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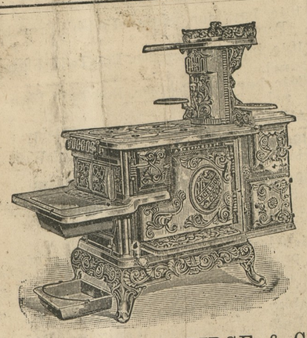

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COLLEGE REMINISCENCES.

James A. Pearce, Esq., Gives a Most Interesting History of His Life at Washington College, His Classmates, &c.

The following paper was read by our fellow townsman, James A. Pearce, Esq., at the banquet given at Shuster's Dining Parlors, Chestertown, by the Mt. Vernon Literary Society, on Washington's Birthday, and he furnished it for publication at our on our request:

The reminiscences of my college days date from January, 1854. I had never then attended any school, public or private, having been always taught at home, and the awe with which I looked forward to entering college was something inexpressible. I went literally in fear and trembling, both of teachers and students, for I had no brothers, and had but little contact with other boys. But the wind is always tempered to the shorn lamb, and I soon found my awe giving way to other feelings. The Principal at that time was the Rev. Francis Waters, a stately and impressive old school gentleman, distinguished as an instructor and disciplinarian, and as kindly as he was dignified. I shall always admire and cherish his memory—as a true gentleman and scholar.

It was my fortune, however, to be at first under the direction of a tutor whose name I need not give, and whose intellectual qualifications were ample, but who was not himself a gentleman, and had no conception that a boy could be a gentleman. He succeeded in making me very miserable during his reign, and time has not yet efaced the recollection of many unfeeling insults offered by him to me and to others whose progress or conduct did not win his approbation. I shall never forget my first recitation in Latin with him. I had a fair elementary knowledge only in grammar and could read the opportunity to a reader, alone, without [illegible] others, and I was measure myself wie on the first book of put in the [illegible] class with a number of students older, and much better prepared than myself. The opening words of that lesson are as fresh in my memory to-day as they were 40 years ago—"dum paucos dies [illegible] when I gazed at and pondered over Vesontio nem morantur. I could not read the Latin without trembling and halting, and I could not render it into even decent English. As for parsing, I did not know what that meant, and after some days' hopeless effort to keep up, I was degraded from the class into which I should never have been put, and found myself in a lower class, where, under the influence of a better man and teacher, I succeeded in acquiring some knowledge of my Latin studies. Dr. Waters was succeeded as Principal by Rev. Andrew J. Sutton, who was educated at St. Mary's College, Baltimore, in its palmy days, and it was my good fortune to be thrown chiefly under his personal instruction. His general scholarship was high, but in his mastery of the English and Latin tongues he was the peer of the best man I have ever known. His English was drawn from the undefiled wells of Chaucer, and he read and spoke the Latin language with a charm of accent and intonation which was indescribable, and rendered it into English, with a clearness and elegance which was the admiration of all who heard him.

I have listened to readings by him from Virgil, Horace, Cicero and guvenal which the classes of Yale or Harvard might have been proud to hear; and I have heard sermons from him which I am persuaded would not have done discredit to any pulpit in America or England. The text of one I can recall to-day as freshly as if it were yesterday—"The mountains shall bring peace and the little hills righteousness"—and while the lapse of time has effaced from recollection the scheme of his argument and the language in which it was clothed, it can never efface the recollection of its power and beauty.

"Green be the turf above him,
Friend of my early days;
None knew him but to love him,
None named him but to praise."

In those days we had few or none of the advantages which you now have, though these, I am aware, are limited as compared with those of richly endowed institutions. We had three—sometimes four—teachers, and during most of my time but one building, the present centre building. At that time the boarders were all lodged in the four rooms on the third floor of the centre building, which were thus required to accommodate at one period something over 40 students. These rooms were known as "The Nursery," "The Apple Orchard," "The Grog Shop," "Saint Peters," and the names were supposed in some sort to reflect the condition and character of the occupants, though the vivid imagination of youth had much to do with the coloring of this picture. The bad were not so bad—and I fear the good were not so good—as they were painted.

While I was a student at the college the present east and west buildings were erected. The second floor of the west building was known as "Broadway," and the third floor as "Pig Alley," and the character and habits of the residents in some sense justified these names. The citizens of Broadway were comparatively neat and orderly; the denizens of Pig Alley neglected the amenities of college life. During the day (for I was a day scholar), I occupied No. 6 Broadway, the last room on the right going south, which was the home of my friend and classmate, Samuel K. Dennis, of Worcester county, Md., one of the best boys and best men, I believe, that ever lived. Without brilliancy of mind or high scholarship, he had such rare common sense and conscientious purpose that he was able to take a respectable position in college, and after reaching manhood discharged every duty of life with a fidelity and discretion very rarely seen. After more than thirty years of honorable service to his county and State, his name is embalmed in the affectionate remembrance of the people among whom he was born and bred and died.

Among the students with whom I was associated at Washington College were Mr. Thomas W. Eliason, Mr. Samuel Vannort, Col. W. J. Vannort and James H. Baker, of Kent county; Henry A. Nowland, now of Delaware; Mr. James Brown, of Queen Anne's; Hon. Charles H. Gibson, of Talbot; Dr. John Parker, of Snow Hill; Charles Lake, of Dorchester; John H. Kennard, of Kent county, afterwards a Judge in New Orleans; and J. Upshur Dennis, of Somerset county, now Judge Dennis, of Baltimore, the youngest student at the college and the pet of all.

I did not graduate at Washington College. From there I went in December, 1857, to Princeton, and though admitted as a Sophomore half advanced, I may say with becoming modesty that I graduated in 1850 second in a class of 88; and let me add, gentlemen, that nothing but determination and unremitting labor enabled me to accomplish that result. In my class there were five men whose fathers had themselves taken the first honors of their class at Princeton, and each of these, with others, were striving for the same distinction. These five were Charles E. Green and Edward D. Halsey, of New Jersey; Wm. G. Upson, of Ohio; John C. Groome, Jr., of Maryland, and myself. The first honor was carried off by Upson, one of the worst stutterers I ever heard, but endowed with splendid powers of mind and with a determination which enabled him to stand without flinching before the class in a silent struggle with his dumb devil, until at last he gained control of his vocal organs, when he would extort the applause of the class by his splendid rendition and translation of Greek and Latin. But the promise of his youth was not followed by fruition, and he went to an early grave, the victim of over-work. I had the good fortune to be second on the roll, Halsey was third, Greene fifth; Groome died before graduation, standing among the first ten in the class. Green and Halsey are to-day eminent lawyers in their native State. But those of my class who have achieved material success—who have accumulated wealth—were, with one notable exception, not among the real students or scholars while in college. The wealthiest man of my class to-day was an army contractor during the war—I need not say upon which side; the next wealthiest, had the sagacity to buy a large tract of land underlaid with coal. Neither of these vexed their souls with classics, mathematics or humanities, but were shrewd men of the world. The next was a man of fine talents and most respectable standing in his class, who practiced law for several years, but had the good sense, early in his career, to exchange the bar for life insurance, and for many years has been vice-president of one of the largest and strongest companies in the country, and has filled his position with signal ability and address.

The exception to which I referred was a man who entered college at the age of 23—poor and without influence—but endowed with a strong mind and a stronger will, who was a thorough scholar and told me when we parted in 1860 that he graduated high in the class. He meant to be successful and respected in the law. I have never seen him since then, though I heard from time to time that he was prospering in Chicago. When I was at the Columbian Exposition I found his name and address in the Chicago directory as located in one of the immense buildings of that city. On reaching the rooms I inquired for Mr. Clark, and was ushered into his presence; but I could not recognize him, and I asked: "Are you Mr. C. C. Clark?" "I am," said he. "Are you of the class of 1860 at Princeton?" "I regret to say I am not; your Mr. Clark made his pile of a million more than five years ago and now resides abroad."

The moral, gentlemen, is an old one—that the money-making faculty is apart from all others. It may be denied to talent, aye, even to genius, or it may accompany either; and it may be as well the gift of the clown. But however this may be, gentlemen, let me remind you that the best kingdom is the kingdom of the mind. But I have exceeded my time and must close. I will only add that my earliest affections are connected with Washington College, and they will remain warm and true as long as I live. Whenever I enter her halls or come within their shadow, I pay silent tribute to the magic memories of youth. Long may Washington College stand to educate and elevate the youth of the land.

Common Sense

Should be used in attempting to cure that very disagreeable disease, catarrh. As catarrh originates in impurities in the blood, local applications can do no permanent good. The common sense method is to purify the blood, and for this purpose there is no preparation superior to Hoods Sarsaparilla.

Hood's Pills cure constipation by restoring peristaltic to the alimentary canal.

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