

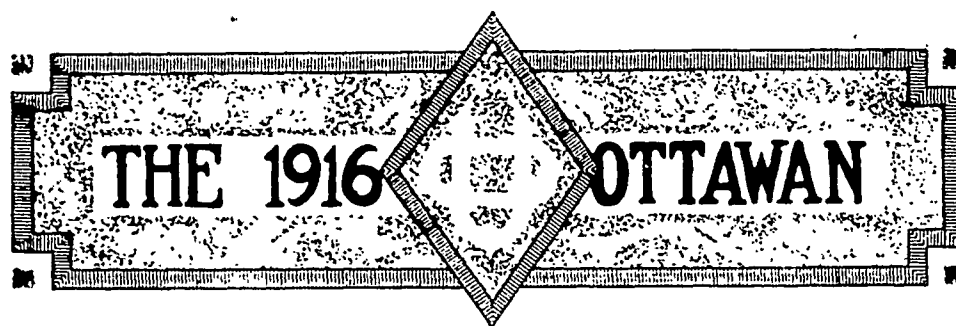
Ottawa University

Retrospect and Prospect

BY PROF. W. B. WILSON

WERE the annals of Ottawa University fully written, there would be enough in them of virile, sturdy, self-sacrificing action to challenge the loyalty of all her sons and daughters, and romance enough to warm the heart even of the casual reader. Perhaps no college in the great West has had a growth more typical of western conditions than has this intellectual mother. Her vicissitudes have run the whole gamut of favorable and unfavorable influence and yet she has survived, and her growth, though slow, indeed, has been steady.

Starting under the title of Roger William's University in about the year 1860, she like most institutions of destiny, existed for a long time only in the minds of a few men of vision and purpose. It remained for John Tecumseh Jones, a half blood Indian Missionary, to give tangible form to this vision of an institution of learning. He conceived the idea of founding a school for both Indians and whites on the Ottawa reservation. Through his influence and that of some of the leaders of the Baptist denomination of Kansas, a committee was appointed, Mr. Jones being a member, which conferred with the Indians and finally with the Congress of the United States in behalf of the new institution. An act was passed by the government by which 20,000 acres of the Ottawa Reservation were set aside for the use of the school. Two Indians and two whites constituted the first Board of Trustees. The first Board meeting was held August 20, 1862. It authorized the sale of 5,000 acres of land at \$1.25 per acre. The records, though meagre, indicate that a school was carried on in a building in the little cross-roads town of Ottawa, on what is now Main Street. A section of land just south of town was selected as a campus, a building was talked of, and large expectations loomed up in the minds of the early builders. But the Civil War put a stop to all these plans until 1865. When the war was over and the westward impulse of civilization held sway, the Trustees reorganized and secured a charter. At the request of the Indians the name Roger Williams University was dropped and the name Ottawa University, became the corporate title. J. T. Jones, J. S. Kalloch, C. C. Hutchinson, John G. Pratt, James King, Henry King and William Hurr constituted the new Board of Trustees under the chartered institution. Science Hall was planned and begun at once, though not completed until 1869, after many interruptions and delays. In the meantime many of the Indians withdrew and went to their new home in Indian Territory. In the readjustment of affairs, the school was left in the hands of the whites. It was agreed that the 640 acres retained by the University should forever be devoted to the



purpose of education under the control of the Baptists of Kansas, that it should never be mortgaged, and that, when sold the proceeds should go as endowment. In 1873 the Trustees were increased from seven to twenty-four men and the last of the Indian Trustees resigned. The number was increased again in 1910 to thirty-six.

When the old stone building was dedicated to its work in the early day, there was carved on the head stone of the main entrance the phrase, "*Fit Via Vi*," a most suggestive and appropriate motto for the institution of learning. The faculty at this time numbered four members among them Rev. Robert Atkinson, who was sent out by the Baptist Home Mission Society to become financial head of the school. Professor Ward served for a while on the faculty but resigned to accept a position at the State Agricultural College at Manhattan, returning to Ottawa in 1873. His connection with the College has been continuous since his return.

The progress of Ottawa University has been in the face of grinding poverty much of the time. Twice has she endured the test of fire. In 1874 the inner structure of Science Hall was destroyed by the flames at a time when the insurance had been allowed to lapse. And again in 1902 the recently completed Administration Building was razed to the ground by fire. Drouth and financial panic have harassed her leaders. But through it all friends with generous hearts and willing hands have sacrificed their means to help put the institution on a safe financial basis. Much remains to be done yet before we can say that Ottawa University is well equipped. The endowment has increased from time to time until it is now a little more than a quarter of a million dollars. Besides the campus of about 33 acres the institution holds about 50 acres near Ottawa and a small tract near Turner, Kansas, about 25 acres, with buildings on the campus valued at \$110,000.00. Our recently completed gymnasium comes at an opportune time, giving new enthusiasm to the student body and filling a long felt want.

Thus through fifty years of struggle with lack of funds, often with her fate in the balance, Ottawa University has been true to the high mission marked out by her progenitors. She has proved herself an ever-increasing blessing to the cause of truth and clean living. Hundreds of young men and women have gone out from her walls to carry into home, and church, and State, the ideals of Christian citizenship.

What shall we say of the future? One thing seems plain. It will not do to retrench. The watchword must ever be "*Onward*." A new Science Hall is an immediate, imperative necessity. Then there should follow a Library Building, a central heating plant, and general campus improvement. With all this the endowment must be increased to meet the ever growing budget of expense. We look forward confidently to the consummation of this material equipment and with it will come a larger realization of the ideals for which old O. U. was founded.

At the June commencement this year we celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the University. We hope the alumni and friends will have no other plan than to attend this celebration and help make the occasion the most enthusiastic in the history of the school. We take this opportunity to extend a most cordial welcome to you all.