

The Evolution of a College Student.

by

Rhoda Clara McPartney.



The people who live in College towns and who are continually in contact with Colleges and with College people do not realize the troubles of a student coming from the decidedly rural districts. This student has not the advantages necessary for preparing him to enter College, and he is backward in his make-up, in his manner and in his general knowledge of the world. But under this outward appearance there is a true nature and an honest and upright character. The fact that this student has had but few advantages is not always due to lack of money, for on the contrary, he often comes from the homes of our wealthiest farmers. Then why



is it that he is not further advanced? In order to show this lack of training the better we will take the average student as an example; the one who comes right from the farm, without having had the advantages of the town school.

His home is out in the prairie country where neighbors are few and the town probably ten miles away. The house is not modern but he has every thing necessary for his comfort. His parents are of the good old type, who never having had any chances themselves are saving every cent of their hard earned money, in order that they may send their son to college.



To them he is a hero, and perhaps he is, but at the same time there is a vast amount of room for improvement, and they little realize the enormity of the obstacles which he must confront upon entering College. To them he is perfect in every way. They have instilled in him an ardent respect for truth, they have taught him honest politeness without the usual polish, and unconsciously from their own refined natures they have imported to him all the essentials necessary for an upright character, modest and unassuming.

The school he attends is the usual country school with no special advantages, and from which he finally obtains a diploma. From this



school he goes to work on the farm.

His social advantages are few, an occasional spelling school, a Literary Society, and perhaps an oyster supper. On Sundays he is allowed to spend the day with some friend. Town is a long ways off and he only goes when business demands it, or when there is a circus or a celebration. He is a genuine country-boy subject to all the temporary vanities and conceits of any youth of his age, but who is at heart a manly fellow, and possesses a great strength of character.

His parents are determined to send him to school. He has often pictured himself at College, but is rather indifferent about going, and it is not until the plans are well made



that he really wakens up to the fact that he is going to leave the farm and enter into a new career. So at eighteen years of age, we have him an overgrown, awkward country boy, with his hair country cut, his trousers too short and his arms dangling from his coat-sleeves, after the fashion of "Pep Van Winkle."

The trip on the train was rather a novelty to him, he never having gone quite such a distance before, and he had plenty of time to investigate the window shades and to find out just how the seats were manipulated.

He reaches the College town and as he alights from the train he feels somewhat bewildered at the number of people who seem to have come for



the express purpose of taking care of him. He soon gains his composure and orders his grips, trunk and the big lunch mother put up for him, sent to the College, and he goes there also thinking his troubles are almost over, when in reality they have just begun. He reaches the College safely and finds his trunk deposited upon the campus. He is so amazed at the enormity of the buildings, that he does not notice, or if he notices, pays no attention to the amused smile which greets him from the upper-classmen. Suddenly, the term "College" takes on a new meaning. Every thing is so strange, he knows no one, and he forcibly feels that it is not just as he



had expected it to be, and he sees nothing but a cold welcome in the great stone buildings. He feels just a little homesick, but decides not to give way to the feeling and enters one of the buildings. Every thing to him is noise and confusion, and he is bewildered by the number of students going this way and that and rudely jostling him about. He knew just how to act when he entered the little old school house at home, but here every thing was so different, so uncomfortably different, that his sense of politeness left him and he forgot to remove his hat. He thought of it with a start, clutched it from his hair, chucked it under his arm and wondered if any one saw him.



By this time he was almost in the center of the building having been pushed there by the rapid on-rush of the students, who all seemed to have some place definite to go. He sees an old man standing by a flight of stairs directing the crowd. He immediately approaches him and asks if he is the President.

The janitor conceals a smile and directs our boy from the farm to the President's office. He goes there but the President is absent. Tired and homesick he decides to try it another day, so breaks away from the College and proceeds to look up a room. He finds one and before night is comfortably located. The next day he starts out again carrying with him his County



School Diploma, of which he is unduly proud, and feeling that it, in some way, will give him a greater air of importance.

The President is in his office and it is with great awe and with trembling of the knees that our boy from the farm approaches the head of the institution. The President looks at him proudly and directs him to room 36 telling him that there he will find the professor whom he wishes to see. Again the boy is confused and wanders aimlessly around trying to find the room indicated upon the slip in his hand. He asks someone standing near, who wanting a little fun, directs him in just the opposite direction from where he should go. He goes, but



fails to find the place and thinks the person was simply mistaken not seeing the mischief intended.

He asks another and this person, remembering his experience of the year before, shows him the building and takes him to the office door.

His appreciation of this kindness, partly expressed, showed faith in his eyes and the strange person immediately became kind to him. He enters the room and here receives his first shock. The professor takes his name and age and hands him a slip of paper and directs him to another office door close by, near one taking notice of that cherished diploma, merely asking if he had one. He goes to the next professor and gets his



assignment without further trouble.

The first day he has some trouble finding his classes, the second day he gets along pretty well, and the third day his confidence is great and he begins to feel his importance. He walks around with an air of importance and wonders why he didn't always feel this way. Every thing looks bright to him and with great magnanimity offers to take some others around the buildings. He feels very proud as he marches down the halls pointing out different places of interest. He is very kind, even condescending and offers his services for the next day to help the stranger find his classes. The stranger declines with thanks.



suppresses a smile and again shocks our unsuspecting freshman by telling him that he is a Senior having been in College almost four years.

For the first few months of the freshman year, our boy from the farm does not change materially only that he gets a better hold of the general ways around the College. He stands in awe of the Faculty and has a deep reverence for the Seniors.

He studies hard, joins the Y. M. P. A. and a Literary Society, and towards the end of the year begins to improve his dress and also to notice the way dress and manners of his fellow students.

Before this he had been too busy, his time had been taken up. At the end of the term he goes home to his



parents, looking about the same but much wiser in some ways.

He realizes what a necessity a College education is and comes back the second year to take up the duties of the Sophomore. He studies as hard as he did when a Freshman, but there is some little difference in the way he applies himself. He uses his knowledge to a better advantage. He takes an interest in Athletics, enjoys the Foot-ball and is becoming imbued with the College spirit. He is beginning to take more interest in his class meetings. His general appearance is changing; his hair has become manageable; he has clothes which fit him and his manners are easier. At the end of the Sophomore year the



him "College" again takes on a new meaning to him and he finds that he is in love with the atmosphere about the school. He finds that College life is only imaginary but real and that there is a tie which draws him back to take up the work of the junior year. The sophomore has a warm feeling for the seniors.

As a junior he feels himself to be just a little bit better than his under-classesmen, but hardly knows just how to deal with the Senior. He is losing some of that awe and reverence which he felt for the Faculty, and begins to realize that they are merely men and women subject to their own individual peculiarities. To his parents to whom he looks two or three



times a week in his first year he now writes but seldom. Once or twice he called his father "the Governor", or spoke of him as the "old man", but was heartily ashamed of it, and although he didn't let on to the boys, he decided not to do it again. He rather neglects his studies, paying just enough attention to them to pass the examinations and regards his dress as a subject much more important.

As a rule, however, the juniors along toward the end of the year are spurred on to harder work by the fact that they will soon be seniors. So it is with our boy from the farm. He is anxious to go home to his parents as a full-fledged senior. He is more in earnest now. Before this he had



almost succumbed to the "yellowfeil", but now he realizes that he must run no risks. This year he sees the Seniors through. Instead of rushing home at the close of the examination he stays until the last function is over. As the Seniors receive their diplomas and the last exercises are passed, it is with a feeling of no little importance that he walks forth from the College Chapel. The words "at last" chase themselves through his mind, and again the term "College" takes on a new meaning. The important feeling leaves him. His College life has changed. Instead of the free easy-going life of the Junior, comes the rushed existence of the Senior, full of responsibilities. He knows he must



make every minute of his time count. His work must accomplish something for him. In the Fall and Winter he gets along very nicely, but in the Spring there is an obstacle. He knows he has just so much to do but he has no inclination whatever to do it. As a Senior he loses all of the vanities which marked him as a junior. He does feel rather proud and to others probably seems rather important and as though he possessed all the knowledge in the curriculum, but he alone realizes how little he does know. To him the truth is apparent, and he looks back in memory to the Freshman year, to the time when the Senior to him seemed to have unlimited knowledge. But this idea has left him. The end of



The rainbow is found but the cup of gold does not glitter and as a senior he knows that he has but to look ahead and learn. Commencement Day is at hand. Our boy from the farm marches down the aisle and takes his place upon the platform. We hardly recognize in him the awkward boy of four years ago. College life has left its marks.

Instead of the ungainly boy from the country we have a handsome, polished self-possessed young man. He has developed both physically and mentally. All the ideas of good which his parents had imparted to him when a child have become fixed in his mind and his character shows forth in every line of his face. The society life, the contests on the athletic field,



the steady contact with so many people: all these things have helped to broaden him. He laughs at the experiences of his freshman year. The first three years developed him physically, but this last, the senior year has done more than all others to develop him mentally. He is glad to be through but dislikes to think that he will not return again in the fall. As he receives his diploma it is with a feeling similar to the one he experienced when he first viewed the great stone buildings of the college. He receives the congratulations of his friends and classmates and then bids adieu to them and his Alma Mater.

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