

CHAPTER XXIX

HAZING

Hazing Reilley

With the class of '93 there entered the freshest Freshman who had ever been seen on the campus - Reilley of Eau Claire. He slapped upper classmen on the back until their teeth chattered and called Seniors by their first names. The like of all this had never been seen before. Reilley must be hazed. To be sure, President Chamberlin had said that hazing must stop and that direst penalties, both of the University and of the law, would be meted out to anyone who dared to disobey the edict. Yet in the face of such freshness, what was the edict of a President? There could be no other way - Reilley must be hazed.

So one evening a group of Sophs tried to sieze Reilley, whereupon Reilley pulled a revolver out of his pocket and proceeded to shoot. Whereat there were no Sophs in sight. The following day Dean Birge tried to have a serious talk with Reilley. "Oh! don't worry about me, Dean," Reilley was reported to have said, "I know how to shoot and won't hit anybody."

It was now doubly certain that Reilley must be hazed, and deceit was resorted to. It was allowed to leak out that the Sophs planned to get a friend of Reilley and then after Reilley was known to have loaned his gun to this friend, the Sophs went up to Reilley's room and took Reilley along with the balustrade of the staircase out in the street, planning to clip his hair on at least one side of his head and perhaps do other

amusing things. But just at that moment, by chance, along came a still larger group of upper classmen and rescued Reilley.

However, a rumor of this defiance of Prexy's edict reached the President. To be sure, the attempt was foiled, yet the majesty of the law had been assailed, and the dire threats must be made good. So President Chamberlin conducted an inquisition and one Soph - Flower by name - the boys called him Posey Flower to distinguish him from another Flower - confessed to his part, but regardless of consequences steadfastly refused to implicate anyone else.

The President, utterly unable to make further progress, turned the matter over to Judge Keys of the city's municipal court, who in turn summoned all those against whom suspicion rested. Flower refused to testify on the ground of incriminating himself. The other students had, for young men attending school to train their minds, what appeared to be alarming lapses of memory. The students attended the hearings en mass, overcrowding the courtroom. When some student would venture to make a wise crack, the crowd laughed very audibly. The judge would threaten to clear the courtroom if anyone laughed again. Then the judge would say something witty as was his wont at times, but not a smile on any face.

At last one dumb bunny refused to testify on the ground that since no arrest had been made, the judge had no legal right to conduct an inquisition. That brought the hearing to an end and the case had to go to the Supreme Court of Wisconsin to determine whether a municipal judge could question witnesses before an arrest was made. Col. Vilas, the Democratic candidate for United States Senator, and one of the ablest

attorneys in the state, offered to carry the appeal up for the students without charge. Perhaps Vilas saw some political advantage in this - more likely he had preserved a sense of humor which had apparently been wholly lost by President Chamberlin and Judge Keys.

When the day for argument before the Supreme Court arrived, the students packed the room and in respectful quiet listened to Vilas' brilliant argument. Eventually the case was decided against the students, but too late to have any practical effect, for the informal inquisition had been abandoned. Posey Flower had been arrested and held over to Circuit Court on a charge of participating in a riot. When Flower's trial came off in Circuit Court, Grandfather did not attend the trial but understood that Reilley claimed to be unable to identify Flower as one of his assailants, that Flower and all student witnesses refused to testify on the ground of incriminating themselves and that the prosecuting attorney put President Chamberlin on the witness stand.

Flower was found guilty and fined \$20 and costs. The witnesses, except Reilley, waived their fees, but even so the costs brought the total up to \$60, which to the impecunious students of that day seemed an appalling amount. One of the Sophs who lived in the same house with Grandfather woke Grandfather up about midnight and with tears in his eyes told him the decision had gone against Flower and now Flower, having already been convicted, could no longer refuse to testify and that he and the other Sophs, in order to avoid arrest, would have to be across the State line before morning. So there was a sudden exodus of some of the capable men of '92. Flower left; Reilley did not return next term, and the usefulness of

President Chamberlin as a leader of students was impaired. However, the President could point with pride to the fact that the practice of hazing was for the moment suppressed.

A Mediaeval Joust

Perhaps one other event which happened the year after Grandfather graduated should be added to this chapter on hazing.

In other chapters (Betting Pies and A Student's Romance) is told something of the colorful Freshman year of Grandfather's friend and fellow townsman, Harry Harding. Harry, either by some miracle or by sheer bravado, had escaped hazing when a Freshman, but as a Sophomore Harry felt a great urge to do to some luckless Freshman that which he himself had escaped.

There was, however, one serious impediment. Harry had a job as janitor of one of the University buildings, and the income from that job was needed to keep him in college. Now if suspicion came to rest on him for a hazing exploit, he would lose his job and be out of luck. Why not do the hazing openly and aboveboard?

The more he thought about it, the grander this idea seemed. He persuaded his Sophomore class to challenge the Freshman class to settle all their class difficulties in a hand-to-hand combat between two individual champions. Each class was to elect a champion. These champions, clad in swimming trunks and each armed with a long pole, were to be rowed out to a raft in the lake, and at the sound of a gun, without referee or rules, were to settle who was the best man.

The Freshmen, not knowing Harry, accepted the challenge and elected a champion. The Sophomores, of course, chose Harry. On the appointed day, the classes assembled on the shore to see the great event. The champions were rowed out to the raft and took their positions. At the flash of the gun, Harry with a vigorous and reckless sweep of his pole, knocked the Freshman into the lake (fortunately without killing him). Harry then poled the raft to the shore as the conquering hero and the proud champion of his class, with his desire to haze a Freshman fully satisfied.

Grandfather had already graduated and did not personally see the bout, but such is the story as he recalls it was told him with great glee by one in position to know all about it.