

Handwriting of Rev. Jethro Rumble,
Davidson College in the "forties."

It was the day of small things with Davidson College in decade of the forties, but as it was the day of beginnings, and the prelude to the larger and nobler achievements of later times, it is worthy of attention, and reverential admiration. There were only three professors, including the President, and they taught everything, and all the day long, even one class before breakfast in the morning. Well do we remember the few of us left - how we used to be awakened by the clanging of the bell, at sunrise or before, and rush to prayers & roll call, perhaps half-dressed, & making over toilet on the way - perhaps "dressed in an old cloak," minus the "Solitude," and listen with half-closed, but not devout eyes, while the rather stereotyped prayers were being repeated. Thence from the chapel to the lecture room below, we

wended our weary way, to wrestle
with Horace or Juvenal, or perhaps
Demosthenes on the Crown or Aristotle
Peri megalo-psuchias, or his Peri tou
micro-psuchou kai tou chaunou. I may
remark in passing that we got most
of our Greek, all I believe except that
of Homer from a two volumed Greek
Anthology, entitled "Analekta Helle-
nika meizona, sine collectanea
Graeca Majora, ad usum Academicarum
juventutis accommodata." Of course
the reader will understand that the
writer had to get down the old
volumes to recall the title page, &
that he was sufficiently shocked
to see the "notae philologicae, quas
partim collegit, partim scripsit," with
which that volume was interlined-
ly decorated during the "forties." It
is to be hoped that students in the
"nineties" do not ornament their

text books, as did we in the forties!!

The antebreakfastan roasting over, we were generally prepared for refreshments, which "old Aunt Dan," and "old Lew" furnished at six dollars a month, together with dinner and supper at the constitutional hour. The reader will observe that we were not very reverential in our appellatives in those days, having the bad habit of prefixing the word "old" to the prenomens, even of our venerable President, along with our two professors. And then we had the further bad habit of gulping down our rations. As there were no railroads, in a hundred miles of the College in those days, with their regulation "twenty minutes for dinner," we had to be guided by our juvenile reason, & get through the operation in from five to ten minutes. It is a

would now that there is one of
us left to tell the story after the
lapse of fifty years. But there are
actually more than a score of the
graduates of those days still living,
but it is a noticeable fact that they
eat more slowly now than they
did then. This may be the result of
dental denudation during the passing
years.

I said that those professors taught
every thing. We regarded our venera-
ble president as a living encyclope-
dia. This may have been partly owing
to the fact that we did not know quite
as much as he did, and were unable
to gauge the contents of his intellect.
But after the lapse of a half century
he still looms up as a man of natur-
al genius & indomitable energy. He
taught Mathematics, Chemistry, Men-
tal and Moral Philosophy, Rhetoric,
Logic, Geology, Mineralogy, Law

2nd Sheet

of Nations, Natural Philosophy, Astronomy, Evidences of Christianity, It was a popular notion that he could have stepped into any class room, and heard any recitation, as well as the regular professor, and time has not erased the impression. Besides working all day and teaching every thing, they received very small salaries. The president received twelve hundred dollars per annum, and a residence - the other two one thousand dollars each, with residences. The President lived where Prof. Martin now lives. The Professor of Languages lived in the present "Gammony", and the Prof. of Mathematics lived in "Danville," on the site now occupied by Dr. Harding's residence. The present president's residence was occupied the first time by Dr. Williamson during the term of 1849-50 - Our instruction was of a general

nature, as none of our professors were specialists. There was little time for ~~Scientific~~ ^{Scientific} ~~Chemical~~ experiments. We had a frictional disc electrical machine - (the one I think still standing in Prof. Smith's class room,) with which our professor used to elict sparks, charge a Leyden jar, and shock things generally, included a circle of students on one occasion. There was also an old galvanic battery in a chronic state rust & decay. Our professor told us one day that he would make Esom clean the thing up, and that he would exhibit its peculiar powers to us the next day. Esom was the president's colored (slightly) body servant & general factotum, whom we usually called the "Vice President." Esom tried his hand upon the machine, but utterly failed to get it in working order.

So we failed to witness the power of galvanic electricity. We were more fortunate in two other simpler experiments. One was the dropping of a piece of potassium into a glass of water. It burned beautifully, much to our amazement. The other was the mixing of some chlorate of potassa & something else, & making Isom hit it with a hammer, when a mighty explosion took place, much to Isom's disgust. He had performed the experiment before, and tried to turn his head away while he made the stroke. The first time he missed the salts, but being rebuked for his timidity, he did better the next time. These were about all the "experiments" we were permitted to enjoy in those primitive days. We had a collection of crystals and other miner-

alogical specimens, that were exhibited at recitations, but our descriptions were not always as exact and distinguishing as they might have been. For instance one or more of the class had a stock of descriptive terms that were used upon all occasions. For instance the particular mineral was ^{often} ~~generally~~ described as tasteless, odorless, of a dark brown or slate color, shading off in pale green, blue and white. Sometimes the mineral was ^{also} colorless ~~too~~, but possessing all these shades!! Upon such occasions our professor would say, "yes, yes, it certainly possesses some of the properties you mention." As the style of marking was ~~for~~ ^{of} the same general character & the professor often carried the work in his head, we never knew till graduating time just how well

4000

3rd Sheet

As far as we understood the process of marking 'x' meant excellent, g meant good, m stood for moderate, and b for bad. Whether d meant detestable, and e exerting we never knew. But somehow or other all of us who stuck long enough got through somehow - all except one fellow who spent four years at Davidson in the prep class, and five at Chapel Hill in the Freshman Class. He never could pull through anywhere. I believe he succeeded as a practical farmer and is now living in a comfortable competency. Even a classmate, who on his final examination defined an ellipse as a kind of long round figure, something like this - (making one on the blackboard) got a diploma, but it was said to have "speciali gratia" on it.

But in spite of all this quite a number of the graduates of the "forties," have made sterling men, scholars, orators, physicians of repute, Statesmen, judges even on the Supreme Court bench. (Give to a capable and ambitious student a judicious course of study, suitable text books, ~~a regular course,~~ & regular recitations, and he will secure an education, while the incapable, rem ambitious boy, in spite of the most skillful teaching will be a pitiable failure.)

On those long and perfunctory days of June, July, & August - for Commencement then came the second week of August, you might have seen in the late afternoon, a group of students, out on the campus, under a large oak tree that stands, ~~or stood,~~ in front of the Old Chapel, about fifty

gave ~~from the floor~~, with their
South of it
long stemmed pipes, having an
evening gossip. Some of them
had on white trousers & coats &
panama hats. Some wore long
blue calico hunting shirts, or
study gowns, reaching below the
knees. The topics of conversation
would be various. But sometimes
a dignified senior, would give
reminiscences of the olden times, and
back to 37 & 40, which he had
gathered from some senior when
he was a Freshman. Those were the
reminiscences and traditions of
the days when Davidson was a
Manual Labor College. (Those Man-
ual labor boys did not love to
work, & evaded it by all sorts
of tricks & dodges. One gossip
told how he had heard that there
were at least three bushels of
clavis pins, hoes, axes, and

heel screws under the chapel,
having been put there by the boy
that was expected to use them
the next day. It was too sultry
to go and see, so it was accepted
as probable. Another told how a
certain student while plowing
would irritate his mule, and
then run his plow against a
convenient root or stump, and
of course would have been un-
til~~x~~ the broken plow was ⁱⁿ ~~wounded~~
process of repair. Still another rela-
ted how they used to haul wood
from the new ground or clearing.
A full load would be put on, and
then with a rider on each horse, they
would gallop to the wood pile. Per-
haps half of the load would be
spilled on the route. But that
mattered not, if they could es-
cape the eye of the Steward, Mr.
Abel Graham, or Jos. H. Robinson Esq.

4th Sheet

It is a fact that young people like active exercise, but as a general rule they would rather invent for themselves the method of its manifestation, than have others to prescribe the method. They would rather have it in a competitive way than any other, especially if the competition is spiced with danger, and is utterly unremunerative. There seems to be a kind mercenariness, not to say sordidness in all profitable labor, as it appears to the average youthful mind. This arises from the fact that the average youth has always been a pensioner upon the loving bounty of parents, and has never needed to earn his livelihood by his own exertions.

You have descended— like an avalanche— from the heights of the Apennines.

You have descended like an avalanche from the heights of the Apennines.

You descend from the heights of the Apennines
Descend from the heights of the Apennines.

9 Large congregations attended at-
tended the ordinary preaching days.
At that time there was no regular Pastor
at Center & Bethel. - The Chapel would
be full for two years, till the Chap-
el was completed, the Stewards Hall
was used for a church as well as a
dining apartment -

Mecklenburg Co. furnished more stu-
dents than any other Co. Fredell was
next. thirty - two of the graduates
are from this Co. & quite a number
who took a partial course - Rowan
came in next. The first five or six yrs
the patronage was measurable from the
bounds of Concord & Bethel (the upper Co. in the
Presbytery) - The Academics from which the
students generally came was Rocky River,
Robt. J. McDowell, Providence Academy -
Ebenezer, R. H. Hall (who, perhaps, educa-
ted more young men in part, who became
useful in church & State than any oth-
er man in Western Carolina) & Ebenezer Academy A.C.,
taught by Rev E. Pearpoint Bishop & Rev E. M. Anderson.

The first Class that graduated, eleven
 six of them became ministers, four
 of whom are living - Rev. J. A. Knott of Texas
 Rev. D. W. H. H. of Clarksville Tenn. &c
 Two other members of that class would
 have been ministers had their lives been
 spared -

Dr. J. R. Knott