

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

hurry up the line directing the groups in reforming. The band, striking up "Newburgh," falls in behind the Meadville Blues. The other groups, also falling into line begin the next to the last verse of "Newburgh". Singing, they pass out into the street and disappear]

EPISODE FIVE

THE RESIGNATION OF ALDEN, AUGUST 2, 1831

[From the right over the bridge, JOHN DICK and REYNOLDS come into sight walking slowly. As they cross the bridge, they mop their brows.]

REYNOLDS. 'Tis something of a climb up here on a hot August day like this.

DICK. The dog days are certainly upon us, even if today be but the second of the month. *[Looking about]* But Alden is not waiting for us.

REYNOLDS. Yet surely at his house there in the fields *[Pointing in the direction of Spenser Hospital]* we were told that he had left special word we should find him here before Bentley Hall.

DICK. Well, Alden never fails to keep his word.

REYNOLDS. He must have had some strong reason, considerate as he always is of others, for making us come this long distance on a hot day. Certainly we should wait.

[As they seat themselves, the center door of Bentley swings slowly open. ALDEN, lost in his sad thoughts, almost as if unseeing, closes the door slowly behind him. He locks it, lingering over the task. The two men turn at the noise of the door and start to rise, but something in the sadness of the figure arrests them, and they motion to each other to wait. As he comes from the building, ALDEN turns once and looks at it. As he approaches, he sees the two men and greets them with a stately bow. But he is thinking, lost in thinking. He looks much older than in the last scene. As he comes nearer he is seen to be carrying something in his

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

hands which looks like a folded letter of the time. DICK and REYNOLDS stand and respectfully await him as he approaches]

ALDEN. Good afternoon, my friends. I beg your forgiveness for making you come thus far in the heat, but at my house when I tried to write this [*Lifting the letter*] I grew restless—too restless for endurance. It seemed to me I could write and say what I have come to feel I must write and say only in that hall where I have for so many years dreamed and planned and labored—in vain.

[The two men exchange a sympathetic glance]

REYNOLDS. My dear Alden, you exaggerate. Not wholly in vain.

ALDEN. Yes, in vain. Let us face facts. It is seventeen years since you and I, with other worthy men, some now dead, met to found this college. It is eleven years since the corner stone of that building was laid, with a pomp and ceremony that befitted the promise for this community and the neighboring counties of such an educational enterprise. Today, we should be a growing institution; instead, our students are falling away from us. The annual state appropriation of \$1,000, which has helped greatly in past years, is withdrawn. You see, everyone seems to be losing faith in us.

DICK. [*Impulsively*] But it's all the fault of the Erie Presbytery. If they had granted your petition that they should take this college under their patronage, students would not turn from us, nor would the State appropriation be withdrawn. That refusal seems our doom.

REYNOLDS. The Erie Presbytery remembers that it already has two colleges to support in western Pennsylvania, and fears the expense and the rivalry of a third.



THE LIBRARY

CENTENARY PAGEANT

DICK. Well, I notice that the Presbytery are alumni of those other two colleges.

ALDEN. I will not deny that it was a hard blow when the Presbytery refused its patronage. Tuition fees do not begin to support us. I have exhausted my claims on individual givers. Now that the Presbytery and the state refuse their aid, I do not know where to turn. Therefore, I have closed that door till such time as another may open it under happier auspices.

REYNOLDS. [*Much moved*] Old friend, are you sure this is absolutely necessary? [ALDEN *nods*]

DICK. [*Breaking in*] But surely you can find a way out, you who have always been so resourceful.

ALDEN. [*Sadly shaking his head*] No, I have schemed and planned till I have no more devices to offer. I came here with a strong hope and faith for the work I had chosen to do; now they are broken. I have done all in my power to win and to keep students; I have taught them freely in all the subjects I control. Before this hall was built, I took them into my own house. I have tried the friendship of my friends by my constant appeals for aid in money and books. I have put pride aside, and forced the needs of this institution upon perfect strangers. Now, my friends, I am bankrupt of devices, bankrupt of courage and hope. [*Glance of pity between the two*] I have therefore written this letter to the trustees of Allegheny College. It has not been unknown to you that I have contemplated this step. I sent for you both today that I might read to you what I have here, so that if it need correction I may make it now. I have dated it from this beloved hall, erected on my part with so much hope and pride.

ALLEGHENY COLLEGE

"Bentley Hall, August 2, 1831.

To the Trustees of Allegheny College,

Gentlemen:

I hereby formally tender my resignation as president of Allegheny College. The indications of Providence convince me that there is very little more for me as an instrument in the hands of God to achieve in building up a seminary whose welfare has been very near my heart, and which I trust, with smiles from above, is to become a blessing to many yet unborn.

Respectfully your servant,

TIMOTHY ALDEN."

REYNOLDS. [*Taking the letter with obvious emotion*] Mr. President, for some time the trustees have been aware that you have been considering this step. Only because I know that any further attempt to dissuade you must be useless, do I accept this to transmit to the trustees. The admiration and esteem of the trustees and the citizens of Meadville are yours now and will be always. The trustees, wishing to testify their regard for the way you have, in the past, faced all difficulties with courage, inventiveness and decision, beg you to serve as Librarian, that the books you have brought to this college as gifts from your personal friends, may have proper care. They earnestly request, too, that you will accept an election as a trustee of this institution, which owes to you its inception and its growth for many years.

ALDEN. I shall gladly do whatever the trustees wish, for I now am convinced that my usefulness as pilot of this ship, is ended. [*He takes the college keys from his pocket and hands them to DICK*] May you put these into other hands able to make this institution what I have dreamed for it.

CENTENARY PAGEANT

DICK. [*As he accepts the keys*] If you have not succeeded, I don't believe anyone else can.

ALDEN. Thank you, good friend. Good night.

REYNOLDS. May we not walk homeward with you?

ALDEN. [*After an instant's hesitation*] You have both stood by my side in many a difficult hour for this college—you particularly, friend Reynolds, but tonight, as I lay down in sadness what I took up seventeen years ago with such enthusiasm, you will not think me rude, will you, if I walk alone? Good night, good night [*To each of them*]

[*With bowed head and stooping shoulders, he goes upon the bridge. The other two, watching him, shake their heads sadly, then hiding their emotion, they move off quickly. ALDEN, on the bridge, stops and looks long at Bentley. Then, with a heavy sigh, he raises his hand in benediction, and pulling his hat over his eyes, walks away. Softly are heard the strains of "Alone and Yet Not All Alone" as he disappears. They swell up loudly as the next scene begins*]