

**YALE YARNS; SKETCHES
OF LIFE AT
YALE UNIVERSITY,
ILLUSTRATED. [1895]**

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Yale Yarns; Sketches of Life at Yale University, Illustrated. [1895] by John Seymour Wood

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JOHN SEYMOUR WOOD

**YALE YARNS; SKETCHES
OF LIFE AT
YALE UNIVERSITY,
ILLUSTRATED. [1895]**

UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA



VANDERBILT HALL.

L. C.

TO
HENRY E. HOWLAND
YALE '54

III

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PREFACE.

THE difficulty of suiting every one in a college story is greater than the casual reader may imagine. Aside from the cheek of the young maiden which may not be incarnadined under any consideration, and the maiden aunt who sees an utter lack of refinement in the daily student life, there is the old grad. who says it is n't as it was in *his* day, and the undergrad. who maintains it is n't as it is in *his*! If you describe the life of the "rowdy element," you may offend the "digs"; if you confine yourself to the "better element"—the good boys—the "earnest workers," the smart young Junior asks if you are describing life in a State Normal school or a female reformatory; if you poke fun at the faculty you have a fine array of parents and guardians about your ears; if you tell of things that happened in your day, the *Courant* and witty

little *Record* show you up for an absurd old fossil who ought to have sense enough to stay buried and not insist on coming to life again; if you are flippant or hint of the seamy side of college life, the ponderous old *Lit* may pronounce your effort worthless and condemn you as the "enemy of Yale,"—and if so, it would be better a thousand millstones were hanged about your neck at once, for the oldest and at the same time, the "youngest" magazine in America pronounces literary judgments which are terribly and wondrously final.

Then there arises the difficulty of slang. What slang shall your college hero use? Yesterday's, to-day's, or to-morrow's? Much of the slang of four years ago is dead now. Are your stories up to date? If so to-day, they will not be next year. The privilege of quoting from a recent letter of an undergrad. has been afforded us. It is *apropos* on this point. He says:

"To begin with, there are nearly four varieties of slang used in the University,—approximately one for each class. Very evident is this when you are in conversation with a Freshman, or what is better, have the good luck to overhear two of these infants discoursing on college life. They import, every year, the very latest Bowery style, and while most of it soon wears

off, yet ear-marks remain, and if they strike the popular fancy, the phrase or word is handed down from class to class. There is no authentic 'cuss-word' as the boys say. We sait the word to the action at Yale. In society we use lamb-like expressions which would hardly be recognized on the field or in the Gym. The phrase, 'Cuss a little, it may help you,' is not by any means discountenanced. In such cases we have our private 'cuss-words,' which vary from the Dwight Hall heeler's 'goodness!' down to,—well, as far down as they go. In a community as large as this, there are always a few who at times find themselves in such peculiar positions, that even St. Peter himself would hardly know what to do without giving way a little. Not since Freshman year have I heard any low profanity, and that was by an intoxicated person."

So, kind, indulgent reader, let us offer our Yale Yarns as of a date somewhere in the '90's, and the slang that occurs in them of no particular date at all. Many of the sketches are founded on fact, but whether fact or fancy, if they serve to amuse, it is perhaps all that the writer, an old grad. himself, can ask. It will be seen that very little is said of the athletic side of college life,—this side is well known, perhaps too much so, in our daily press. One might easily imagine from the newspapers, athletics to be the sole occupation of students. In reality, as things are now constituted, only the few actively engage in the chief athletic contests. The vast array of "rooters," "heelers," "backers," etc., employ themselves while in college in serious

and studious pursuits, and give vent to their enthusiasm only at stated intervals. It is the object of this series of light college sketches, of which the first volume, Mr. Post's *Harvard Stories*, has already become well known, to present pen pictures of life in our great universities, without bearing too heavily on any one particular class or set. Life at Yale is too complex to afford opportunities in a few stories of giving more than a brief account of incidental phases. We cannot purvey such a complete view as *Tom Brown at Oxford*, or *The Adventures of Verdant Green*, nor have we attempted to carry any one set of men through the four years, as in *College Days*, or *Harry's Career at Yale*,—we have simply gathered together and written out yarns which have been more or less known for a long time, and have never had a friend to give them lasting form. As such, O kind, indulgent reader, we relinquish them to you, hoping that you will enjoy reading them as much as we have putting them together.

J. S. W.

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