

COLLEGE BUILDINGS AND CAMPUS FROM THE BASEBALL FIELD.

A PRAIRIE COLLEGE.

AN EMINENT FRENCHWOMAN'S STUDY OF CO-EDUCATION IN AMERICA.

BY MADAME BLANC (TH. BENTZON) OF THE "REVUE DES DEUX MONDES."

[The author of the following article, Madame Blanc, or, as she is better known to French readers, Th. Bentzon, is one of the ablest and most delightful writers among the literary women of the day in France. For many years her short stories and novels have been regular features of the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

Madame Blanc is even better known in her own country, however, as an authority on contemporary American literature than as a writer of fiction. For years she has been presenting one after another of our writers to the cultivated readers of France, until a great constituency has learned to look to her for information on the literary output of the United States.

The knowledge of our life which she has obtained through our books has been increased by her constant intercourse with Americans travelling in France. She never fails to extend gracious courtesies to literary Americans who seek her in Paris, and she never fails to charm them by her sincere interest in all that concerns our country. Indeed, I never met in Paris a French person who understood our social life so well, or who was so well able to ask intelligent questions about it.

For several years Madame Blanc had cherished the idea of visiting this country, in order to observe for herself what we were like. "I want to see Americans in their homes and at their work," she told me in talking of her plans. "I do not want to see the cosmopolitan life of the few, but the life of the mass of the people."

She carried out her plan in 1893, coming over in October, and remaining until the next June. In this visit of some eight months, she went to nearly all our great cities east of the Mississippi, and from them made numerous excursions out of the beaten paths of sight-seers. She studied all the great institutions, not only of the East, but of the West. She saw all classes, and talked with people of all conditions. She gathered documents on numerous enterprises peculiar to the country, examined statistics, cross-examined leading men and women. Although interested in all phases of our life, Madame Blanc studied with particular care the effect of our institutions upon women. The one original and peculiar thing which most foreigners believe the United States to have produced, is the American woman, and there is no subject which interests them more. To see the American woman in all stages of her development, and in all lights and shades, and to study her present tendencies, was Madame Blanc's

desire. She did her work of observation and note-taking with the fidelity, sincerity, and good sense which characterize all her literary efforts, and when she returned to Paris, she had an astonishing amount of material. This material Madame Blanc has already used in a series of articles just completed in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. The following article is typical of that series.—IDA M. TARBELL.]

WE have yet to become acquainted with co-educational colleges, stranger to our eyes than all the others. It is almost exclusively to the West that one must go to find them. A man of high position in the Bureau of Education spoke to me enthusiastically of the results, from the beginning to the end, of studies pursued under this plan, which in France has recently been the subject of so many earnest discussions, where, however, it could not possibly be established without a complete change in customs and manners.

Perhaps the story of a week or two spent at a prairie college, that of Galesburg, will give my readers the best idea of what co-education, in its most interesting phases, may be. The picture of

the college is inseparable in my memory from that of the little town and its inhabitants. I will therefore copy a few fragments from the journal in which I wrote each evening.

A journey of about five hours takes us from Chicago to Galesburg, where I am received into the home of one of the college professors, who, like all Americans, is faithful to the principle, "The friends of our friends are our friends." Rich or poor, they offer you, under this maxim, a share in their family life as easily as we invite to dinner. It is a simple wooden house placed almost at the edge of the town. Before it,

leading to the college, lies a street planted with maples, and with board walks upon its two sides. There are three or four rooms upon the first floor; upon the second as many more, with sloping ceilings. That is all. But this modest interior suggests at

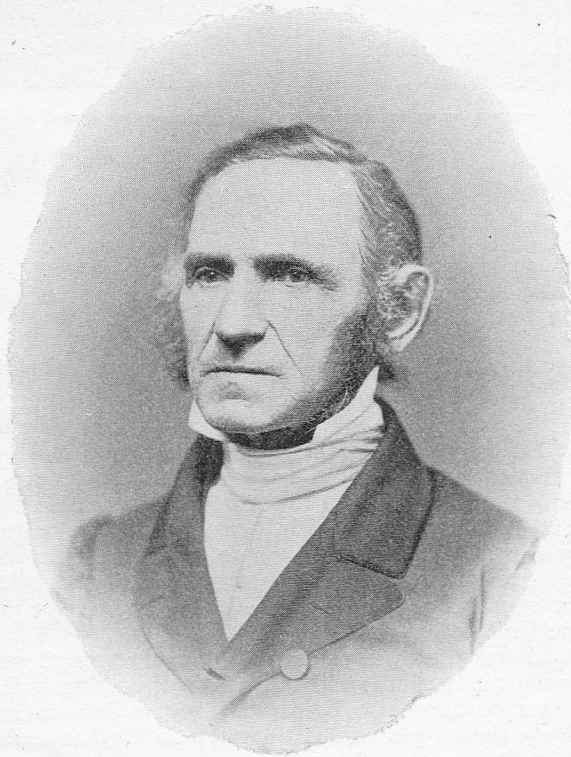
first sight ideas of order, scrupulous neatness, and studious retirement. The study is full of books, and they are all over the house. In the little parlor there are no mirrors, only very simple furniture, family photographs, good engravings, and flowers; a singular dignity pervades the whole.

This is the frame for one of the most energetic and noble faces I have seen, that of an old man, robust as a young man, a disinterested scholar, whose labor-filled career has been consecrated

from beginning to end to the same college, in spite of what ambition may have counselled him. He is, so to speak, one of its pillars.

THE FOUNDATION.

The founding of Knox College, as it is described to me, presents unique features. A band of patriotic and Christian pioneers laid its foundation. Their declared aim was to establish a college which might furnish well prepared recruits for the evangelical ministry, and which should make women worthy educators of the future generation. On January 7, 1836, a meet-



REV. GEORGE GALE, FOUNDER OF THE TOWN OF GALESBURG, ILLINOIS,
AND OF KNOX COLLEGE.

ing was held at Whitesboro, New York, at which a sum of twenty thousand dollars was voted to pay for fifteen thousand acres of land, the sale of which represented the first gift to the college; and in the spring of that same year the colonists, led by the Rev. George Gale, promoter of the project and head of the colony to which he gave his name, turned toward the prairie. By autumn thirty families, composing a homogeneous nucleus, descended from the Pilgrim Fathers of the past, had already built rude cabins upon the place where afterwards was to rise the town.

Alumni Hall, a building of brick and red sandstone, in modified Roman style, has a fine appearance. Its auditorium, which

always been especially interested in religion and science. The residence quarter is full of very pretty houses, the most of them built of wood and painted, and affecting all styles of architecture. Grassy borders surround them. They might be described as scattered over a lawn. The whole town is scrupulously neat, with the sidewalks, very ugly by the way, which everywhere in America, along the roads, in the public parks, and about the houses, permit one to avoid the dust or mud, according to the season. A few streets are paved with an improved brick. One feels a pleasant intimacy with the interior of the houses seen through the flower-decked bay windows. We come to a suburb formed of little houses painted in



COLLEGE BUILDINGS FROM THE CITY PARK.

will hold nearly one thousand people, serves each morning as a chapel, where a service of prayer unites the whole college, and where in turn the professors read the Bible and give a brief instruction. I hear the professor of English literature speak upon "Comparisons" apropos of the mote and beam of the Gospel. This custom does not exist in the universities of the East; it seems to me that it contributes largely to the moral atmosphere of Galesburg.

We visit the town, very charming with its shady avenues and green boulevards. It covers a large area, trees and gardens occupying much space. Trees surround the principal buildings. There are a few business streets, but they have a tranquil activity, as is fitting in a town in which traffic is a secondary matter, and which has

light colors, well varnished, like new toys; it is the Swedish quarter. They are an honest people, forming quite an important part of the population, and quickly obtaining a competency through their industry. Passing the college we see a vast drill ground for the three companies commanded by an officer of the United States army, delegated as professor of science and military tactics. The service is obligatory, each student being required to procure a uniform.

There are numerous churches, representing all Protestant sects, and also—a small fraction—the Catholic religion. It was the efforts and sacrifices of the two Congregational and the Presbyterian churches which founded the college. Their influence, therefore, dominates in the council of adminis-



DR. JOHN H. FINLEY, PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.

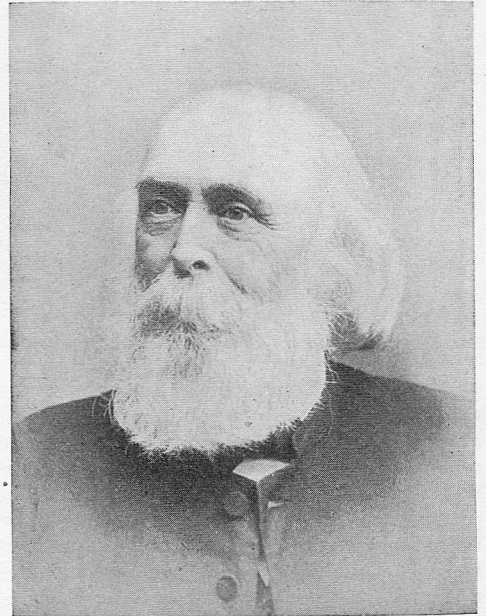
Dr. Finley was born at Grand Ridge, Illinois, in 1863, and spent his early life on a farm. After graduating from Knox College in 1887, he pursued a post-graduate course at Johns Hopkins University. He was associated with Professor Ely in the authorship of "Taxation in American States and Cities," and has been for some years editor of the "Charities Review." He was elected president of Knox in 1892, and is the youngest college president in the United States.

tration, but without any narrowness. A true Christian spirit alone is required as a fundamental and indispensable foundation to an education at Knox. The students are expected to frequent their respective churches on the Sabbath.

A STURDY TYPE OF STUDENT.

I was present at a Latin class conducted by a young woman with an expressive and resolute face, who seemed to exercise great power over her pupils. There were grouped about her almost as many boys as girls. Although no rule requires it, the two sexes are separate, and occupy different sides of the room. In general the girls are more advanced in their knowledge. They smile a little maliciously at each blunder of the boys, who, on the other hand, do not appear sorry to find them in fault. There is no coquetry on the one side or gallantry on the other. I notice the sunburned complexions, the rustic appearance of several of the students, grown men; their

good faces express at once energy and purity. They tell me that they come from distant parts of the West, and that before entering college they earned the necessary money by the labor of their hands. The editor of an important magazine said to me one day, while travelling with me: "I used to pass over all this country on foot during vacations, year after year, a pack of goods on my back, to pay my college expenses. They called me the honest little peddler." And I saw that this epithet would always remain among those that had pleased him most, although he has since attained great success. A good many of the students at Knox College are made of the same solid stuff. It is found that these students who are late in beginning, are likely to show superior talents. Several are pointed out to me who, during the exposition at Chicago, without any foolish shame, used their vacation of two months and a half serving in the restaurants of the Fair, and in pushing the wheel-chairs. Now behold them buried in the "Æneid."



DR. NEWTON BATEMAN, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.

Dr. Bateman was born in New Jersey, July 27, 1822, and went to Illinois in his boyhood. He has had a most important part in the educational development of the State. He served five terms as State superintendent of instruction, in addition to his long connection with Knox College as professor and president. He resigned the presidency in 1892, but he still retains his professorship. Dr. Bateman enjoyed an intimate acquaintance with Lincoln, and when he was State superintendent of instruction they had an office together.

The kind and bright influence of the young girls upon these country boys is most happy. The whip of emulation inspires them; they are ashamed to allow themselves to be distanced by their frail comrades; and, moreover, feminine kindness polishes them without their knowing it.

If the professor who teaches the chemistry lesson with remarkable animation and clearness had not, on my account, purposely questioned the girl-students that they might show a foreigner (very incapable of judging in the matter) how much they knew, I should think that here, perhaps, the boys would have the advantage. But on this subject our preconceived opinions are apparently belied by the aptitudes of American women.

SOCIETY IN A WEST-ERN COLLEGE TOWN.

I was invited to several houses of the town, where I found the best society; women at the same time simple and educated, talking of everything, questioning with intelligence. Evidently contact with the college is a perpetual stimulus, and the society of the professors a precious resource. Some of them have travelled, but they are not possessed by that feverish desire for change which I have noticed elsewhere—a thing which is restful. The diversity of denominations in that little town, so religious as a whole, is curious. At a certain luncheon I met half a dozen ladies, all warm friends, although belonging to different churches. Opposite me sat a Baptist; at my side a pleasant Universalist, whose religion pleased me, since it permitted her to be as sure of my eternal salvation as she was of her own. Universalists damn no one.

The French lessons attracted me. The pupils were reading, translating, and explaining a play of Victor Hugo's, "Hernani," and nothing could be more droll than the accent given to those grand, impetuous verses and to those Spanish names, which they spoke with hesitation and robbed of their beauty. But they understood, they understood quite well enough, I believe, to find the character of Hernani that of a fool. I gave them real satisfaction by telling them that even in France

his sentiments appeared a little exaggerated. There were some among them who were evidently bewildered by the intricate scene: some of those fine, swarthy fellows, simple and solid, of whom I have already spoken, young giants from distant farms, who have left the plough for their books. One of them accosted me with hesitation, and asked in a tone of passionate curiosity if it was true that the admiration for such a great man as Napoleon was growing less in France? Emboldened by my response, he expressed his conviction, shared by many others, that an obscure soldier had been shot in the place of Marshal Ney, and that Ney had taken refuge in

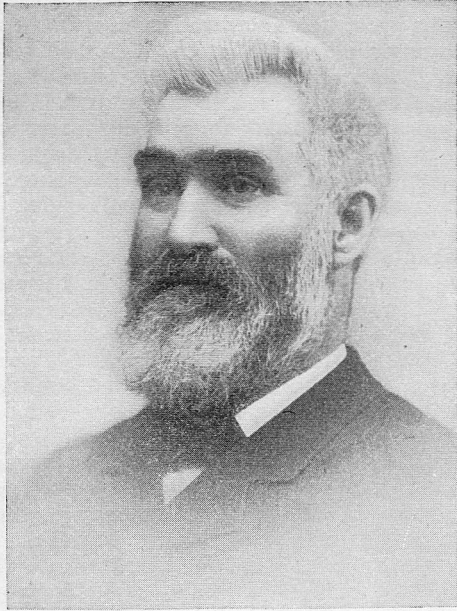


PROFESSOR ALBERT HURD.

Professor Hurd was born at Kemptville, Ontario. He worked on his father's farm, and fitted himself for college. Graduating in 1850 from Middlebury College, Vermont, he served a year as principal of the Vermont Literary and Scientific Institution, at Brandon, Vermont. Then he was called to Knox College. Before taking up his work there, however, he studied for a time with Agassiz. He has held the chair of professor of chemistry for forty-one years; for sixteen has acted also as professor of Latin, and for three was acting president.

America. The questions of the young girls touched upon more personal subjects: they wanted to know if the education of women in France was making any progress; if we were always shut up in convents; if co-education really did not exist with us.

We took supper at the seminary, where the young ladies from out of town live together. Around the table were assembled professors, men and women, and a few women guests. The dining-room where we were, communicated with another, a larger one, in which the boarders had



PROFESSOR GEORGE CHURCHILL.

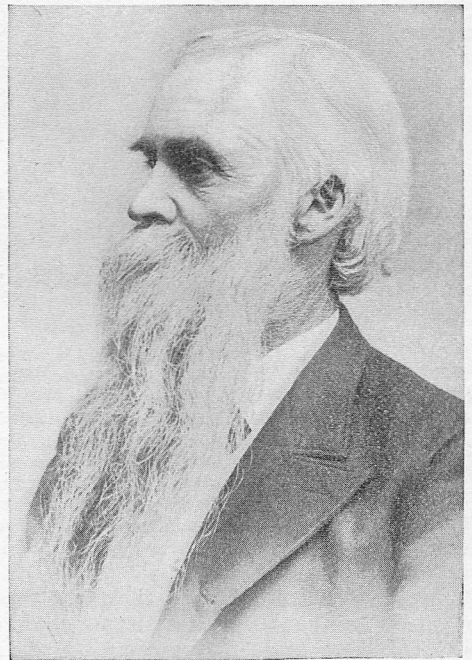
Professor Churchill has been principal of the preparatory department of Knox College since 1855. He was born in New York State in 1829; but his parents were of the colony which in 1839 established the town of Galesburg and founded Knox College, and in the town and the college his life since his tenth year has been mainly passed.

taken their places about small separate tables in groups of six or eight. The principal presided. A few of the young men students came in to take their meals with the young ladies. After supper, in the large, handsome drawing-room, all the pupils in the seminary were presented to me, one after another. It was a long line of very different types, often very pleasant to look upon. They came from all quarters of the United States—from Kansas, Colorado, California, Texas, from everywhere. While telling me their names, they told me also their native States. Several were from Utah, from Salt Lake City. I shuddered, thinking myself before Mormons; and they, laughing, explained to me that their parents were "Gentiles."

A VISIT TO AN ILLINOIS FARM.

I was invited to spend an afternoon upon a great farm in the suburbs. The name "farm" is given in America to all rural estates. With more than ordinary hospitality the proprietor of the farm came for me himself in his buggy. Carried along by two excellent horses, we rolled across the prairie, filling our lungs with the soft,

velvety air, which, before the winter winds, accompanies that exquisite season so well named Indian summer. The landscape in its monotony was new to me, who had never seen the steppes. It was the immense, rolling prairie, its short little waves cut only by fences, barriers sometimes straight and sometimes zigzag, which all over America separate fields and confine cattle. Their silvery color, like that of the aging fir, harmonizes well with the brown tone of the soil. The corn had been harvested; there only remained the stalks and long leaves stacked for the cattle. Strange long lines of stumps, which no one takes the trouble to remove, were rotting here and there where once stood groves. They are one of the general characteristics of the American landscape as they rise rudely from the newly-cleared plain. The farmhouse, toward which we were going, was situated in the midst of three thousand acres, part cultivated and part in prairie. We stop before a wooden structure built



PROFESSOR MILTON L. COMSTOCK.

Professor Comstock was born October 19, 1824, in Hamilton County, Ohio, and graduated from Knox College in 1851. Under the necessity of making his own way he became a teacher some years before his graduation. He was principal of Knox Academy from 1851 to 1854, when he removed to Iowa, where he was for a time editor of the "Iowa Farmer." In 1858 he returned to Knox College as assistant professor of mathematics. He became full professor in 1862, and has served in that capacity ever since.

on the usual plan, with a stoop leading to it, and the indispensable walks. The mistress of the house comes to meet us. There is not a shadow of provincial ceremony in her greeting. She takes us into a drawing-room furnished in black hair-cloth, and we are immediately engaged in conversation upon interesting subjects.

About one o'clock dinner was served, a strictly American dinner: soup of canned oysters, roast meats, stewed corn, raw celery, rhubarb pie, wild grapes that tasted like black currants, hickory nuts, tea or coffee, as you preferred. Two young girls waited on the table; they were presented to me as the children of the house. They are obliged to assist with the housework during one of these do-

century; French women in politics; origin of Greek art, etc. Would one expect such interest in the affairs of the Old World in a prairie village? For a town of eighteen thousand inhabitants is little more than a village in the United States. But this village has certainly a mind superior in quality to that of many large towns.

In one of our drives a buggy crossed our path carrying a young man and a young girl. I asked the professor who drove me, if they were engaged. "They may become so," he replied, "but not necessarily." And I see that this austere man comprehends, approves this state of things; and upon this point he is of the opinion of all fathers of families whom I have met, in New York and elsewhere, finding it quite

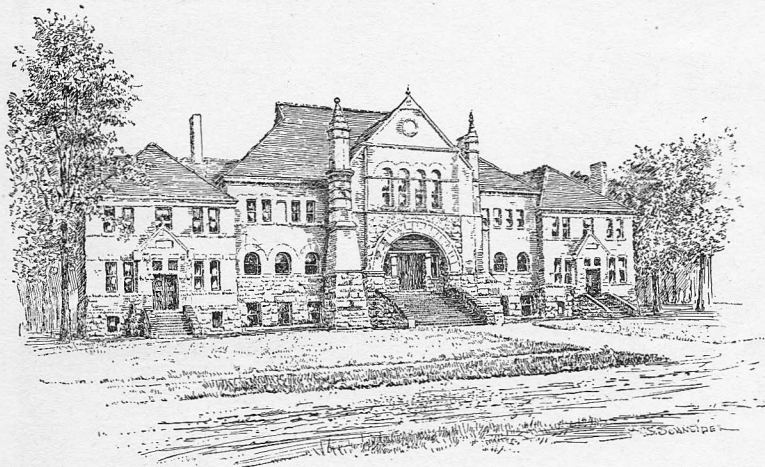
natural for their daughters to ride horseback, to go and come, accompanied by a friend. Still I do not know that his tolerance would be equal to that of many others, in case some one ventured to put the theory into practice in his own family.

The longer I stayed in Galesburg, the more I felt its resemblance to some little university

town in Germany, as they were before the annexation of Prussia. There is the same simplicity, the same veneration for science and its representatives, the same patriarchal manners. The German spirit, shown by a general knowledge of the language, prevails here, too, as in many other American towns, the result of immigration, of a more or less pronounced stay made by the professors in Germany, and also of that prestige inseparable from the victorious when seen from afar. The most of the inhabitants do not speak French, though a few recall with delight a hurried visit to Paris.

COLLEGE MARRIAGES.

My questions were always about the system of co-education with its advantages and dangers. The pretty wife of the president replied to me: "We, my husband and I, can say no harm of it, since



ALUMNI HALL.

mestic crises so common in the West and nearly everywhere.

As we talk, I discover that the life of a farmer's wife is rather severe in America, where the farm-houses are at great distances from each other, and are upon such an immense scale that the housewife's duties are by no means small. She has no distractions, no neighbors. But in winter my hostess finds compensation at Galesburg, where she belongs to a literary club. The ladies who are members of it, can read much during the summer in connection with the proposed subjects of the coming meetings. I inquired about the subjects, and learned a number of them: the Troubadours and the Trouvères (the Romance languages being held in great honor in the United States, and many people who do not speak French fluently going into ecstasies over our old Provençal literature); the influence of the *salons* of the fourteenth

we met and loved at college." The elder daughter of my host married in the same way, after having received all the diplomas of the college.

"Yes, many marriages are decided at college; is there any harm in it? Would it be better to meet in society, in the midst of frivolity? Do they not become much better acquainted, and in a more interesting way, when they study together for years?"

"But these marriages are premature!"

"Not at all; they do not take place until the man's position is secure. The constancy of the two parties is often put to a long test."

of his neighbor without the intervention of strict rules.

My conclusion, after having heard all, is that the system would not succeed in a larger city where an incessant moral surveillance could not be exercised, or where religious influences would be less direct, or where there would be temptations, or even distractions. The still primitive manners of the West permit the realization of what would elsewhere be a Utopia. Many other colleges are founded upon the same basis as Knox, and this proves an uprightness of soul, fresh and robust virtues, to which it has seemed to me that the more Europeanized America of the East does not give



A RESIDENCE STREET IN GALESBURG.

"And does not love distract you from work?"

This very French reflection caused a smile. An American thinks of a wife only after having thought of his serious duties and first of the means of supporting her. The brilliant and almost unique example of the very young president of Knox, who at thirty years of age has lately succeeded a universally esteemed man, forced by his age to a comparative leisure, proves that college engagements do not prevent great efforts and great success.

I was asked if I had seen anything either in the college or the town which suggested any of the disadvantages of which I spoke. Assuredly no. It was because they did not exist. The atmosphere of Knox is clear and healthful. Each respects the dignity

sufficient justice. Between the two sections, in the West as in the East, there are prejudices, because they are not well enough acquainted.

The wild odors of the prairie do not prevent me from appreciating certain drawing-rooms in Boston or New York. But I have often been shocked at the willing ignorance which Americans who have crossed the ocean ten times, profess for the still new portions of their own country, as if the treasures of the future were not buried there. I left Galesburg with regret. I afterwards returned to it from a long distance. I think of it yet with respect and with sympathy. It would be a great pleasure for me to take my "knitting" there, as I was invited to do in the frank parlance of the West.