider could see, was to secure honors for their members. This they strove to do through the literary societies of which they were members the same as "The Barbs." They would have their candidates for "Twenty-Second-of-February Orator" and "Spring Speakers" and for the society "Valedictory Exercises" just before commencement. "The Spring Speakers" were the orators at the annual literary society exhibition. For these honors the frats combined and contended often with success since they, though in the minority, were well organized. Sometimes they were beaten when the Barbs had a strong leader. I think the fraternities had literary exercises of their own the evening before the meeting of the regular literary society and drilled themselves in debate to enable them to better meet their opponents next evening. They surely had more literary ambition than the frats have to-day.

An idea of the chapel exercises on both week days and Sundays will best be obtained from the catalogue of 1865. Under the head of "Religious Services," you read:

- (1). The duties of each day, during term time, commence with religious services which all are required to attend.
- (2). Every Sabbath at 3 o'clock p. m. a lecture on some

moral or religious subject is delivered in the University chapel, and it is expected that all the students will attend. It is also recommended by the faculty that the student attend some other place of public worship on Sabbath morning according to the direction or preference of his parents or guardian.

(3). At all chapel exercises students are expected to be in their seats when the bell stops tolling. As this rule of chapel attendance did not seem to be strictly in accord with the theory of our State and country—no State religion and no compulsion as to attending its ministrations—an exception was made in the case of those students who themselves or whose parents were opposed to religious exercises. These were granted perpetual non-attendance. Perhaps there were always a few such, not many.

I think that mischief was more common forty years ago than now. It would be idle to attempt to mention the various forms of trickery by which the restless student amused himself and annoyed the authorities of college and town. If there has been a change for the better, how has it been brought about? The general growth of the college away from crude and boyish conditions, and its development into a higher University life has been, we may say, the chief general cause. The coming of the young ladies has made a great change. It has developed the social element—a thing that may easily be carried too far if it has not already been so—and has naturally tended to greater polish of manners and refinement, drawing the young men away from the ruder and more outlandish sports, and has brought them more and more to the social reception, the dance, and the banquet. In some respects this appears to be a good thing, in some an evil. Can you eliminate the evil and retain the good?

But perhaps the chief cause has been the rise of college athletics and the athletic spirit. This has given the young men (yes, and the young ladies too) a new ambition for physical development—surely a great desideratum. It has largely stopped the unhealthy bending over books for eighteen hours of the twenty-four, as Tilghman H. Mallow did who, though he won high scholarship, destroyed his own life in so doing. Furthermore vigorous young men have mostly ceased to plot some base trick, and are filled with an eager desire to outclass and overcome their opponents at home and their rivals abroad in physical force and

skill. They talk it at table and in their rooms, and they yell it in chapel and on Jordan field and make it one of the chief things in University life. This also may be overdone.

As I come to speak of the faculty, I must think of them first as my teachers and then as my associates.

I took logic and mental philosophy with Dr. Nutt, Greek and Latin with Dr. Wylie, and physiology and history with Dr. Owen. I found President Nutt a kind and fatherly man. He received students in a friendly manner and always proved himself a friend and did everything for them that he could. He had a good memory and was a fair teacher.

I found Dr. Richard Owen an enthusiastic teacher of science. He had wall charts nearly covering the sides of his recitation room presenting to the eye the great geological formations and periods and the classification of the animal and vegetable kingdoms. No student of his will ever forget with what enthusiasm he would start from his desk and with long pointer in hand pass rapidly round the room and review his class upon the outlines—the Stratified Rocks and Unstratified Rocks; the terms, Mesozoic, Paleozoic and Azoic; the classification of mammals, birds, reptiles and fishes; the vertebrates, articulates, mollusks and radiates. The names of great scientists were often on his lips—Cuvier, Linnaeus, Audubon and the rest and, later, Darwin, Huxley, Tyndall and others, busts of whom he placed in the new building that was afterward built and burned. If it is a part of a teacher's business to force idle and indifferent students to learn, willing or unwilling, you would not class Professor Owen as an ideal or even a good teacher. He was too unsuspicious for that. It was his custom to call the members of the class alphabetically for recitation and if he was half down the roll one day (and that was frequently the case) he would begin the next day at the same point and go on in order to the end; so that the shirking student, knowing what to count on, made his calculations and omitted preparations for the day that he did not expect to be called out. The doctor was a most charming and instructive talker upon any subject that had come under his wide observation. On that account students often asked questions (some did it, doubtless to consume time) in answering which he was occasionally led far from the topic in hand.

But in most cases, the ideas, the information and real science acquired by the digression was of more value than the regular book lesson of the day.

My own experience as a student under Dr. Theophilus Wylie in Latin and Greek confirms what has so often been said as to the versatility of his scholarship. He seemed perfectly at home in the classics, as if they had been his life-long specialty; but when Professor Ballantine returned to the University in 1867 as professor of Greek and Prof. Cyrus M. Dodd was elected professor of Latin, Dr. Wylie took the chair of Natural Philosophy (or Physics as now named). At his entrance into the faculty in 1837 his chair was called Natural Philosophy and Chemistry.

But all the later years of his teaching were spent in the chair of Astronomy. Professor Kirkwood never, so far as I remember, taught a class in that science, in which he had a world-wide reputation. But later on, in the seventies, when Saturday morning lectures became the order, Professor Kirkwood gave the students lectures on comets, meteors, etc., which were highly appreciated. A student who should have met Doctor Wylie on the street in those days—a man of small stature and weak voice and half-diffident, unworldly manner certainly far from self-confidence—would hardly have been able rightly to estimate him. In order to do so, he would need to visit him in his rare old home and see him in the midst of his most interesting family and accept their generous hospitality. He would thus see him surrounded by every indication of old time learning and refinement such as few have enjoyed. He would see him in the midst of his books, his pictures, his ancestral portraits and paintings and mementos of other times and scenes. Only thus would he realize his hereditary touch with scholars, divines and great missionaries and the noble forces leading to the world's advancement.

On the death of Professor James Woodburn September 8, 1865, I was chosen to fill his place. The salary of the position was \$800. The regular professors, Dr. Wylie, Dr. Owen and Dr. Kirkwood had \$1100, President Nutt (I think) \$1400 or \$1500. If any one wonders at the smallness of these salaries, let him remember that the fixed income of the University was only about \$8,000, that the first professors, Baynard R. Hall and John M. Harney received only \$250 per year and that our common country

school teachers in the forties received only about ten to fifteen dollars a month for three months school, lady teachers often getting but \$1 per week.

The examinations held by the faculty (as far as I remember) were entirely oral and were not very rigid. In language it would be required to translate some selection from an author and answer pertinent questions in parsing and construction. Visiting members of the faculty would be invited to quiz the class to test their scholarship. On subjects which would admit of it, numbered topics would be made out to be drawn by lot from the professor's hat or hand. The student, when his number was called, responded and went to talking on his topic. It was a pleasant way to examine and be examined but it readily lent itself to the cheating tendency as students sitting close together could easily swap topics in the hope of getting one less difficult than the one they had drawn. No professor was more easy and yielding than Professor Kirkwood. I call to mind his report (probably made just before commencement of 1866) of a student who had been away in the war. He said: "I asked him two questions; he couldn't answer either of them. I didn't ask him any more—I knew he couldn't answer." But when the decision finally came as to placing his name on the list of Seniors, the indulgent professor voted for his graduation—and he was passed.

In June 1868 I was chosen Professor of Latin and Greek in Hiram College (President Garfield's old institution) where I had been a student some years before. Returning to Indiana University as professor of Latin in September 1870 I found quite a change had taken place in college—the salaries had been increased and new and able men were being added to the faculty. Professor Elisha Ballantine was now (after a four years temporary absence) in the chair of Greek since 1867. Professor George W. Hoss, who had lately been Superintendent of Public Instruction, was now since 1868 the Professor of English Literature. Judge B. E. Rhoads was Professor of Law and Colonel James Thompson, lately from the Army, had just been elected to the chair of Military Science and Civil Engineering; and a little later (November 1870) Herman B. Boisen became Professor of Modern Languages. There was also young Scot Butler, later President of Butler

College, who was doing preparatory teaching with the sub-freshman class. His work lasted through the year 1870-'71.

The new men brought in a tide of new life. Being usually younger they were more aggressive and full of plans for reconstructing and improving old conditions. Some men have a natural liking and ability for business administration. Such were Professor Hoss, Colonel Thompson, Judge Rhoads, Professor Boisen and Scot Butler. Dr. Wylie and Professor Kirkwood (the latter was seldom called Doctor then) now took but little part in Faculty discussions, though Professor Ballantine and Dr. Owen held their own. Dr. Wylie often sat through the faculty meeting with only an occasional remark. But he would have a pencil and paper in hand with which he would seem to be scribbling in an absent-minded way. Look over his shoulder, if it will not be thought impolite. Why, he has drawn a picture, perhaps a human face, with the hand of an artist. How often have I seen him sit down with a pamphlet or catalogue and cover it over with such sketches. He seemed to do this work almost unconsciously. I think he could have drawn a good group picture of the whole faculty at one sitting. Professor Kirkwood was a good listener as he sat with his cane in hand supporting his arm. He said but little, but occasionally we heard a bit of grave humor from him. Once when we were talking of our hotel accommodations the Professor told a little experience: "A man on the train," said he "asked me about Bloomington hotels, I told him we had two hotels in Bloomington—whichever one he went to he would wish he had gone to the other."

Professor Kirkwood was the main reliance in moving an adjournment. So much was this the case that when some other member thought to do so he, perhaps, would begin: "Begging Professor Kirkwood's pardon, I move we adjourn."

In those days cases of discipline came before the whole faculty for investigation and decision. Those who were accused of some misdoing and the witnesses were cited to the faculty room. There are doubtless men now in public life—congressmen, judges, doctors, lawyers, etc., who can remember being called before the faculty in some of these troublesome cases. Though sharp questions were fired at the accused, the discipline on the whole

was just and mild. It was too mild, sometimes for our military professor, Colonel Thompson. On one occasion when some offender was let off quite easy against his protest he remarked "Our Catalogue says 'the discipline of the University is *strictly paternal*.' I suggest that we change the wording for the next catalogue and make it read "*strictly maternal*."

ELISHA BALLANTINE.

There is one man whose name has not been sufficiently dwelt upon either in these memories or by the many eulogists who have written of the old faculty. We have had good teachers in the University but Professor Ballantine was among the best; other good scholars we have had but he was among the very best. He was, I think, more on his guard against cheating and deception than was Doctor Owen, Doctor Kirkwood or Doctor Wylie. We have had and now have many men of noble character but none in this respect could be placed higher than Elisha Ballantine. For cultivation of mind, for accuracy of scholarship and ability to instruct; for literary style, for refinement of culture, for deep and true conscientiousness; for purity of heart and simple Christian dignity of manner and of life Professor Ballantine stood on the highest plane. "Mark the perfect man and behold the upright," says the wise old scripture, "for the end of that man is peace."

He had resigned his chair of Greek but after a little had been recalled and had been made President pro tem. to meet an emergency. After the election of President Jordan he continued to teach Greek. On the last day of his life (March 31-1886) he was at College as usual and conducted chapel exercises. Coming in from his garden that afternoon with some felling of distress at the heart he dropped into his easy chair. His faithful daughter came at call and ministered to him. But almost before she was aware he had passed from earth.