

## Seventy-Five Years Ago

1857 in a Student's Life. A Second\* Installment of Excerpts from the Diary of George Beck, '60

Saturday, Dec. 5.

Have been busy trying to do several things such as cooking marketing studying &c. This boarding ones self and attending college is the very poetry of students life though it is sometimes expressed in rather uneven measure. There have been 3 of us for a week past. This evening our number is increased to four by the addition of a little dapper fellow who came in just after dark with his trunk on his shoulder prepared to enter upon possession. He wishes to have his eatables & cooking all to himself. I have felt for a few days past as though I should like to be at home. It is not exactly home sickness but I should enjoy very much a good visit among the folks at Lockport a chat with the old folks & a frolic with the girls &c.

Tuesday, 8th.

..... At boarding we get along quite cosily. I do the chief part of the cooking and we live quite finely. We have Mush & Molasses for breakfast Molasses & Mush for dinner & Johnny cake and Molasses for supper. We sometimes have a pot of beans or a few baked potatoes by way of variety. I do not know but we feel just as well after meals as we should had we filled out stomachs with roast beef & plum pudding. At any rate I do not discover the difference till the next meal comes and then my appetite does not allow invidious comparisons.

Saturday, 12th.

Have been reading some in Macaulay's History of England Our recitations in history are quite interesting but not as much so as they would be had I more time to read collateral works upon the subject. We this week commenced the study of Descriptive Geometry. I can not say yet how I shall like it. I hope I may better than Analytical for I confess I am not too fond of it.

Wednesday, 16th.

..... We had a call this afternoon from 2 ladies, Mrs. Judge Clark & a young lady, as agents for the American Bible Society. It took us bachelors by surprise to receive such company nevertheless we did the best we could. ....

Wednesday, 23rd.

We had our last recitation before New Years today. Some of our Profs are going away and the rest are no doubt glad to get rid of us for a while.

Thursday, 31st.

..... With today closes the year 1857 and what a year it has been. Commotions have disturbed the Social physical & political world. Accidents by sea & by land have darkened many homes and sent sorrow to many a heart. Our country has been visited by floods & conflagrations & commercial prostration now rests heavily upon us. Yet for all this we have abundance for which to be thankful. Abundant crops reward the labor of the husbandman. No desolating pestilence has swept across our land and we are at peace with the world.

Monday, January 4th, 1858.

Fine & warm. Commenced work again today at college. Some of the students have not yet returned. Two of my room mates have come back one full of the relation of his adventures the other with a load of provisions.

Wednesday, 13th.

..... The Students Lecture Association have already had several lectures. First by Edward Everett Subject "Washington," Second W. H. C. Hosmer. "Tilt at Humbug" Third Dr Hayes of Dr Kane's Arctic Expedition on "Kane's Polar Sea." The next was J. G. Saxe "The Press." This evening we had Horace Greeley Subject "Poets & Poetry" The House was well filled many coming wholly for the purpose of seeing the man

He is by no means an elegant speaker & he rakes down the poets at a terrible rate.

Thursday, 21st.

..... The present is a peculiar season. Strong revivals of religion are taking place around us and in our midst. The influence is beginning to be felt in the college and we hold additional prayer meetings during the week. We have had two since Sunday morn and have another appointed for Saturday morning.

Saturday, 23rd.

..... This evening I heard Prof Winchell's second lecture of a course which he is to deliver before the Young Men's Association of this place upon Geology & Natural History. He delivered his introductory lecture last Saturday eve. His subject this evening was mineralogy. He is our University Prof of Nat Sciences. He is a very interesting & pleasing speaker. I last evening had a view of the moon through the large telescope of the Observatory. Also of the planet Jupiter three of whose satellites were visible. ....

Saturday, Feb. 6th.

..... Last evening our Literary Societies had their elections. It is amusing to witness the scheming of the candidates and their partisans to secure election All our members 73 were present some having come a distance of 20 or 30 miles for the purpose of voting. Our candidate was beaten by the casting vote of the president. I kept a resolution which I made not to get at all excited over the matter. I was unanimously elected Assistent Marshall without having asked for either nomination or vote. The honors of the office consist in keeping the room in order, providing seats for any company who may favor us with their presence, attending to lamps, fires, &c. The emoluments are \$10 per term. I have also the advantage of free access to the library and it will be a pleasant place for study at any time when I may wish to remain at the building. Prof Winchell delivered his fourth lecture this eve. He gave a brief outline of the classification of the animal Kingdom and the characteristics by which the different sub-kingdoms & classes are distinguished.

Monday, 8th.

..... Saturday eve attended Prof. Winchell's lecture on Geology was very interesting As they have been free a resolution was passed to have a fee of 25 cents at the next lecture for the purpose of presenting a testimonial of appreciation to Prof. W. for the interest which he had excited.

Friday Mar 19th.

The past week has been genuine spring weather. The first was mild & showery and soon finished our snow and took most of the frost out of the ground and during the last few days the sun has shone out from an almost cloudless sky. Today being commencement at the State Normal School at Ypsilanti I last evening procured Dr Tappan's excuse for the day and this morning started for that place. One of my classmates accompanied me. Not being very flush of funds we took it on foot the distance being variously estimated at from 7 to 10 miles. The morning sun for a short time after rising remained screened from sight by a light veil of clouds which however soon withdrew and he looked upon us in undimmed splendor The air was somewhat keen from a slight frost during the night but it soon became more mild. The walking was not of the best the road in many places being wet & springy but we still considered ourselves richly compensated for our walk. An occasional

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flock of pigeons flew high over our heads while committees of blackbirds not the most orderly held their sessions in the trees & bushes below. From the topmost twig of a burr oak the meadow lark piped his morning song while the pee weet started up from the little run close by uttering his sharp piercing cry. We came in sight of our place of destination before we expected it and had to inquire to assure ourselves that it was the place. We arrived in time to hear all but the first & part of the second pieces. Four were by young ladies & 6 by young gentlemen. They were generally very good. The closing address to the graduating class was delivered by Mr. Sill one of the teachers. . . . .

Thursday, 25th.

. . . . . The Medical Department of the University held its annual commencement to-day so that we had no exercises at college. The commencement exercises consisted of music, Reading of Thesis (subject "Tuberculosis") conferring of degrees by Dr. Tappan & an address to the graduating class by Dr. Beach. . . . .

Saturday, 27th.

. . . . . As we could not have possession of the rooms where we spent the winter longer than till the first of April we took the opportunity today to move. We have no great store of worldly goods so it was not a very great operation and this evening we are domicilled as comfortably in our new quarters as it is possibly for 3 poor bachelors to be. This keeping bachelors hall I do not believe is quite as comfortable as it would be to leave the superintendence of the domestic department to a prudent good-natured little lady and she—your wife. Some of the students know this from experience and I doubt not that many others would be glad if they did. There are several married men attending college and one of them a Freshman has during the present week come in possession of what will undoubtedly give vent to some "family squalls." Perhaps he may be obliged to rock the cradle when he should be learning his lessons.

Tuesday, March 30th.

. . . . . Many freaks are tried to evade study & recitations as though they were profitless tasks. It was for no such object that I came here. I have this evening furnished my first contribution to the Sibyl the paper of the Alpha Nu Society.

Thursday, April 1st.

This bachelor life answers very well where there are no surrounding circumstances which may operate to make one discontented with it. For instance where we have been spending the winter we would scarcely see a female for weeks but here gay as butterflies in June they flit by the window laughing and chattering in a manner which has not the best influence upon solitary study but to cap a climax on the whole a young lady & her piano have taken apartments directly overhead and though I have not yet seen either of them I have heard them both & that is enough under the circumstances. . . . .

Friday, 9th.

. . . . . I am now in course of reading the Autobiography of Hugh Miller entitled "My School & Schoolmasters" I have ready it before quite hastily but I find it very interesting this time also I wish to write upon it if I can do so. I hope after the present year to have better opportunity for more general reading than I have had since I came here. My studies for recitation completely occupy my time commencing at 7½ AM I have History of Eng. Literature till 8½ then chapel exercises from that till 9 after which comes French or Rhetoric till 10 and between 10 & 11 Calculus. In the afternoon we have drawing which usually takes 2 hours or more So that by the time I prepare for recitations I have not much time to spare. The same amount of study upon a lesson will not suffice for me that does for some others. I fear that I have acquired what may be called a habit of inattention by allowing my mind to wander off on various subjects when I ought to have confined it to some special one.

Monday, 12th.

. . . . . I have not studied very hard today. I made a call this afternoon upon Prof. White & had a very pleasant conversation.

Wednesday, 21st.

There has lately been somewhat of a movement among the citizens of the place & the students towards ornamenting the University Grounds. The Regents have appropriated a small amount of money to the purpose and the work is progressing. Each class has taken in hand to set out its group of trees & all are busy. I am one of a committee to arrange the things for our class. We this afternoon marked out our plan on the ground. It is the conjugate hyperbola. Each branch is to be composed of 9 trees. The faculty at their last meeting voted to appropriate \$50 to this purpose so that there is quite a flattering prospect for the future appearance of "Our University" . . . . . I do not like the class in which I am very well. Too large a proportion of it is made of young men of rather slack principles to say the least much too loaferish or rowdyish for congenial company. There are but 3 or 4 at most in the class of whom I should like to make intimate friends.

Saturday, May 1st.

This morning I spent about 3 hours cleaning lamps & sweeping Alpha Nu Hall as we are to have a public discussion next week. We have had a laugh at Dr. Tappan yesterday & today. Yesterday morning he read in Chapel a note stating that a horse chestnut tree had been taken from the seniors group & unless it were returned there would be a "row in the campus" The Dr stated that he sympathized with the aggrieved party and hoped whoever had taken the tree away would see it safely returned. He stated that two fine chestnuts had been planted beside his gate & that he should feel very sorry to have them removed and yet any person had as good a right to move them as the one in question. Now it happens that this tree stood near where the seniors planted their trees & someone noticing that one of those beside the Dr's gate was dead had put this in its place. The Dr very good naturedly told us his mistake this morning. A melancholy circumstance has happened here today. Last night several of the students procured a quantity of liquor & succeeded in inducing one of their number to partake of it so freely as to cause his death today.

Saturday, June 19th.

It is quite interesting to take a retrospective glance over the past year. When I came here every body and every thing was strange. College life was a novelty. Our class consisted of nearly 40 members. We have at the present time less than half the number. We have furnished the material for 5 of the 8 expulsions of the past year and nearly as great a proportion of the suspensions. Almost every class of character has been represented among us. Some pleasant scenes have been passed through which will always be bright.

Saturday, 28th.

I shall be able to resume my studies with new vigor. Mother has agreed to lend me the money which I shall require to carry me through another year. I am very anxious to go through if possible without stopping.

Tuesday, June 29.

On Thursday morning I took the morning train from Ann Arbor to Detroit where I arrived about 10 o'clock A. M. I expected to obtain a chance to go down the lake on a propeller some time during the day or evening but could find none which would not be very likely to leave one in Buffalo all day on Sunday. So at 8 o'clock P. M. I took the train for home where I arrived about 6 o'clock and surprised the folks just as they were about sitting down to breakfast. I had given no notice of my coming and was not expected. Since I have been here I have spent most of the time running around among old friends. They appear very glad to see me and I have no reason for suspecting hypocrisy.