Dickinson College Archives & Special Collections

http://archives.dickinson.edu/

Documents Online

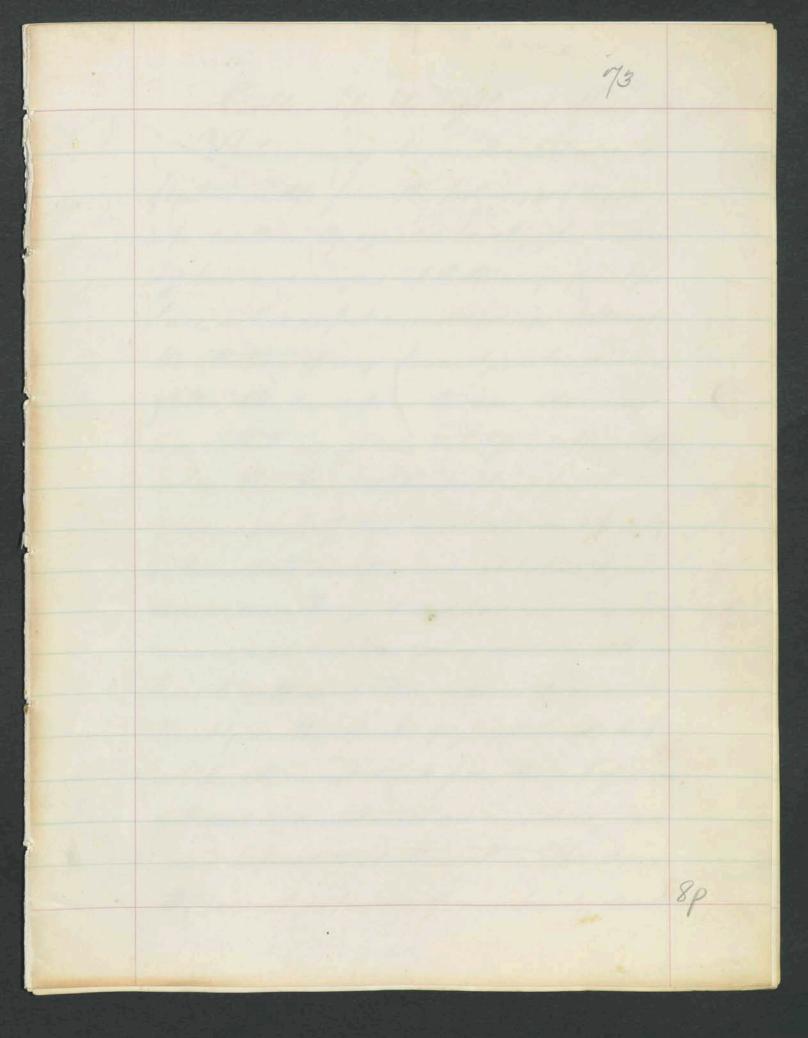
Title: "College Life Its Lights and Shadows," by William C. Wilson
Format: Commencement Oration
Date: June 26, 1873
Location: Orations-1873-W754c

Contact:

Archives & Special Collections Waidner-Spahr Library Dickinson College P.O. Box 1773 Carlisle, PA 17013

717-245-1399

archives@dickinson.edu



College Life Its Lights and Shadows. Whatever may be our circumstances or fosition in life, from the fore ragged began who dwells ni the squalid hovel, where nidecen ey lives - and migns, up to the magnificent falace, whose supert surroundings attract the attention of every passer by, where diamonds glitter, like dew drops in the sam, where every want that mong can satisfy is affeased, where the king dispenses laws for the forement of the nation; and to all intermediate conditions and habitrations joy and sourow come. The good and bad, virtuous , and vicious, neh and for young and old allace heirs to suffiring i For man is bommento trouble as the sparks fly upward' But while, all must dimk from the cup of overour yet, some cucumstances are considered, as more exposed to it than others. This being the feneral estimce of moankind, and

most parents being older than their children and having the interest and prosperity of said . children at heart wish to put them m' possessions of what they believe will be the best antidole to source, and give them com petency without drugery, send them m' differ ent directions in present of happiness, yet while there is no wad so sure, none so direct to abtain it as learning fur choose it. Some having derived the conclusion, after serious consideration, wakeful nights, gloomy) days, and consultation with those whom they believe are able to give sound counsel, concern mig the equipment of their noble boys for the voyage of life, at the conclusion to send them to college. The inesterinced youth full of joy at the throught of being brought micontact with the quat minds of the nation, con

hardly manitain his equilibrium. His dear mother packs his trunk with shirts, towels to and some estables. He starts, the proudest, and quak est man mithe country mi his own eyes, desined at the town miquires the way to the college, inters theough the front inon pater, the beautiful camfus, at a few hundred yard a squad of students may be seen tasking in the sungif the weather is fleasant, and a convances they debate among Atuselves whether he is a candidate for Such man's reders, "a seed shaken with the wind 're an evergreen, the decision for the time is mostly fire in favor of the wargreen, and frequenty it is a difficult matter for tender-eyed persons to decide, he ause his affearance is so readant. But they som initiate him into various reders, which are beculiar to colleges, throughly cleanse him from his former died, - and quick

in to new news of life. Then they more to the other extreme and neeload him with kindness for the purpose of as certaining his suitableness for their Fraturity 'or Leterary Society, "he thought at first that they were very findly to each other, but aron disceners that they are very hostile, why he cannot understand, However, m'order to give peace to his mind, begins the party that first take him mi hand, which materially characturges his college caver, and moulds to a preatrate this future life, have the impatance of a good decision, then the others have him as if they had never seen him, and during his course is partially excluded from all other paties, So great is the influence which some of these parties exert that misome cases it is mough to montion his party to know his character, Life is me of the quatert blessings That

-could be bestowed upon us. To be broughtfrom the dust of the earth, put in the capacity of holding communion with the ford of the min vere, and finally of dwelling with this in light is truly a theme on which glorifed intettects may funder, and for which storifice tinques well atter endless praise, But me must have to a close for we are tried already. The world is full of sign It is oeen not only in the sunbeam, the tightming, the glimmer of the dislant star but also micollege life, Here we meet with conferral opinits, who ally themselves to us because of our natural disabilities, joys and socrows, In them we find our counterfacts and effinities, who may be said m'a sense to be bone of our bone and flich I rou plush ,' - at least they are true help mates And being drawn into auch intimate rela-

2

tions at that season of life, when we are so free from care, so fure in mind, and so susceptible of impersion, that we most naturally, surrounded by such Jolly companions, forget our individual troubles and heartily take part in every land of inno cent anusement, and needful exercise, at my time in any place. It is useless to go into a detail ed description of the life in the betwee room, the society hall, the chapel, and on the Cam fus, yet we may mention one of the great though n' general imafficerated and motoerved sources of delight. It is to hear De, Harman, incon seions of your prescence, conversing now with Aboessoe Isaich mi thebrew, then with Demo theres or bocrates mi Greek, afterward with bicero, or Lacitus mi Latin' Listening to This dialogue me is almost - comfelled to doubt his escistence mithe flish, and as he looks

- around to see these mighty spirits of the minerse, he beholds the doctor, with an in Afable smile, a mild lustre in his eye meek ness, and simplicity depicted on this counter nance, as he addresses him in his own nana--cular, and marrates to him some micident that accurred to him an' Egypt or Palestine. Mour as this performance is never to see the light in ther in the way of speaking or funting it, and as I have no money to buy few, hape, and ink I must conclude, with one lesson, In general run daily life is not marked by ecstatic joy or miconsolable sourow, get most of the human family have eschercenced some of these sensations. He who sends them knows our party, that quat pleasure would intox cate andrender us micompetent for the fer formance of our duties, and immidful of the desting awaits us when this world shall be huma

-0

up, when of its folluted existence no trace shall be found, when it shall fer up into that other peat mysterious would for which it was created and to which it leads; whereas many socrous would outmape us hereath their dark and troublous billous, quench our noblest depinations, close our eyes to the heartiful and good robus of the enfor ments of life but by limiting our joys and temfing our sorrows we are mable with cheefulness and animation to a complish our individual altetments, This being the undisputed & evident fact it follows that the little troubles and dif ficulties, which we experime in college like, ought to prepare us to bear with magnaminity the quater trials that await us,

W. C. Wilson

Commencement Oration of W. C. Wilson, Class of 1873 Transcribed by Christine Rosenberry, May 2002 Edited by Don Sailer, September 2009

College Life Its Lights and Shadows.

Whatever may be our circumstances or position in life, from the poor ragged beggar who dwells in the squalid hovel, where indecency lives and reigns, up to the magnificent palace, whose superb surroundings attract the attention of every passerby, where, diamonds glitter, like dew-drops in the sun, where every want that money can satisfy is appeased, where the king dispenses laws for the government of the nation; and to all intermediate conditions and habitations joy and sorrow come. The good and bad, virtuous and vicious, rich and poor, young and old, all are heirs to suffering, "For man is born into trouble as the sparks fly upward" but while, all must drink from the cup of sorrow yet, some circumstances are considered, as more exposed to it than others. This being the general experience of mankind, and

most parents being older than their children and having the interest and prosperity of said children at heart, wish to put them in possession of what they believe will be the best antidote to sorrow, and give them competency without drugery, send them in different directions in pursuit of happiness, yet while there is no road so sure, none so direct to obtain it as learning, few choose it.

Some having, derived the conclusion, after serious consideration; wakeful nights, gloomy days, and consultation with those whom they believe are able to give sound counsel, concerning the equipment of their noble boys for the voyage of life, at the conclusion to send them to college. The inexperienced youth full of joy at the thought of being brought in contact with the great minds of the nation, can

hardly maintain his equilibrium. His dear mother packs his trunk with shirts, towels &c and some eatables. He starts, the proudest, and greatest man in the country in his own eyes, arrives at the town inquires the way to the college, enters through the front iron gates, the beautiful campus, at a few hundred yard a squad of students may be seen basking in the sun, if the weather is pleasant, and as he advances they debate among themselves, whether he is a candidate for "Freshman's" orders, "a reed shaken with the wind" or an evergreen, the decision for the time is mostly given in favor of the evergreen, and frequently it is a difficult matter for tender-eyed persons to decide, because his appearance is so verdant. But they soon initiate him into various orders, which are peculiar to colleges, thoroughly cleanse him from his former died and quick-

en to newness of life. Then they move to the other extreme and overload him with kindness, for the purpose of ascertaining his suitableness for their "Fraternity" or "Literary Society," he thought at first they were very friendly with each other, but soon discovers that they are very hostile, why he cannot understand. However, in order to give peace to his mind, he gives the party that first take him in hand, which materially characterizes his-college-career, and moulds to a great extent his future life, hence the importance of a good decision, then the others pass him as if they had never seen him, and during his course is partially excluded from all other parties. So great is the influence which some of these parties exert that in some cases it is enough to mention his party to know his character.

Life is one of the greatest blessings that

could be bestowed upon us. To be brought from the dust of the earth, put in the capacity of holding communion with the God of the universe, and finally of dwelling with Him in light is truly a theme on which glorified intellects nay ponder, and for which glorified tongues will utter endless praise. But one must hasten to a close, for we are tired already. The world is full of beauty joy. It is seen not only in the sunbeams, the lightening, the glimmer of the distant star but also in college life. Here we meet with congenial spirits, who ally themselves to us because of our natural disabilities, joys, and sorrows. In them we find our counterparts and affinities, who may be said in a sense to be "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh," at least they are true help-mates And being drawn into such intimate relat-

ions, at that season of life, when we are so free from care, so pure in mind, and so susceptible of impression, that we most naturally, surrounded by such jolly companions, forget our individual troubles, and heartily take part in every kind of innocent amusement, and needful exercise, at any time in any place. It is useless to go into a detailed description of the life in the lecture room, the society hall, the chapel, and on the campus, yet we may mention one of the great though in general unappreciated and unobserved sources of delight. It is to hear Dr. Harman, unconscious of your prescience, conversing now with Moses or Isaiah in Hebrew, then with Demothenes or Socrates in Greek, afterward with Cicero, or Tacitus in Latin. Listening to this dialogue one is almost compelled to doubt his existence in the flesh, as he looks

around to see these mighty spirits of the universe, he beholds the doctor, with an ineffable smile, a mild lustre in his eye, meekness, and simplicity depicted on his countenance, as he addresses him in his own vernacular, and narrates, to him some incident that occurred to him or Egypt or Palestine. Now as this performance is never to see the light either in the way of speaking or printing it, and as I have no money to buy pen, paper, and ink I must conclude this one lesson.

In general our daily life is not marked by ecstatic joy or inconsolable sorrow, yet most of the human family have experienced some of those sensations. He who sends them knows our frailty, that great pleasure would intoxicate and render us incompetent for the performance of our duties, and unmindful of the destiny awaits us when this world shall be burned

up, when of its polluted existence no trace shall be found, when it shall open up into that other great mysterious world for which it was created and to which it leads; whereas many sorrows would submerge us beneath their dark and troublous billows, quench our noblest aspirations, close our eyes to the beautiful and good, rob us of the enjoyments of life but by limiting our joys and tempering our sorrows we are unable with cheerfulness and animation to accomplish our individual allotments. This being the undisputed & evident fact it follows, that the little troubles

and difficulties, which we experience in college life, ought to prepare us to hear with magnaminity the greater trials that await us.

W. C. Wilson