

Along the Trail of the Friendly Years

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William E. Hatcher

**DR. HATCHER
WRITES ABOUT THE
BEGINNING OF
FORK UNION
MILITARY ACADEMY
IN HIS BOOK,
"ALONG THE TRAIL
OF THE FRIENDLY
YEARS."**

Soon after erecting this home at Fork Union, there grew into my heart a desire to be of some substantial service to the community. The people were agricultural for the most part, intelligent above the ordinary, and full of kindness for the new neighbor, and it seemed only fitting that some little return for their abounding hospitality should be made. After some meditation my choice settled upon the thought of a school which would afford the neighborhood far better educational facilities than it had ever had.

The start of it was too modest and timid to expect the movement to be made more than an enterprise of the community. The mention of the proposition set the neighborhood afire. The wildest and most enthusiastic approval broke out in every direction, and the little school started in a rented house with one solitary teacher, —a worthy bachelor of Richmond College, and with less than twenty scholars.

The growth of the school from the start has been out of all proportion to its resources. The neighborhood could

not furnish many students, but the young people began with the second year to come in with ever-increasing numbers, until for the present session (1908-1909) the enrollment has been about two hundred. The faculty, consisting of one at first, has grown to about one dozen in number, and besides ample and comfortable boarding arrangements, the trustees have erected a building capable of housing the faculty, the administrative officers, the gun room, the library and the literary society, and also of accommodating a large number of students. The trustees are now erecting a large building, including an armory, a public hall, a skating rink, and ample room for conducting the work of the academy.

To me this school has been a gracious burden and a taxing benediction. It has brought me into contact with hundreds of the choicest young people whose lives it has been my happy portion to touch. Ministerial students have come in great numbers: the sons of ministers have been educated at small expense, and ever so many youths have worked their way in different industrial lines which have been open to them in the neighborhood. Students have come from every section of our republic and from many foreign countries, and year by year we have witnessed the conversion of many young people who have found the Saviour under the good religious influences of the academy.

Not very long after the academy started, the Department of War at Washington, after due investigation, decided to give the school a military equipment and to detail an officer as Instructor in Military Science and Tactics. The new feature has worked admirably, and the discipline, efficiency and varied benefits of the military system have given the school rare prestige and a far-reaching reputation. That the school has drawn upon every resource of my life I can truthfully say, making its exactions exceed-

ingly heavy at times. It has been the pet of my latter days, and of all the facts of its life the most comforting and delightful is that it has never yielded me one dollar of income or support. It has not all it needs, and is not all that it ought to be, nor can I tell what its future will be, but I shall leave the world thankful for the good that it has done, and for the honor which has been mine in working with the good people of the community in the establishment of the Fork Union Military Academy.