

W. D. ELY, YALE'S OLDEST ALUMNUS. RECALLS COLLEGE DAYS AT THE AGE OF 92.

Football and Windows Smashing the Leading Sports—Commons Then Compulsory.

Providence, Jan. 4.—Under the very shadow of the lofty elms of the Brown University campus, where for half a century he has watched successive generations of Brunonians come and go, dwells the "oldest living graduate" of Yale—William Davis Ely, of the class of '36.

By a recent decision of the university officials the date of graduation rather than actual age determines the possession of that title by an alumnus, thus settling a long disputed point. A few days ago Mr. Ely was officially notified by the Rev. Anson Phelps Stokes, secretary of the Yale Corporation, that to him belonged the unique distinction.

In his ninety-third year, William Davis Ely is not as old in manner and appearance as many a man who is twenty years his junior. With elastic step, he takes almost daily walks abroad from his home, at No. 1 Marce street, often descending steep College Hill to the business centre of the town unattended. Excepting a difficulty in hearing, he is the physical peer of most men of sixty. With mind unclouded, his memory harks back over a span of years by Scriptural warrant measuring the life of mankind, recalling the days when, first as an undergraduate and later as a member of the faculty, he was part and parcel of the ancient institution which to-day honors him as its oldest son.

Tall and rather slight in build, with snow white hair in abundance and spotless, well kept beard, keen eyes of blue, verging upon gray, he is the very embodiment of the traditional Yale spirit—strong, alert, capable, even with the century milestone in view.

"Yes, I have been informed that I am the oldest alumnus of Yale," he said in an interview. "I believe there are two graduates of the college who are about a year my senior in age, but both of them were graduated after me. George T. Spencer, of Corning, N. Y., was a '37 man, and Chester Dutton, of Concordia, Kan., was a member of the class of '39.

"No, I can't say that it makes me feel any older to know that I'm the oldest alumnus. I've known for some time that I am an old man, you know; but I am sensible of the distinction which my years thus thrust upon me.

THE GOOD OLD DAYS. "Yale was a fine place in those days," Mr. Ely declared, "but not much like the great institution it is now. To-day, with its thousands of students, it is a great university. In those days a class of 100 was a big one. Yale in my time was very much what a New England high school or academy is to-day. Our class of '36 entered with ninety-eight members, but graduated less than half that number—forty-seven. Now they are all gone excepting me.

"I suppose the young men at Yale now would think that their lines had not fallen in the pleasant of places if they had to pursue the daily routine which the students went through back in the '30's. Then there wasn't much play going on, and a lot of hard work. Then the young men mostly went to college to study and to learn something. I won't say they don't now; but I can speak from experience as to those times, and only from hearsay as to the present.

"To begin with, college prayers came at an hour in the morning when I imagine many of the present Yale undergraduate body are just turning over for a second nap. In the winter we didn't have to turn out for prayers in the chapel until 7 o'clock, but in the summer it was 6 o'clock. Time after time we would get up and stumble over to chapel when it was almost dark. Some cold mornings in November, even, the boys on their way to prayers would see meteors, or shooting stars, it was so dark.

"After prayers—and it behooved one to be there, or to take the consequences—there was usually a recitation or a lecture until breakfast at the commons. I'll tell you more about the commons later and how we got rid of them as a compulsory institution.

"After breakfast there was a period given over to study or to trips to the professor's, or like pressing business. Then recitations or lectures between 11 and 12 o'clock, usually, after which, at about 1 o'clock, came dinner. The old-fashioned 'supper' was the concluding meal of the day, and was partaken of at about 6 o'clock, following an afternoon of lectures and recitations. In the evening most of the young men thought that their studies demanded their attention.

THE WAR ON COMMONS. "The commons was an institution that had been handed down to us for generations. There was a tradition that President Dwight had said that the college couldn't be governed without commons. Some of us thought differently, and we proved our theory.

"I was a tutor when the change came. Some of the younger professors and tutors thought that instead of being an aid to college discipline commons was the source of half the devilment in college. It afforded an opportunity for the students to get together under a compulsory institution; and when the food wasn't first class they raised trouble at times.

"The undergraduates sat by classes in commons, which occupied a big building in the centre of the back campus. I believe it has been razed long since. At the time of which I speak perhaps four or five hundred men gathered there three times a day. The manager of the commons was the college steward. His name was Twining, and he was the grandfather of Arthur Twining Hadley, the present president. He was a fine man and a substantial citizen. On a raised dais stood the tables at which the faculty were seated, while in the halls were the students' tables. If they made a disturbance at their tables they were likely to be disciplined, as they were under the eyes of their instructors.

"There was the same bill of fare apparently for the same day of every week, and the young men could generally tell what was coming, allowing, of course, somewhat for the changing seasons. I remember one day we almost always had oysters. I don't recall whether it was Tuesday or Wednesday. We were generally well satisfied then, because the oysters in those days were fine. Corned beef day was often the signal for trouble. Sometimes it came on rather blue, not properly corned, I suppose, and rather poorly salted. Then the diners would raise their voices in protest. No, I don't suppose it was 'embalmed beef' in those days.

WANTED MORE LIBERTY. "Well, the faculty at last became divided as to the desirability of keeping up the institution of commons. The younger members, almost to a man, were constantly pressing for greater liberty. They pleaded that the students be allowed to join clubs and to make such arrangements as they could with boarding houses for their meals. It was deemed undesirable that they all be required to eat at the same place. It was pointed out to President Jeremiah Day that a watch could be kept upon the students, the names and personnel of the various clubs kept, and if any trouble arose it could easily be traced to its source.

"At a meeting of the faculty one day, the older members thought to draw our fire, as it were, and voted, not to make the commons optional, but to abolish the institution altogether for that term. It came as a tremendous surprise to us, but we could ill conceal our satisfaction. We were mightily pleased, but said little in public, letting the students know about it only gradually and without great proclamation. The student body seemed greatly pleased, and the plan was tried. We had the most peaceable term ever known. I do not recall that a single complaint was made. Everything was lovely and the goose hung high. It was a great joke on the older members of the faculty. Never after that was commons compulsory.

"I went down to Yale not long ago, and one of the college officials took me to the big dining hall there and showed me how they feed twelve hundred students there at a time. It is wonderful. The contrast to my student days is most marked. The management is like that of a great hotel."

SPORTS WERE FROWNED ON. Of the game of football as it used to be played two generations ago at Yale, Mr. Ely was particularly fond, but he recalled little of baseball games or other sports. There was no keen rivalry on the diamond or gridiron between picked teams of colleges, as to-day. Even with Harvard there were no athletic relations. Football of the old-fashioned kind was all that was played, according to Mr. Ely, in the '20's and '40's, and then the game was nothing like the scientific struggle of this day and generation.

"No, there weren't any such amusements as are in vogue now," he went on. "All that is now encouraged in that line is then frowned upon and barred. We couldn't play billiards, or even ninepins. Cards were never allowed and were played only under cover. There was practically no gambling of any sort. Some of the lively youngsters who were sent north from Virginia and other Southern states, more to be governed than anything else, because their parents couldn't do it, would occasionally play cards; but they had to be very secret about it.

"About the worst dissipation a Yale man engaged in at that time was breaking a window in another student's room. When the young fellows felt as if they had to let off steam, they would occasionally shatter a few panes of glass.

"The Southerners were the most troublesome in this respect also. Still, I counted some of them among my closest friends. Public opinion among the students largely governed and exerted deterring influences over the lawlessly inclined.

"The old-fashioned game of football was the real sport. It wasn't played at all as college boys play it now. There was nothing worse than barked shins in those days, with an occasional bruise or contusion. It wasn't a case of breaking limbs every little while and lugging men half dead off the gridiron.

"Still, it was plenty lively enough. Two of the best players would be delegated to 'choose up' sides. Sometimes half the college would engage in a game which consisted chiefly of kicking, not one another but the ball. That was entirely round, not elliptical, and was made of an ox bladder blown up as hard as possible and covered with a leather jacket. After the sides had been chosen they would retire to their bounds and the ball would be put in play. The game became a general fight for all and the side which got the ball over the other side's line won. The field was usually the whole length of the front campus and the fence at either end was the goal. It was very exciting, and by no means a tame sport, even compared with the game as it is played to-day."

FATHER AND GRANDFATHER ALUMNI. Mr. Ely was the third of the name, representing three generations, to graduate from Yale. His father, William Ely, was graduated in the class of 1787, and his grandfather, Rev. Richard Ely, of Saybrook, Conn., in 1754. William Davis Ely was born in Hartford, Jan. 15, 1815, and prepared for college at the Hopkins Grammar School in that city. He entered Yale in 1832 and after four years was graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Arts. Three years later his alma mater conferred on him the degree of Master of Arts after resident study and research, and in 1829 he became a tutor in the college. Four years later he took a class in the university, but at the close of 1843 he was admitted to the bar in Connecticut, and to practice in the federal courts in 1849. He practised law in Hartford until 1856 and then came to this city to live. Two years earlier he had married Miss Anna Crawford Allen, daughter of Dr. Zachariah Allen, of Providence. She died in 1888. He virtually retired from active law practice after his removal to Providence, but continued to be associated as an officer with several corporations and institutions. To-day he still carries on considerable legal business, "looking out for the affairs of some of the family," he smilingly explained. On his father's side he is a descendant of one of the oldest families in Connecticut, while on his mother's he traces his ancestry to Major Robert Davis, of the Boston "Tea Party." With an early thirst for knowledge, he attended lectures at Yale in both the theological and medical courses, and was licensed to preach, but never occupied a pulpit.

A WILLIAMS ALUMNUS OF '31. Sir: On the first page of the issue of Saturday, December 28, I read an article headed, in large type, "Oldest Living Graduate of Yale." Following this was a statement concerning William Davis Ely, of the class of '36. It may be of interest to you to know that there graduated from Williams College in the class of '31, or five years before Mr. Ely, William Rankin, who is now residing with his son, Professor W. M. Rankin, of Princeton University. Mr. Rankin was born in 1810 and is now in his ninety-eighth year. Until a few weeks ago he was well, and daily enjoyed, as he has for years, reading The Tribune. He is now just recovering from an attack of pneumonia. So far as is known, he is the oldest living graduate of any of our American colleges.

J. J. RANKIN, Scranton, Penn., Jan. 2.

Landlady (smiling)—You don't taste any veal in these chicken croquettes, do you?

Conch—Illustrated Bits.

THE LAKEWOOD SEASON

New Year's Gayeties—Dinner to W. D. Howells—Amateur Plays.

Lakewood, Jan. 4 (Special).—As was to be expected, the crowd of visitors in Lakewood thinned out slightly for the first few days after Christmas, but almost at once every hotel in town found itself filled again to its utmost capacity. The weather was as cool and crisp and clear as October. Every one took to the out-of-doors sports and, rather than social functions, seemed to sink, rather into the water. On New Year's Eve the storm broke, and it was two breathless days before Lakewood finally sat down to reflect on what a good time it had been having. New Year's Eve and New Year's Day came and went in a round of gayety that will make the season remembered long. Even the oldest of oldtimers admitted that all previous records in Lakewood were outdone.

On New Year's Eve interest centred in the special ballroom and long corridors of the great Lakewood Hotel. Under long rows of brilliantly colored Japanese lanterns, scattered among the heavy festoons of pine and laurel, Charles Munter, with Miss Leonora Lichtenstein, the beautiful Southern belle, for his partner, led the cotillon. The cotillon itself was very lively, with the approach of the big American dining room to welcome the new year, and all drank the toast while the orchestra played "The Star Spangled Banner."

At the Laurel House the new year received a welcome equally hearty. The big dance at the Laurel-in-the-Pines took place on New Year's night. The Lakewood Hotel also gave a second night. A brilliant entertainment was given on New Year's eve at the Country Club, with Mrs. Charles Lathrop Pack and Mrs. Grandville D. Braman acting as hostesses. Nearly a hundred guests were present. The decorations were arranged to represent an out-of-doors arbor. The new year was greeted with the singing of "Auld Lang Syne." Stengel Sembrich and Mme. Marcella Sembrich, of the Metropolitan Opera Company, were among those present. There were also Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Shonts, the Misses Shonts, the Duc de Chauldeux, Colonel and Mrs. Henry S. Kearney, David Paton, William A. Paton, Mr. and Mrs. Jasper Lynch, Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Ryle, Mr. and Mrs. E. L. de Forest, Mr. and Mrs. Kingsland-Smith, John Milroy, Mr. and Mrs. Elbert F. Baldwin and Mr. and Mrs. A. B. Claffin.

Now that the New Year excitement is over the cottage colony is turning its attention to other things, the main interest centering in the plan to give a series of amateur theatricals, under the guidance of Mrs. Jasper Lynch. There will be three performances, one at each of the town's three large hotels—the Lakewood, the Laurel and the Laurel-in-the-Pines. All are to be given during Lent for the benefit of the Ocean County Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.

The new Town Club, recently organized by William A. Hamilton, Jasper Lynch and other prominent members of the Country Club, held an open house on New Year's Day for the friends of the members. Placed right in the centre of the residence district, the club has already become popular.

A large dinner was given at the Country Club last Saturday evening, with Mrs. H. L. Herbert presiding. Among the guests were Mr. and Mrs. L. B. Stillwell, Miss Ferris, Mr. and Mrs. Braman, Mrs. Downer, Mr. and Mrs. Proctor, Dr. and Mrs. Schaffner, Dr. and Mrs. C. L. Lindley, Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Pack, William Paton, David Paton, John Milroy, Mrs. Elsie Howells, A. B. Claffin, S. T. Skidmore and Miss Anderson.

Mr. and Mrs. William A. Hamilton are now occupying their new home near the Gould estate. Governor-elect John Franklin Fort was in town on a week-end visit. The heads of the various departments of Harper's, together with many of Harper's prominent contributors, met at the Laurel House last Saturday for a dinner given by George Harvey, the editor of "Harper's Weekly." A. B. Claffin, S. T. Skidmore and his daughter, Miss William Dean Howells, both of whom will shortly sail for Europe. Among the features of the event was the presence of Mark Twain, who conducted a duel of wit with Mr. Howells that kept the room in a gale of laughter for some time. Among those present were Henry M. Alden, editor of "Harper's Magazine"; Mrs. Alden, Mrs. E. Miss Jessica Alward, Mr. and Mrs. Herbert E. Bowles, Miss Elizabeth C. Cutler, of Brooklyn; A. J. Chandler, Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Thompson, Mr. and Mrs. F. A. Duneka, Mrs. Charles Melville Dewey, Henry J. Forman, Mr. and Mrs. Fisk, George B. Fife, managing editor of "Harper's Weekly"; C. H. Gaines, Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Gilman, Mayo W. Hazeltine, of "The Sun"; J. W. Harper, Mrs. Harvey, Hillyer Hitchcock, Mr. and Mrs. Hartmann, W. O. Inglis, Mrs. Elizabeth Jordan, editor of "Harper's Bazaar"; Major and Mrs. F. T. Leigh, Mr. and Mrs. John A. Carlin, John L. Schuchman, Mr. and Mrs. L. L. Lator, David Munro, managing editor of "The North American Review"; James McArthur, Fred Natt, Denis O'Sullivan, of the London opera; Mr. O'Sullivan, Albert Bigelow Paine, Mr. Phayre, Miss Paret, James Rodgers, W. A. Rogers, Mr. Road, Van Tassel Stuphen, Thomas Wells and Mrs. Wells.

Among the New Year arrivals at the Lakewood Hotel were Maurice Gordon Clyde, the actor; Judge Otto Rosovsky, of New York, and his family; other guests of the house were Mr. and Mrs. H. Alexander, Mr. and Mrs. David Price, Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Sire, Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Praeger, Mr. and Mrs. I. H. Bach, Mr. and Mrs. D. Friedman, Mr. and Mrs. J. Selgel, Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Oppenheimer, Mr. and Mrs. August Goldsmith, Mr. and Mrs. J. Werner, Mr. and Mrs. L. W. Wetzell, L. Schuchman, Mr. and Mrs. L. A. Kaufman, Mr. and Mrs. D. D. Dossie, Mr. F. Heine, Miss Rose Brinbaum, Mr. Peter James, of Jersey City; Dr. Elizabeth Kalscher, of Brooklyn; D. N. Jacobs, of Brooklyn; B. H. Arnold, Max Newman, Edward Snyder, Miss Rosella Grossman, L. J. Altkrug, Charles Munter and Miss Leonora Lichtenstein.

At the Laurel House are registered Mr. and Mrs. R. G. Cook and Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Cook, Philadelphia; Park E. Bell, A. S. Bell, H. W. Slocum, F. Ashton de Peyster, of New York, and Mr. and Mrs. W. A. Jameson, the Misses Jameson and Mrs. Robert Jameson, of Pittsburg, who will remain here for the winter.

At the Laurel-in-the-Pines are Stengel Sembrich, Mme. Sembrich, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Shonts, the Misses Shonts, the Duc de Chauldeux, Mr. and Mrs. Townsend Jones, Mrs. F. N. Cowperthwait, Mrs. W. S. Strong and Mr. and Mrs. A. R. Shattuck.

HOTELS IN CHINA. First-Class Houses Much Needed in Asia—An Opportunity for a Good Hostelry.

The following report on the need of modern hotels in China and the Far East is transmitted by Wilbur T. Gracey, American Consul at Tsingtau: "There is an excellent opportunity in China for establishing good, modern hotels, and positions are frequently open to first-class hotel managers. In Tsingtau there are two hotels of the first grade, but under the same management, and owned by a limited liability company. During the past summer several hundred guests have come to Tsingtau for the season, and this year the hotel is expected to be practically no boarding houses, and one hotel, located on the bathing beach, has secured most of the trade. This hotel is provided with forty rooms only, and has been continually filled during the summer months. Many persons have come here from the other parts of China, expecting to secure accommodations, and have been obliged to put up at the town branch of the hotel. The hotel is situated in a beautiful spot, three miles distant. A continual complaints have been made of the inadequacy of the accommodations. It is stated that practically all the rooms are engaged for the summer of 1908. Most of the guests patronizing this hotel are British from Shanghai and Tientsin, though a few come from the summer from as far south as Hongkong and as far north as Newchwang. "The charges in Tsingtau hotels amount to approximately \$10 to \$14 per day, and the winter season brings this up to probably an average of \$5 to \$8 per guest per day. "In Shanghai there are three good hotels, and a new one in process of construction. They are all much inferior to the hotels of the United States, largely owing to the lack of knowledge on the part of the managers. Prices charged guests are high, probably more than double those of the same grade of hotel in America, and the cost of servants, food, etc., very much less than at home. "An organized hotel company with buildings at Shanghai, Hongkong, Tientsin, Yokohama, Kobe, and possibly Nagasaki, Peking and Manila, with a capital of \$1,000,000, and a general manager spending a portion of the year in each hotel, run on modern American lines, with all conveniences, ought to pay well for the investment. The question of cost is not of great importance to the traveling public, who are willing to pay well for first-class accommodations, but at the present time no traveler will stay at a hotel there is a really first-class hotel in the Far East."

SAILORS BLAME KIPLING. Say the Author "Hoodooed" the Gloucester Fleet with Story.

When Kipling wrote "Captains Courageous," a sea tale of the deep sea fishing industry as practised on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland by the hardy mariners of Gloucester, Mass., and the other New England ports, the honied heads of these places declare that he perpetrated the worst "hoodoo" against the industry in the annals of the fishing business in the North Atlantic.

Soon after the publication of Kipling's book the fleet of fishing schooners began to diminish alarmingly. The Army Kipling figured in the book as the Currier Pilot. She was pictured as the comeliest of the fleet, that was always in trouble and would break adrift on the banks on every conceivable occasion, compelling vessels at anchor to leeward of her to trip their "kedges" and seek new moorings at unearthly hours lest they be damaged, if not sunk, by her. Fisher folk were represented as saying of her: "She don't do much 'cep' drift, there ain't no anchor made to hold her." She sank while on a voyage along shore from Bucksport to Rockland. She was within a mile of the beach, when she met her fate, and there was not wind enough to enable the crew to run her around. The Martha M., another vessel which did service in Kipling's volume, was really the Mary N., a well known schooner from Bucksport, which sank with all hands on a frozen herring voyage from Newfoundland in the spring of 1902. The We're Here, the centre of the little sea drama which the book embodies, was really the Andalusia, a Gloucester trawler, which sank somewhere off Sable Island in an equinoctial gale and carried down her whole crew with her. A third of his group to meet this disaster was the "Nick Brady's" her skipper, the meanest man on the banks.

So might the category be continued—twenty strong. At least that number have vanished beneath the wave since "Captains Courageous" was written. The last of the fleet he named therein—the Prince LaBou—went down two years ago, and her disaster ended marked the extinction of all the "hoodoo" fleet, as they came to be known.

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