Comparisons.

It may be that sometimes "comparisons are odious," or, as Shakespeare puts it, "odorons;" nevertheless they have their uses, both for the strengthening of argument and the illumination of history. The value of a social condition at a given time is demonstrated by comparing it with a social condition at some other time, and a conclusion is reached by observing whether the human output has advanced or retrograded along the line of its own evolution. It is quite within reason to apply this rule to our University.

Those who were present when the little bantling sent forth its first cry will not be likely to forget the unpretentious equipment and unpromising environment that attended its advent into the educational world. In 1848 the entire teaching force consisted of Professor Stephen W. Taylor, and tutors Isaac N. Loomis and Alfred Taylor, supplemented by the services of J. Harvard Castle, then a student in one of the advanced classes. It was a "day of small things," but it was also a day of strong men and sound instructors. In 1849 Professor George R. Bliss came to the chair of Greek, and Professor George W. Anderson
to the chair of Latin. In 1851 Professor Taylor retired, and Doctor Howard Malcom was appointed president. In the same year the chair of Mathematics was filled by the election of Professor Charles S. James. Professor Justin R. Loomis was elected to the chair of Natural Science in 1854. For several years changes occurred, professors dropping out and others taking their places, but the number of those at work varied but little. In the early seventies the members of the Faculty could almost be counted on the fingers of one's hand. In 1899 it requires four full pages of the catalogue to display all the names connected with the enlarged work of the University.

In 1848 the accommodations were confined to the basement of the old Baptist Church. Some students did their studying in the largest room, others were perforce permitted to study elsewhere. When the Academy building was completed, it was like moving into a palace, while the erection of the West Wing was hailed as a glory and a joy. The completion of the main building, with Commencement Hall, surmounting it as a crown, left nothing to be desired. Now add to the main building and the Academy the various structures which have come with the passing years, the Gymnasium, the Observatory, the Laboratory, the Chapel, the Boys' Annex,—to say nothing of the Institute and the Girls' Annex, which are supposed to be beyond the common ken,—with the proposed new dormitory rendered indispensable by the increased number of students, and it becomes worth while to have lived fifty years to be able to look on this picture and on that.

In the beginning co-education was a necessity, as it is now in a country schoolhouse. But the constant effort was to work away from it, and give the girls a chance with their own teachers. When the Buffalo House came into the market, the authorities were quick to avail themselves of the opportunity and organize a separate department to meet what was supposed to be the peculiar educational need of the girls. The success of the enterprise only intensified the desire to enlarge the facilities for the education of the female sex. The work was slow, but went on with persistent purpose. When at length the Female Seminary was erected on University grounds, far enough away from the college to make a home-life free from disturbing forces, but near enough to keep the chords of sympathy continually vibrating, all parties deemed the problem of education, so far as Lewisburg was concerned, to be happily and permanently solved. Those old views have been modified in later years, doubtless with good reason; but, after all, if there were no dear and distinct "Sem" to-day, it would be necessary to create one for the sake of its usefulness and its charm.

In the early days athletics were practiced under difficulties. Pedestrianism was always in order, and it cost nothing. Foot-ball and shinney were followed in primitive fashion. Swings and parallel bars were constructed in the rear of the West Wing. The game of all games which produced the best results was known as alley-ball. The towering east wall of the West Wing, unbroken except
by a small door, was daily bombarded with the lively sphere. There were great contests, and no debts. Swimming was indulged in at one of the piers of the old bridge. Boating was introduced, but it fell into desuetude. The creation of the campus broadened the field of sports. Now the prowess of the boys in inter-collegiate matches is known far and wide.

There were cliques and rivalries in those days, as there always will be. There was nothing to fight about, but there was fighting all the same. In the sheer working off of surplus energy, lines were drawn and battles fought, in a Pickwickian sense, to the satisfaction of all parties. When the fraternities came in, it became possible to regulate and utilize this plethora of restless life. If the authorities of the time failed to grasp the situation in adopting the policy of suppression, to the disgruntling of the boys and the detriment of the University, their successors acted with a broader experience, and learned to employ even the rivalries of college life in the promotion of loyalty and enthusiasm.

In 1848 Lewisburg was an obscure inland village, difficult to reach from a distance, and as difficult to depart from. For instance, the student left Philadelphia by rail in the early morning, reached Harrisburg in the afternoon, transferred himself and his traps to the cumbersome but convenient canal-packet, enjoyed its cheap board and lodging while moving four miles an hour, was tipped out next morning at the Crosscut, whence he made his way over a dusty road and the dirtiest bridge in Christendom to the foot of Market street, up which he tramped with the firm tread of one who has other worlds to conquer. It was awfully slow, but it was great fun. The modern railroad which carries you to any point in the State in a few hours is prosaic and stale compared with the delicious primitiveness of that now obsolete mode of travel. But, on the whole, we are not sorry that the soporific canal, like the odorous mill-race that used to run though Lewisburg, is gone.

Let it not be inferred that the paucity of resources and the narrowness of curriculum in that olden time meant poor work and deficient training. On the contrary, the very limitation of the time increased the intensity of application on the part of both teachers and students. Greek, Latin, and Mathematics were the steady diet, with a few side-dishes thrown in to make the necessary expansion. The quantity of work done was almost exhaustive; the variety was no more than was required to relieve the pressure. The average excellence of the graduates in the first decade will compare not unfavorably with that in any equal period since. Professor Taylor was an accomplished executive and a great personal power. Professor Bliss won the affections of the students with a loftiness of character possessed by but few men. Professor Anderson was a class-room disciplinarian who stimulated his students to the farthest verge of achievement. Professor James plied his classes with a closeness of questioning that went to the roots of the subject. Doctor Malcolm's lectures on Metaphysics will never be forgotten by
those who were so fortunate as to be under his teaching. There were giants in those days, as there are giants now, and the old boys never get weary in talking of the stature and power of their old teachers.

But to-day is better than yesterday, though minus the glamour. We are enjoying not only what we have gained by our own effort, but also what has been bequeathed to us by those who have gone before. The graduate of '54 may recall his hard work accomplished with meagre tools, and the graduate of '99 may rejoice in his equally hard work with the aid of abundant facilities; but together they will give common praise to the men of the past and the present, and wreathe the brow of every instructor who has contributed to the prosperity and glory of Alma Mater.

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