

## CHAPTER XXXIX

### AN UNUSUAL STUDENT

In more than eighteen years of teaching, Grandfather had many pupils he considered excellent, a few whom he felt were brilliant and one whom he thought could properly be called a genius. This unusual student was a Sophomore in Wausau High School the first term Grandfather taught and Grandfather had him in Caesar. Max ~~the~~ Slimmer did not get astonishingly high marks. He rather disdained marks and in examinations answered easy questions with a carelessness that lowered his grades. But if there were a difficult question in an examination, he answered it with a thoroughness and originality beyond what seemed possible in a high school student.

He was the product partly of the innate brilliance of the Jewish race and partly of the stimulating attention his mother gave to his education. She had bound volumes of Popular Science Monthly and propounded scientific questions to Max, an answer to which perhaps he could find in these volumes. Max took to these problems with great avidity. Frequently he was waiting for Grandfather when the school doors opened in order to discuss the philosophy back of Caesar's campaigns or Why a Horse Had One Toe. During this winter he sold his pet pony to buy a compound microscope, yet he was quite a real boy in spite of his unusual thirst for knowledge.

At the close of his Sophomore year in high school, he passed the entrance examinations of the University of Chicago. He entered the University of Chicago that Fall and almost immediately was recommended for a scholarship in Botany. When the Botany Department was informed that it

was not possible to grant a scholarship to a newly arrived Freshman, they replied that he was so far the best student in Botany that they would defer awarding anyone the scholarship until such time as the University thought they could properly give it to Max.

He graduated from the University of Chicago in three years with high honors and went to the University of Berlin for graduate work in Chemistry. For his doctor's thesis he was assigned a problem upon which University professors had worked for fifty years. Max solved the problem and, it is said, was awarded the highest mark on his thesis which up to that time had ever been awarded on a doctor's thesis in University of Berlin. He was recommended for his doctor's degree Summa Cum Laude, but the Imperial Government reduced the honor to Maxima Cum Laude because he was not a native-born German. He was recommended by the faculty for a professorship in University of Berlin, but this was not ratified by the Imperial Government. He returned to the University of Chicago to teach Chemistry.

Meanwhile, it may be noted as consolation to some members of the Parlin family, that Max came far from excelling in spelling. It may also be noted that he had displayed no unusual aptitude for learning the lumber business. At one point in his student career his father thought Max would do well to turn his bright mind to lumber and make lots of money. So his father took Max through a lumber yard, explaining to Max the fine distinctions between North Carolina pine and Louisiana pine. After listening attentively for some time to these fine distinctions, Max inquired: "But Father, how do you tell pine from hemlock?" "Go back to your chemistry!"

exclaimed Slimmer, Sr., and Max was not again interfered with in his meteoric career.

After Max had taught Chemistry in the University of Chicago for a couple of months, he paid a visit to Wausau and came in to have an old-time chat with your grandfather. "How are you getting along?" asked Grandfather. "Not at all," replied Max. "Why how so!" ejaculated Grandfather, much surprised. "Well," said Max, "you wouldn't believe it if I told you." "Oh, yes I would," insisted Grandfather. "Well, the truth of the matter is," said Max, "that I have some students in my classes who are so stupid that they do not know some things even after I have told them twice." "Max," said Grandfather, "you are in the wrong job, you better get out." Max took the advice, went into industrial chemistry and Grandfather lost trace of him.