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UA37/44 Diary to Kelly

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One advantage of being ill is that there comes a sort of erasure of what was troubling the patient, and he seems to get a new start. The whole month of March was a sort of dreamworld for me this year. Having had to take a lot of strong medicine, I was unhooked, as it were. I did not especially mourn for lost time; that took too much energy. I got so weak before I began to gain strength that almost any movement of my body tired me; my legs felt inadequate as supports for my body. And then, as I began to get well, I seemed to have started a new existence. Rather oddly, every serious illness I have ever had, occurred in late winter or early spring; my getting well was synchronized with the arrival of spring. As the birds began to come back, my energy returned. Though it was late April before I could get out much, I found a consolation in the astonishing number of migrants that came to my back yard. Some of the rarest birds I have ever learned to know by sight or ~~sight~~ sound came to my yard, like the mountain that came to Mohammed. Some one asked Thoreau where to find Indian relics; he stooped down and picked up an arrowhead and said, "Anywhere." If I were asked the same question about birds, I could answer in the same way, for it is almost unbelievable how many oddities have been recorded in my yard in the forty-eight years that it has been my yard. By degrees my strength has come almost back to normal, and I have been able to walk again and, lately, to do an enormous amount of painting the woodwork of our big, big house. Spring and I have come on together.

With the passing of the old Ogden Building passed an era in my experience; its successor will finish the experience of seeing every structure on the Hill arise. Only the front part of the transformer building back of Cherry Hall remains of any of the structures that were there when I first arrived on the Hill. I used to wonder at the breadth of love that a mother of a large family could have. It seemed that the tenth child was just as much a part of her life as

her firstborn. From my long association with Western I can say that I understand now this type of mother love, for I have somehow made room in my affection for each new building, each new advancement; they are all mine.

It is a plan of mine to go over to the new Commerce-Education Building soon, that I may experience the joy of seeing a brand-new part of our achievement. Until fairly recently, I fear, I would not have had enough energy to climb the stairs. Those of the faculty who are in the building permanently or for the summer are loud in the praises of it.

The new science complex grows right in front of my house; every time I go across the campus, I slow down long enough to see what has been added since my last previous walk. The building has many attractions in prospect, but it would still be a part of my life if my son were not also vitally interested in it. A mere building needs people to give it life. I probably have told you before about how lonesome and lost we felt when we moved up from the old building at the foot of the Hill, back in February, 1911. Everybody felt lost, teachers as well as students. President Cherry, sensing this, called a group of some twenty students to come to his house one night to plan some "spontaneity." We orated and otherwise showed our spirit the next day, and I can truly say that never afterwards did we feel lost or strange. I do not know whether the school in general knew about our pump-priming of spontaneity, and I do not care to know. I only know that the new, big building was ours after that morning; we had adopted it and given it our affection.

Sentiment is a queer thing. For many years, as you know, I have been a camper. In that time I have owned several tents. After I had spent a single night in any one of them, when they were new, that little bit of rainproof canvas was my home. No matter how strange had been the experience of the day, as I drove over strange, new country, at night, when I crawled inside my pup tent, I was at home, fearing

no loneliness, no strange sounds outside. Normally I go to sleep more quickly in a tent than in my own bed. I have never been a night owl; hence my bedtime is early, my rising equally early. Meanwhile my tent top is a few inches, or, in my present tent, a few feet, above me as I lie on my air~~ma~~mattress and settle down for the night. Adaptability ought to be as easy as breaking in a new tent. I can count now a dozen buildings on our campus where I taught classes, some of them now gone forever or so changed that they are hardly recognizable. But, after meeting a class and looking it over, the new room was mine, even for a short summer term or for years on end. I have always felt slightly ashamed of a teacher who says he has to be in his own room to teach properly. One of the teachers of my department almost acted like a person insane if her classes were not all in a designated room, where she could come every day. One of our faculty members, you may recall, objected strenuously to a classroom of a deceased teacher being made into an office. Maybe sentiment can go farther than that, but I can think of no recent instance of it.

It pleases me greatly that we are now able to assign summer classes to air-conditioned rooms. We do not have air-conditioning in my house, but I am glad that our summer students can save some of their energy that used to be wasted in trying to keep comfortable. My own fifty-one summers in a row that I went to school or taught in hot rooms did not run me to earth, but I sometimes feared that the next one down the line would do so. When I hear some old-timers pretend that they are longing for the Good Old Days, I wonder whether they remember, as I do, how cold we were in the old one-roomed schoolhouse and how bad we smelled when we got close enough to the stove to thaw out.

In saying all this, I am in no way making fun of the inadequacy of our classrooms of long ago. That was about the best we could have then, but let bygones be bygones. I once taught a class, in spring, in the old barracks where the Training School now is, a class so big

that it spilled out into the halls. But a great many members of that class had had to spend days and weeks in trenches in Europe and probably felt that they were in excellent surroundings in the flimsily-built barracks on Fifteenth Street. Anyway, we lived through it and are not ashamed that we could do no better at that time. Imagine some senile fellow pretending that we need just that type of classroom again, merely because he found himself while attending classes in such unlikely spots!

My quarrel with old-timers, whether they are actually old or have allowed their brain-cells to harden prematurely, is that they refuse to "see life steadily and see it whole," in Matthew Arnold's phrase. Most oldsters have a way of abstracting some good qualities from some former time and place and deliberately leaving out the others. Most historical societies leave me cold, because they are too often in the hands of oldsters who can see only over their shoulders, who feel that humanity is going down hill. If the Revolutionary War soldiers were as brave and as high-minded as I have heard them pictured, how in the world did the war drift on so long without our winning it? Maybe the prime fault of oldsters is their refusal to see all the attending circumstances of war or school or great people or buildings. I respect the people whom I have known and feel that my lines have fallen in pleasant places for the most part, but I resent a false worship of some personalities merely because they were great in their times but are pictured as great for all times. I recall hearing a great speaker, when I was a senior at Indiana University, say that William McKinley, but for the assassin's bullet, might still be living. He wondered, however, whether the great man could adjust to a mere fourteen years later.