Interesting Memories

OLD SCHOOL DAYS IN WILMINGTON.

Mr. Stephen Jewett, a most amiable and estimable gentleman, cabinet-maker by trade, settled in Smithville about the year 1839, where he was employed in the United States Government service and also as postmaster of that village. While residing there he married Miss Mary Gracie, a Scotch lady of great accomplishments, intimately related to the president of the Bank of Cape Fear, Dr. John Hill. Mr. and Mrs. Jewett subsequently opened a school at Smithville which they conducted jointly, she having been previously engaged in the profession of teaching in Wilmington. Mrs. Jewett died while on her way to Moore County with her husband.

Some years later Mr. Jewett was married to Miss Lucy Bradley, sister of the late Mr. Richard Bradley. He then made his home here, and became cashier of the Bank of Wilmington, in which capacity he served, honored and respected by the community, until his death during the yellow fever epidemic in 1862.

Mr. George W. Jewett, a professional school-teacher of superior attainments, came to Wilmington from Kent Hill, Maine, at the suggestion of his brother Stephen, about the year 1852, and opened the Wilmington Male and Female Seminary in a small frame house on the west side of Third Street, near Ann Street, and later in the old Society Hall in the rear of St. James's Church. He was assisted in the female department by his accomplished wife and two other Northern ladies, Miss Stetson and Miss Whipple. A large majority of Mr. Jewett's boys at that time were sons of the best people of our community, with a reasonable knowledge of the rules of propriety, notwithstanding which his school discipline was marked, under the influence of passion, by frequent acts of unnecessary severity, and, at times, by positive cruelty; which, instead of breaking down his institution, increased the patronage, our fathers in those days evidently regarding such physical treatment as both wholesome and necessary. There were a few very disorderly boys, however, who deserved a whipping as regularly as they got it. Who,

among the survivors of the incorrigibles, can forget the stern command: "Walk into the recitation room, sir," over which apartment might have been written, "He who enters here leaves hope behind"; because the unhappy culprit to whom this command was addressed at once gave himself up for lost, reminding us of Marryat's boy, Walter Puddock, who, having been hauled up by his preceptor, O'Gallagher, without remonstrance immediately began to prepare for punishment by the reduction of wearing apparel.

Oft repeated flagellations, according to the testimony of the old-time Eton boys, render the subject callous, and some of these hopeless cases of Mr. Jewett's became so hardened by this process that they ceased to make an outcry, and, in the language of the prize ring, came up smiling after the first round, while the preceptor had evidently the worst of it.

Two habitual offenders, Henry McKoy and William Fergus, however, found it necessary to protect themselves from the neck downwards with padding, which sometimes shifted during the inevitable struggle, causing yells of entreaty which could be heard at a great distance.

Perhaps the most laughable scene in our four years' preparation for college was the startling appearance one morning of one of these boys changed from his attenuated habit of a lean and hungry Cassius to a wonderful state of exaggerated obesity, which Mr. Jewett promptly discovered and proceeded to unroll and reduce before punishment, with the anxious inquiry, "Where on earth did you get all this flannel?"

Many who were Mr. Jewett's pupils will recall the compulsory singing lessons and the noisy demonstrations when the exhilarating and senseless fugues of "Three Blind Mice" and "Scotland's Burning" were rendered in conclusion.

Two or three years later the school was removed to the premises on the east corner of Third and Ann Streets and continued until the commencement of the war, when Mr. Jewett went to Statesville, where he taught for a while. He returned to Wilmington about the close of the war and resumed teaching in the house occupied by the late Captain Divine, and subsequently on the corner of Second and Chestnut Streets, but left about the year 1881 for his former home in Maine, where he died of heart disease. The summons came suddenly, while he was sitting dressed in his chair. He simply straightened out his arms and ceased to breathe.