CHAPTER III

A CO-EDUCATIONAL COLLEGE OF THE '80'S.

When I entered Allegheny College in the Fall of 1876 I made my first contact with the past. I had been born and reared a pioneer; I knew only the beginning of things, the making of a home in a wilderness, the making of an industry from the ground up. I had seen the hardships of beginnings, the joy of realization, the attacks that success must expect, but of things with a past, things that had made themselves permanent I knew nothing. It struck me full in the face now, for this was an old college as things west of the Alleghenies were reckoned - an old college in an old town. Here was history and I had never met it before to recognize it.

The town lay in the valley of a tributary of the Allegheny River - French Creek. Its oldest tradition after the tales of Indians was that George Washington once drank from a spring on the edge of the campus. Certainly he passed that way in 1753 when he came up the river valley from Fort Duquesne, Pittsburgh, following the route which led to Fort Le Boeuf on Lake Erie. He comments in his Diary published the year after his trip on the extensive rich meadows through which he had passed, one of which "I believe was nearly four miles in length and considerable wider in some places." To

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this particular "rich meadow" a few years later came one David Mead and laid out a town and sold land. Here soon after came the representative of the Holland Land Grant Company, colonizers of first quality. Good men came, distinguished names in Pennsylvania's history, and they wanted a college. The answer to their wish came in 1815 when one of the most scholarly men of that day, Timothy Alden of Massachusetts heard their call and picking up all his worldly possessions made the two months trip by coach and boat to the settlement called Meadville.

Timothy Alden like many of his fellows was fired by a deep belief that through Democracy alone could men arrive at the better world which he, scholar that he was, knew they had been groping towards from their earliest beginnings. But men could only come to an understanding of their individual and collective responsibilities to democracy through education. Therefore, as men spread Westward he and others like him must follow them with education.

But once in Meadville how little he found with which to carry out his project - a log court house for a school/house and little or no money though of what they had men gave freely. Now Timothy Alden knew that throughout the East were men of scholarly traditions convinced as was he that democracy would work only if men were trained to understanding and sacrifice. He believed that they would help his Western venture.

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In 1816 he went East to find out. He was not wrong in thinking there would be sympathy for the young college. Out of their meagre store men gave, this one fifty cents, that one five dollars - few more - and men gave books, one, two, five. The list of donors now in the college archives show many of the best known names of the day - Lowell, Adams, Tucker, Parkman, Channing in Boston and twenty nine fine New York names. Friends were made for Allegheny in every town and city where its brave story was told. Timothy Alden came back with $361.00 in money and with books, more needed than money, estimated to be worth $1,642.26.

From that time he kept the undertaking steadily before the East, promoted it by every method known to the times. A great response to his passionate effort came in 1819 when the college world of the East was shocked by learning that William Bentley of Salem, Massachusetts had left his famous collection of "classical and theological books, dictionaries, lexicons and Bibles" to a college in the wilderness of Northwestern Pennsylvania, a college without a home still doing its work in a log court house. That gift, long a bitter drop in the cup of Harvard, it is said, made a home of its own necessary for Allegheny and in 1820 the corner stone of Bentley Hall, named for the donor, was laid. It took many years to complete it, but when done on the lines Timothy Alden had himself laid down it was one of the most beautiful buildings in the country.

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Today it easily stands after Independence Hall as the most perfect piece of Colonial architecture in the state of Pennsylvania. For me Bentley Hall was an extraordinary experience. It was the first really beautiful building I had seen, a revelation, something I had never dreamed of.

Fifty six years had passed since the corner stone of Bentley Hall was laid and not one of them without disappointments and sacrifices. More than once it had seemed as if the brave attempt must fail. Two buildings only had been added in these years - Culver Hall, a frame boarding house for men - Ruter Hall, a grim uncompromising three-story rectangular brick structure, fifty by ninety feet in size, a perfect reflection of the straitened period to which it belonged. The "Factory" was our slighting name for Ruter Hall, but in this stern structure I was to find a second deep satisfaction - the library; in a room on the top floor, ninety feet long and at least sixteen in height was housed not only the splendid Bentley collection, but one even more valuable, that of Judge James Winthrop of Cambridge, Massachusetts, rare volumes from the great presses of Europe, three tons of books brought overland in wagons by Boston teamsters in 1822. They lined the great unbroken inside wall, as well as every space between openings. From the window seats one looked out on the town in the valley, its roofs and towers half hidden by a wealth of trees and beyond to a circle of round-breasted hills. Before I left Allegheny I had found a very precious thing in that severe room - the companionship there is in the silent presence of books.

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Allegheny did not of course admit women at the start, but the ferment caused by the passing of the 14th Amendment making it clear that only men were to be regarded as citizens stirred the Allegheny constitutents mightily. Its chief patron, as I have said, was the Methodist Church. Now the Methodist Church was a militant reformer. The greatest of its Bishops, Matthew Simpson had backed Mrs. Stanton and Miss Anthony and their colleagues at every step. Leaders among Methodist women had been abolitionists, aggressive temperance advocates and now they became militant suffragists. Their influence began to tell. In 1870 with misgivings in not a few minds the admission of women was voted. This was the same year that the University of Michigan opened its doors to women and two years before Cornell. In the six years before I entered ten women had graduated. When I came there were but two seniors, two juniors, no sophomores. I was a lone Freshman in a class of forty hostile or indifferent boys. The friendly and facetious professor charged with the care of the "young ladies" put it that I was "Lost in the Wilderness of Boy."

From the first I was dimly conscious that I was an invader, that there was abroad a spirit of masculinity challenging my right to be there, that there were taboos not to be disregarded. My first experience was that of which Virginia Woolf speaks so bitterly in "A Room of One's Own" - the closing of the college green to her at Oxbridge. Nearly fifty years before her book was written I was having at Allegheny the same experience.

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The sloping green of the campus below Bentley Hall was inviting. Between classes I made my way one day to a seat under a tree only to hear a horrified call from the walk above, "Come back, come back quick." An imperative summons from an upper class woman. "You mustn't go on that side of the walk, only men go there."

It was not so simple to find a spot where you could go and be comfortable. If Bentley Hall where all the classes were held was a beautiful piece of architecture its interior could hardly have been more severe. The rooms were heated with pot-bellied cast-iron stoves, seated with the hardest wooden chairs, lighted by kerosene lamps. In winter, and the winters were long, the snow tracked in kept the floors wet and cold. Often one wore his muffler in chapel. But of all that I was unheeding. My pioneer childhood served me well. Moreover, I realized at the start that I had found what I had come to college for, direction in the only field in which I was interested - science. I found it in a way that I doubt if Cornell could have given me at the moment, shy and immature as I was-the warming and contageous enthusiasm of a great natural teacher, one / who had an ardent passion for those things which had stirred me and a wide knowledge which he fed by constant study and travel - Jeremiah Tingley, the head of Allegheny's department of natural science.

Professor Tingley / was then a man of fifty, sparkling, alive, informal. Three years before he had been one of the fifty

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chosen from many hundred applicants to spend the summer with Louis Agassiz on the Island of Penikese in Buzzard's Bay. Agassiz had planned with enthusiasm for the Penikese Summer School and for those privileged to enter who could understand and appreciate it was an unforgetable experience, certainly it was for Jeremiah Tingley. He carried there Agassiz's faith in observation and classification, as well as his reverence for nature and all her ways. For both men the material world was but the cover of the spirit. Professor Tingley would quote Agassiz sometimes - "Nature always brings us back to absolute truth whenever we wander."

This fervent faith had a profound and quieting effect on my religious tummult. I learned a new word - Pantheism. Being still in that early stage of development where there must be a definite word by which to classify oneself I began to call myself a pantheist - and I had a creed which I repeated more often than the creed I had learned in childhood:-

"Flower in the crannied wall,
I pluck you out of the crannies,
Hold you here, root and all, in my hand
Little flower - but if I could understand
What you are, root and all, and all in all,
I should know what God and man is."

It reassured me; I was on the right track for was I not going to find out with the microscope what God and man are?

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Professor Tingley's method for those he found really interested in scientific study was to encourage them to look outside the book. There was where I had already found my joy, but I suspected it was the willful way, that the true way was to know first what was in the books. Here in Professor Tingley's classes you were ordered to go and see for yourself. He used to tell us a story of his first experience at Penikese. A stone was put before him, a round water-washed stone, on which he was to report. He looked at the stone, turned it over. There was nothing to report. "It is not the outside, it is the inside of things that matter," said Agassiz. And in the laboratory that became our watchword - look inside.

Discovering my interest in the microscope, I was not only allowed, I was urged to use the magnificent binocular belonging to the college, was given the free run of the laboratory along with a few as crazy as myself. Here my most exciting adventure apart from what I found under the microscope came from actually having my hands on a "missing link." Evolution to which I was clinging determinately could only be established, I realized, by discovering the links. There was one peculiar to the waters in our Valley, the menopome Alleghaniensis, a creature twelve to fifteen inches long with gills and one lung, able to live in the water or mud as circumstances required. The mud-puppy, as it was appropriately called, was slimy, loathsome, but I worked over it with awe.

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Was I not being admitted into the very workshop of Nature herself - seeing how she did it?

Professor Tingley took his little group of laboratory devotees into his home circle. He and Mrs. Tingley were housed in a wing of Bentley Hall - big rooms built for class rooms. They had no children and in the years of their study and travel they had gathered about them things of beauty and interest. The atmosphere of those rooms was something quite new and wonderful to me. It was my first look into the intimate social life possible to people interested above all in ideas, beauty, music, and glad to work hard and live simply to devote themselves to their cultivation.

And such good talks! Much of it was concerned with fresh scientific thought, the inventions and discoveries which were stirring the world. An omnivorous reader of the sciencitic publications of Europe and America, Professor Tingley kept us excited, not only by what had been done but what it might mean. There was the telephone. I had been in College but a few weeks when my father asked me to go with him and my brother to the Centennial Exposition of 1876. President Bugbee who had made me his special care for a time, Mrs. Bugbee even taking me into their home until an appropriate boarding place could be found, was heartily in favor of my going. I went and when I returned Professor Tingley's first question was, "Did you see the telephone?" I hadn't even heard of it. Two exhibits only of that Exposition made a deep enough impression on me to last until today - my first Corot and the Corliss Engine. Professor Tingley was greatly disappointed ———————————————

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disappointed and I did not understand why until a few weeks later he called the student body together to explain and illustrate the telephone by a home-made instrument. "You'll talk to your homes from these rooms one day," he told us. "New York will talk to Boston." He didn't suggest Chicago. "Dreamer," the boys said. "Dreamer," my father and his Titusville friends said a little later when an agent of the Bell Associates, the first company to attempt putting the new invention within reach of everybody, came to town selling stock. How often I heard it said later, "If I'd bought that telephone stock."

Years later I told Alexander Graham Bell of my introduction to the telephone. "Nobody," he said, "can estimate what the teachers of science in colleges and high schools were doing in those days not only to spread knowledge of the telephone but to stir youth, to tackle the possibilities in electricity."

But what I best remember is not the telephone but Professor Tingley's amazing enthusiasm for the telephone. This revelation of enthusiasm, its power to warm and illuminate was one of the finest and most lasting of my college experiences. The people I had known, teachers, preachers, doctors, business men, all went through their days work either with a stubborn, often sullen determination, to do their whole duty, or with an undercurrent of uneasiness, if they found pleasure in duty. They

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seemed to me to feel that they were not really working if they were not demonstrating the Puritan teaching that labor is a curse. It had never seemed so to me, but I did not dare gloat over it. And here was a teacher who did gloat over his job in all its ramifications. Moreover, he did his best to stir you to share his joy.

But while I looked on what I was learning in the laboratory as what I had come to college for, while each term stiffened my ambition to go deeper and deeper into the search for the original atom, science was not all that interested me. The faculty, if small, was made up largely of seasoned men with a perspective on life. There was not only deep seriousness but there was humor and tolerance, and since we were so small a college the student was close enough to discover them, to find out what each man as an individual had to offer him. As I learned the power of enthusiasm from Jeremiah Tingley I learned from another man of that faculty the value of contempt. Holding the Chair of Latin was one of the few able teachers I have known, George Haskins, father of that sound scholar of inter-national repute, the late Charles Homer Haskins, at the time of his death Professor Emeritus of Medieval History at Harvard University.

What deep satisfaction his career gave his father, himself a man of many disappointments.

George Haskins labored, usually in vain, to arouse us to the choiceness of latinity, the meaning of Rome's Rise and Fall, the quality of her men, the relation of that life

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to ours. Professor Haskins' contempt for our lack of understanding, for our slack preparation was something utterly new to me in human intercourse. The people I knew with rare exceptions spared one another's feelings. I had come to consider that a superior grace; you must be kind if you lied for it. But here was a man who turned on indifference, neglect, carelessness with bitter and caustic contempt, left his victim seared. The sufferers lived to say, some of them at least, "I deserved it. He was never unjust, never inappreciative of effort."

"Cherish your contempts," Henry James advised me once when he had drawn from me a confession of the conflict between my natural dislike of saying anything unpleasant about anybody and the necessity of being cruel even brutal if the work I had undertaken was to be truthful in fact and logic. "Cherish your contempts," said Mr. James, "and strength to your elbow." If it had not been for George Haskins I doubt if I should have known what he meant, nor would I ever had become the steady, rather dogged worker, I am. The contempt for shiftlessness which he inspired in me aroused a determination to be a good worker. I began to train my mind to go at its task regularly, keep hours, study whether I liked a thing or not. I forced myself not to waste time, not to loaf, not to give up before I finished. If I failed at any point in this discipline I suffered a certain mental and spiritual malaise, a dissatisfactior with myself hard to live with.

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~~and it must be taken for granted I think that pain and despair are inevitable in all expanding human life, particularly in its younger periods~~

In spite of my painful efforts to make a regular worker out of myself life at college was lightened by my discovery of the Boy. Incredible as it seems to me now I had come to college at eighteen without ever having dared to look fully into the face of any boy of my age. To be sure I had from childhood nourished secret passions for a succession of older individuals whom I never saw except at a distance and with whom I never exchanged a word. My brother and his friends, my father and his friends, these I had always hobnobbed with, but those who naturally should have been my companions I shunned. I was unable to take part in those things that brought the young people of the day together. I did not dance - the Methodist discipline forbad it. I was incredibly stupid and uninterested in games - still am. I had no easy companionable ways, was too shy to attempt them. I had my delights - the hills which I ran - the long drives behind our little white horse - the family doings, the reading of French regularly with my splendid friend, Annette Grumbine, still living, still as she was then a vitalizing influence in the town and state for all that makes for a higher social life, these things and my precious evening walks, the full length of Titusville's main street alone or with some girl friend while we talked of things deepest in our minds.

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But in all this there was no boy. I was not long in discovering him when I reached Allegheny for the taboos I encountered at the start soon yielded under the increased number of women, women in college, in special courses, in the Preparatory Department. They swept masculine prohibitions out of the way - took possession, made a different kind of institution of it, less scholastic, gayer, easier-going. The daily association in the class rooms, the contacts and appraisements, the mutual interests and intimacies, the continual procession of college doings which in the nature of things required that you should have a masculine attendant soon put me at my ease. I was learning, learning fast, but the learning carried its pains. I still had a stiff-necked determination to be free. To avoid entangling alliances of all kinds had become an obsession with me. I was slow in laying it aside when I began to take part in the social life of the college and because of it I was guilty of one performance which was properly enough a scandal to the young men.

There were several men's fraternities in the college; most of the boys belonged to one or another. It was an ambition of the fraternities to put their pins on acceptable town and college girls. You were a Delta girl, or a Gamma girl or a Phi Psi girl. I resented this effort to tag me. Why should I not have friends in all the fraternities? And I had; I accummulated four pins and then one disastrous morning went into Chapel with the four pins on my coat. There were a few

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months after that when if it had not been for two or three non-Frat friends I would have been a social outcast.

I spent four years in Allegheny College. Measured by what I got instead of by what I did not get and was obliged to learn later I regard them as among the most profitable of my life. I find often that men and women accuse the college of not opening their minds to life as it is in the world. For a mind sufficiently developed to see "life as it is" I cannot conceive a more fruitful field than the classics. If I had been sufficiently mature I could have learned from George Haskins' teachings of Cicero and Tacitus and Livy more than I know today about the ways of men in their personal and their national relations, more of the causes of war, of the weaknesses of governments. But I was not ready for it. Life is the great teacher and she leads us step by step. It is not the fault of the human teacher that his pupil must learn to climb by climbing.

It was in the Spring of 1880 that I graduated. I still carried the same baggage with which I had entered - a little heavier to be sure, a little better packed, a little better adapted to the "Purpose." The only difference which threatened disturbance was that I had added an item which I had refused to bring with me in 1876. Then I was not willing to believe I would ever marry, now I thought possibly some day I might, but the item was not heavy, not heavy enough at least to prevent my rejoicing over the fact that I was graduating with a job.

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I had signed a contract with an institution of which I had never heard until the negotiations leading to it opened. After frequent communications with the faculty a representative of the Poland Union Seminary of Poland, Ohio, with some misgivings had employed me to serve as its Preceptress - $500.00 a year "and board yourself." I was jubilant. It meant economic independence - the first plank in my platform. I would use my leisure to work with the microscope; I would save my money; I would one day go abroad and study with some great biologist. I would never abandon my search for the beginning of life, the point where I expected to find God.

It was then with entire confidence in the future that I started out in August of 1880 for the town of Poland on the Western Reserve of Ohio, to begin what women were then talking of in more or less awed tones as a Career.

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