

## CHAPTER XIX

### LATIN AND GREEK

Grandfather entered University of Wisconsin in the Fall of 1889 (Class of 1893) at the age of seventeen. Grandfather had graduated from high school in the Spring of 1888 at the age of sixteen, but being small of stature and frail in appearance, although always well, it seemed best to his mother to keep him home for a year before he entered college. This year was devoted to studying Latin and Greek in preparation for entering the "Ancient Classical" course.

It was recorded in Part I how Grandfather after a poor start in Latin had redeemed his reputation in Caesar. His last year in high school there had come as principal a stern but generous young man who encouraged your grandfather and another young man, who was in the next graduating class and who became your grandfather's room mate in college for four years, Fred Jackson, to go on with their Latin and to take up Greek.

The high school curriculum provided only for two years of Latin and no Greek, but Professor Aiken most generously offered to help us out of school hours. He did give us considerable help on our first year Greek and on Xenophon's Anabasis and Homer's Iliad. On our Latin, consisting of six of Cicero's orations, Sallust's Conspiracy of Cataline and six books of Virgil's Aeneid, he gave us a start, but we had to do most of the reading by ourselves.

Grandfather had plenty of time on his hands this year being out of school and spent much time on Latin, finally getting to where he

could read it readily enough to get some pleasure in doing so, and in addition to the college entrance requirements, read all of Virgil's Georgics and Bucolics, additional orations of Cicero, extra chapters of Caesar and a considerable amount of Ovid, reading more than twice as much Latin as was ordinarily read in preparing for college. Meanwhile, Grandfather had given himself no training in Latin composition.

When Grandfather entered college, Professor Bennett, a graduate of Brown University, who had recently published Bennett's Latin Grammar, which became well known in high schools and colleges, came to Wisconsin and looking into the expectant but I fear perhaps dumb-looking faces of us Western Freshmen, wondered what perhaps we might know about the Latin language. Probably he did not expect much. Whatever he may have expected of our knowledge of Latin composition, he was in for a disappointing surprise.

We were supposed to have mastered forty lessons in Jones Latin Composition, so for our first lesson in Latin he assigned us Lesson 41. We all flunked. He expressed disappointment and assigned us Lesson 21 and again we all flunked. He expressed surprise and great disappointment and assigned us Lesson 11. Once more we all flunked. He expressed himself as on the verge of despair and said there was only one other thing he wished to know - namely, whether we could read any Latin. He produced some very easy Latin for sight translation which several of us volunteered to translate.

Then he produced another book which he said he knew was not fair to give us for sight reading. He had, however, tried it on the Sophomores

without success and wondered whether any Freshmen would volunteer to try to translate it. Grandfather, who as a student I fear was not overwhelmed with modesty when he thought he had the correct answer, promptly volunteered and proceeded to translate quite fluently, while the professor, looking over his glasses in amazement, finally stopped Grandfather, saying: "Very good, very good." While in composition, sad to relate, Grandfather never did get much beyond that 11th Lesson of Jones Latin Composition Book, yet Professor Bennett always marked him "excellent."

But in Greek Grandfather never got beyond the stage of digging the meaning out painfully with lexicon and grammar. At the University of Wisconsin were two Greek professors - "Billy" Williams and Professor Kerr. "Billy" Williams was a bachelor already quite mature in years. Just before we entered, Professor Williams, according to the story current on the campus, in seeing a young lady off on the train, had lingered too long, and, jumping off, had injured the "Achilles tendon" on both heels. At any rate, Professor Williams was unquestionably on crutches, and since he could not climb the hill, he met us Freshmen twice weekly in a parlor in Ladies' Hall (the girls' dormitory). You can imagine the "razzing" which we Freshmen got as we filed up to Ladies' Hall twice a week in broad daylight. However, we concluded that the upper classmen were only envious and we should not be annoyed by their remarks.

One incident of Billy Williams' class may entertain you. Grandfather and his roommate used to dig their Greek lessons out rather painfully until they got acquainted with a Greek student named Miller who apparently could translate with some fluency, and the three of us began

to get our Greek lessons together. Shortly after this plan had been instituted, we came to a passage which when Miller translated, Jackson said: "That does not sound right to me." Jackson, being a conscientious student, wanted to stop and look up the words in the lexicon, but Miller, who took work more easily, assured him that the translation was all right and we went on. In class it devolved on Jackson to translate this passage and when he started "Mercury flew through the heavens followed by a pack of dogs," we all thought that Professor Williams had been siezed by a spasm. As a matter of fact, he was overccome only by hysterical laughter. When we discovered there was nothing seriously the matter with the professor, we all (i.e. all except Jackson) joined in heartily. It seems that the passage should have been read "Mercury flew through the heavens accompanied by a band of angels."

Jackson said that what made him most provoked was that Miller and Parlin laughed the loudest of all. At any rate, Jackson and your grandfather thought it best to return to the painful work of digging out their translation with grammar and lexicon.

Professor Kerr was already an old man, and he had just returned from his first trip to Greece. Apparently he would rather tell about his trip to Greece than teach Greek syntax and, if one must record the whole truth, some of the class would apparently rather listen to Professor Kerr's story of his trip to Greece than try to tell the professor what they were supposed to know of the Greek subjunctive.

Just one of Professor Kerr's stories will serve to illustrate the entertaining and instructive character of these talks. Professor Herr had

been to Olympia at the season when Greek grapes are gathered and converted into "English currants". He had seen, as your grandmother and grandfather saw years later, the Greek laborers tread on the grapes with their bare feet as they pitch the grapes from carts into freight cars. Professor Kerr, who was really an excellent student of ancient Greek, could speak enough modern Greek to inquire of one of the laborers whether he had washed his feet. To which the laborer had replied: "No, not yet, but I intend to when I get through."

Grandfather gave much of his best efforts in college to debating, but maintained a grade of "excellent" in most of his studies throughout his course. There was no chapter of Phi Beta Kappa at the University of Wisconsin during Grandfather's attendance, but a chapter was installed some years later and a limited number of graduates of early classes were awarded pins. Grandfather was among those so honored.

Grandfather grants that academic standards today are higher than when he attended college and that the attainment of highest grade doubtless is more difficult, yet as a mark for the grandchildren to aspire to, Grandfather will append two of his report cards.

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

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Madison, Dec. 18, 1891

Report of Charles C. Parlin

for the term ending today.

Psychology	5/5	.....	Excellent
Pol. Econ	5/5	.....	Excellent
Rhetorical	1/5	.....	Excellent
Greek 2/5	VII	.....	Excellent
Philology	1/5	.....	Excellent

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

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Madison, Dec. 19, 1890

Report of Chas. C. Parlin

for the term ending today.

Greek V	.....	Excellent
Greek VI	.....	Excellent
Latin	.....	Excellent
Rhetoric	.....	Excellent
History	.....	Excellent
Rhetoricals	.....	Excellent