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Twenty-Five Years After.

Quarto-Centennial of the Class of '70.

By Chas. G. Biggs, Class Historian.

When the Class Historian drops his pen on graduation-day, his functions are supposed to have expired by limitation. As a rule the class no longer maintains an organized existence, and his office ceases with the reason which called it into being. I do not recall a single instance in which the chronicler of college life has resumed his official duties subsequent to graduation.

But this custom, practically without exception, is no precedent to which the Class of '70 yields obedience; we are not only a law unto ourselves, but, by our quarto-centennial reunion, have established a precedent to be followed by other classes of Dickinson.

The reunion of our class, twenty-five years after graduation and at the one hundred and twelfth commencement of the College, was a most gratifying success. Although we graduated only sixteen members, thirteen were present on this auspicious occasion. We do not, however, mean to say that all of those thirteen are graduates; but eight of the thirteen did complete the College course.

Biddle, Biggs, Bosley, Byrn, H. Cannon, Cassell, Conlyn, Hemminger, Righter, C. A. Robinson, C. N. Robinson, Williams and Wolfe answered "*adsum*" when the roll was called, and right fortunate was everyone to be present on this occasion. Some had not met since they parted in 1870, or earlier. They separated as buoyant boys and were reunited, after a quarter of a century, as men of affairs, who had gained strength, standing and character in successful contest with the world.

The most conspicuous characteristic of these men was the universal prevalence among them of genuine, hearty class spirit. There was an *esprit du corps* among "the boys" that bore a closer relationship to the old College fraternity feeling than any other sentiment. Every member yielded himself cordially to this feeling and the spirit of *comaraderie* was perfect and spontaneous. It was not to be expected, nor did this sentiment find expression in the exuberance of College associations. But because it was calmer and more dignified, it was not the less emphatic. To express the idea in homely phrase, everyone felt that he was enjoying a thoroughly good time.

We were very clannish at this reunion. Wherever one member of the Class was to be found there was the majority; we were

thoroughly and delightfully reunited during our brief stay in Carlisle. One of the effects of this intimate association was to attract quite marked attention in town and at the Commencement exercises, where prominent seats were invariably reserved for the Class that, twenty-five years after graduating sixteen members, could muster thirteen at a reunion. A class button in red and white, the colors of Dickinson, and bearing the figures "70," gave additional prominence to the wearers. This button was the happy thought of Tom Conlyn, who met each arrival at the train, where his decoration was made a part of the cordial greeting extended by this whole-souled member of '70.

In this connection it is proper to say that the splendid success of the reunion was due to the untiring efforts of Biddle and Conlyn to secure a large representation of the Class. They wrote, they telegraphed, they visited, plead and insisted, and where victory was possible they achieved it.

Conlyn and Biddle were as fertile in suggestions for our comfort and pleasure as they were indefatigable and successful in their accomplishment. One thoughtful attention on their part deserves special notice. Carlisle has an admirable club located in the old Watts' property, opposite the Wellington Hotel. This institution, excellent in all its appointments, was specially adapted as a *rendezvous* for the members, who were enabled to avail themselves of its comforts through the forethought of Conlyn and Biddle, who had procured tickets extending the hospitality and privileges of the Club to each member of '70 for ten days. These tickets were distributed to the members on arrival.

Monday, June 3, was agreeably disposed of in welcoming the various members as they arrived. The evening was spent in social intercourse in the parlors and on the verandas of the Carlisle Club, where mutual congratulations and reminiscences were indulged in to a late hour. It was generally remarked that all the members had a prosperous appearance. Evidently the world had not dealt too harshly with any individual. So far as we could learn only three members of the Class, Loose, McKeehan and Weiser, have died, two of whom, Loose and McKeehan, graduated. Of the non-residents of Carlisle, Byrn, Conlyn and Cannon were accompanied by their wives. With Byrn also came his son, Edward W., Jr. It transpired during conversation that Byrn, Bosley, Cassell and Williams were each the father of five children. Bosley, Cannon and McKeehan each have sons attending the college. The first member on the old class-roll, Biddle, was last fall honored by an election to the position of Judge of his Court, which office he fills with ability and credit to himself. Cannon is a member of the Board of Trustees of Dickinson College, representing the Wilmington District Association.

On Tuesday the Class attended the Commencement exercises in a body. In the afternoon we visited Dr. George Edward Reed, President of the College, at his residence. At a recent meeting of Dickinson alumni in Baltimore Dr. Reed remarked that it is one

regret of his life that he is not a graduate of the College. On this occasion of our visit to the President he was informed that we proposed removing this disqualification by electing him an honorary member of '70, which was done by an unanimous vote, and he was at once decorated with the class button, which he wore conspicuously throughout Commencement exercises. The Doctor responded to the compliment in graceful terms.

At the very eloquent oration by Hon. Charles Emory Smith before the Phi Beta Kappa and United Literary Societies in Bösler Memorial Hall, the Class had reserved seats directly in front of the platform. After the oration Dr. Reed made some complimentary remarks concerning the Class of '70, which had the effect of drawing further attention from the large audience to our modest selves. We were then invited upon the platform and introduced to the orator of the evening.

That same afternoon we called upon Dr. Charles F. Himes, the only surviving member of the Faculty during our College days, where we were cordially received by the Doctor and his very agreeable wife and daughter.

The principal and most enjoyable feature of our reunion was a reception and dinner tendered us at six o'clock Tuesday afternoon by our classmate, Judge Biddle, at his residence. Meeting here we passed a brief time in pleasant conversation, when we moved to the dining-room. The table conveyed a charming surprise to Judge Biddle's guests. Its centre piece was a large floral elliptical figure in the Dickinson colors, encircling the figures "70" in the same colors. At each plate was a *boutonniers* in the hues of Dickinson.

In the floral decorations, the handiwork and taste of Judge Biddle's charming wife were apparent. At the dinner the pleasures of the palate and of memory vied with each other to make the occasion one of unalloyed enjoyment. Water and land were laid under tribute to complete the various courses which gave delightful variety to the repast, while wit, anecdote and reminiscence of College days and Class life brought the past into intimate association with the present. Letters and telegrams expressing regret at their inability to be present were read from Hargis and Wilmer. It was the unanimous opinion of the Class that Hargis had not received the consideration from the College authorities to which his ability and distinguished services in the Methodist Episcopal Church clearly entitled him. We are so thoroughly confirmed in this opinion that a resolution was voted without dissent to the effect that in our judgment Hargis should be invited to deliver an address before the alumni at Commencement, preferably in 1900, when it was determined that the Class of '70 would again hold a reunion. In this connection it might be stated that, although we sat thirteen at table, no superstitious suggestions intruded themselves upon the complete enjoyment of what was preeminently our reunion. C. N. Robinson extended an invitation to the members to participate with him in a sail down the Chesapeake Bay on July 4, but, it being regarded as impracticable to come together at such short notice, we

were compelled to decline with reluctance, though we gave expression to our appreciation of the courtesy in a subsequent vote of thanks. At the conclusion of the dinner we, silent and standing, drank a toast in clear water, to the three members of our Class, Loose, McKeehan and Weiser, who have passed from life into the light of the great mystery.

Today the Class gathered about the old Class tree and was photographed, Dr., Mrs. and Miss Himes, at our invitation, joining in the group.

On Wednesday, Commencement Day, we attended the exercises and the Commencement dinner, the latter in the capacious gymnasium, where Williams, in response to the sentiment "The Class of '70," delivered a highly interesting and felicitously worded speech.

With the President's reception in the evening the College exercises concluded, and the Class separated, Thursday witnessing the departure of all except possibly Conlyn and Cannon.

We must not forget to commend C. N. Robinson's poetic enthusiasm, which found expression in an ode entitled the "Class of '70," to be sung at this reunion and which he had printed for the occasion.

Such was the highly successful and gratifying reunion of the Class of '70, in which it was the delightful privilege of thirteen members to participate, a quarter of a century after the completion of our collegiate life. It was an occasion never to be forgotten—a revival and renewal of the happiest days of our youth, when life was as yet untried and we were strangers to cares or fears of the future.

To the historian, and he believes to all the members who revisited Dickinson, the vigor of the old class spirit as exhibited on this occasion was a matter of constant pride. And we felt pride in each other—in the self-contained, forceful group of men and the impression they created. I think we may be pardoned the satisfaction we felt in ourselves and in each other. We rejoiced to witness the striking improvements in Dickinson—her new and handsome buildings, with the immediate prospect of further important additions of this character; the increased number of her students; the strength of her faculty; her strides in the direction of an university, and in the numerous evidences of her material prosperity. The students of today, among them sons of '70, have such advantages at Dickinson over those enjoyed by their fathers, that, by comparison, we were mere pioneers in college life; twenty-five years ago we "roughed" it through College; now students live and study surrounded by comforts and advantages to which our wildest dreams were total strangers.

We rejoiced in all these things. It was good, indeed, to be there, and the Historian concludes this hasty and imperfect account of '70's quarto-centennial reunion with the fervent hope that the care of Providence may permit all who were present to meet those who were so unfortunate as to be absent on this occasion at the projected reunion of the Class of '70 in the year of grace 1900.