

## A Freshman's Trials and Experiences

His Period of Probation and the Processes of Learning How.

Anyone could tell that he was a Freshman. His air of careless abandon, his swaggering independence and utter unconcern indicated only too clearly that he had not as yet been ground between the mill stones of experiences and polished by contact with the vicissitudes and harrowings of routine college life. With a false self-possession he looks boldly into the faces of the passers-by with an assertiveness that proclaims his right to live and move and have a being and his triple-fold consciousness of the rights and privileges guaranteed him in the preamble of that immortal document, The Declaration of Independence. With his hands in his pockets and with a belabored and hackneyed imitation of last summer's popular tune issuing from his lips he surveys the tall buildings of the campus, outwardly seeming to take them as a matter of fact, while inwardly comparing them to the little meeting-house where he used to worship in the far off land of his birth.

Slowly and majestically he pounds up the stone steps of the main hall and anchors himself conspicuously in the midst of a group of veterans who view him with amusement and portray in their minds the long and difficult process he must undergo in passing through the various stages of enlightenment. There he stands, critically giving ear to their conversation, and wisely comprehending enough of its import to drag himself deeper into the mire of his arrogant misconception of the rules and by-laws that govern a student's status in the college community.

Mistaking their indulgence for interest, he breaks into their discourse with a volley of childish assertions, intending to show his intimate acquaintance with the intricacies and polluted state of class politics, but in reality laying bare his social position as a simple child of the soil with a distressing ignorance of the world and the ways of men. Heedless of the smiles of sarcasm that greet his efforts, he pursues his insane harrangue with relentless energy, smashing all the barriers of reserve and good sense that intervene between rationality and utter folly.

With a piquancy and versatility born of an excitable and unstable imagination, he narrates incidents of his career interwoven with veins of fallacy that show through in lurid streaks to the trained perception of his hearers. He entertains them with a thrilling account of how he won the foot-race on the 4th of July, how he climbed the greased pole and captured the prize at the top, and how he carried home in triumph the grease-bedaubed porker that tried to elude his untiring pursuit in vain. He also tells how Deacon Walker's cow fell into the well and was hauled out not hurt a bit; how Old Mother Smith went wrong at the religious meeting and hollered "Glory Hallelujah!" and upset the stove; how he hung the dead rat to Parson Davis' door knob on Hallowe'en night, and how Red Walker—the famous slab artist—had devoted an afternoon in attempting to fan him, Red's foxiness and strategy meeting at every turn with ignominious failure, as he hammered the ball to the four corners of the earth, sending it upon one occasion through the open window in the second story of the Grand Opera House. He tells of an amusing incident that Fatty Donald figured in. Fatty went to call on his best girl one night, and they sat out on the front stoop to talk it over. New Fatty was of a somnolent disposition and as the evening advanced he wandered into the land of Morpheus (I think that's the place). Anyhow the girl's romantic nature did not harmonize with the low sweet love song that Fatty's snores wafted to her ears and you can't guess what she did. She took a piece of paper and wrote on it, "I hope you'll wake up in time for breakfast," and then left him snoring away. Fatty felt pretty sick when the story got out, and the boys would always snore when he came within two blocks of them. Old Davy Byers pretty near busted himself laughing and thought it was the richest thing he ever heard.

After he had thoroughly acquainted his long-suffering subjects with his own

sense of importance, he begins his search for the place where he must make himself solid with the powers that purport to be. After an invasion of the basement, the Chancellor's office, and the open rooms of the chemical laboratory, he finally finds some man with a true Christian spirit who helps him through the ordeal of getting his high school credits examined and finding the registrar's office.

He takes his place in the line, forming a unit in the sweltering and turbulent mass of humanity that is bent upon squeezing through the narrow door, all at the same time. Inch by inch he moves up, until at the very verge of the goal. Then life becomes unpleasant. A sharply pointed elbow coincides with the lower portion of his diaphragm and he bespeaks his annoyance. He stands on tip-toe to get a view of the interior of the room, and someone yells, "Rubber." He sees a pretty girl standing near him and he stops and looks at her. He has nearly caught her eye when a paper wad from an unseen quarter takes him in the back of the neck, and makes him feel mad and silly. Finally he is caught in the rush and carried through. And then comes another wait, and an opportunity is given for the dents in his anatomy to smooth themselves out and his organs of respiration to regain their normal efficiency.

Before him is a wall of students either trying to get or retain a place at the desk, each one cursing or crying—under his breath. A gap finally appears and with cyclonic velocity he rushes in, and finds himself gazing into the in, and finds himself gazing in the classic and placid countenance of the registrar. He is handed a slip of paper, which he takes with as much promptitude and decision as a man would display upon being sewed up with a live crab for dinner. However, an idea hits him that he is to write down what he wants to take. This done he extends the slip toward the registrar with a violence of movement that causes that dignitary to duck in genuine alarm for the safety of the point of his jaw. Then an explanation follows. Poor Freshie has overlooked the matter of paying his incidental and matriculation fees and the avarice of the treasurer must be satisfied. He must fight his way out and return again. If Arnold von Winkler had had such a task as that when he tackled the bristling line of the Austrians, he would have given it up for a bad job and taken to the woods. But our hero succeeds and ere the gathering shades of night envelop this section of the world, his name is enrolled on the list of the faithful and he is a part—not the whole—of the student body of the great University of Nebraska.

Saturday night comes and he goes to the Y. M. C. A. reception. Though somewhat dazed at the largeness of the hall and the intensity of the light, he is encouraged by the show of good fellowship and makes himself at home. He meets many of his own genus who are at the same stage of evolution and who have also far to travel in ascending the scale of civilization. With a dutiful civility he seats himself and folds his hands all orderly while the speaking is in progress. In the intermission that follows previous to the serving of refreshments, he makes a number of acquaintances, whose names and faces glide from his memory as soon as they pass from notice. He finds a friend at last with a disposition similar to his own, and to him he relates a thrilling adventure:

"Had to pack up and git in a hurry," he exclaimed. "Hit the cop with a rotten lemon. And say, Mister, you ought ter seen him hop. Just like a mule with his tail afire. And I didn't stay ter console him, neither. I lit out in a rush for tall timber. Jumpin' Moses, but he was hot."

It is time now to serve the sherbet, and a grand rush is instituted for the locus of the supply. Our hero rushes in among the foremost, with the same intensity of purpose that a small boy exhibits in going to pieces where he has been told not to go. An account of his experience can best be gleaned from his own vernacular.

"I didn't mean for a minute to be at the tail-end when it came to diggin' in

for the ice. And I wan't neither. I slipped in and poked my saucer under the nose of the guy that was servin' it up. Then I swooped down on the Nabiscos, and made such a hole in 'em that the Missus a handlin' 'em told me to chase myself in a hurry. I worked my sandy a couple of times more before they got wind of what was up. And then they shut down on me. But that didn't make no difference. I got into a hungry crowd that said they hadn't had any yet, and I fooled 'em slick and got into the push for a fourth dish."

It is Monday morning now and he sets out for his class. How he misses the old high school bell and how he wishes he could recite all his lessons in one room. After a toilsome search he locates his class rooms and goes in to tremble under the hollow dignity of the profs. He is called upon to recite and with a sudden and convulsive effort he staggers to his feet, only to be told to seat himself and fire away from his first line of defense. He is pleased to meet his class-mates and is determined to treat them all alike, and show favor to none. But somehow a certain amount of reserve toward him. This he attributes to shyness, and continues to be "hail fellow well met."

He goes around to the first night's try-out at drill. With the rest of the effervescent youths, he rushes in to secure a place, surging and pushing with the rest of them with all the energy that a force of men might exert in extricating a fat man caught in a narrow water-pipe. As the days go by he is subjected to the setting-up exercises. Fearfully obedient he executes the various movements at the command of the stiff before him, who forgets he is nothing more than a human being like himself. He is mildly told "ter stand-up and get the crook outer his back," to "keep his hands down ter his sides with his feet at an angle of 45 degrees." Each evening he crawls around and suffers in misery and gallops home in delight when the torture is finished. At the end of two weeks he has become quite an accomplished jumping-jack.

At the end of two more weeks a marked change in his demeanor and deportment is observed. He has become more sober and less noisy. His clattering tongue no longer disturbs the quiet of the campus, nor does his mirthful laughter drive the birds from their nests. The dagoes feel that their wares are more secure and are recovering from the severe nervous strain that they have been subjected to. The "hot tamale" man drives his car through the streets without dreading lest the windows be broken and without having to fire uninvited passengers off the back steps. The slot machines are enjoying a rest, and their penny-clutching contents have ceased to slide.

The Freshman is becoming acclimated. He has begun to see college life as it really is. With a crushed spirit he stands meekly aside waiting for the proud Soph or Junior to pass, and retires humbly to a distance when a noble and stately Senior approaches. Under a mighty load of sorrow he plods along to his classes, fearing to raise his eyes from the ground lest someone might taken offense and hit him.

Day by day he pursues this weary round, but he is learning. He will not always be a Freshman and the distant future holds out a brighter prospect for him. In the passing of time he will be wiser and stronger and may even bring others to respect him. He has a hard lesson to learn, but when it is once mastered he will have a strongly developed character and a storehouse of experiences that will always stand him in good stead.

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