

CHAPTER NINE

A 1901-02 MAGAZINE REVIEW OF “COLORADO COLLEGE”¹

Editor’s Note: This article, entitled “Colorado College,” appeared in a magazine named “The Mecca” in 1901-02. Although written mainly to celebrate and describe the new building now known as Palmer Hall, the article gave a brief history of the College to 1901-02 and then concluded with some speculation about the College’s athletic programs.

The article is significant for two reasons. The first is that the idea of Colorado College being a “Christian College,” which was so much in the minds of the College’s initial founders, was still very much a driving force in the ideology of the College in 1901-02.

The second is the critique of the athletic program at Colorado College. In 1901-02, Edward S. Parsons was the Acting-President while President William F. Slocum was on sabbatical traveling in Europe. Parsons subtly suggested that President Slocum may have been on the wrong track by putting such strong emphasis on the College fielding winning athletic teams. Although Parsons did not use the word “intramural,” he clearly preferred an athletic program that would be centered in intramural, on-campus sports, with as many students as possible participating. Parsons would have deemphasized big-time intercollegiate sports, in which just a few outstanding athletes perform for large crowds of spectators.

There is more to this conflict between Slocum and Parsons over the nature of the College’s athletic programs than meets the eye. Slocum was an ardent supporter of the College providing a strong classical education to its students combined with a strong emphasis on personal morality. Parsons, on

¹ See “Colorado College,” *Mecca* (no date), 7-1, Photograph Files: Buildings-Campus Views-Collections, Special Collections, Tutt Library, Colorado College. The magazine article refers to the College being in its “twenty-eighth” year, which would be 1901-1902. That also was the academic year that President Slocum went on sabbatical to Europe.

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the other hand, represented the new and emerging ideas of the younger faculty, who wanted to move the College more in the direction of teaching practical science and leading the students toward a greater sense of their own identity and personal life choices.

There was in Colorado, until the year 1874, no educational institution in operation, organized for the work of college grade. There was indeed a thrifty germ embodied in the Colorado Seminary, which has since developed into a noble tree under the name of the "University of Denver;" but this institution, as a University, dates from 1880. There was also a clause in the fundamental law of Colorado, empowering the Legislature to create a State University; but no step was taken to the realization of this possibility until 1877.

In 1874, however, there came into actual operation, at Colorado Springs, an educational enterprise, which, by the terms of its charter, was bound to set before itself the ideal of a Christian College. As the first in the state in point of time, it received and still bears the name of Colorado College.

To be a Christian College, as has been said, was the ideal originally proposed for it. The sense in which its founders understood the terms "College" and "Christian" is well indicated in a sentence from the announcement, which they put forth in the same year in which the work was begun:

"The character which is most desired for this College is that of thorough scholarship and fervent piety, each assisting the other, and neither ever offered as a compensation for the defects of the other."

The ideal of a Christian College is a large one. It was not attained in the first year. It is not attained in the twenty-eighth. We do not know exactly how full an equipment, how universal an outlook upon science, the first builders pictured to themselves as the fulfillment of the desire of their hearts. Certainly it was larger than they saw in the actual institution of that time. Almost as certainly, it was much smaller than has since been realized. But their ideal, like every noble ideal, expanded as they worked up into it. It will expand for hundreds of years to come.

But the form in which the ideal was first conceived was sufficiently high to make the founders very jealous for the reputation of their degrees. Rather than give such as should be of low estimation, they preferred to give

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few degrees. Under the first president, James G. Dougherty, no degrees were given. Under the second, E. P. Tenney, the number was but small; though, of the men who studied in his college, and went elsewhere for a degree, the proportion of first-rate students was remarkable.

The third president, William F. Slocum, has been in all ways a builder. While raising, from year to year, the already high standard of the College, he has transformed its small classes to large ones, its comparatively restricted courses to the freedom of a broad election, its handful of instructors to a goodly company, and, in the material sense, has reared building after building on the college grounds, until now a dozen edifices, most of them of stone, stand about the single recitation hall in which, on his arrival in 1888, the work of instruction was carried on

The historic Pike's Peak, which in these same years has seen a noble growth on the part of the city at its foot, has in no part beheld a more vigorous and at the same time healthy and substantial expansion than that of Colorado College.

One may be excused for a flight of fancy in this connection, by saying that the sunrise as seen from just over the crest to the west of Pike's Peak might be typified by the intellectual and spiritual light of the educational sun consistently coming into more glorious view from the college buildings nestling half a dozen miles from the eastern base of the noble, rugged mountain.

Of all of Dr. Slocum's achievements as a builder, however, no other has equaled that which is now rising under the workman's hammer.... The Science and Administration Building [subsequently named Palmer Hall], long hoped for as a possibility, then anxiously awaited as a possible future good, is at last taking shape as an actuality. When the money for its erection had all been secured, and the contracts were let, Dr. Slocum embraced the opportunity to seek a year's well-earned rest, and is at present absent on a tour in Italy and Greece. The gifted and popular Professor of English, Edward S. Parsons, at present occupies the [president's] chair....

To forecast in detail the advance which the College will make when this building is complete is not easy; but there can be no mistake in predicting a large increase in the number of students, and a corresponding increase in every kind of expenditure. The new building means prosperity; but, far from offering a relaxation of effort, it demands an immediate and vigorous attempt to bring the endowment to a much more adequate strength.

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Eastern colleges of about the same size as this, besides charging three times as much for tuition, employ the income of from three to five times as large a fund. Colorado College, to maintain the grade it has won, must be as richly endowed as they.

At the close of an article of this character, it may not be inappropriate to refer to the question of athletics, and the influence exerted by brawn as well as brain on the degree of success attained and maintained by a college of today. The average student will certainly endorse the views of Acting-President Parsons as recently expressed to a [*Colorado Springs*] *Gazette* reporter. He spoke in part as follows:

“There is no doubt but that the athletic movement has attracted a great amount of public attention to our colleges; and, as most of them are dependent for support upon the public, I should say that it is a good thing for a college to be victorious in its athletic encounters with other institutions. All the world loves a victor. There is no doubt in my mind but that Colorado College has been materially benefitted by its victories. I know that President Slocum was always keen about the College winning its honors on the gridiron, and attached much value to it, not only for its effect upon the town, but upon the standing of the College as well.”

“On the other hand, I know that the standing of Yale was not affected during the period of its losses. I hardly think that any young man would take into consideration the victories of a college in determining which he would attend; and, while the victorious college may be more popular with the public, I do not think its pennants influence its numerical strength. I should say that its victories were beneficial principally because of the advertisement which the honor confers. In soliciting funds for the erection of the Science and Administration Hall [Palmer Hall], I have no doubt but that the task was less difficult because Colorado College has been unusually successful in its sporting combats for the past few years.”

“I think, if American colleges were more inclined to follow the English idea in athletics, that it would be better all around. Here [in the United States] we delegate a certain few to represent [a] college in its athletic encounters with other institutions. For instance, the attendance [of students] at Harvard is something like four thousand. Of this number, probably not more than a hundred and fifty to two hundred are actively identified with the athletic life of the college.”

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“In England, every student takes an interested and personal part in the athletics of the institution. In America, most of the students are content to sit around and do the shouting, but that is all. There should be a more general interest taken in sports of all kinds.”

“The athletic movement has had a most healthy effect upon the morals and manners of the student at college. It makes a good use of the animal spirits of the young man, and [it] makes him more gentle and a better man all around. The barbarous practice of hazing declines in proportion to the standard of the athletic training at the school. I am always proud when we win – proud of the boys, and proud of the school. I think the town also shares this feeling of loyalty to [Colorado] College.”