Old Times at Allegheny

The editor of the "Allegheny Literary Monthly" has asked me to set down some recollections of "Old Times" at the College.

At the word, my mind flies back to a day in September, 1876, when woeful, scared and apprehensive, I landed in Meadville to take a place in the freshman class. How different a girl's coming then and now! Now there is Huling's Hall and the Dean and scores of upper class girls waiting to receive her. Things are prepared for her. But nothing in my day had been prepared for girls. We were an experiement still. There were but two girls in the senior class, two in the junior, none in the sophmore, and to my dismay, I found that I was the only one entered for the freshman class.

However, that year the preparatory department had been opened to girls. A dozen or more were to come, and the authorities having them on their hands had decided, with some misgivings I think, that they had got to add a girls' boarding hall to their cares.

The decision seems to have come at the last moment, for nothing was ready when I arrived. In pity for my lonliness, however, Mrs. Bugbee, wife of the president, had offered to take me in for a week. I could have gone anywhere with less suffering. Nothing could have been more delightful than the Bugbee house, but I was still in that period of undevelopment where the president of the college was only a little lower than a bishop, and the bishop

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stood next to the angels. To sit at the table daily beside a president of a college was a trial that no kindness could quite assuage.

At the end of the week Mrs. Hyde, the wife of Dr. A.B. Hyde, took me over. Here again I fell into a family of the rarest qualities. Mrs. Hyde was as near a Madonna in character and looks as any woman I remember. The only daughter in the family, Minnie Hyde, was a pianist of remarkable technical skill. And as for Dr. Hyde there never was but one of him - a gentleman, a scholar and a humorist. But he lived largely among the Greeks, the Latins and the Philosophers, and I was still too frightened to dare to follow with my meagre equipment into his fields.

These preliminary weeks among the great were one of the hardest trials of my life, though my gratitude to the people who took me in can never be expressed or paid.

The house the faculty promised us was forthcoming after a month. It stood on the street back of old Culver Hall where a hundred or so boys lived - a tiny seven or eight-room house. We were a very happy crowd, and if we had not been fairly well brought up girls and our housekeeper had not been a good deal of a dragon, we might have made much more mischief for the faculty than we did.

The Snow Flake, as our place was called, faced the rear wing of the boys' boarding hall. There was a chance for unimpeded

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communication. That we did not avail ourselves more of it was due to the fact that we were all of us more or less conscious that it was up to us to prove that co-education could be made a success, and the frequent reminders that we received from our superiors that excessive flirtation would probably result in a decision by faculty and trustees that, so far as Allegheny was concerned, girls were a failure.

The trials incident to finding a satisfactory living place were hardly less for me that the trial of finding myself in the student body. To be the only girl in a class of 40 to 50 boys when girls are on trial is sure to make as shy a young woman as I was, more or less self-conscious. I dreaded everything - chapel, walking across the campus, going into the class room - I could see nothing but boys - hostile boys that considered me an interloper. Later I was to find that this was all nonsense, that while they might feel a little bored that their masculine preserves had been invaded, they really were not thinking anything about me so long as I kept my proper distance. You had to learn however, what your own preserves were, and faithfuly remain upon them. My first false step, I think, was [illegible] down in a vacant period under the trees below Bently Hall. A kindly upper class woman, seeing me there, rted down and said, with unmistakable horror in her tone: "Girls r come into this part of the campus. Come back quick!" And you end upon it I did.

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It was not long, however, before my preliminary alarms and sufferings were pretty well drowned in interest in my class room work. My first great intellectual passion came into life that fall of 1876 at Allegheny. My object in going to college at all had been to prepare myself as a teacher of natural science. The universe and its ways had taken deep hold upon me. This was due to two things - first, the sermons of the Rev. A. M. Craft, strongly tinged with the scientific thought of the day, that I had been listening to for some three years in my home town of Titusville, Pa., Those sermons set me to reading the Popular Science Monthly when I was 15 or 16 years old, and I had kept it up. I had become a crude but serious observer. So sincere was my desire to follow scientific studies that I had decided of myself that I should go to Cornell College as it seemed to me to offer more of the kind of thing that I thought I wanted than any other institution open to girls at that period.

But several things which I need not speak of here had brought me to Allegheny. Nothing could have been better for me. Here I fell into the hands of one of the rarest of teachers, Prof. Jeremiah Tingley.

I have never known a more compelling enthusiasm in the class room than Prof. Tingley inspired. He had been with Agassiz at Penikise, and all his teaching was directed to making independent observers of his pupils. To put your hands on a thing, pull it to pieces, discover it, that was what Prof. Tingley sought to do with us. He soon had me at a microscope. I had never had my hands on

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one before, and nothing that I have ever had my hands on since has gave me such joy. I fancy that his great binocular was to me somethin like his violin is to an artist, and I determined then and there that I would be a biologist.

When I left college I still had that ambition. Life elbowed me away from it and into an entirely different profession, and what I would not give if, in Allegheny at that time, to the rather very meagre instruction in reading and writing which was given us, Prof. Tingley's principles were applied. If I could have learned then that the matter of writing lies first in what Montaigne calls "clear and lively images" which will force themselves to paper! To look within yourself, to find your own thought about a thing, your own feeling about a thing, and then get that down with all the art you can command, and with a consciousness that you can grow in that art - that I did not learn at Allegheny. It was not born in me and I failed to get it there, and because of that I have been hampered throughout the professional life into which I almost unawaringly walked.

The Allegheny girl of today does not have, I believe, the advantage of a Literary Society. My belief is that she loses by it, that the fraternity which absorbs the time which we used to give to "Ossoli", as our organization was called, does not take its place. It was in "Ossoli" we found our best opportunity for free discussion and free exercise of whatever little talent we might have as writers. We had rather an abnormal interest in the machinery of

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organization and in parliamentary law. I remember that we considered it almost a crime to break a rule. But that was probably natural to beginners in organization, as we were. We did have lively debates in "Ossoli" and because of it we all did much more reading of English classics and contemporary literature than otherwise we would have done.

Of course the equipment that we had for scientific and for library work was meagre indeed compared to what you have today. Our laboratories were all in the basement of Huling's Hall, where old furniture, coal and janitor's supplies disputed the space with us; but I would not give the most highly developed equipment to be found in America for the spirit that reigned in those bare and helter-skelter rooms. Nor would I for a great deal give up my memory of the library on the top of the stern old Hall ~~facing the present gymnasium~~. It was one long, dark room, with books to the very ceiling - books which you could climb on a ladder, take out, sit on the ladder and read, if you wanted to, dipping into one after another, sometimes using up your whole afternoon perched there in blissful unconsciousness both of danger and discomfort.

The library offered a better place, however - the deep seated windows, where, looking out over the tops of the trees of the campus and down into the lovely Meadville valley, and to the hills beyond. It was seated in one of the those windows along with two of my classmates, we chose the motto which appears on the stone of the Class of '80 now on the campus:

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Spes Sibi Quisque

What it all amounts to is something that life grinds deeper and deeper into us, the more we see of it, - that the treasures of mind and spirit that you lay up for yourself as a student do not consist in buildings or equipment, or conveniences or luxuries, - that they come purely from what goes on in head and heart in this precious period.

It is a temptation to go on, to tell of the joyous year that twenty or more girls of us had in our second boarding hall - an utterly unsuitable shack at the foot of North Street, - we called it the Black Maria, - of the two years of happy life that we had in our third dwelling place, Bunce Hall - a rambling old place, perched on the top of a terrace. "Purty as a pictur," its owner ays declared it. It wasn't - save when the apple trees were in the spring, which somewhat relieved its ugly lines. But gay crowd of fairly hard working young women. ter my first year I was not alone in my class, which ing different. Three women had joined me - three rare riet Linn, a woman of fine mind, far better prepared for rk than I was, a woman whose after career in China as the r. Beebe of the Nakin Hospital, is well known to the y element of the college. Besides Miss Linn there were r girls, as we called them - Harriet, the older, gentle and best student in the class in many ways; and her charming young na, the belle and beauty of the class.

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But I could go on and fill this issue of the Literary Monthly, so many are the pictures that merely the words "Old Times at Allegheny" bring to my mind - things grave and gay, things sad and bad and courageous and hopeful. The girls who came into Allegheny from 1876 to 1880 came in a transition period. A few, not all, realized this, and a few, not all, stood up to the demands consciously or unconsciously; but on the whole we went through our test fairly well, Huling's Hall and the Allegheny College girl of today is proof.

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