

Dr. W. C. French, '07as, is commanding national recognition for his work in education. He is now the acting dean of the school of education of George Washington university and director of the summer school there. A pioneer in Oklahoma, a pioneer in educational measurements, an author and editor, this member of that Class of Notables ('07) is rightly termed by Miss Lee "A useful American."

W. C. French

A USEFUL AMERICAN

BY MUNA LEE, '12

DR. W. C. French, '07as, acting dean of the school of education of George Washington university, and director of its summer school for 1932 and 1933, has for some years been winning increasing recognition in the field of education. As a member of university faculties, as an author of widely-used text books, and as a lecturer, Doctor French has carried far afield his insistence on systematic and enlightened research into the history of education, and his progressive application and development of modern principles.

Doctor French was born in Texas. His family moved to Center, in the Chickasaw Nation, near Ada, while he was still a very small boy. His father was the general store-keeper in Center, and engaged in farming and cattle-raising as well. A threatened raid by the Christian brothers belongs to this period. Doctor French remembers his own boyish excitement, a mixture of fear and delight, as he watched his uncle bring home the money from the store and bury it in the garden, and saw the neighboring farmers arm themselves and wait grimly at the crossroads for the raiders to come: a precaution which forestalled the invasion.

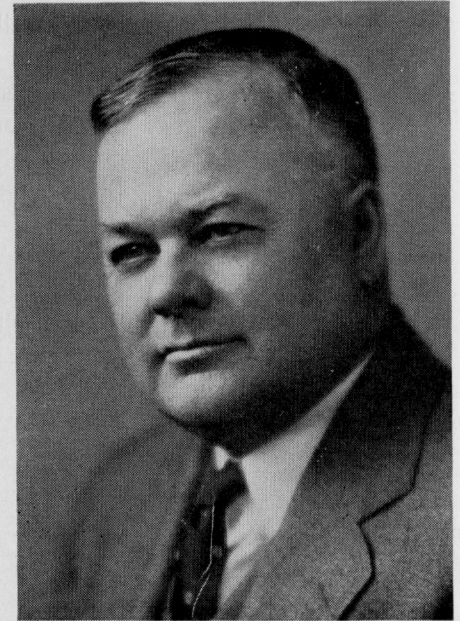
When a boy, he used to freight his father's goods from Paul's Valley to Center. This was a two-day trip, and meant camping out overnight. The thirst for education had already asserted itself, so he would tie the lines to the bows of the covered wagon, and let the horses jog along over the way they knew so well, while he read. An eastern boy under similar circumstances might have beguiled the miles with the adventures

of Jesse James or Buffalo Bill; this small boy of the west, to whom outlaws were no novelty and cowboys the natural order of being, ploughed through a set of books, *True Stories of Great Americans*, lent him by his father's friend and lawyer, Joe Thompson, later to be congressman from Oklahoma.

There were no good high schools in Oklahoma then. W. C. French went to Grayson college in Whiteright, Texas, for the four years of his secondary schooling. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Oklahoma in 1907.

After graduation, Doctor French held responsible positions on the faculty of several of the state schools. He was president of the University Preparatory school at Tonkawa, and, successively, was superintendent at Wagoner, Lawton, and Drumright. He was instructor in education at New York university, from which institution he received his Ph. D. His master's degree is from Chicago, to which he had a General Education Board Fellowship.

Doctor French was one of the first school superintendents of this country to make practical application of scientific measurements of attainment. His master's thesis, "An Evaluation of Thirteen Measureable Class-room Activities," was commended at length in the 1925 *Year-book* of the National Association of Secondary-School Principals. "Fifteen minutes a day devoted to such problems as that which was attacked by Superintendent French at Drumright," declared the commentator, C. H. Judd, "will ultimately give a body of information about administration which we do not have at



the present time." The Fourth *Year-book* of the Department of Superintendence of the National Education Association likewise reviewed approvingly Doctor French's study on Children's Letters.

Out of this work of teaching, investigation, and experimentation, developed the valuable books of which he has been editor, co-author, and author. "The Self-Directing Work Books" is a series widely used in the public schools; and immediate success greeted the Breed-French Speller written in collaboration with Dr. Frederick S. Breed, professor of education in the University of Chicago. Doctor French is also co-author, with Dr. Frank N. Freeman, likewise professor of education at Chicago; Miss Grace Storm, of the same university and Miss Eleanor Johnson, assistant superintendent of schools at Lakewood, Ohio, of the Child-Story Series of Readers, a popular and practical series based on the latest findings in education.

Election to the Cosmos Club of Washington, that gathering place of national celebrities, has been one of the pleasant recognitions he has received.

A man of great personal charm and a wide range of interests, he has the knack of fostering research; and his seminars at George Washington university are notable for the facts which they have unearthed and made available regarding little-known aspects of the history of education in this country. Graduate students, under his direction, have done exciting and important research in Colonial education, reporting upon much material hitherto neglected. Doctor French's work is being watched appreciatively by educators.