

Reminiscences of the Old High School

Some Incidents of Former Times That Are Familiar to Us All.

They come to us all every once in a while—those memories of by-gone days when we basked in the intellectual atmosphere of that frowsy old high school. It comes as a relief in the midst of the sufferings attendant upon the absorption of higher education, to look back upon the scenes that memory recalls. How one loves to dwell upon each one as they pass in review upon the canvas that memory unfolds!

Don't you remember the day when you had severed your connections once for all with the grades and marched through the portals of the high school, where so many fond recollections are clustered. Don't remember how vaguely you regarded the mixture of faces about you, and how in time you came to know each one of your fellow classmen? Don't you remember the pretty girl who sat across the aisle—the manner and means of procedure with which you started to make her acquaintance? Don't you remember how splendidly you were getting along, when that paper was taken from behind the ear and turned your bliss to misery? Don't you remember how you laid for that fellow that night after school and thumped him till he hollered "Nuff."

But after awhile everything began to run smoothly, and you learned that "Gaul as a whole is divided into three parts." And about that time the literary society started. The professor and his two assistants generally acted as judges, while you all had to take your turn at arguing before the year was over. And there were some mighty momentous questions discussed in those days. For instance, the respective merits of the horse and the bicycle were brought out and expatiated upon in their very best lights. And there was one point that always mitigated against the horse in the minds of the boys in the class at least, namely, that one doesn't have to carry water to a bicycle.

Now, the horse and the cow are too pretty good animals and they both have many fine points, but as to which is the best was a question sometimes discussed. Once upon a time one able exponent of the horse's good points was striving to draw some conclusions by comparison. "Suppose," he said, "Phil Sheridan had come dashing into Winchester riding a cow. Wouldn't that have been noble and poetic? Wouldn't that have been grand and elegant? What a magnificent spectacle it would have been to see him come dashing up on a cow all covered with foam, with fire in her eye and chafing at her bit, while scarcely restraining her fiery spirits, she paws the ground, anxious to kick up her heels and sail into the rebels." And then, too, how logically he met his opponent's clinching arguments wherein the latter demanded to know what would we do for milk if it wasn't for the cow, by stating that we could use condensed milk. And when convinced of the fallacy of this statement he retrenched and said, "Use goats." And then his opponent got in his work by making his astounding proposition: "Suppose a man had a son seventeen feet high and sent him out to milk a goat, how would he do it?" That was a clincher. It was evident that a person seventeen feet high would have some difficulty in milking a goat. Well that was the general style of discussion and although a thousand examples might be quoted the attempt would be useless.

What characters do these recollections call to mind! The youth who worshipped at the shrine of Sophor and dozed blissfully during the class period. How calmly surprised he was when he woke to the realization of his position and struggled strenuously to recall his scattered faculties and answer the question propounded to him. What a first-class fizzle he made of the attempt, and, how witless he looked when the class laughed. And don't you remember the day when he tumbled out of his seat—the horrible clatter of his feet as they ponderously struck the floor with a crash and a bang that made the windows rattle? How the girl in the seat in front of him yelled, "Murder!" and tipped over the coal-scuttle in her break for the door?

Don't you remember that old degenerate, whom the citizens in their ig-

norance elevated, not to the position of high and mighty ruler of the universe, but to the board of education? How he used to nose in and disturb the class recitation? With what an air of intellectuality did the old ignominious fasten his grip upon that Caesar which the teacher proffered him. How wise he looked, as he adjusted his spectacles and glared at the unmeaning stuff, and how hypocritically knowing he looked. Can't you see him sitting there now with that old Prince Albert coat and those high-water pants? Can't you see him now, as he rises to inflict his insane remarks upon the awe-stricken class? How he told of the little boy who achieved such terrible triumphs—both intellectual and material—and how he rounded up the full intent and purpose of his perverted loquacity, by springing that ill-fated, malicious old saw, "Children, that little boy now stands before you." With what a measure of satisfaction did the "little boy" fold his hands and stare contentedly at you like a cow at a bucket of bran. How degenerate you felt, when you reflected on the error of your ways and resolved to pattern your future course after the perfect model cited to you.

Well, there were lots of other things, too. Don't you remember the girl who played the organ for the school to sing and how she struggled through the harder parts in solitary grandeur? The boy who put the bunch of cigarette papers in the professor's Bible and forgot to take them out; and how he paid the penalty? How you all sat awe-struck at the rhythmic whacks of the strap out in the hall were wafted to your ears? The girl who had high ideals and a lofty purpose to lead her in her course through life? The boy that sent the principal a funny valentine and was given an opportunity to explain his kind remembrance before the school board. And the fat boy who tumbled down stairs and cried for his mother. Of course you remember these things, and many more besides. After awhile you grew older and more versed in the ways of the world. The literary society was still in existence, and exciting debates often occurred. There was, of course, a bright boy, who had numerous ways of meeting any kind of an argument that could be advanced. The question, "Resolved, That a pig is better than a dog," came up. His opponent, the leader on the affirmative, undertook to show the commercial value of the pig, while our attachment to the dog was only a matter of sentiment. Our hero proceeded to smash this argument by a course of reasoning running something like this: "A pig is a noble and affectionate animal. When one comes home at night it comes bounding down the hill to meet you and fawns at your feet. When you are in sorrow it lovingly licks your hand in sympathy. It stays about the house and would defend you or your property with its life. So always remember when you are feeling blue and when everyone seems turned against you that the pig will be faithful to the last."

There are hundreds of things that happened. The school bell certainly suffered its share of tribulation. Sometimes it was its clapper that would be purloined through the machinations of malicious youths. And sometimes its tones sounded through the night to warn the authorities that it was being unlawfully imposed upon and appealing to them to bring speedy relief.

There were snow-ball fights, too. And of course, the principal got hit in the side of the head while amorously conversing with one of the handsomest of the grade teachers. No doubt it was accidental, but for all that the big black strap that hung on the nail in his office was called upon to render invaluable services. In the natural course of events one of the girls ventured in and stopped the force of a swiftly flying mass of compact snow with her ear, which caused her to shed tears of unspeakable sorrow and grief as she fled for the fastness of the school house to wall piteously in long drawn out tones. She just knew the boy who threw the ball, and as a consequence there was more grief than pleasure for him in the interview in the principal's office that afternoon. And that spoiled the game for the rest of the winter.

In those days there was no grand, noble, intangible college spirit to buoy you up, so that you might exert yourself to a superhuman degree in laboring for the good of your institution, yet sometimes you were possessed of an indescribable feeling that urged you to proclaim your distinction as a member of the high school. It was this feeling that persuaded you to join in the party that took the professor's cow and shut her up in the empty store-building, where she passed the night in great disquiet and unrest. How plaintively she made known to the outside world that she was a prisoner, protesting in deep chested tones against the inhumanity of man. How angry was the professor when he discovered the absence of his faithful cow, and with what ill-grace did he lead her forth from her captivity back to her domicile. At least they started back together, but the cow was in great haste, and soon the professor found himself propelled at full speed through the main street, hanging onto that rope as if it was a bond uniting him to his dearest friend, whom he was in great fear of losing. They traversed the street together, the professor going along with undignified springs and hops, and sometimes mounting high into the air, as a result of a sudden acceleration of speed. Of course, the whole town turned out to look. But finally he fell humbled to the dust, and the cow sped homeward unchecked in her flight. What was it he said, as he picked himself up? Well, perhaps, you don't remember, but he must have said something. But you know what he did when he got home. The whack, whack, whack that emanated from the cow shed to the ears of the neighbors was a certain indication that he was engrossed in the act of administering justice to his wayward cow, and there's no telling what the poor beast may have suffered.

Don't you remember the little dialogue he enacted in school one day when he was in an ultra-facetious mood? The assistant principal dropped her handkerchief, and he essayed to pick it up.

"Now," he said to the class, "I want to show you how to pick up a lady's handkerchief. Never bend over so that the blood rushes into the face or she will think that you are confused. Get down on one knee like this, with your head held up, and pick it up like this." Then he picked it up, and dangling it daintily between his thumb and forefinger he proffered it to the teacher, who stood looking silly and confused, and, blushing deeply. But, O, merciful heavens! While he was in the very act, while in this posture, his wife stalked in. She stood there for a moment, eyeing him coldly, as if cut to the heart by his unfaithfulness. And then, noting the impressive silence that reigned, he turned and saw her. Did you ever see anyone that looked sheepish? Did you ever see a professedly pious person caught in a mean act? If you have, wasn't there a close analogy of expression. A person wonders how he went about to explain it all. It must have been a very difficult task.

Don't you remember the big victory that the football team won, and the big blowout you all had after it? How you tore up the "Old Dutchman's" side walks to feed your bonfire, and how

mad he was about it? What a good time you all had when he came out to protest, in hooting him? How you shattered the stillness of the night until Bud Tyler, the town marshal, came down and made you suspend operations?

There are a thousand things that one can remember, each one of which will bring up some fond association, making each of us feel that we would like to do it all over again. One of these was the occasion when two of the boys made a wager with the professor that he couldn't burst a keg by water pressure. He went down town and got the keg and the piping himself in his anxiety to prove his point. And after he got all his apparatus ready, the rods being screwed together and rising from the keg to the level of the top of the school house, like a pipe stem attached to the bowl of a pipe, one of the boys had to spoil matters. He shoved a corn-stalk down in the rod, well out of sight. The professor poured in water until he supposed the pipe was full, but the barrel held out nobly. How hard he worked. And how at length he had to admit in a shame-faced manner that the experiment was a failure. But when in the natural course of events he found out the deception, it is hardly likely that he felt pleased.

How pleasant it would be to review these little incidents one by one, but the time is lacking. Only one more event can be recalled, and that was an important one, marking as it did a milestone in your life.

Don't you remember the uncertainty and doubt attendant upon graduation? How you sat in a state of nervous prostration awaiting your turn to orate? How horribly still it seemed and how terrifying your voice sounded? How the baby in the audience squaled? How you finally gained confidence and disclaimed in strident tones the most momentous and newly found truths? How dizzy you were when the forced acclamation of the audience greeted you and you plunked down in your chair, feeling as if a weight of tons had been shifted from your shoulders?

Don't you remember—well, we'll take it for granted that you do, and let you recall the rest for yourself.

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