

CHAPTER XXXII

COST AND LIVING CONDITIONS AT UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN IN EARLY '90'S

In the early '90's at the University of Wisconsin, there were three terms - a Fall term of fifteen weeks, a Winter term of twelve weeks and a Spring term of nine weeks. The average amount spent by a majority of the male students for these thirty-six weeks of the school year, exclusive of clothing, car fare, and laboratory fees, was about \$200. Board at the eating clubs at which a majority of the students took their meals averaged a little less than \$2 a week and room for two students rooming together, which was the general custom, in a majority of cases did not exceed \$2.00 per week for each student. There was no tuition, the University being a state institution and hence free for all residents, but there were "fees" amounting to about \$12.00 for the year. The total cost of board, room and fees for the majority of students was about \$150, leaving out of a \$200 allowance \$50 for books and incidentals. The first year, with purchase of military suit and various articles to get started on student life, the cost ran a little higher, as did also the Senior year with various class expenses.

Grandfather's recollection is that his first year, inclusive of car fare, which was not much, as his home was not far from Madison, but exclusive of clothes, was about \$225, that his Sophomore and Junior year were less than \$200 and that the one term he attended in his Senior year cost about \$100. Grandfather's roommate spent no more, and of the

students Grandfather knew well, probably there were as many who spent less than there were who spent more.

A student with \$250 was considered to have a liberal allowance, and a few who were reported to have as much as \$400 a year were considered "millionaires" and, for the most part, had more money than was good for them.

The majority of the girls stayed at "Ladies' Hall" and Grandfather's impression is that the cost of living there was somewhat greater than with the male students. Probably average expenses for a girl living at Ladies' Hall must have been somewhere between \$250 and \$300 exclusive of clothing and car fare.

Food at the eating clubs was plain and hearty after the manner of the farms and small towns from which, for the most part, the students came. There was an abundance of meat, potatoes and other vegetables, also of bread and syrup. The heavy meal was at noon and, in general, eating was a means of keeping the physical machine going rather than a source of pleasure or a social diversion. The first pretentious "sweet shop" in Madison started after Grandfather's time.

Smoking was much less common then than now. Grandfather does not recall rules against smoking, but does not recall that there was smoking in University buildings or at the debating society or at the eating club. A considerable number of students smoked in their rooms - usually cigars or pipes. There was some smoking on the campus, but Grandfather cannot recall that it was a prevalent custom.

Drink was a more serious problem. These were the days with the open saloon and two saloons lived chiefly off student patronage. One of the students whom Grandfather knew very well drank himself to death before he was thirty. Two others whom Grandfather frequently met were already confirmed drunkards. Many students drank occasionally, a considerable number got drunk once in a while and a few got drunk frequently. On the other hand, a considerable number of students, of whom Grandfather was one, were teetotalers and a few were active workers in the Prohibition party - a small independent political party of the day.

Do not let anyone convince you that drinking among students is worse under prohibition than in earlier days. Grandfather is confident that conditions are much better in most universities today than in the University of Wisconsin in his day. Do not let anyone minimize the harmfulness of the saloon. No one can picture the influence of the saloon as worse than it is.

One of Grandfather's boyhood chums died in delirium tremens when about thirty. This boy's mother died of grief and his father, who did not drink but was a political "wet", lived on to regret the tragedies which his vote and his arguments had helped bring about.

Later, when in teaching Grandfather came to see the misery and disgrace brought to many children by the drinking of their fathers and brothers, Grandfather determined that by vote, words and example, he would do whatever he could to support the cause of prohibition. Grandfather does not look for any complete solution of the drink problem, for whatever

the regulations, he is satisfied that people interested in promoting strong drink will violate the laws. He believes, however, as a result of a life-long observation and study of the problem, that less liquor will be drunk under prohibition, even though it cannot be absolutely enforced, than under any other system and believes the Eighteenth Amendment, backed by effective legislation, is the best solution for this difficult problem.