

## REMINISCENCES OF THE EARLY DAYS OF THE COLLEGE.

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Four decades have passed since Gallaudet College was founded,—the first and only existing college for the deaf in the world. It was incorporated under an act of Congress in the year 1864. When the bill for this incorporation was introduced, grave doubts were expressed as to the justification in conferring the degree of Bachelor of Arts, Master, Doctor, and the like, upon deaf-mutes supposed to be under ban in acquiring the intellectual attainments accorded to their more fortunate brethren; but all objections disappeared on the presentation of facts bearing on the capacities of deaf-mutes.

The first year opened with one solitary student in the college, and four young men and two young ladies in the preparatory class. The next year the solitary student rejoiced to see two more students from his *alma mater*. There were then five students in the college and seven in the preparatory class.

The sleeping rooms and recitation rooms were in a frame-building on the site now occupied by the male students' dining-hall. The students took their meals in the central front basement room of the old main building at a table a few feet from the officers' table.

The third year saw quite an accession of new students, a great number of which came from the Western states. From a small beginning the college grew slowly but steadily until it reached an attendance of which a young college might be proud.

It may be thought not amiss to say a few words here in regard to the solitary student. When he entered the college, he felt queer to find himself in a new place,—as a class reciting to a professor three times a day without another student for his companion in some of the studies on the list, as though he was under a private tutor. During his connection with the college, he was spoken of as *the College* in such expressions as these: "Where is the College?" "He has gone to the city." "The College has gone to bed." "The College is sick." etc. He never knew of it until some time after he



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graduated. And when he heard of it, he was glad that he did not know it, for he would have sunk under so stupendous a responsibility, and continually worried as to his ability to uphold it; or, on the other hand, he might have been foolish enough to say "*Le College, c'est moi,*"—and got laughed at for his vanity. As it was, he felt thankful that he had escaped both of those two dangers.

During those forty years of the college's life, students have come and gone well fitted for the various walks of life, and the trusts committed to them in the outside world have demonstrated the value and usefulness of the college.

Every college has its stories, some of which are ludicrous and others, serious; and a few reminiscences are to be related here in connection with the early years of Gallaudet College.

A sad accident took place on the morning of the first of June 1866, which cast gloom over the college. Before breakfast most of the students went swimming in the Anacostia River, a small tributary of the Potomac, near the piles of the old bridge over which the British came to destroy Washington, some distance above the navy-yard, in the War of 1812. While they were disporting themselves in the water, James Cross, Jr., of '69 seemed to be in distress, and Samuel T. Greene of '70 rushed to his rescue. After a long struggle, and with the help of two other students, Kull and Englehardt, Cross was gotten under control.

Greene waved to Bird of '70 to bring a boat. Cross was brought in the boat to the shore. They did everything in their power to resuscitate him till an old fisherman, who came along, told them that Cross was dead. A doctor came and after examining him pronounced his life extinct.

The students had all dressed again, except one. There was a pile of clothes on the ground, and they, on looking at the mark, asked "Where is Hallowell?" They looked for him, but he was nowhere to be seen. The painful conviction forced itself upon them that Hallowell had drowned, too. His body was found the next day, thirty-two hours after the accident.

A double funeral service was held in the old college chapel. Their bodies now lie buried in the Institution lot at Glenwood Cemetery in this city.

In the second year after the inauguration of the National Deaf-

Mute College, now Gallaudet College, a professor was appointed for a certain chair. Among the articles of furniture he sent to put in a house on the premises, was a fine pianoforte, and he left the address with the shipper, but owing to either the peculiar pronunciation of the professor, or the stupidity of the shipper, the address was put down as follows :

Prof. ———.

National Deaf-Mute College,  
Washington, D. C.

The box reached its destination all right !

During the second year of the college's foundation, a tall deaf-mute man, living not more than two hundred miles from the Capital made his appearance as a candidate for admission. When one of the professors informed him that it was necessary for him to pass an examination in each of the studies on the list before he could be admitted, this man produced a long envelope containing a document which proved to be a certificate from the celebrated phrenologist, Dr. Fowler, and offered it as a good ticket of admission. Though this certificate showed a fine record of attainments, as indicated, in the phrenologist's examination, by the several prominent bumps of his head, the professor did not consider it a sufficient passport to the college. This man went away, a disappointed aspirant for college honors.

A "Down East" student had been reviewing his books for a coming examination, and in the midst of his preparations he experienced an unpleasant sensation in his jaw ; but he did not mind it, thinking that it would soon pass away.

However, this unpleasant sensation did not pass away, but continued worse and worse till it came to a head in the form of an enormous swelling in his face, accompanied with an excruciating pain. The day before the examinations, this poor, patient student concluded that it would be wise to ask the Faculty to postpone his examinations to the next term, rather than run the risk of entering upon the list of conditioned students.

So he laid aside his books and betook himself to bed. But he was not to be allowed to rest in peace. Finding his efforts to assuage this pain in his jaw and to go to sleep of no avail, he got up,

and took up his books. And he worked all night to forget his trouble.

When the morning came, he went with his face in a bandage to the chapel. He passed all his examinations successfully. He had done his work, and now there was something for a physician to do for him. The doctor, examining his jaw, said to him, "You are just cutting a wisdom tooth."

In the third year there was, as at the present, a preparatory class under the title of *Intermediate*, which had a larger number of students than the college had, and in an evil day there arose an ill-feeling between the students of the two departments for some cause, whether real or imaginary, it is impossible to say here.

This distemper, which had for several days been brewing, reached a climax one evening when the college boys rushed into the room whence an old shoe had been thrown at them, and a scuffle followed which lasted a few minutes. The lights had been put out to increase the confusion.

A slim *Intermediate* got behind a powerful college man and put his arms around him to constrain his muscular exercise. The collegian, finding himself thus hampered, pressed on to the washstand to pick up a slop-pail standing by its side. Lifting the pail over his head, he poured its contents upon his opponent. This *Intermediate* relaxed his grip at once as if he had been shot!

In another part of the room, one of the college boys threw an *Intermediate* upon a bed. This *Intermediate* drew up his leg to deliver his opponent a tremendous blow, but, missing his aim, he landed his foot squarely on the nose of a friend, drawing a stream of blood. Somebody brought in a candle and shed the light over the scene. The outcome of this fight has been forgotten.

The student who was anxious to avenge the injury to his nose, made a tour of the building running up and down stairs in quest of an innocent student. Some one stopped him, and, pushing him to the wall, said to him, "Take care. You are chasing the wrong man. It was one of your friends who did it."

The Faculty took cognizance of this disorder and made an investigation; but to this day it is not known to the writer on which side the Faculty laid the blame.

Although the Faculty put a quietus on this quarrel, the bitter

feeling did not subside. What seemed to be peace was only a forced truce. This bad feeling soon showed itself in an attempt to break up the college base ball-club, which bore, at the time, the title of "Kendall." The Intermediate students who belonged to this club, withdrew, and, with the others, formed a separate club under the name of "Scorpion."

The Scorpions had a sufficient number of players to make two teams for practice, while the Kendalls could not muster more than twelve or fifteen men. The Kendalls had to depend on hearing clubs to play practice games, and mostly in throwing and catching the ball, first in the Fall and next in the Spring. This state of affairs continued eight months.

As the summer vacation was approaching, the Kendalls challenged the Scorpions to measure bats with them. The Scorpions took up the gauntlet. A long game they played, the tally-card showing eighty-five runs to the credit of the Kendalls, and seventeen to the credit of the Scorpions. At one time they had to suspend the game a few minutes for the water-boy to pass the pail around to quench their thirst.

The Scorpions did a handsome thing. They ordered ice-cream and cakes, and invited all the professors and students to partake of the refreshments. The ice had been broken and a friendly feeling seemed now to prevail everywhere. And one of the professors, in a few words of congratulation on the return of good-will among the students, made a happy hit by saying, "Now I do not know who are the Kendions and who are the Scorpalls."

*Melville Ballard, '66.*