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**VARIOUS**

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EDITORS FOR THE CLASS OF '80.

JOHN A. AMUNDSON,                      ALFRED B. NICHOLS,  
WILLIAM M. HALL,                      DOREMUS SCUDDER.

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TWO TOPICS.

DO not censure me too severely, my would-be critic, if instead of being borne through some region in systematic progress, with the rush and uniform roar so characteristic of our modern times, contrary to your expectation you perceive after a perusal of these few pages that you have been carried along very much after the manner in which our fathers were wont to travel—a slow, onward movement with many stoppings. The shortness of the journey we are about to take together, forbids the possibility of more than two stages, and provided you are an experienced traveler you will not be offended at any remarkable change of scenery between them.

Of late several of our friends have been discoursing to us of the vast strides we make in these college days toward unsettlement of mind and the destruction of old time opinions. I have wondered on occasions what ideas of the four years which are before them, the new comers among us must entertain with reference to the stern and unwelcome thought visitors, who are soon, if we must believe the statements of our able friends, to enter the arena of the brain amphitheatre and drive forth the, as they say, false monsters which have so long held the position of

mental heroes. I fear to such the outlook of the coming years is anything but delightful. Did I wholly believe these disheartening opinions, very little pleasure indeed would I have in looking back upon what is soon to be one of the fairest and brightest spots in the field of retrospection—my college days.

What then, you ask, is my idea of this four years of pleasure and study? I have said pleasure and study. Let me hope that I shall be able to defend this simple word arrangement, though in the inverse order. Doubtless the expressed aim of our presence here has been study in its restricted sense. Incidentally to the attainment of this object has been the greater or less amount of gain, which each one, according to individual taste and character, has received in outside branches. A necessary accompaniment of this general and special gain has been to nearly every one of us the birth into the real world of thought. To some this birth may have resulted in an unsettlement of mind and an upturning of child ideas. Such we cannot refrain from denominating weak or, if this seems too extravagant, singularly unfortunate. To the average man, I believe, it has simply proved an expansion, an enlargement of his mental horizon, the first glance of his short-sighted eyes through the magic glass; the old objects which have been within his view since earliest childhood are closest, nearest, dearest to him but how much more clearly seen, and what a world of unseen wonders are spread before him for his life study. Let the one who feels himself on the verge of giving up his child ideas take heed. He is throwing away one of his purest sources of enjoyment. A sad saying was that of one of the best exponents in our day, of the intensely modern fashion of cutting wholly loose from these early mind associations, when he forced himself to record the conviction, "the great companion is dead." The mental supremacy of the cultured Greek lay in his retention of his mythological traditions, not in their gross forms but in the ennobling transfiguration of them into symbols of the beauties and wonders of nature.

I used above the word pleasure. That the individuals, generalized under the appellation, average man, derive from the course much pleasure of various qualities, at times questionable, though far oftener not so, is a truism, upon the subject of which our harmless but charmingly ludicrous friend, the college sentimentalist, finds his greatest delight in dilating. And it is not to be doubted that in the freedom from restraint, the opportunity of association with wild, young human animals, brimful of spirit and mischief, the contact with a code of morality and honor at once so defective and complete as is that of our community, the character wear and tear, and the strange relations which we bear to one another in our hearty dislikes and in the much abused and sentimentalized yet undoubtedly powerful friendship—all of which characterize this little sphere—there is a substantial gain of enjoyment which every one of us, whatever be our natures, cannot fail to experience. But is this all? By no means. Two sources of pleasure there are to many—I regret that I cannot with correctness say to all. The first of these is no less than the added knowledge, and the glimpse that a college career gives one of what is to be mastered. Poets and men of weak sensibilities delight to sigh over the vast amount of knowledge which it seems to them a hopeless task ever to obtain. And certainly in times of depression a species of despair does often invade our minds, when we compare the little acquired with the great unacquired. And did we believe that our opportunity of gaining knowledge were to be confined to the few moments of the terrestrial seventy years—I trust I do not offend you, my cheerful materialistic friend—good cause, I grant, we should have to feel sorrow in the days when first we caught glimpse of the unexplored regions. The second of these has reference to our own natures, and here, indeed, is the essence of the whole controversy. If we can note in the few past years an increase in the strength and depth of our characters, we are indeed to be counted happy. There is no mirror so searching in its revelations of our own character-failings as the reflections of our-

selves in others. While, then, it is a melancholy task to observe our own defects by a study of our companions, if we accept the conclusions of our study and strive in the right way—and a difficult duty it is to determine it—to further our own character-growth, there can no limit be set to the subjective pleasure to be derived from a contemplation of success, however feeble it may be.

I have endeavored in a few words to answer the question proposed and to justify my opinions. I trust the presentation will not be disheartening to any. The first stage of the journey is completed. Imagining the necessary changes of motor power to have been accomplished, I beg you to hasten a little farther with me.

In my study of the few minds whom chance has brought in my way, I have met with the peculiar individual even here in the world of study, whom in paucity of suitable designation I have been wont to style *the dreamer*. In probability this word conveys to your minds a very unsavory signification; if so, it can only be on account of your unfortunate associations with its primitive. Allow me, then, to premise by desiring you to set aside all prejudice; not to think that the object of our contemplation is a shallow-pated idler, whose head is filled with notions of the difficulty of life and the emptiness of life and the final uselessness of life, and whose time is occupied with lazily dreaming himself into a comatose condition, where the only sign of vitality is a succession of sighs and groanings. On the contrary, imagine to yourself a man of intense activity, of fine talents—for without these the character I am describing is impossible—of theories, if you wish, whose general idea of the importance of character and the dignity of life is a lofty one, a practical man where action is needed, yet, withal, one whose life is lived for a great part in veritable dreamland, whose store of pleasure is never exhausted because he has trained himself to live in a land of mind-pleasure, whose misfortunes, disappointments, and indeed, what is more than this, whose failures even in the realm of character can all with their totality of effects be voluntarily



laid aside, a man, to sum up with, who has labored to create a world into which he can escape, whenever the world of reality distresses him, and you will gain some idea of this personage whom I have denominated the dreamer. How many of such there are I know not. I have said that I have met them, though indeed rarely. Would you inquire my opinion of their character? I will endeavor briefly to state it. That such a constant residence in the region of non-realities is conducive to weakness could hardly be questioned, were it not true that there is implied so much general strength of nature in one capable of thus sequestering himself that this tendency to weakness is not worthy of consideration. Undoubtedly it would prove disastrous to many, in fact nearly to every one, if such a habit of mind were encouraged, where nature forbids. Those fortunate enough to possess such a temperament, then, are to be deemed strangely gifted. Indeed, it has been my experience to observe that these so-styled dreamers derive a positive strength from the exercise of this peculiar method of abstraction. In general, they are extremely sensitive to pain and so naturally susceptible of pleasure, and in proportion as their power is greater, it is quite worthy of notice that their interest in affairs of practical moment is the keener. Their philosophy has ever seemed to me to unite the advantages of stoicism and epicureanism.

Product of a remarkable age, and far more remarkable as such than the factors, was that wonder of all who have studied him, Richter. Apropos of a question in the statistic list, lately published for the use of the Senior class, are these words of the German: "Of ways for becoming happier (not happy) I could never inquire out more than three. The first, rather an elevated road, is this: to soar away so far above the clouds of life, that you see the whole external world, with its wolf-dens, charnel-houses, and thunder-rods, lying far down beneath you, shrunk into a little child's garden. The second is: simply to sink down into this little garden; and there to nestle yourself so snugly, so homewise, in some furrow, that, in looking

out from your warm lark nest, you likewise can discern no wolf-dens, charnel-houses, or thunder-rods, but only blades and ears, every one of which, for the nest-bird, is a tree, and a sun-screen, and a rain-screen. The third, finally, which I look upon as the hardest and cunningest, is that of alternating between the other two." We are often asked—what is your philosophy of life? Whether we are always able to reply in words, we indicate the answer by the truer language of deeds. Richter has given us his reply and one the truth of which in his instance was fully attested by his life. Does it not convey to your mind some explanation of the character of my friend the dreamer?



### VESPERS.

Did you ever watch the shadow  
Of the low-lined mountain crest  
Slowly length'ning o'er the meadow  
From the twilight in the west?

Did you ever think about it,  
How 'twould soon cloud all the earth,  
And you would emerge from out it  
In a new day's glorious birth?

Has the deep'ning cloud of sadness  
Ever settled on your heart,  
But there was a happier gladness  
When the shadow did depart?

In its starry letters never  
Would our heaven its glories tell  
If the sun should shine forever,  
If no midnight darkness fell.

E. W.

## AN OLD BOOK.

CONTRARY to all that the axiomatic monotony of a Proverbial Philosophy may have to say about industry, there is some reason for believing that hours of idleness are not always without a good return. The whirligig of fortune seems to say that there are advantages coming from a want of purpose now and then. Who knows but that there may be some virtue after all in occasional aimlessness? Even the emptiness of the juvenile brain of that lad of Dryden's who

trudged along, unknowing what he sought  
And whistled as he went, for want of thought,

was not without its profit; he was at least obtaining the great acquirement of every healthy boy—a good whistle. It was this excuse I made to myself the other day as I rambled through the library alcoves, scanning in a sort of listless way the titles of the shelved books, and rubbing off on my fingers the dust which long disuse had settled; for I happened on a curious old book, a collection of English college poems, published in the reign of William and Mary. Here, indeed, was something worth finding. What food was this to dream upon! A thought-germ lurks in every feature. Time, as though he grudged us a good-looking outside, has blackened the edges with his dusty fingers and discolored and hardened the once pliant leather of its back. A venerable old age speaks out in every yellow leaf. How many hands have clasped it during all these years? How many eyes have beamed upon its antique letters? Who was the binder who left on the tarnished covering the mark of his carelessness? A cigar and a Sleepy Hollow chair and this little volume; these are the materials for a thousand visions as enchanting as any that flash at the waving of a magician's wand. A queer voyage this waif must have had since the time when it started all fresh and new from the press of "Ber-