

CHAPTER XXVIII

CLASS OF 1893

A Class Yell and a Class Hat

Rackety, Whack, Rackety Whee, There are no flies on '93.

That there was anything humorous about this yell appears never to have occurred to any of the members of the serious-minded class of '93 until twenty years later, when in the midst of a great University convention the class stood up, many with gray hair and bald heads, and shouted this old class slogan, producing thereby great laughter as well as applause.

The Class of '93 entered the University, the largest class which had ever entered. It contained a considerable number of rather mature and aggressive young men and more than a usual amount of rampant radicals among its younger group. The preceding class (1892) had been relatively small in numbers and had had its spirit crushed by the denouement of the hazing of Reilley. While it contained some of the foremost scholars of the University, such as Reinsch, who was afterward professor in the University and Minister to China, and Schlicher, who was associated with Grandfather in Joint Debate, it evidenced little class spirit and did not do much to assert itself.

So as "Mighty Ninety" began in the latter part of '93's Freshman year to relinquish the control which it had exercised, the class of '93 made an aggressive bid for leadership and during the rest of its career was a dominant influence on the campus. Upon organization, it was suggested by

one of the radicals - I suppose in modern parlance they would be called Bolsheviks - we called them just plain "nuts" - that '93, being so much greater than any preceding class, should for their Freshman hat adopt the mortar board, which from time immemorial had been the style exclusively sacred to Sophomores. When some timid member suggested that the Sophs might not like this, the radical proposed that the class adopt baseball bats for canes and demonstrate by their valor the right to wear what no Freshman had dared to wear before.

At the next class meeting, a letter was read from the president of the University, personally requesting the class not to adopt the mortar board for their hat. This led to a type of oratory foreshadowing the United States Senate of 1930, denouncing tyrannical interference with private affairs of the unusual class of '93. In the end a mortar board was adopted with this modification - the Freshman mortar board should have three corners instead of four. This led to a debate as to whether it should be worn with one horn forward like a unicorn or two horns forward like a devil, and '93 did get away with wearing this strangely constructed mortar board for its class hat.

It is not Grandfather's purpose to write a history of the colorful career of '93, but merely to relate two incidents as typical of their thoughtfulness for humanity in general, for '93 was always including the University, if not the Universe, in its scheme for improvements.

Both of these incidents had their origin in Grandfather's administration as president in the latter part of the Junior year. Yet it should be chronicled that the ideas originated with the radicals who so cheerfully on all occasions bubbled over with ideas.

Adopting a Pin

When it came time for '93 to select for itself a class pin, one of the radicals suggested that the class of '93, which always felt a paternal interest in the University, should instead champion a movement for each of the other classes to appoint a committee to collaborate with the class of '93 in selecting a University pin.

Now it happened that the girls of '93 had become peeved at some previous class action and punished the class on this particular occasion by staying away. There being no girls at this meeting, only boys were appointed on the '93 committee, and so abject imitators were the other classes that they also appointed only boys. Now this committee of boys planned a unique pin - in the shape of the state of Wisconsin, with a red background bordered with gold and a gold star to mark the location of Madison. At the meeting to receive the report of this committee enough young ladies to fill a couple of benches deigned to attend, and one of them delivered a Phillipic upon the proverbial bad taste of men, called attention to the absurdity of a committee composed only of men, presuming to choose a design for a University pin to be worn by women as well as by men, and ended by denouncing this particular pin as a "geographical monstrosity - just too Dutchy for anything." In spite of this impassioned address, the ungallant youths, having a majority, adopted the report of the committee.

This was too much for offended femininity to stand, and Amanda Johnson stood forth to champion the cause of fair play to women and to

save the University from this terrible example of man's bad taste. Perhaps it should be related that Amanda Johnson was tall and fair to look upon and thoroughly possessed a belief in her convictions. She had received an affectionate epithet as a result of one of the early class meetings.

Class meetings were held in some vacant lecture room, and as nominations for class offices were made, the secretary would write the names upon the blackboard. At one of these meetings, the first person nominated for a certain office was a man named Sweet. So the secretary wrote on the board Sweet. The next person nominated was Amanda Johnson, and the dumb bunny secretary, instead of writing her name under Sweet's name, wrote it in the same line, and as soon as '93 in formal assembly read Sweet Amanda, they indecorously laughed and "Sweet Amanda" she was ever after.

Well, now, when Sweet Amanda got a conviction, something was bound to happen. Just to illustrate her independence of thought, let me wander away from my story for a moment to tell you of our Senior Class party which of necessity the Senior class gave itself. It usually happened that pretty Senior girls received many invitations and less attractive Senior girls received none. Now '93, in its mania for reforming, thought of a new scheme. The names of all Senior girls were put in a hat together with enough blanks to equal the number of boys. Each boy drew a slip. If a boy drew a name, he was to take that girl and no swap or evasion was allowed. If he drew a blank, he could invite an underclass girl. Well, the youth who drew Sweet Amanda's name apparently lacked the courage to follow through, although Miss Johnson, it must be said, was in fact both pleasing to look at and attractive in conversation. Exactly what delayed the youth

we did not learn, but at any rate Amanda having waited for her escort as long as she thought propriety required, came to the party all by her lonesome.

But to get back to my story, Amanda Johnson took up the cudgels for a battle royal against the newly adopted pin. Meanwhile, somewhere in between the start of the idea and the adoption of the committee report, a summer vacation had intervened and some important events had transpired. In the first place, there was a new president of the University who was not familiar with the prestige of the class of '93 and who thought a graduate school was more important than the Senior class of '93. In the second place, a new boathouse had been built. This latter fact may seem quite unrelated to our story, but became in fact the crux of it.

A student by the name of Saucerman was business manager of the newly started Daily Cardinal and he got permission to build a boathouse for the University on an important piece of University land. Apparently in the passing of authority from President Chamberlin to President Adams, no check-up was made as to Saucerman's plans for financing the deal. As a matter of fact, Saucerman apparently had no plans for financing the venture. He just put in about \$2,000 of his own money, drew up plans, let contracts and had the boathouse built. In the Fall there was a perfectly good boathouse in a fine location on University ground, with contractors clamoring for about \$20,000 and no appropriation from the State legislature. Saucerman's funds were exhausted and no other contributions were in sight.

This created an opportunity which Amanda was quick to seize. The girls would liberally donate their father's money toward a boathouse fund

in return for support from the athletic organizations on the pin fight. Amanda also had an interview with the President and won him over. Furthermore, she convinced the law school that they had been grossly slighted by this presumptuous committee of undergraduates and got them to use their legal oratory as well as their votes to right this wrong to women.

So President Adams called a convocation of the University to reconsider the action on the University pin. At the meeting, a point of order was raised that the action having been properly taken and contracts having been legally entered into for the manufacturer of the pins that it was now too late to reconsider the action. To which President Adams replied, as only an Adams could: "Nevertheless, I shall consider a motion to reconsider." He gave the floor to Amanda, who related the barbaric manner in which a small coterie of mere men had presumed to act for the whole University and the atrocity of a pin they had produced, and amidst tumultuous applause on the part of athletes, law students and ladies, the previous vote was reconsidered.

Grandfather is not clear whether the rest he shall relate took place the same day or at a later meeting. At any rate, it seemed clear that if the state design was to be saved, it would have to be by strategy in the face of a determined majority of votes. Now the foremost rival was a pennant bearing U. W. The help of some engineering student draftsmen was enlisted and it was found that if a pennant was drawn a little off the established lines, it could be made to look very ugly. So a huge pennant with this quirk in it was produced with colors which jarred a bit, and an appropriate speech was written, presenting this pennant as the ideal pin for the University.

For spokesman, a Freshman not yet known to the University was chosen - Harry Harding who afterwards, as related elsewhere, won campus fame by eating fifteen pieces of pie at one meal and breaking his Freshman cane over the head of a Sophomore. Harry looked mature enough to be an upper classman, had a good voice and unlimited nerve. He made his plea for the pennant before a surprised audience.

There was no counter argument for the state design. "Vote, vote." Among the others appointed were some known to be advocates of the state design - a couple of these were tipped off to get only girl ballots in their hats. The state design won by a handsome majority and those who allowed only girls to vote reported the ballots in their hats were for the state design. The girls had not really objected to the design - they just wished to be consulted. Grandfather, along with some others, wore the state design with a feeling of pride in their victory in this amazon contest and cherished the pin for many years. Later some unauthorized pennant pins appeared for sale - they were easy to manufacture because they became standard for all colleges and finally by their cheapness won a monopoly of the field.

Meanwhile, perhaps a word should be added concerning the later career of Amanda Johnson. After graduation she went to Chicago to live at Hull House, where her convictions soon came in conflict with Bathhouse John, the political boss of the slums. Bathhouse John, irritated by her tactics, one day in a humorous mood, got her appointed scavenger of his own ward - the worst in the city. Amanda promptly showed up with wagons and cleaned up the ward with such striking results, as Grandfather heard

the story, that Bathhouse John was not returned to the City Council.

Incidentally, it may be added the boathouse was paid for and remained for many years a very creditable addition to the University campus.

Giving a Library Building

The second of the stories which Grandfather decided to write about the class of '93 concerns leaving a memorial on the campus worthy of so great a class as '93. The matter came up in Grandfather's period of presidency, and one of the radicals made a stirring speech, stating that no mere block of stone could represent adequately the great class of '93 and suggested that we give the University a new library building to house both the University library and the very valuable library of the State Historical Society, then in the State Capitol Building.

Now it happened that the one thing '93 did not have was money. The problem of raising money for a tablet would be a task, how could we give a library? The radical had an answer. Harvard and Yale and many other colleges had fine libraries which were gifts of their alumni. Wisconsin had a number of wealthy alumni; doubtless they would be glad to give the University a library building if the need were pointed out - and the need was great, for the State Historical Library, the finest library on History and Economics west of the Allegheny Mountains, containing many priceless manuscripts and old books, was in a wing of the Capitol, which was such a fire trap that if a fire started, the books could not be rescued. (Later the Capitol building did burn, and if the library had still been there, it would have been destroyed.

Here then was a very simple plan for a great service. The class of '93 would raise \$100 and instead of spending it for a stone marker, would use it for traveling expenses of a committee to raise funds for a great library building. The idea carried. The enthusiasts were appointed on the committee, the expense money was raised and the summer vacation was to be used for soliciting work. In the fall it was difficult to get a report from the committee, but at last it was forthcoming. The committee had expended the traveling money carefully and had solicited, no doubt with the vigor of youth inspired with a great idea, all the very wealthy alumni and many in modest circumstances.

With what results? Again it was difficult to obtain a report, but the truth finally came out - Expenses \$100; receipts \$6.00 cash and \$23.00 pledged. It appeared as a great fiasco, but as a matter of fact, when the legislature met in January, wealthy alumni of both political parties united to put through a bill to build at state expense a fine library building. The name of the Class of '93 is not engraved on the cornerstone. Yet when a visitor to the University campus inquires "Where is the memorial of the Class of '93," any wise member of '93 will proudly point to the Library Building which is still the most beautiful structure on the campus.