

NONDESCRIPT.

SOME HISTORY.

This is Charter Day—or will be if THE HESPERIAN appears on time. The day is one we celebrate for various reasons, principal among which is the fact that one cold night along in 1881 Professor Aughey delivered a lecture in the chapel, telling us that the University was founded on the 15th of February, Anno Domino eighteen hundred and sixty-nine, and that we ought to observe that day in an appropriate manner. We were trying to do that on the night of the speech. The room was half filled with frozen people, or filled with half-frozen people, or something like that, and in addition to the aforementioned speech some college songs were given to the suffering audience. The present Senior class was out in force, sitting in a row on the front seats, enjoying the exercises with all the happy gusto of innocent Prephood.

The next year witnessed a mighty change, as the Sop'a would say in his oration. The college paper, then called THE HESPERIAN STUDENT, was in debt to the extent of forty dollars and a mortgage on its soul and body was about to be foreclosed. One week before Charter Day, some bright man suggested an entertainment, as a means of raising the necessary lucre, and a committee was appointed without delay. The affair was extensively advertised and evening found the chapel packed with students, who paid for admission at the rate of two for a quarter, citizens who were taxed twenty-five cents, and several members of the faculty, who were compelled to pay a half a dollar apiece before being admitted. The programmes were printed on the backs of huge comic valentines, and showed a few eccentricities of illustration, construction, and expression that would have done credit to any funny almanac ever published. The programmes, however, did not equal the programme. All the absurdities that could be devised were placed on exhibition. A smile is necessary even now when one recalls the orchestra, the military company, the singing class, the Charter Day oration by John Dryden, and the wonderful phonograph. This last instrument was a simple wash tub and clothes wringer, the handle of which was gravely turned by "Monsieur Hippolyte, of Africa," while the Cadet Band, behind the scenes, wheezed out "Sweet Bye and Bye." The last act was a burlesque faculty meeting in which every professor was personified by a reckless student. The meeting was a racy one, in which University affairs were discussed with a boldness that would at the present time secure a vacation for the participants. The whole was a tremendous success, principally because it was largely impromptu and the boys threw themselves into the spirit of the thing with the abandon of trained actors. In spite of the low admission fee more than enough was cleared to free the paper from debt. Humorously it was called a success, George McLain declaring afterwards that the floor yielded him a peck of buttons at the next sweeping.

In February 1883 there seemed to be no general desire to celebrate our birthday, consequently the Palladian Society resolved to use the date for an entertainment that had been contemplated for some time by a few of its reckless members. It was to be an Ethiopian affair, and the widely scattered bills called the participants "Refined College Minstrels." There are at least a dozen members of that famous company still in the University, and they often speak of the three weeks spent in rehearsing their heavy parts as a period of unalloyed enjoyment and ceaseless flunking. The audience did not differ very materially from the crowds that gather at the present time to hear special programmes. The curtain was drawn and a semi-

circular row of blackened visages smiled serenely upon the expectant multitude. An orchestra, consisting of tambourine, bones, two violins, a double bass, a cornet and a piano (presided over by Mr. Charles Sumner Allen, of the class of '86), had been formed for the special purpose of adding gloom to the occasion. It played an overture of some length in order to prepare the victims for the jokes that were to follow. Of these one sample will be given, and one only. "Bones" looks around and inquires the name of the theater in which the company have the honor of playing. He is assured that it is not a theater, but simply a college chapel. Of course he wants to know why it is called a chapel, and then comes the denouement: "Because some chap'll freeze to death here one of these days." With rare fortitude that unhappy audience remained in their seats during one whole hour of such unpleasantness. Then they had a diversion in the way of a "Shakespearian Revival" that was indeed startling. The play of Julius Cæsar was represented with a faithfulness that would have put to shame Salvini, Booth, Keene or Buffalo Bill. The noble Romans, clad in borrowed sheets for togas, and armed with cheese knives, hacked up poor Cæsar on that old chapel rostrum in a way that was beautiful to behold. Then when Mark Antony, disguised as C. S. Polk, harangued the motley crowd from his post behind the old pulpit, there was scarcely a wet eye in the house. It was beautiful. Once the orator grew fervid and declared that the Preps, or somebody else would gather and "fight for Cæsar 'till the cows come home." Then he turned to pathos and drew out Cæsar's necktie and worked on the feelings of the Roman tough. "You all do know this necktie; I remember the first time ever Cæsar put it on; 'twas on a Friday evening, in his room, and 'twas used to hide a dirty shirt." The acting was spirited throughout, and the few changes that were made in the text of the play served to make the whole stronger and more pointed than the original. There were other things on the programme, but with the possible exception of "Tackhammer, a colored extravaganza," they were unimportant and need no special mention. The people who were decoyed into the chapel on that eventful night managed to recover in the course of a week or two, but the upright and moral newspaper men of the capital city have never gotten over the nervous prostration brought about by witnessing the performance. It was a jolly, careless, harmless way of celebrating, but it will never be repeated in the University for various reasons. One is that when the chapel was remodeled the stage was made too small to accommodate a minstrel troupe. Another reason is—well, the one we have given is enough. That show in '83 was the last of its kind in the University.

In the following year the day was observed, but as the exercises were sober and earnest they were not appreciated by the rather wickedly disposed young man who masquerades in these columns as the Nondescript. In this history, then, 1884 will be a blank page, and all who are anxious to read a full report of those doings are respectfully referred to the *Sombrero*. (Copies can be had at this office at the rate of three for a dollar.)

There is really no necessity for our writing up 1885. It is but one short year since last Charter Day, and the events should be fresh in the minds of all who were in Lincoln when the celebration took place. Then, the circumstances were so peculiar and so liable to be misunderstood that the task of the historian is indeed a hard one. No full account has been published, however, and in order that old students and our exchanges may learn even at this late day what was done, we will give the sad story briefly and with absolute accuracy. Charter Day came on Sunday, and the University did not cele-