

PROFESSOR LARRABEE AND "ROSABOWER."

[The following account of Professor Larrabee, a once well-known educator of Indiana, and the author of a now-forgotten book called "Rosabower," is of special interest because written by Professor Larrabee's son. It originally appeared as a communication to The Indianapolis News.—
EDITOR.]

PROFESSOR LARRABEE went to Greencastle in the spring of 1841. The town was then in an extremely rough condition. There were no streets, but the horse paths and wagon tracks wandered about in the lanes marked out for them wherever there seemed to be the least depth of mud, and the pigs and cows disputed for occupancy with human intruders; no sidewalks except here and there a foot-log laid across a runlet, or a fence rail that some one had thrown down into the mud. The college stood on a ridge between two deep ravines, on a sort of terrace of yellow clay, with no grass or trees around it.

Very few of the people had found time to attend to the higher culture, and manifestations of taste were rare. As a rule, little attention was paid to the decoration of yards, and it was something if they were kept simply neat. A brilliant exception was the beautiful flower garden of Eliza Detrick, on the hill beyond the public spring, and back of General Standiford's house, which stood where Captain Thornburgh afterward built his mansion, now occupied by Mr. Renick. There were other women who had a taste for flowers, as we found out later; among them, Mrs. Jennings, wife of "Squire" John S. Jennings. Professor Larrabee had taken with him a selection of the choice flowers and shrubs of the day, and some of the people wondered what they were good for, seeming unable to understand how a man should want to raise anything he could not eat or feed or make something out of. They soon took a hint, however, from the newcomer's example, and in a year or two the effects of his zeal in tree and flower planting and the decoration of grounds could be observed all over the place. This was, I believe, the beginning of the development of taste in the community, which, going on continually and accel-

erated from time to time by other influences, has made Green-castle the beautiful and homelike city it is.

Professor Larrabee had a deep love for nature, which had grown upon him during his early life on the seashore and afterward amid the dense evergreen forests and among the steep, rocky hills of Maine. Though he became strongly attached to Indiana, he craved the familiar scenes of his native State, and obtained a large assortment of evergreen seedlings, which he cherished with great care till they became large enough to plant out, so that he might reproduce one of the features of a Maine landscape.

On one of his lots, just south of the "Rosabower" house, but a quarter of a mile from where he was living at the time, was a small grove of forest trees, beeches and sugar maples and elms. The ground sloped gently toward the spring and the "branch," and there was a little patch of bottomland. This he filled with tamaracks, while he planted the slope thickly with balsam firs, spruce, pine and hemlock. A dear recollection of his childhood had something to do with this. Becoming possessed when a small boy with an intense religious interest, which proved permanent and controlled his future life, he arranged in a retired grove of fir trees on his grandfather's farm a convenient place to which he resorted every day for worship. The memory of this "bower of prayer" was revived in Rosabower.

A large old beech tree, already beginning to decay, stood in the middle of the bower. Professor Larrabee fixed a place for writing under its shade, and there spent the leisure hours of his summer days and did much of his literary work. Under the edge of the spread of the limbs of this tree, he laid little Emma Rosabel, and thirteen years afterward Mrs. Larrabee; and there, four months later, he was laid himself; all to rest there till they were removed to Forest Hill cemetery. The old beech tree disappeared many years ago.

There was no display of art in Rosabower or in any of Professor Larrabee's grounds. The aim was simply to present nature in a pleasant aspect.

The death of his little daughter was a marked event in Profes-

son Larrabee's history. There had been a May party, with a May queen, at the school, in which the whole town seemed to be interested. The little girl of three and a half years old was very happy in watching the preparations and proceedings, and every one enjoyed her interest in them. Almost immediately after the party she was attacked with a brain fever, from which she died in less than three days. It was my parents' first and only bereavement, and drew to them great and wide sympathy. I do not think either of them ever recovered from their grief over it.

It seems to me that the house at Rosabower has been invested with more romance than it was ever entitled to wear. It was built to satisfy a long-felt want, and the plans were governed by individual, and not very practical, tastes. I do not think any house like it was ever built in England, or in colonial America.

The opening of Mrs. Larrabee's female academy marked an era in the history of education in Indiana. The need of facilities for the instruction of girls was a crying one at the time. I do not know what the Presbyterians and Congregationists had done then for this cause, but they could hardly have had schools of more than local importance. Outside of these, the principal resources for the higher education of girls were the schools of Mrs. Tevis, at Shelbyville, Ky., and the Sisters' school at St. Mary's-of-the-Woods, near Terre Haute. In 1836 the Rev. Smith L. Robinson, a Methodist minister, prepared to start a school for girls at Terre Haute, and applied to my father, then in charge of a seminary in Maine, for a teacher. He sent out a young woman, a student of his, of suitable qualifications. She arrived at Terre Haute in October, ill with measles, and died in less than a week. Less than a month afterward, and before an answer to his letter announcing her death could reach him, Mr. Robinson, too, died, and the projected school was given up.

In almost every letter my father received in relation to his engagement at Asbury University he was urged to bring teachers with him, and particularly teachers for girls. He accordingly took with him a considerable company of teachers, who found employment at various points in the West. Mrs. Larrabee's sister accompanied her to Greencastle and opened a school there.

When she was married and went away another tried friend was brought from the East, and so the supply was kept up. At last, Mrs. Larrabee, urged by the Rev. E. R. Ames, Alfred Harrison, of Indianapolis, and others, took in a few young women as boarders and started the academy. The school grew rapidly, gained a high reputation and was attended by pupils from all parts of the State. It may help to an understanding of what the last clause means when I say that it often in winter took two days to travel from Indianapolis to Greencastle. A few years after this Ft. Wayne Female College was established and the education of Hoosier Methodist girls began its course of regular development. Mrs. Larrabee transferred her school in 1852 to Jeremiah Tingley. Its work was afterward carried on by different teachers, all competent, till young women were admitted to the university, and a special school for them was no longer needed in Greencastle.

The last time I was in Indianapolis one of my old friends said to me that the history of Mrs. Larrabee's school ought to be written out in full. I think so, too; but though I have material of exceeding richness in regard to all the other features of my father's career as an educator, of which I am just now trying to make a good historical use, I have very little about this, and my own recollections of the matter are rather scanty and indefinite. I should be glad if any of my mother's old pupils who may agree with the friend I have spoken of would furnish what they can recollect that might be of use in preparing such a history. If they will direct any communications they may have to make on the subject to me at 45 Willow avenue, Plainfield, N. J., I shall be heartily thankful to them.

W. H. LARRABEE.

Plainfield, N. J., 1901.