

Appendix

Letter from Guy Albright, Professor of Mathematics and Astronomy, Colorado College, to Professor Paul Peck, Grinnell College. This letter is in the Special Collections of the Tutt Library, Colorado College.

Colorado Springs, Colo

Oct 23rd 1917

My dear Peck:-

Your kind letter of Oct. 4 I appreciated very much, and I hardly know just how to answer it. A full explanation will make a long and unbelievable letter. Then, too, it seems unkind to permit those situated as you are in happy environments to know how others suffer, as tho the angels in heaven were called upon to contemplate the agonies of the damned in hell. My reputation for sobriety [*honesty? -hard to read*], truthfulness, and conservatism may suffer if I attempt to tell the story rightly, for no ordinary person is willing to grant that such people and conditions can be outside the story book. But you ask for the story, and I am going to try to tell enough that you can follow it.

No doubt the investigation will be taken up very shortly by the already appointed special committee of the Association of University Professors, and in the course of a year or two a report will appear. This will substantiate what I say. Many statements I shall make without offering proof simply because I shall attempt to save time. Whenever

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the statements are based only upon my own conjectures I shall make them with qualifications.

Before entering upon the story proper it may be well to furnish the setting and describe the chief actors.

Colorado College was founded in 1874 under the care and with the support of the Congregational Church. This support was less apparent in recent years and grudgingly acknowledged by the college authorities, but was so real that as late as the college year 1916-1917 part (one-third, I understand) of one professor's salary came from the church. Initially of course men of religious association played an important part upon board and faculty. It may have been in part for this very predominance of "the cloth" that the infancy of Colorado College was so feeble. Money was lacking; so were students. In 1888 the school was practically bankrupt, very small, and without standing of any sort.

At this time came William F. Slocum, fresh from a Congregational pastorate in Philadelphia, I believe, thirty-seven, strong, ambitious, backed by rich friends in the East, dominating, indomitable, aggressive, persuasive,

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eloquent, impressive in appearance and address. He laid hold of the little flabby college and the lukewarm backers and from the wreck built in twenty years a big, well equipped, fairly well known college. He allowed ministers and other professional gentlemen to slip from the board of trustees and replaced them with financiers of his own choosing, until in 1915 he had about him as trustees men whose chief attribute was money. One or two local trustees like Armstrong were men of college training and fairly broad horizon. A few far away had names with which to conjure. The others knew nothing of educational matters, cared nothing at all for Colorado College save that they were flattered to be its trustees, believed in Slocum through and through, and were willing from time to time to dig up a few thousand dollars from their millions to meet pressing needs. They did not question how he ran the college and were perfectly willing to accept his decision as their own so long as their toy did not cost them too much. Of course they did not know the men on the faculty and were

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of the opinion that Slocum should do exactly as he pleased with his teachers.

Now there has grown up in Colorado College a faculty which has some self respect and independence in spite of the autocratic control of the institution. The fame of the region, the unusual curative climate, and the keenness of Slocum in picking his men when opportunity offered drew together a group of men who are somewhat unusual. These men, chiefly through tramping together week after week in the mountains in sunshine and snowstorms, in bitter winter winds with the temperature below zero, through exposure in rain, and through debating about the blazing campfire, have been drawn so close together that each knows almost the unspoken thoughts of the others. This tramping group comprises all the old men of the faculty, every head professor, every man who has been teaching in the college since 1910 save one, and is a body of men drawn very intimately together and with knowledge of their power. No one can be false to his fellows and each must say and live the truth for the sake and

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the esteem of the others. Of this group a few stand out strongly.

Dean Edward S. Parsons is an ex-Congregational pastor. I think that his delivery was so bad that he was forced to give up preaching. One can stand him now and then but not as a steady diet! He is the most Christ-like man I ever met. His faults are self effacement, lack of firmness, and a readiness to be governed by the opinions of others.

Dean Florian Cajori, a Swiss by birth, is a scholar, really happy only when deep in some old manuscript in mathematics. He was caught by Slocum years ago and bought for a song when Cajori, broken in health, came to Colorado to seek a few more years of life. He feels that he owes

much to Slocum, hates a fight, and will for ever handicap the other man by giving him the benefit of the doubt.

Head Professor E. C. Hills was a scholar, and hated turmoil so much that he resigned to avoid it.

Head Professor E. C. Schneider is a fighter, and a very popular teacher and friend among students and alumni.

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Slocum had the qualities which make a first class promoter, but not many of those which are expected of one in which financial trust is placed. In 1911 Parsons and Gile, a professor now dead, found that Slocum, during a year when Colorado College had no treasurer or responsible officer to attend to the books transferred money from the college endowment to the fund for current expenses. They attempted to bring the matter quietly to the attention of the trustees, who they thought were desirous to protect the future of the college. The plan miscarried. Slocum learned of their action, convinced the trustees that what he did was right, brought (these seem to be the facts and are not denied) a former bookkeeper, distantly related to him, to work upon the books all one summer, and in the fall had an audit by a well known firm of expert auditors, and was gloriously whitewashed. Since that time Slocum and the trustees hated Parsons but feared to dismiss him because of his host of friends and because they really had no case against him.

In the fall of 1915 two young women,

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secretaries in the college, brought to the attention of Parsons and Schneider irregularities of the president. They also appealed to a woman physician who in turn brought the matter to the attention of a clergyman and another prominent man in the city. The two college professors called in Cajori and Hills, and accepted more evidence collected through the two secretaries and directly from others. The fact was that Slocum was an erotic. No woman was safe from insult when left alone with him. Stories by the hundreds and affidavits by the dozen poured in proving that college girls, women secretaries, wives of professors, married women in town, pretty or homely, old or young, all were liable to shocking caresses and suggestive language from Slocum. Someway, while rumors had been abroad for many years, nobody dared expose the old libertine. His position and his power as well as a woman's modesty protected him through twenty-seven years in Colorado Springs. He was hated by students and distrusted by faculty folk because of his faithlessness, his lying, and his double-dealing. But until these young women were goaded to speak,

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no one had the courage to attack him. He had put few agreements on paper and found oral contracts easy to break. He had raised his own salary to seven or eight thousand dollars in

addition to house, light, heat, some menial help, and, I am informed, traveling and entertaining expenses, and had kept down the salaries of his teachers with lies and impositions. He had elevated pets on the faculty and, according to rumor, paid an excellent but not college bred bookkeeper a five thousand dollar salary, and could not raise the wages of head professors beyond two thousand. No financial statements were published and no one knew what another received, and the statements offered to the newspapers were grossly exaggerated and contradictory. In spite of all this, all knew or felt that the trustees approved so completely of Slocum that there was no use to criticize the president openly.

The four men, Parsons, Schneider, Hills, and Cajori, through a former trustee carried the well established charges before two or three of the trustees who were known to constitute the active element on the board.

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They seemed to react like men, agreeing strongly that Slocum was not a fit man to be in charge of a coeducational institution. The matter was left in the hands of these trustees in December (or November) 1915, and it was supposed that they would in some quiet manner so as not to arouse comment permit Slocum to resign. Since he was now sixty-five and had shown some signs of age, it would be easy for him to resign on a Carnegie pension. All who knew the charges were bound among themselves to secrecy, to suit Cajori who was very desirous of saving Dr. and Mrs. Slocum the disgrace of publicity.

Now a strange turn was taken which is wrecking Colorado College. The best explanation I have heard is offered by Schneider and may have no truth in it. It is not mentioned in public and is probably not in the minds of half a dozen men. It is this. Slocum is a fighter, and was unwilling to give up. He was trying to raise an additional five hundred thousand dollar endowment, and had about half of it promised. He agreed to keep on with his endowment campaign and complete the amount if the trustees would

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not require his immediate resignation and would finally resign if they would fire Parsons and perhaps others who stood with the Dean. Probably this agreement was not put together all at once but was developing for over a year. Moreover it may have been understood by only two or three trustees. Anyhow it sheds light upon the occurrences of the next two years.

After December, 1915, nothing happened. Then the four men learned that Slocum was busy trying to get letters from former college students showing that his conduct was that of a gentleman and that the affidavits were false. His quiet campaign was producing the very condition which the men, particularly Cajori, feared. Alumnae were asking what this meant, and the scandal promised to come to the public. Along in the spring, therefore, the four men, the few trustees and Slocum in various interviews agreed that in June Slocum should retire from active

control, the college should be run by a committee of the faculty, and Slocum should lend his energies to raising the money. The trustees selected a committee of

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five, the three deans, Parsons, Cajori and Persons, and two others both henchmen of Slocum's, one a Dean of Women distrusted by many, the other the one old member of the faculty who had lied so frequently that students and faculty were exasperated with him, who was in the habit of bearing tales both true and false to the president and was so petted by the president that he was almost in personal danger from students much of the time. This committee the four men said was not a harmonious body and could not do effective administrative work. The president seemed willing to accede to any recommendation, and college closed with the understanding that the committee of the three deans would be in power in the fall.

The faculty, not one additional member of which knew of the fires raging under the surface, so well had the four kept their secret, scattered. Hills resigned, too sick of the whole affair to stay, but remained a few weeks at his summer house on account of meningitis in the east. About this time you saw us in the mountains and found us

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longing for more democratic conditions in Colorado College.

Apparently a few of the trustees thought this a good time to deliver a blow which would cripple the faculty four. Hills was supposed to be gone. Schneider was dangerously ill with typhoid. Cajori was supposed to be in Chicago. Parsons only was left, and he was to be scared into resigning. So he was told by a trustee that the agreement was off, the trustees resented as an insult the protest of the four faculty men regarding the committee. Hence the committee was dissolved and the president was to be in complete charge of the college until a successor could be chosen, and in as much as the trustees were going to take their time in finding a new president Slocum might remain in power for some time.

I suppose that if Parsons had reacted as many would have predicted he would have resigned. The few people in town who knew the facts would have been quieted and the matter might have closed. But Parsons did not resign. He stayed to fight. Legal advice was sought. All head professors

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and most of the full professors nearby were let into the secret. Copies of the women's letters were sent every trustee. Eleven trustees met with eleven professors about the middle of August, 1916. One of the active trustees lied and was exposed during the course of the six hour discussion. The professors were firm, and carried their point against the trustees. The result was that Slocum left in October, leaving the administration in the hands of Cajori, Schneider, and Parish, three men selected by the trustees from six elected by the faculty. Cajori and Parish

together with Schneider when he recovered from his long run of typhoid had a terrible year with the trustees, who attempted to thwart them at every turn. Conditions improved by spring and this Faculty Executive Committee made new appointments for the following year.

The alumni asked the trustees to select a committee to confer with an alumni body relative to alumni representation on the board. Armstrong was the only alumnus of Colorado College on the board, and he was not a representative of the alumni. The trustees made no answer, but elected another alumnus in June and made much of the fact that there were now three alumni on the board, the third being a man who long

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ago attended but did not graduate from Cutler Academy, the preparatory department of the college until a few years ago. The alumni again tried to reach the trustees with their petition, and the trustees appointed a committee which, however, never met the alumni.

Slocum and his friends planned a celebration for commencement over Slocum and the completion of the five hundred thousand dollar campaign. The faculty objected and many of the older students talked of taking action. Some of us counseled the students to keep quiet and let the trustees have their way. The faculty was persuaded chiefly by Cajori to accede to the wishes of the trustees and the vain president in order to offend the masters no farther and to bring about peace.

We all hoped that June had seen the end of the trouble. Slocum was definitely out. A successor was not chosen, but we believed that one would be found before September, and the trustees had been hunting so long that they should get a good man. A few more faculty members had been let into the secret due to remarks and letters which could be explained only when one knew the facts. For

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instance Peabody, an eastern trustee, took it upon himself, after he had entertained Slocum, to scold the faculty in a letter whose words were quite unintelligible to the initiated but called for explanation. The letter was sent to me as Secretary. I wrote to Peabody asking him to withdraw the letter because it would require the spreading of facts which we must all of us prefer to keep quiet. He ignored my request. The letter was read, and several more people had to know the facts. Still the scandal was being kept down pretty well. We began to breathe more easily when again the trustees broke out.

On July 8th Parsons and I were asked to resign. Parsons was given no reason and allowed no hearing, but was dismissed when he refused to resign. I was told that it was said that I had told students stories about President Slocum. On the day following, Monday, July 9th, the local papers screamed the news that alumni and trustees charged us with disloyalty to the college. On the same day Cajori pleaded with one trustee, Howbert, that I be given a trial. H__ protested that

I had shown the affidavits to several students who had reported the matter to trustees, that I had acted as secretary to

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the faculty group that had sent the charges against Slocum to the trustees, and that I had incited trouble among the boys of the fraternity to which I belonged. On Wednesday, July 11th, I was called before five trustees and charged with having placed affidavits before students, a trustee saying that trustees had been told by students that they had talked with students to whom I had shown the letters. Fortunately I had shown no documents of any sort to my best friends among the students and was able to deny the charge. Then I was charged lamely with talking about the financial affairs of 1911. I told them that I knew so little about those matters that I did not know what I could have said. Thereupon they gave me their version of the affair of 1911, and I took pains to learn more from others afterward. I was also told that what appeared in the papers did not come from the trustees. Also I was told that they did not intend to ask me to resign without a hearing. Anyway the matter was dropped, but I have never received apology or explanation or statement that my case was not to be followed up. The alumni as a body and many individually wrote to both Parsons

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and me to express their confidence in us and their feeling for the trustees.

The new president was chosen without seeing or consulting the faculty. He is trying to carry out the wishes of the trustees, and is very careless of the truth. He is repeating in public the things the trustees have been saying in private, viz, Slocum is a pure, high-minded Christian gentleman, very much wronged: Parsons is seeking the presidency: Parsons has no backing even among the faculty; no professor or group of professors is indispensable to the college and it would not much matter if fourteen professors left. And the professors are leaving. Woodbridge resigned in August, and the Registrar this month. At least six of the best men on the faculty are planning on leaving this year. It isn't worth fighting about. The trustees have a strangle hold on us and mean to kill us if the institution falls with us. Students are falling off and are on the point of striking. They have protested to the trustees by classes (Seniors and Juniors) and in a few days they are to have a mass meeting to make a more vigorous protest. The Congregational church, the alumni of Colorado Springs, Pueblo, and Denver and the faculty have protested.

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Henry Hall, Chairman of the Interstate Commerce Commission, a resident of Colorado Springs proposed over a month ago a scheme of arbitration to settle all questions at issue. The older members of the faculty accepted the suggestion and agreed to abide by the decision. The trustees, however, have made no reply to suggestion or petition. I fear that, having chosen a man

who swears that he will carry out their policy or resign, they are piling the whole infamous burden upon his back and pretend to have nothing to do with it.

We are hunting jobs, and are ready to take them at any time. If you hear of a vacancy in Biology, German, Economics, Philosophy, Education, English, Mathematics, or Astronomy or of an empty registrar's or dean's chair just remember that we have men who have taught from six to twenty-five years or have the qualifications needed, and have proved their ability and are ready to accept a good offer. Judging from what I see of the new man in the president's chair I can say that we have half a dozen men who are better presidential material than that used by our board of trustees. I am perfectly serious. Here is a chance to pick up a man in almost any line.

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It's horrible to work so long in a college and get so attached to the students, alumni, and professors and then have to go. And all this has occurred to us because we preferred the welfare of the college to personal gain. Now, of course, we are standing out for academic freedom and against autocratic government. I fully expect the president and trustees to stand pat, the students to fall off by hundreds, and the faculty to disintegrate. Already the alumni are urging students away from C.C., and you know what a force the alumni are either to build up or destroy.

In August, 1916, Parsons asked the trustees if they would like to see a report upon the administration of institutions like our own. Several of the trustees signified that they would be much interested and would like to see such a report. Within a short time we began the preparation of the report, a part of which has been published, the other part to be completed shortly and published if we can get it past the president. We soon guessed that the preparation of the report displeased Slocum and that he was arousing the trustees' anger against us because we should take it upon ourselves to collect statistics upon such a matter. No definite opposition was

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shown, however. The five thousand dollar treasurer scowled when the manuscript was placed in his hands, for only he could order its printing. Articles in the local papers stated that the faculty was preparing a report upon college administration and that the trustees were investigating the same matter. As tho ours was of doubtful worth and they were going to take time to check us up! We know, of course, that they did nothing of the sort. It may be said, however, that our report was only a contributing cause of the drastic action of the trustees.

Well, I have written at too great length and in a wandering manner. Pardon me. I guess that many of us are having our heads turned. I should surely think that we were no longer able to weigh evidence wisely did I not almost daily see others, business men and others who are or should be by training quite different from us in their viewpoint, align themselves with us and hear them express themselves more strongly than we about the trustees, who are deliberately

shattering the institution whose welfare is in their keeping simply out of personal malice and for vengeance.

Poor Armstrong has added many years to

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his age during this last year. He is gray and partly bald, and his face shows the effects of the worry. For he has thought much and cared a lot during this last year.

I long to get away to a place where I can teach without being constantly stirred by rumors and acts which should be quite strange to education. Soon I shall be advertized by teacher's agencies, and shall be repeating the job seeking of my youth. Some of us talk of giving up teaching and engaging in fruit growing or something of the kind. There ignorant rich men can't wield power over us as they do here. At any rate, we look forward sadly to the scattering. For a vindication by the Association of University Professors carries no weight with our trustees, and we men will not remain in their power.

The war has affected institutions very unexpectedly and not all in like manner. I hope that Grinnell has not suffered. Harvard, I understand, you and I would not recognize. It is truly a war college. But I should like to see it. Indeed I wish I were younger and independent. I should like to be with our boys in France or learning to fly!

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We spent part of the summer in California, visiting in many places, among them in Berkeley. Really we were disappointed in the University. Probably we had heard too much about its beauty and attractions. Perhaps a man from a little college is overwhelmed by a great university. At any rate I prefer the smaller school.

When we next blow up I shall let you know. Blow ups or blow outs are the only events of interest in Colorado College nowadays.

Mrs. Albright and Preston wish to be remembered to you.

Cordially yours,

Guy H. Albright