

## COOLIDGE AS A STUDENT

HORACE GREEN

*HAVING won last place in an historic race at Amherst, Calvin Coolidge was obliged to pay for an oyster supper with his next three weeks' board money. What he lost in athletic prestige he gained in reputation for wit. When called upon for a speech he uttered the pithy and prophetic words: "The last shall be first." This and other stories of college days are told in the second installment of Mr. Green's biographical series, along with opinions of the men who knew him at that time.*

THERE was no discussion as to whether Calvin Coolidge should go to a university. The question naturally settled itself: he was the type for whom universities exist. Nor did he have to work his way through. "My folks," he has said, "live within their income and fear no man." His father had a little laid by, and because of frugality,—the young collegiate paid two dollars a week for board,—the first of the

month had no terrors for him. Several pairs of reversible cuffs, and John T. Wheelwright's humoresque volume entitled *Rollo's Journey to Cambridge* are said to have been outstanding features of his impedimenta. When he was ready for college he naturally started for Amherst. After two days he was taken ill and had to come home. He was ill for some time. It was decided that it was not best for him to go to college that year. He went, therefore, to St. Johnsbury Academy, one hundred miles from Plymouth, where he entered and finished with the graduating class. In the autumn of 1891 he returned to Amherst, joining the class which graduated in 1895.

In Amherst, as elsewhere, it is difficult to make anything romantic out of Coolidge. His classmates liked him, respected him. They left him more or less alone, as his nature called for. Now that he is renowned, they rack their brains for dramatic anecdotes to feed the biographer. His early friends are divided in two classes: first, those of retrogressive imagination whose memory decorates the youth of the now illustrious executive. This type always knew "Calvin was destined for *great things*," and give corroborative characteristics. They talk about his prim, determined mouth, which is a fact, and his blazing red

hair,—which is not a fact. More honest critics saw nothing remarkable in the young man, and to this day cannot understand how he got so far.

Amherst is a typical middle New England college, thrust on a high plateau, six miles east of Northampton. Broad, quiet streets are flanked by ancient and honorable trees. Comfortable fraternity houses, including the modern ones built of Harvard brick, are designed to fit the setting. At evening the glow through crimson window curtains throws soft paths of light across the shadows on the campus. The atmosphere is peaceful. "More so," a professor's son remarked, "since President Meiklejohn resigned."

Coolidge was not immediately popular, and did not join a fraternity. In freshman and sophomore years he roomed at Mr. Trott's; in part of his junior year at Mrs. Avery's. Later, he joined the Amherst branch of Phi Gamma Delta. He was not athletic. Once when asked what part he had taken in college athletics, he replied: "I held the stakes." If you ask whether he was interested in dramatics the answer is a laugh. He was not musical. He did not debate. Nor did he shine in feminine society. Until his senior year, one can ransack class books, club records, campus legends, without finding the usual stories of greatness in the making. But, as in later life, there stands out one factor which greatly aided his personal and political development. *He gravitated naturally toward the men worth knowing and impressed himself upon them.*

Ninety-five produced representative men. Among Coolidge's contemporaries were Dwight Morrow, of J. P. Morgan and Company; Herbert L. Pratt, President of the Standard Oil Company; Dean George Olds, now President of the college in place of Dr. Meiklejohn; Augustus Post, pioneer in aerial development; Frederick Houck Law; Dr. Elmer S. Newton, Principal of Western High School, Washington, D. C.; Ernest W. Hardy, of Portland, Oregon; Clinton E. Bell, of Springfield; Harlan F. Stone, Dean of Columbia Law School; Archibald Bouton, of New York University; Richard F. Dana, William Boardman, and Percival Deering.

Morrow and Dean Olds were close to Coolidge, and dear old Professor Grosvenor early remarked upon the sterling charac-

teristics behind that quiet, inscrutable face. "Coolidge was a fine fellow, never troubled anybody," writes Augustus Post.

Morrow was not only a good mixer, but the accomplished member of the class. He was on "The Olio" Board, Chairman of "The Lit," a class monitor, on the class baseball team, winner of the Armstrong Essay prize, class orator, and President of the Phi Beta Kappa. The vote for Morrow as the member of the class most likely to succeed in life was so heavy as to be practically unanimous. Coolidge received only one vote, and *that vote was Morrow's!*

Nothing happened without consulting Morrow. Therefore when the question arose as to appointing class officers, the Committee went around to Morrow's room. The Grove Oration, supposed to be delivered by the wittiest man in the class, is analogous to the Ivy Oration at Harvard and furious flights of alleged humor at other universities.

"How about Grove Orator?" Morrow was asked.

The dictum was immediate and definite. "Coolidge is the only man,"—and Coolidge it was.

To this period we are also indebted for Coolidge's first, and up to that time, longest speech. It came after the famous "plug hat race" in junior year at which all members of the class are required to clothe themselves in raiment funereal, consisting of cutaways and top hats, plus canes,—the nearest approach to sartorial perfection in the future President's entire career, and the regrettable occasion of a photograph for whose destruction he has offered the Burns Detective Agency 367,444,300,083 German marks. The "last eight" in the plug hat race are required to pay for an oyster supper, and Coolidge, according to historians, having won last place by a nose, was also required to prolong the evening with a speech.

Expectation ran high. Coolidge paid for the oysters with his next three weeks' board. He then rose and turned his pockets inside out. The account of the oration, which may be found in the apocryphal history of Amherst, second edition of 'Ninety-five, set up and electrotyped only, presumably, in the memory of graduates, is here reported verbatim and in full: "Calvin Coolidge then drawled, '*The last shall be first,*' and sat down!"

It is possible that this speech, epoch-making as to length, even

if not revealing hitherto unknown sentiments, was the first intimation to the class, as a whole, that Calvin the Clam was more like an oyster, with pearly potentialities. Certainly by graduation day his wit, or as Dean Olds better calls it, his "wisdom touched with whimsical humor," was recognized; for in one of those impertinent circulars which college youth send one another, there was the question, "Are you engaged?" to which Coolidge answered, "Severally,"—a retort which it was considered worth while to record in print. Furthermore, in answer to the question, "Who is the brightest man in the class" (in which Dwight Morrow, of course, carried off the prize with forty votes), Coolidge, Kingsland, and Sampson received honorable mention. But the most astounding feature, in view of the belief that Coolidge always spent his evenings in forward thinking, is that he had as yet come to no decision of his life's work. He gave his business or profession as "Undecided," and his plans for next year as "Nothing"; he was one of the few with no preference for any Church or sect. Only one answer was definite. Under the heading, "What political party do you prefer?" he put down an unequivocal "Republican."

The Grove Oration on Class Day at Amherst is so called because delivered in a grove of trees somewhat resembling the setting of a Greek amphitheatre. Around the speaker in a semi-circle, sits the graduating class; behind them juniors, sophomores, and freshmen; behind these, provided the barbed shafts of judgment are not feared, members of the faculty and others. The object is to amuse the gathering in more ways than one,—first, by cracks at various members of the faculty. It has also been an immemorial custom to interrupt the speaker by methods devious and underhand.

But Coolidge's he-lamb was guarded as carefully as Papyrus before the race; in fact the efforts to obtain his goat were without fruition. They listened with one ear. By the time Coolidge had divided the faculty in two divisions, "Christians and Gorillas"; had referred to the "late Adam" in connection with fruit consumption; and pointed out that it was "not positive proof that a diploma is a wolf because it comes to you in sheep's clothing," they settled down to give him both ears, and a round of hearty applause. He concluded with the undeniable college sentiment

that later years would find them forever in spirit for: "Old Amherst, doubtless always right, but right or wrong, Old Amherst!"

Coolidge was not Phi Beta Kappa, and, reports to the contrary notwithstanding, did not stand out in his studies. He did good work in Mathematics, English, and French. He read and pondered historical subjects,—made them a part of his equipment. The prize essay, "Principles Fought for in the American Revolution," in which he was singled out for award, in competition open to all colleges and universities, is evidence. He did not specialize, in the ordinary sense of the word. As Professor Grosvenor puts it: "He continually specialized in his own mind."

Though not athletic, Amherst's imprint on his intellect and outlook is pronounced, particularly the direction given to his mental processes by Professor Morse and Professor Charles E. Garman. Morse's teaching, according to Dean Olds, probably confirmed him in those habits of "deliberation, intellectual self-control, and a wise man's balance," which dissipates many difficult problems; while the philosophic Garman is again and again revealed in Coolidge's public addresses, says Dean Olds. Consciously or unconsciously, this teacher seems to be with him at all times. One need only instance certain salient points in Garman's teachings to make this clear to those who are familiar with "Have Faith in Massachusetts" and other public utterances of the President: "Weigh the evidence." "Process not product." "Carry all questions back to fundamental principles." "The question *How* answers the question *What*."

Furthermore, "if Coolidge's classmates could be consulted, they would surely agree on one thing about the man. The basis of his philosophy of life and the way in which he has met difficult situations in his public career was ethical."

To this we can only add the faithful description of his friend and classmate, Charles A. Andrews of Waban, Massachusetts: "In college Coolidge was quiet, retiring, but always thoughtful. In one of our first math recitations the then red-headed Professor Olds, who had not yet learned our names, put a question, looked over the class to select a victim and then said, 'My red-headed brother in the second row.' Coolidge's answer was correct and was ample for Georgie, but was so brief that it needed amplification for the rest of us. Coolidge's recitations were

always good, but he seldom volunteered or got into the general discussion.

"His intimates were few. His participation in 'outside activities' was negligible, and yet he was neither aloof nor lonely. The acquaintance of the class with Coolidge was slow in developing, but by junior year we all knew and thoroughly respected him. Before we finished college there had developed a general and well-defined opinion that he was an unusual person whose ability would carry him far in some direction or other. But that the road he was to travel was to lead to mayoralities, legislatures, governorships, and to the presidency never occurred to any of us, I think."

At graduation Coolidge was a few days short of his twenty-third birthday. Removing his cap and gown, and folding the sheep skin within his coat, the young man crossed the Rubicon separating the plains of theory from the hard road of practice. In his case it was merely a trolley ride over the Connecticut River that winds between Amherst and Northampton.

About this time that good fortune which was ever to be his chaperon decided to take a hand in things. For one morning in September, 1905, he walked into the law office of Judge Henry P. Field, that fine old Yankee of the firm of Hammond and Field.

It happened that the Honorable John C. Hammond, senior member of the firm, had wandered through the grove at Amherst Commencement just as Coolidge, C., Class Jester, '95, was delivering his output of wit.

*The next installment deals with the President's "mind in the making," and presents new and illuminating facts in connection with his record in the Massachusetts legislature*



## PROTECTION AND PROSPERITY

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*HIGH wages and a high standard of living are made possible by a protective tariff, according to a prominent Republican who denies that the farmers' interests have suffered under the Fordney-McCumber law and argues that both labor and capital, in every business and industry, enjoy the benefits of this "American policy." There has never been a protective tariff, he says, that failed to increase our foreign trade or prosper the nation. He denies the charge of "class legislation."*

THE principle of protective tariff has been known as the "American policy" since the days of Henry Clay. The Republican party from the date of its birth has been the constant advocate of that policy. Whenever it was in power it saw to it there was a protective tariff in operation. America's great industrial and agricultural development, its growth into the world's greatest power, has taken place during

the sixty years of the Republican party's existence. With few exceptions of brief duration, the United States during those sixty years has been under a protective tariff. It is significant that the years of those exceptions were marked by industrial depression, hard times, and loss of foreign trade.

The tides of immigration have brought hundreds of thousands of working people to our country, attracted by a higher standard of living and better wages than prevailed in their own countries. This high standard of living of American wage-earners has been largely due to the high wages and steady employment made possible by the policy of protective tariff.

It is a favorite charge of those opposed to the principle of protective tariff that it is class legislation. Nothing is farther from the truth. The benefits flowing from a protective tariff are enjoyed by capital and labor, by agriculture, industry, and business. Such a tariff stimulates industrial production and benefits every industrial wage-earner by giving him steady and profitable employment. It benefits every enterprise selling raw material or supplies to industrial concerns. It benefits every commercial interest which sells goods consumed by wage-earners. It benefits