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### Mills, Gilbert E. - Memories and Impressions

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## Memories and Impressions

of

Gilbert E. Mills

Early in September, 1907, a fifteen year old boy, accompanied by his father, stepmother, three half brothers, and a half sister, arrived in Westerville directly from the hills of Central West Virginia. His father, Willington O. Mills, had just left the chair of Mathematics, and also the Vice Presidency, of West Virginia Wesleyan College at Buckhannon in order to teach Chemistry and Physics at Otterbein, from which he had graduated in 1888. (Passing note might be made of the fact that, after the main building at West Virginia Wesleyan had been destroyed by fire around the turn of the century, he had been put in charge of designing and constructing the new one. A visitor from Otterbein might be struck by its floor plan which is an almost exact replica of that of Towers Hall, before it was remodeled, with its central chapel and flanking classrooms. This was not an accident.)

Since the Mills family knew no one in Westerville, we spent the first night in the Blendon Hotel (which is still standing at the corner of State and Main Streets) and the next two weeks in a guest house on S. State St., settling finally at 145 W. Home St. (in the Haywood house now oc-

cupied by Sanders A. Frye). As there was no gas line down Home St., we heated and cooked with coal. (Five o'clock on a winter morning is an awfully cold time to start a fire in the cookstove.) Other than the combined kitchen and dining room, we heated one room in the fourteen-roomed house--the living room--with an enormous base burner which gulped two hodfuls of "hard coal" (anthracite) each morning and after glowingly digesting this food, like a fat man lazily enjoying a heavy meal, spewed out the ashes the next morning. Since the electric company had not yet extended its tentacles down Home St., we did our evening reading by the light of "coal oil" lamps. (My, the chimneys were messy things to wash!)

\* \* \*

After I had finished my freshman year at Westerville High School, my father decided that my education was not progressing rapidly enough and in the fall of 1908 enrolled me in Martin Boehm Academy, the "preparatory school" of Otterbein and my twelve years as an Otterbein ~~xxxxxxxx~~ student began.

My life in the Academy had its advantages and its disadvantages. Many professors in the college proper also taught classes in the Academy and I came into contact with some of the finest personalities of Otterbein who, as I now know, taught me things that still influence me. On the other hand, there were drawbacks. The students in the

Academy were typically rather mature people, a few in their thirties, with a sprinkling of persons in their forties--students whose education had been interrupted and who felt they were too old to go to high school. (This fact is not mentioned by Dr. Bartlett in his discussion (pp. 191-2) of the Preparatory Department, in "Education for Humanity".) These older students naturally assumed places of leadership in student life and my association with them intensified my natural inclination to follow rather than to lead. This too still influences my actions.

\* \* \*

Of my life in the Academy, many memories remain. I still cherish my recollections of Dr. Edmund A. Jones, a kindly, lovable man, dignified in movement, slow but impressive of speech with unusual clarity of enunciation and a quality of voice which seemed better suited to the pulpit than to the professor's chair. Yet when he led the chapel service<sub>x</sub> (at which all the faculty members took their turns in those days), he never harangued or exhorted. He used just the Scriptures--he never, however, read from the Bible, he quoted entirely from memory. It seemed that all he had to <sup>to</sup> was to open his lips and from his bearded <sup>face</sup> the verses rolled forth. And the students listened. One saw no studying from shielded books when Dr. Jones led chapel.

It was easy for one to lend credence to the campus

comment, inspired supposedly by his wife, that he would come down stairs of a morning majestically quoting some verse of poetry or a passage from the Bible.

This readiness to quote scripture carried over into the classroom. He had been, I was told, Commissioner of Education for the State of Ohio, but he came to Otterbein as Professor of Bible, bringing to the faculty one of the six Ph.D.'s it then had. I don't know how much Bible his students read in preparation for the recitation period but they did hear the choice parts in class and at least one carried away the love and reverence he has for the Bible at the present time.

\* \* \*

Another professor who will continue to live with me was Dr. Frank E. Miller, Professor of Mathematics, a slim, fairly energetic man--his piercing eyes looking out over a heavy mustache and pointed beard, along with his erect carriage and precise movements all of which seemed to be directed to some definite end, bespoke in themselves mathematics. He was highly respected, both on and off the campus. In his classes there was no hilarity but the seriousness of a well organized purpose with no wasted time. One felt, when he laid down his ever-present pointer, that there was a reason for his so doing. Yet withal one sensed a friendliness which showed Dr. Miller's true

interest in his students.

An outstanding characteristic of his teaching was his ability to apply mathematical principles to Christian living. I have never known or heard of anyone who was his equal. His students soon learned to expect, after the explanation of some mathematical procedure, some phrase, such as, "And that is the way it is in life," followed by a thought-provoking observation.

His classroom, which was the present #25 in Towers Hall, gave evidence itself of his mathematical preciseness. Everything had to be in its place. Among other habits, it was his custom to go around through the room between classes, re-arranging in a definite position the chairs which had been displaced by a hastily departing class. Once I kept watch as to where he set a certain chair. Time after time, its position never varied more than an inch or so. I often wondered how he remembered where each one should be. After I became a teacher in the same room, I found out.

As Dr. Miller took his Christian principles into the classroom, he exemplified them in all walks of life. The annual "revival services", which usually lasted two or more weeks, gave him a special opportunity to put his beliefs into action. Frequently I have seen him walk up and down the aisles of the old--shall I say Hallowed?--<sup>with his keen eyes</sup> chapel, moving quickly from <sup>one</sup> to another of the students, and finally

accompany one of them down the aisle to the altar to take a stand for Christ.

\* \* \*

Professor Rudolph H. Wagoner, teacher of Latin in the Academy, though the antithesis of Dr. Miller, in many ways, exercised as great an influence. In spite of the fact that he was an energetic teacher, continually moving around with many gestures, his classes were relaxed, sometimes to the point of being hilarious, due to his love of a good joke which appeared often at unexpected times. The supposedly boring subject of Latin was never dull in his class. No one knew what unusual comment of his would arouse an interest that might show signs of lagging.

His love of a laugh was shown one morning in chapel. At that time <sup>or</sup> individuals having an announcement usually made it from the platform and the students expected the speaker to come up the south aisle from the rear door. This morning President Clippinger said, "Professor Wagoner has an announcement." and all eyes were turned toward the door. No one appeared. The Academy students, however, seated as we were in the balcony (which President Clippinger always called the "bal-co'-ny, using the old English pronunciation) saw Professor Wagoner tiptoe down the six or seven balcony steps with a broad smile (which as we had learned to know portended an oncoming joke) and lean quiet-

ly over the railing quite evidently enjoying the suspense. The students below did not catch sight of him until his high-pitched, "Peek aboo!" caused them to look up and brought a resounding laugh. While the students "loved" it, many faculty members criticized him for lack of dignity. I doubt that the criticism affected him at all.

Probably one of Professor Wagoner's greatest contributions, however, was to the citizens of the town as well as to the students. For many years he taught a Sunday School class which numbered at times over a hundred~~men~~. Towards the end of his career, this class became perhaps his greatest concern and love. It still meets under his name in the local ~~E.U.B.~~ church.

\* \* \*

No sketch of classroom personalities at Otterbein during the first quarter of the century could with justice omit Dr. Sarah M. Sherrick, Professor of English Literature. Erect of stature, incisive in speech, she had always a compelling manner which was kindly towards those of whom she approved, <sup>a</sup>devastating when she disapproved, be the offender student or professor. "Doctor Sal", as she was affectionately known, was a woman not only of strong personality but also of exceptional scholarship for the period in which she lived. Having received her bachelor's degree from Otterbein in 1889, she proceeded to earn a doctorate at Yale University,



achieving that coveted honor with the first class into which ladies were admitted. When she came back to Otterbein, she brought with her not only a solid and thorough knowledge in her broad field of study but a tenacious pride and belief in what she had to give to her students. Sparks frequently flew when domineering male heads of departments overstepped what she considered their rightful bounds and she was heard on occasions to resort to very colorful language in returning them to their proper places. Frequently did her temper flare when conflicts between her classes and those of other departments were used by some students to avoid English courses which she considered important in their lives. Sometimes even justified conflicts <sup>fares</sup> ~~XXXXXX~~ no better. In regard to one young student who later became an esteemed professor at Otterbein, she was heard to exclaim, "I doubt that that young man knows the difference between a ballad and a belfry." Later, after he had become well established at Otterbein, this professor conceded, "And at that time, I didn't."

Students in Dr. Sherrick's classes were called "Mr." and "Miss", rather than by their first names. Only on rare occasions did she show her great pride in one of her students by using a given name. Those who were her majors felt always her strong support and encouragement and there is a host of others to whom Robert Browning, or even Shakespeare, would

be little more than the name on a book but for her inspiration.

She was modern in her thinking, certain of her facts, admirable in her strength and straightforwardness, and above all she was unsurpassed as a teacher.

\* \* \*

A familiar figure on the campus during my student days and for several years thereafter was Dr. Charles Snavely who brought to the college the background of one of the four "earned" (as they would be called to-day) Ph.D.'s of which Otterbein could boast when I graduated. With quiet dignity, this always calm and somewhat droll professor taught History and Economics in a capable, if slightly prosaic manner. His voice was never raised above the quietest of speech. It was somewhat high-pitched and one wondered at times if it was going to break, but it never did. His classes moved slowly and a student excelled or flunked according to his own efforts and ability without the lifting of an eyelash on the part of the professor.

Occasionally students were surprised by the droll humor which injected itself into his classes that were for the most part serious affairs. Dr. Snavely's jokes were frequently possessed of delayed reaction--heard to-day, laughed at to-morrow. Just the other day I was in a group where someone was retelling the sort of incident which was

characteristic of him--Dr. Snavely and some friends were riding along a road when they saw a flock of newly shorn sheep. "Oh," exclaimed one of the party, "those sheep have just been sheared." "Yes," agreed Dr. Snavely, "at least on one side."

As a member of the faculty, I became acquainted with another Dr. Snavely. Only occasionally did he speak on a question but, when he did, everyone listened. President Clippinger himself did not hesitate at times to ask what he thought about some matter.

As is recorded elsewhere, Dr. Snavely was active in civic affairs and was for some time Mayor of Westerville. Yet he lived in a very modest fashion. Before moving, late in life, into the house on Grove St. where the Health Center is now located, he occupied a small cottage on East Walnut St. where he and his wife graciously and hospitably received their friends and where he found rest and relaxation in growing red raspberries and in producing honey that took first prize at the Ohio State Fair.

\* \* \*

Many other members of the faculty are deserving of comment but of this there would be no end. The same thing is true of students I have known as I watched them both before and after I joined the faculty. I should need only to open the floodgates of memory and everything would be inundated

with stories of both professors and students. It were better that I keep the locks tightly closed. It may be, however, that as I go on one or two comments may at times spill over the top.

\* \* \*

These early years of mine at Otterbein left memories ~~other than~~ those of faculty members. There comes to mind my first sight of the college library, then housed in the present Room 25 of Towers Hall with an opening into Room 24. The term "libraries" would be more appropriate since the libraries of Philophronea and Philomathea were also housed there and administered separately. As Dr. Bartlett has adequately covered this subject, I shall say no more about it. What he does not say, however, is that during the time the library was in Room 25 the catalog in use was one devised and constructed by my father when he was a student about 1887. It consisted of two (perhaps more in 1907) beautiful black walnut cases about four feet long by some eighteen inches wide and twelve high. The sides were hinged at the bottom so that they could be opened down. The top consisted of two parallel rows of "containers" each about eight by three inches. Into each container were slipped some fifty sheets of paper about six by eight inches which were fastened with two movable pegs. <sup>each of</sup> On these sheets was written the bibliographical information about a book. When the case was closed, these sheets hung straight

down. When one wished to consult the catalog, he swung the appropriate container up on its pivot and the sheet that he wanted was spread out before him. These cases were discarded when the books were moved to the Carnegie Library and seem to have disappeared.

\* \* \*

I cannot think about Otterbein without my mind's turning to the literary societies and I should like to add a note to what Dr. Bartlett says about them in his "Education for Humanity" (pp. 115-6). I was for twelve years a member of one and I feel that his treatment of them leaves the reader with two or three incorrect impressions. This is no reflection on Dr. Bartlett's ability as a historian. He was compelled necessarily to rely on the information found in documents or gathered by word of mouth. He himself could not live through the periods he was describing and catch their underlying spirit.

The first impression is that the feeling between the societies was one of bitterness. What the situation was before 1908, I cannot say. But my experience was that bitterness did not exist during my membership. Keen rivalry, yes--but bitterness, no. Bantering, yes--but definitely no bitterness. The whole situation was about that to be expected in any miscellaneous group of young people. Friendships crossed society lines regularly.. Some of my best

friends were in the other society. And my experience was not the exception.

Entirely lacking in bitterness was one phase of the relations between the societies. Four times a year each of them held Open Sessions which were designed to impress visitors. The most talented members were assigned to give the literary papers and orations and all members were on their most dignified behavior. The Open Sessions of each society were held on nights when the other had regular sessions and it was the invariable custom of each one to adjourn the regular session early that evening and in a body visit the Open Session of the other, taking all the available seats and standing, sometimes, two deep around the large hall. The presiding officer always called on one of the visitors to make a few remarks and the atmosphere both before and after adjournment was one of relaxed friendliness.

Dr. Bartlett seems to speak disparagingly (p. 116) of Dr. Garst's treatment of this subject in the latter's "History of Otterbein University". He seems to fail here to recognize that Dr. Garst, whom he classes elsewhere as a man of good judgment, was talking from actual experience and in the light of recent contact with the societies. Dr. Bartlett's remarks are (p. 116):

A fair evaluation of the literary societies is difficult. The college records abound with reports of the splendid things which they accom-

plished, but say little of the bitterness with which the years of rivalry were accompanied. This is lightly passed over by Garst with the following remarks:

Occasionally, indeed, especially in the somewhat remote past, this rivalry may have become unduly and unpleasantly intense. In such cases the question as to which society could surpass the other in comfortable assurance of its superiority is one with which, happily, the historian need not deal. (*Italics are mine.*)

It would have been well if Dr. Bartlett had also quoted the two sentences from Dr. Garst's "History" (p. 170) which precede the ones which he did use:

While, as to privileges of membership, an impassable gulf has always been maintained between the societies of the gentlemen and the societies of the ladies, they have always been friendly and cordial. The relations of the brother societies and of the sister societies to each other, while perhaps less cordial, have yet quite generally been friendly, with enough of the spirit of rivalry and competition to stimulate each to perform the best literary work of which it was capable.

The statements of Dr. Garst might seem to indicate that Dr. Bartlett had gotten the wrong impression of the situation.

The second impression is that Dr. Bartlett seems concerned about the societies being "private societies with exclusive membership, from which a considerable portion of the student body was debarred (p. 116)" and about "the influence...on that smaller, and presumably less favored group which was not admitted to membership...the forty per-

cent of the students.....(p. 115).

Again Dr. Bartlett does not take into consideration the possibility of changing times. While it is true that membership was obtained only by secret ballot, I doubt that in any given year after 1908 there were more than a half dozen students who were not highly importuned to join a society and these few because of reasons that caused them to drop out of school after a term or two.

So much was this true that an editorial in the "Otterbein Review" (June 11, 1912) decries the <sup>con</sup>~~stant~~ "riding" of new students--unduly urging them to join a society before they knew what it was all about. The writer of the editorial calls it a "disgusting habit" and goes on to point out the disadvantage to the society of having members who were misfits and discontents. His solution is to have an agreement to wait to give the new student an invitation to join until the student's sophomore year. This hardly fits in with Dr. Bartlett's "forty percent".

Another statement of Dr. Bartlett's, although correct, does not give a complete picture of conditions as they existed after 1908 at least. While it is true that "they (the societies) were each given the exclusive use of a room rent free (p. 116)", they did pay the college for heat, light, and insurance on the furniture. When Dr. Bartlett correctly says that the halls "were very nicely furnished and decorated



by the students (p. 115)", one does not see the large chandeliers, the paneled ceiling, the wainscoting, the painted walls, the heavy carpet (that of the Philomathean Hall being still in use in 1963), the somewhat ornate officers' chairs and desks, the comfortable chairs for the members (in 1963 the faculty was still enjoying those in the Philomathean Hall), or the concert grand pianos of which each society had one--all paid for by the students. The purchase around 1914 of the chairs in Philomathean at \$7.50 a piece was no small task for a group of students who had but little money. (I own one of the chairs. I hope it isn't one of those which have gotten all scarred up.) The pianos are all gone now. I don't know what became of the ones belonging to the other societies, but when they ceased operations in the nineteen twenties, the Steinway of Philomathean was given to the college and was so good that it was used on the stage of Lambert Hall for concerts.

To record even characteristic memories of my society life would be an almost endless task. Suffice it to say that I feel that my experiences there--my appearances on the formal programs giving various kinds of papers (How severe that critic sitting up by the president could be!), the extemporaneous speaking (each week five members were assigned subjects on which with no warning they had to speak for three minutes), and the offices which I held (every senior had to "go through the chairs")--all contributed as much

to my development as did my college classes.

Not the least of this training were the "Parliamentary Sessions". Four times a year, the evening was given over to a drill in parliamentary law. A motion, that no one took seriously, would be made and the rest of the evening would be spent in applying to it procedures explained in "Robert's Rules of Order" of which practically every member had a copy. Not the least of the pleasure came from trying to "run up" the president, to find some situation that he did not know how to handle. And woe to the president who did not know his parliamentary procedure!

When the occasion justified it, this skill could be put to serious use. When about 1912, a new constitution was adopted by the society, the weapons in the arsenal of Robert's Rules were skillfully unlimbered and the sparks that were struck surpassed anything I have ever seen in discussions by the faculty. Perhaps the faculty was more dignified.

All in all, considering the many facets of society life, I know of nothing else anywhere that gave the training which we got in these halls.

\* \* \*

This early period has also its memories of athletics--famous games and campus heroes. One of my first recollections is that of watching a football practice (at that time

the athletic field was back of Towers Hall). Isn't that big fellow out there in a football suit, playing with the team, the French professor? It was. Professor Rosselot in his early days used to help with the coaching. Perhaps this was the start of a rumor on the campus of at least one of Otterbein's opponents that Otterbein was playing its coaches on the team.

An evening football rally in the chapel comes to mind. Its purpose was not to arouse enthusiasm for the next day's game but to raise money to help pay a coach. At that time the athletic policy of the college was quite fluid and money to pay a coach was eked out as best one could. In this case student help seemed to be the only thing that would save the situation. I don't remember who the student leader was but his methods were almost professional and as I remember it some \$700.00 were raised and the coach hired.

It was during these years that a now-forgotten college "yell" was popular. The cheer leader would plead to the crowd, "Now, let's have some beer." and across the field would go with its peculiar rhythm--

Bier.....Bier.....Was haben...wir hier?

Der deutsche Verein...von Otterbein...von Otterbein!

Ja-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-!

Only one who has heard the yell can get an adequate idea of the intense scorn and derision that could be put into that

prolonged "Ja!", especially when Capital was the opponent. We did not at the time find it strange that grown men should thus give vent vigorously and hilariously to such emotions. But probably it is well that this manifestation of Otterbein's childhood be forgotten in the period of her maturity.

\* \* \*

My social life until my senior year was mostly limited to association with the fellows, except when it was enlivened by infrequent "pushes", as parties were then known. My father, with only a professor's salary (he came to Otterbein for \$900.00 a year) and a large family, had no money for such things and what I could earn at odd jobs had to go for other purposes than "points", as the students called social dates.

Speaking of points recalls a remark of my father's. In the case of Jack Williamson (John Finley Williamson, that is, founder of the Westminster Choir College at Princeton) and Rhea Parlette, the course of true love did not run continuously. It was an on-again-off-again affair, subject inevitably to student comment. One afternoon my father and Professor Louis Weinland, Professor of Chemistry, were standing chatting at one of the windows of Saum Hall when Rhea and Jack sauntered by very much engrossed in each other. Professor Weinland remarked jokingly as he watched them, "There goes a new point." "Oh, no", replied my father, "it's just an old one re-sharpened."

\* \* \*

The sickness and death of my father in 1914 interrupted my college course. Even before his passing, I had to drop out of school and support the family. With the help of two or three college professors, I got a job as city mail carrier and for some seven years tramped the streets of Westerville. During this time I took some work at Otterbein. My duties at the post office did not start till 8:00 and college classes began at 7:00, the first one lasting only forty-five minutes. This gave me just time to attend class and get to work. Some professors also were kind enough to help me with out-of-class work, giving me many hours of their time. Thanks to their kindness, I, who had left school at the end of my freshman year, came back as a second semester junior in the spring of 1919. I shall always be indebted to these professors, especially to A.P. Rosselot, without whose help and encouragement I doubt I could have succeeded.

These were the years of World War I. Although, being a government employee, I was exempt from the draft for military service, I decided to take my chances. I was rejected because of my nearsightedness, even though it was corrected by <sup>glasses</sup> ~~glasses~~.

My stepmother had by this time remarried and, since I saw no "future" in the mail service, I took advantage of an opportunity to enter the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, spending the winter of 1917-18 in the South. My employ-

ment here open<sup>ed</sup> another door and I volunteered for service in the 472nd Army Engineers. This time I was accepted. Profiting from my experience in the first examination, I memorized the eye chart before the test while I was still permitted to have on my glasses.

After the war's end, I returned to Otterbein, graduating in the class of 1920.

\* \* \*

Two experiences of my senior year were destined to shape my life. Due to the influx of returning veterans, there was need for additional teachers. Being somewhat older than the average student, I was given two classes of French to teach. Such was the beginning of my career as an Otterbein teacher.

The year after my graduation there was need for a full-time teacher in the Academy and it was natural that I should accept the position, teaching French and Mathematics. As a student, I had expected to take up the teaching of Physics as a profession but a bird in the hand is worth two teaching jobs that one has to go out and hunt up. Since I liked French, I plunged in, took the year 1921-22 in France and--me voilà!

A second experience of this last year in school was even more pleasant. Reversing the pattern of my social life, I had just one date during this year--but it lasted from the class push in September till the next June. The young lady

concerned had the poetic name of Lillie Waters and student comment soon described the situation by saying, "It takes the Waters to make the Mills go 'round." It still does.

\* \* \*

My experiences since 1920 have been varied. During the years of the depression of the '30's, I tried to add to a reduced salary by buying a seven acre "farm" at the edge of Westerville. This provided some pleasant work but in 1934 it seemed wise for my wife and me, along with a daughter that had completed the family group, to accept the invitation of President Clippinger to move into King Hall as "managers". King Hall had its own dining room at this time and Mrs. Mills had not only the ordinary duties of house mother to the boys but the added responsibilities of dietitian and supervisor of the dining room and kitchen.

All in all our four years there were pleasant enough in spite of the constant problems, including those of maintaining discipline. This was made more difficult by the fact that the freshman boys were required by the college to live in King Hall. Naturally many rebelled, as it was cheaper to live in town and in the fraternity houses, and were inclined to make trouble. They succeeded all too well.

A continual bone of contention was the quality of the food and many were the students'--shall I say unjustified--complaints about it. After accepting the job of "manager" of the dining room, Mrs. Mills asked Mr. J.P. West, then

Treasurer of the College and in charge of all financial affairs of the institution, for a food budget for King Hall. His reply may throw some light on the situation--"Budget be hanged! Go down there and feed 'em and make them shut their mouths." We were not entirely successful but after a while the mouths were not quite so vociferous.

As the discontents could not be asked to move out of the dormitory, questions of discipline continually arose and it was hard to find means of controlling the troublemakers. One example will give the picture. Halfway down the hallway of each of the upper floors were heavy, steel waste baskets, about three feet high by two across. Occasionally some student late at night found pleasure in carrying one of these baskets to the top of the stairway and throwing it down the steps, making a tremendous thumping noise and spilling the contents of the basket all the way down. Of course no one ever knew who did it. Except one time, that is.

It was my custom to saunter at odd hours through the halls, sometimes chatting here and there with the fellows, sometimes just keeping my ears open. One evening, just before going to bed, I decided to take a stroll and started up the stairs. A peculiarity of the construction of King Hall is that at night when the lights in the hallways are on, the windows in the stair wells at each end of the building make perfect mirrors for a person standing at the foot of the steps. He can see the entire length of the upper



hall, a situation of which I frequently made use. That evening, as I paused for a moment, I saw a tall, blond fellow of Swedish descent, whom I had suspected of undercover activities, come out of his room, look repeatedly up and down the empty hallway, pick up the waste basket and holding it in front of him start toward me. Carefully timing my ascent, I met him right at the top of the steps. We stood for a moment, "eyeball to eyeball". The astonishment gradually disappeared from his face, to be replaced by a very sheepish expression. Finally he said, "I guess I'd better take this back." I had no more trouble with thumping baskets that year.

I need not dwell on other annoyances--water thrown on beds, catsup squirted out of bottles and onto persons across the tables in the dining room, the inevitable "stacking" of rooms, even when a fellow had to climb out of his window, go across the roof and in at a window on the other side of the dormitory, as one fellow did--while the roof was <sup>partially</sup> covered with ice. (I could laugh about it when I talked with him last year.) These were just exuberances of healthy, growing youngsters.

Mrs. Mills and I tried as best we could to guide this growth but felt that we were not very successful. For one thing we tried to bring the rowdy conduct of the dining room to the point where it would be more nearly in harmony with normal standards of acceptable actions. As one step we tried requiring the fellows to wear coats and ties to dinner. As

we expected, this was not popular and wonderful to hear were the excuses given for not conforming, especially by the few who had been given special permission to live in town. To cut down the number of arguments, I kept in the office a supply of my old neckties which the boys could use. I remember the case of one fellow who came from an exceedingly underprivileged community and who at first was as unpromising a student as anyone I have met (he later became a very successful and well-known physician whose son also graduated from Otterbein). This fellow claimed he didn't have a coat fit to wear (judging by his other clothes I could well believe him), so I kept one of my old coats in the office for his use.

A serious disadvantage in our stay in King Hall with the boys was the care of the sick, since it was before the existence of a Health Center. It would not have been unduly bad, had only the fellows in the dormitory been concerned but when any boy out in town or in the fraternity houses was sick for more than a day or so, he was sent in to King Hall where Mrs. Mills, with a modicum of help from a Community Nurse or, later, a college nurse, had to take care of him. During one flu epidemic we had sixteen boys, many from out in town, to be cared for. We protested this situation so vigorously that finally a small house at the corner of Maple and Main Streets (this house has since been moved to N. West St.) was taken over by the college and turned into the beginnings of a Health

Center.

It is difficult to pass over in silence one of my experiences of these days. One evening when most of the fellows were out and the few that remained in their rooms were, mirabile dictu, studying, I took a stroll down the second floor hall. Everything was quiet, not a sound disturbed the calm, and enjoying the unusual situation I walked so slowly that my rubberheeled shoes made no noise. I was about three feet from an open door when I heard a loud, prolonged yawn. Then a well-known voice said, "Let's raise hell and get Prof Mills up here." One more step and I stood in the dorrway. There was no need for me to say anything. The loud, hilarious laughter of this fellow's roommate said enough.

These two fellows are still good friends of mine. Each has gone to the top of his profession, one in the educational world, one in business. Each has become a trustee of the college and each has received an honorary doctor's degree from Otterbein.

All in all, our residence in King Hall was pleasant enough and rewarding. We formed many friendships, some of which are active to-day. And our many experiences there add to-day to our appreciation of life.

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Another phase of Otterbein's development may deserve some attention--the evolution of Senior Recognition Day. President Clippinger, who was much concerned<sup>about</sup> adding a certain

dignity to the activities of both the faculty and students, must have been tortured by some things he found at Otterbein. Senior Recognition Day around 1920 was taken very lightly. It was merely the beginning of the period when the seniors wore their caps and gowns to chapel every Friday. This led to interclass rivalry with the juniors. One year, I remember, the juniors dressed up in various kinds of ludicrous mock caps and gowns, much to the amusement of the lower classes. This I think really pained President Clippinger but probably not as much as the actions of the class of '20. We learned via the grape vine that the juniors ~~were~~ planning to march in ahead of us and take our seats, forcing us to take theirs behind the senior section. Rather than suffer such an indignity, we laid counter plans. During the night before Senior Recognition Day some of the fellows slipped into the chapel (which was not hard to do in spite of the fact that everything was supposed to be locked up tightly) and unscrewed from the floor the old wooden benches of the senior section.

Sure enough, the next morning when we seniors marched in there were the juniors in our seats. The senior fellows, each taking his previously appointed position <sup>had</sup> ~~bad~~ but little trouble in raising the benches and unceremoniously dumping out the surprised juniors.

Throughout all this President Clippinger stood motionless on the platform, his face impassive and stern. When

things had quieted down, he merely said very crisply, "Chapel excused."

Such a situation could not be allowed to continue and by 1923 Prexy, as he was affectionately known <sup>as</sup> ~~of~~ the campus, had with the help of Mr. Floyd Vance worked out a plan whereby all four college classes participated in the activities of the day. The President hoped in this way to prevent any class rivalry.

The seniors marched in to music and the program opened with special music, followed by an address on an appropriate subject. Then the seniors marched up and stood on the platform while their president spoke to the juniors with a word of greeting and appreciation, ending with an invitation to the juniors to take the seats just vacated by the seniors. The junior class president accepted, the class filed, in an orderly manner, into the seats as suggested and the junior president invited the sophomore class to take the juniors' old seats, etc.

This may seem childish now, but it worked. Not perfectly though in the beginning. The first year, from the balcony, where the freshmen (the traditional allies of the junior class) were seated, a few vegetables fell among the seniors as they marched in. Another year, alarm clocks hidden under the chapel platform interrupted the address. But this spirit of hoodlumism, as it had gotten to be, gradually died out.

In later years Senior Recognition Day came to be observed, as I remember (I'd have to consult the records to be sure of the details), on the same day as Founders' Day and an academic procession of the faculty was instituted.

\* \* \*

When my family and I left King Hall in 1938 we went back to our "farm" where we remained until 1945. With the end of World War II real estate prices spurted up and we received such a good offer for our place that it seemed the part of wisdom to sell it. (And then, we were not as young as we had been. Milking three cows on a winter's morning before a 7:45 o'clock class had gotten to be something of a chore.)

By this time, King Hall had been turned over to the girls but the freshman men still took their meals there and the college saw need of a mere male to be around to impress them. Accordingly Mrs. Mills was asked to be Head Resident and I tagged along for three years. This gave us quite a bit more experience, as well as a son-in-law.

In the fall of 1946, the last illness of my wife's mother took Mrs. Mills to Huntington, W. Va. for some six weeks. This gave me the chance to gain the only distinction to which I can lay claim--that of having been the only male in captivity in charge of a girls' dormitory. Of course I had the help of the Dean of Women where needed and of my daughter who was a senior at that time and lived in the dormitory.

\* \* \*

My forty-three years on the faculty gave me a wide variety of acquaintances and experiences. To comment adequately on only a few would require so many pages that no one would ever read them. They were very busy years, not only in faculty load, which ran with some regularity up to 18 or 22 hours (27 during the "G.I. bulge"), but also in committee work. In the early years this was much heavier than when I retired. At one time I was on nine committees, the most of them very active. I had the pleasure of being in charge of the inauguration of two college presidents and of the Centennial Convocation. It also fell to my lot as Secretary of the Faculty to organize some twenty Commencement Convocations. These latter started out simply enough but grew to excessive proportions. One year, near the last, I kept track of the time I spent and found that I had given over 172 hours to it. I was, however, thankful for one thing. In all the time I was in charge, the procession was never rained out. Once black clouds loomed and I was very much in doubt about having the procession form outside. I finally took my chances on starting it on the campus as usual. The last two couples in line were entering Cowan Hall as heavy rain drops began to spatter around them.

\* \* \*

In my professional career there was nothing outstanding. I have no honorary degrees (though I have "hooded" some

*See also of the faculty*

ninety-eight others), I have written neither books nor magazine articles, and I have held no high offices in professional organizations. My continuing struggle to provide a living for my family, along with my "extra-curricular" work has left me little time for anything else. I have not, however, been disinterested in professional activities. I have held minor offices in various groups, refusing the presidency of one, and have presented four or five papers before them. Above all I have tried to keep up to date.

There was one incident which never became public but which has given me more satisfaction than an honorary degree would have. At the time I received my Ph.D., it was the custom of the <sup>Dean</sup>~~Chairman~~ of the Graduate School of the Ohio State University to read one or two of the most outstanding dissertations presented each quarter. My adviser was kind enough to recommend to him a consideration of my dissertation, although at the time I did not know it. I was exceedingly surprised, therefore, when the Dean, after the ceremony of awarding the degrees was over, came clear down to the basement, where we were disrobing, to hunt me up and congratulate me on the excellence of my work.

\* \* \*

As for a sketch of myself as a teacher I am not in a position to speak. We cannot "see ourselves as others see us." I might indeed open a folder marked "Souvenirs"



which I have, as I suppose every long-time teacher has, tucked away in a filing cabinet. I might quote from letters written by former students one, two, five, ten, or fifteen years after they were in my classes, expressing their feelings about our association. But these letters were for me to read and I think that I shall let them lie quietly in the folder.

In among these letters, however, is a paper written twenty-four years ago by one of my students, who as a part of her work in an English class, had to write a description of some person. When she wrote it, she had no reason to think that I would ever see it and I didn't even know of its existence. Recently, however, this young lady, now herself mother of a college student, in going through some old papers came across this one and as a matter of curiosity gave it to me. I am going to attach a copy of it to these "Memories" (see pages 36 and 37). Perhaps one will see in it a person whom I have never seen.

\* \* \*

Before ending these rambling "Memories and Impressions", I should especially like to speak of President Clippinger but I find words inadequate. Then too, his qualities are too well-known to need comment by me. He was one of the greats of Otterbein. His contributions to the development of the college were just as great as those of any of the men traditionally considered as its saviors. I can add only one item to what is already known about him--an incident which I have

never mentioned to anyone.

In the spring of 1937, when the wolves (who wanted a greater emphasis on athletics) were howling on the President's trail, Dr. Dennis D. Brane was made Dean. Many persons thought the appointment was made in order to have some one able to work from the inside. At Commencement that year, Professor Horace W. Troop was appointed to the newly created office of Director of Admissions. After some two weeks he resigned and I was asked about the middle of June to take the job. I found things in utter confusion. The granting of scholarships was one of the bones of contention in the struggle with President Clippinger and the Trustees had that June left the granting of them in the hands of a committee consisting of the Director of Admissions as chairman, the Dean, and the President.

By the end of July I had things fairly <sup>well</sup> straightened out and was in a position to make recommendations for the awarding of scholarships. At that point Dean Brane gave me a special form which he said was to be used in recording the actions of the committee. In a large, beautiful, black, loose-leafed notebook were pages already typed up with spaces for the name of the applicant, his request, and the committee's action. The entire lower half of the page was given over to three prominent, widely spaced lines--one prepared for the signature of each of the three members. A separate page was to be used for each applicant. I hesitated about using this

form, feeling that it might be an attempt to embarrass or in some way trap the President. I finally decided to play along with the Dean.

In the first meeting of the committee the President very much surprised me. He seemed weary, listless, uninterested and made practically no comments on my recommendations. I felt he was discouraged--an attitude I had never before known him to have.

Later I presented to him the pages in the notebook to be signed. I had supposed that he knew about the form but the first thing he said was, "You want me to sign that?" I explained the Dean's part in the situation. A look of sadness came over his usually impassive features. He was silent for a moment, slowly took out his pen and remained with it open in his hand. I thought he was going to refuse. Then with a quick decisive movement he wrote his bold signature. As he put away his pen, he said more to himself than to me, "They don't trust anyone any more."

In the press of other business, I forgot to prepare any further minutes for him to sign.

\* \* \*

In jotting down in this desultory fashion these few memories and impressions, I have tried to capture, before the memory of it is gone forever, a bit of the Otterbein I

knew and still love. Since my comments are memories and impressions, it may be that a date, and perhaps a detail, here and there may not be rigorously accurate but I feel that my presentations are true to the spirit of the Otterbein that has so filled my life.

Yes, much of this Otterbein is gone but we do not mourn its passing. We can look forward to other people's knowing and loving a better Otterbein yet to come.