

THE SEED *and*
THE SOWERS

✧ *A Series of Chapel Talks on
the History of Amherst College
and a Play about Its Founding*

BY F. CURTIS CANFIELD

Amherst College

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Preface

THIS series of chapel talks was designed to make Amherst undergraduates aware of certain critical and dramatic moments in the history of their college and to fasten their attention for a few minutes on some of the problems which confronted those connected with the College in the early years of its life. Occasionally, as the reader will see, I tried to give them staccato impressions of a small number of intriguing personalities whose presence on the scene was remarkable in one way or another. And in one or two of the talks I sought to recapture the special quality of life in the College in that far-off, simpler, slower time.

The framework of the College chapel service is rigid. There must be squeezed into the allotted ten minutes the doxology, a prayer, necessary announcements and notices, a brief introduction by the president, the chapel talk itself, a hymn, and the benediction—then the scurrying exit to the other duties of the day. The pressure of time is so insistent that the speaker must abandon polite preliminaries. He has to come out swinging at the bell, punching with both hands until he reaches the end or until the president pulls at his coat-tails.

Had the talks been written to be read at leisure rather than heard within six or seven minutes' talking time, had they been written for the eye rather than for the ear, they might have taken a quite different form. But since they are now being dignified by publication, perhaps more for the

record than anything else, I have let them stand pretty much as they were delivered regardless of the fact that some of my native woodnotes wild were rather recklessly warbled. Two generations of students heard them in the years between 1946 and 1954.

The final chapel talk in the book, "The Arts and Respectability," was delivered at Senior Chapel on May 21, 1954. Each year at the last chapel exercise in their college careers the members of the senior class invite a member of the faculty to address them. For once, the chapel speaker is not bound by the seven-minute rule. Since I, too, was reluctantly leaving the College after many happy years, it was inevitable, I suppose, that this talk should turn on the theme of farewell—and last words.

The play which makes up the second half of this volume was written while I was completing my service in the Navy in 1946. Stanley King wanted something to help commemorate the one hundred twenty-fifth anniversary of the College, and I tried to oblige him with a dramatized account of the circumstances surrounding the founding. The scenes in the play are, of course, imaginary, the purpose being to recreate the spirit behind the founding rather than to represent the actual facts as these are set down in the formal histories of the College. The real names of some of the figures in that history are used, but the characters and personalities of these men are entirely my own invention.

I am indebted to Amherst's true historians, William S. Tyler and Claude M. Fuess, for their involuntary assistance. Tyler's *History of Amherst College during Its First Half Century* and Fuess's *Amherst, the Story of a New England College* furnished me with much of my basic material. I am likewise deeply grateful to Miss Rena M. Durkan, curator of the Hitchcock Memorial Room, for providing me with relevant material from the college archives, for checking the manuscript, and for keeping me somewhat closer to the re-

ality of names and facts than I was wont to be in the heady but unaccustomed role of playwright-historian.

Finally I salute the memory of our Masquers production of *The Seed and the Sowers* in Kirby Memorial Theater in the spring of 1946. To those former colleagues, students, and friends who contributed to the success of those performances, my abiding and affectionate thanks.

F. C. CANFIELD

New Haven, Connecticut
February 1955

Prologue

THE founding of the College was a drama of real life. It had many of the elements of a play: a conflict of wills, a struggle against adversity that at times assumed desperate proportions, a series of shuddering climaxes with the hero's, or rather the heroine's, fate in doubt, and the final untying of knotty difficulties with a happy ending.

The College did not begin with a building but with a belief—a belief and a hope in the hearts of plain men that to this place which they called their City of Zion there might come penniless students, “indigent scholars of hopeful piety” they called them, to drink deep at the well of theological learning and then go forth to civilize and evangelize the world. By the size of the order you can see what manner of men they were, these hopeful rustic founders of the College. They had no truck with half measures. It was the world or nothing.

So the prologue to our play begins with a trumpet call to the faithful in Amherst and in the surrounding towns to help the Lord and give the cash to make the “Charitable Collegiate Institution” possible. Considering the end in view, which was the conversion and the salvation of the entire universe, it might be termed a trumpet call of grandiose proportions sounded in a minor key and played on a homemade instrument.

In the founders' opinion the world could stand a lot of saving. One needed only to point his nose eastward toward

Harvard College, that hotbed of heresy, and he could fairly sniff the sulphurous fumes of Unitarianism rising from a hundred pulpits. What was needed to counteract the spread of that perfidious doctrine was, in their opinion, more of the old-time religion, more orthodox Congregationalism (incidentally, the rock upon which the College was founded). And the way to get that, they decided, was to train warriors of conservative inclination to do battle with the forces of evil on the seaboard. Their motto might very well have been, "Have faith in western Massachusetts!"

Thus it was a deep and grim religious conviction that provided the motivating force in our drama, the impulse behind the beginning of the College.

As strange as it may seem to some of you, it was Williams College that gave the cue for the rising of the curtain. It was a feeble cue in a way, for when it came, in 1815, Williams was not exactly dead, but it was dying and they had sent for the undertaker. There it was, wasting and withering away in the farthest corner of the Commonwealth, barred from contact with the rest of Massachusetts by mountains and the wilderness, dying not so much from insufficiency as inaccessibility. Once the luckless students got there, they could never be sure that they would be able to return to civilization. So they stayed away in large numbers.

The Williams trustees, in a measure of desperation, decided to move their patient to a healthier locality—in short, to Hampshire County. Before the Revolutionary War, the colonial governor in Boston had signed a charter for the establishment of what was to be known as Queen's College, which was to be located somewhere in the Connecticut Valley. But the war had nipped that scheme in the bud. Now, convinced that they either had to move or go under, the Williams trustees got off their hunkers and began casting about for a new location. Northampton and Amherst were the most likely sites.

What did Amherst offer? It had a natural setting of unparalleled beauty. It also had the Amherst Academy on Amity Street just west of our motion-picture palace. The Amherst Academy in 1815 was a preparatory school of sound reputation and undoubted influence, shortly to outrival Andover in the number of students enrolled. Its presence here gave Amherst the edge over Hamp as an already-established seat of learning. Furthermore, the trustees of the Academy were men of practicality as well as piety. They saw that an institution of higher learning might emerge naturally from the lower school.

When they became aware that Williams sought revival by transplantation, they immediately set to work to do two things at once. They sent a deputation to Williamstown and invited the trustees formally to move their expiring college here, to these slopes of Pisgah that overlooked the Promised Land. And they appointed agents and collectors to start raising money. All they had to go on was a dream and a belief. That was enough for them, and they set out on the long road with high hearts.

Thus ends the prologue to our play.

A Shaky Start

WHEN the men of Williams heard or thought they heard the death-rattle starting in the throat of their expiring college, when they knew or thought they knew that it was headed straight to where the woodbine twineth unless they could carry it away from the Tibetan isolation of the Berkshires, they pulled themselves together and made a momentous decision. They decided to move their college to Hampshire County. Whereupon the energetic trustees of the Amherst Academy sent the Williams men a cordial invita-

tion to move their college here. So confident were our zealous townsmen that their invitation would be accepted that they appointed collecting agents and sent them everywhere in the county and beyond, begging, persuading, and in some cases threatening the citizenry to give to the Amherst Charity Fund. They aimed to raise fifty thousand dollars, a considerable fortune at that time. The money would pay tuition of thirty dollars a year (with room rent thrown in) for the penniless students who would here prepare for the ministry. Incidentally, this was the first entrance requirement: one had to be poor and penniless to get in. But before the college actually opened, the trustees relaxed a little on this point and decided to let some students enter even though they had the money to pay.

The entire amount of the Charity Fund had to be raised or at least promised within a twelvemonth; otherwise all subscriptions were to be canceled automatically. For a year the agents labored, but in the end they had raised only about two-thirds of the required sum. It looked as if the whole project would end in failure, the hopeful dream forever shattered. But at the last moment—although not one of them could really afford it—nine citizens of the town, three of whom were trustees of the Academy, came forward and guaranteed to supply the remainder. Later, our enemies tried to discredit this generous gesture by claiming that there had been a private understanding between the nine and the trustees that they would never be called upon to pay up, even if the balance of the Fund was never collected. At any rate, the money was guaranteed for the time being at least, and thus the first mighty obstacle was overcome.

The remarkable thing about the Charity Fund and the subsequent, so-called "\$30,000 Fund" is the number of subscribers, thirteen hundred in all. Many gave a dollar, others fifty cents, still others even one or two cents. We took the widow's mite and the orphan's halfpenny. Amherst was not

begun by the rich and powerful, but by the yeomanry—plain people who dug and tilled New England earth, people who gave from what they had as a testament of their belief in God and education.

But when hope ran high in Amherst, when all the cash had been pledged and Elijah Dickinson's ten acres on this hill had been devised and measured as the place of the future college, there arose another difficulty, the second of many major obstacles, thrusting itself up between our heroine and her happiness and interfering in a particularly dangerous way with the happy ending of our play. It came, as I hope you have already suspected, from Williamstown, which was already, as you see, performing to type as the villain of our piece and performing in dead earnest. We had invited them to move here. For our pains we received an answer that was apparently a polite combination of the brush-off and the bum's rush. The Williams men gave the Academy trustees permission to withdraw their invitation. Period. That was their only answer. Then they proceeded to vote to move their college to Northampton. Think of it! But fortunately for Amherst—and at a later date for Smith—the legislature in Boston refused them permission to move. It was as if they said, "You picked Williamstown in the first place, now, darn ye, stay there, and die."

Thus with Hamp eliminated as a place where a rival school might be founded, Amherst's road was open. And it was decided to go ahead.

Amid derision, amid a quick-developing opposition to the plan, even in Amherst itself, with little ready cash but with their ten acres and the good will of thirteen hundred of the faithful behind them, the Amherst men went on with what they had begun, the building of an edifice they hoped would live forever. No one will deny that they started from scratch. It was even further back than that, if such is possible, as you shall presently see.

One Pioneer

UP TO now in this sporadic serial about Amherst's early history, no mention has been made of individuals. But no drama is ever without its cast of characters. So, out of all the faithful company who were actors in our play, I should like to introduce you first to one who labored greatly that this place might be.

His name was Rufus Graves. Born in Sunderland in a house that still stands, he was a graduate of Dartmouth and moved to Amherst about 1815. He had tried his hand at many ambitious schemes and projects, but none of them seemed to pay off. When we first see him he is sixty years old, a trustee of the Amherst Academy, a working trustee who teaches chemistry in the basement while his good wife keeps things going running a boardinghouse for pupils on the second floor of the school on Amity Street. Graves has come down a bit in the world, perhaps, since the days when he was commissioned a colonel in the army, yet there is growing in his heart such a sense of dedication to the Lord that it finally overshadows every earthly interest and ambition. For it had become clear to Rufus Graves that the way he could best serve the Lord was to help found Amherst College. And he put aside all else save this one thing.

It had been he who first fastened on the idea of extending the scope of the Academy by adding to its faculty a professor of languages. With the blessings of his fellow trustees he had set forth in his wagon to raise the money. He awakened no enthusiasm, maybe because he centered his activity in Boston. On his return from one of many trips he reported at a trustee's meeting. "Deacon Graves," he was asked, "what success? How much money have you collected?" Graves answered, "Not a cent. Brethren, let us pray."

It was Samuel Fowler Dickinson, a local lawyer, grandfather of the immortal Emily, who convinced Graves and the other trustees that their failure lay in asking for too little. He sensed that people who had shown no interest in a collegiate adjunct to a grade school might respond generously to a larger idea, the idea of a separate college. And it was Dickinson, a man with iron in him, who set Graves and the others on a higher, harder road.

Rufus Graves himself drew up the original constitution of Amherst College, a remarkable document with the sweet ring of simple faith in it.

Elected "financier," he led the agents collecting subscriptions for the Charity Fund. He was on the road for a whole year, neglecting his health and his family, going about, it was said, with his coat in rags and his shoes worn through, begging from door to door. The greater part of the fund was raised by him alone and later he had the difficult job of collecting on the promises to pay.

It was Rufus Graves who, with Hezekiah Strong, on a moonlit night paced off the one hundred feet that marks South College and thus established the location of our first building. And the other founders could think of no higher honor to bestow on this man of action than to let him hold the plough that cut the first furrows of earth for South's foundation-hole. What a picture we have here of this "pioneer the virgin soil upheaving"!

When South was building, it was Rufus Graves who slept out under the stars on this hill with the men who freely gave their labor, to be with them and also to see to it that they lost not a moment of light in beginning their day's work at dawn. It was he who begged barrels of beef and pork from neighboring farms to feed the laborers around the campfires. And as if all this were not enough, after the building was finished he taught the first chemistry classes until a regular teacher could be hired. After that he went ahead to raise

another thirty thousand dollars from the mite boxes of widows and the offerings of ladies' church societies to furnish the bare rooms and pay off the debts, with "the last gleanings of charity."

He was a man possessed, afire with zeal. He had but one thought, the College, and he spoke of nothing else. Indeed, his friends feared he had gone mad. Professor Tyler said that Graves had Amherst College on the brain. Fiercely pious, crude of speech, often moved to tears by the fervor of his faith, Rufus Graves was the most colorful of the founders, and the impress of his intense, fanatical personality lay deep on an Amherst of another day.

When the College was well launched and his greatest ambition fulfilled, although he was by then an old man, Graves went west to seek the worldly fortune that he had had no time for. But it eluded him and he died in Ohio, with the arm of poverty around him, at the age of eighty-six.

Someday the College might well memorialize in permanent fashion this devoted man, for he gave what riches he had that it might be.

Building South

WHEN it burns in the minds of many men, a simple idea may generate enough heat to move the thinker irresistibly to action. Opposition, disappointment, and delay serve not to quench it but to make it flame more fiercely than before. Thus the idea of Amherst, seen in the inspired madness of Rufus Graves, found release—poetic fulfillment, if you will—when it fired him to drive the plough over Elijah Dickinson's farm yonder to start South College.

And there were other men as ardent as Graves with the same idea in mind who set their jaws and vowed to build a college with their own hands if need be. And need there

was. The Charity Fund was for tuition. There was no money to buy a place in which to house the students, when and if they came—no classrooms, no library, no laboratories. There was nothing except the idea itself. That was enough.

All friendly to the project were asked to help, not with dollars only, though they were welcome, but with their hands, their skills, their time. They responded. In the summer of 1820, once Rufus Graves put his hand to the plough, this hill came alive with activity. Men left their farms, brought oxen, horses, tools, and carts and set to work. They scooped away the top of the hill and leveled it. They tore down the horse sheds that faced the Holyoke Road and carted them off. They dug the cellar hole of what is now South College, one hundred feet long and forty feet wide.

Graves and others combed the landscape for lime, sand, timbers, bricks, and stone. What they couldn't beg they bought with borrowed money. Wells Southworth, a youngster from Pelham, quarried a load of granite and hauled it here for the foundation stone.

When all had been made ready, on the ninth of August in 1820, a procession was formed at the Academy on Amity Street. Headed by the trustees and including the pupils of the school, townspeople, laborers, and honored guests, it moved down Pleasant Street and mounted Meeting-House Hill, as this eminence was called. At two o'clock in the afternoon with most of the village present, the Reverend Mr. Crosby of Enfield began the ceremonies with an "Address to the Throne of Grace." Then, at the northwest corner, the Reverend David Parsons, president of the Board of Trustees of the Academy, laid the cornerstone. Standing on the stone, Noah Webster spoke to the assembly. Then the multitude solemnly moved to the meeting house on the site of the Octagon to hear the Reverend Mr. Clark of Amherst deliver himself of a sermon entitled somewhat equivocally, "A Plea for a Miserable World." According to one spectator, the

performances of the day were "interesting and graced with excellent music."

Once begun, work on the first building scarcely stopped by day or night. The fervor of the people was intense. They labored like Nehemiah and the Jews to build up their wall, and the edifice arose as swiftly as Elisha's hut on the banks of the Jordan.

In ninety days the roof was on. As someone observed, South College seemed to rise of itself from the ground like a miracle. Heman Humphrey, later to become our second president, said, "Only a few weeks ago the timber was in the forest, the brick in the clay, and the stone in the quarry." None can deny or belittle the strong love that laid brick on brick and stone on stone to build this monument to dogged belief in the good to come.

In the summer of 1821 the interior was finished, a few sticks of furniture begged and borrowed. Meanwhile the president of Williams, the Reverend Zephaniah Swift Moore, convinced of the need for a college in Hampshire County and long an advocate for the removal of Williams, accepted the Amherst presidency. When he arrived in September with fifteen students from the hapless Berkshire institution, Amherst triumphantly opened its doors, all four of them, to forty-seven students and three professors.¹ South was not merely a dormitory, it was the College.

President Moore met his divinity students in the southwest corner room on the topmost story, while Colonel Graves

¹ Miss Durkan (curator of the Hitchcock Memorial Room) reminds me that the first catalogue listed three professors and one tutor as the faculty. One of these, however, failed to appear. "Rev. Jonas King was elected to be Professor of Oriental Languages in the Collegiate Institution. Mr. King soon after went to Greece and never accepted the appointment. His name, however, appeared on the catalogue through the greater part of the first decade in the history of the College." (W. S. Tyler, *History of Amherst College during Its First Half Century* [Springfield, Mass., 1873], p. 71).

conducted his chemistry classes from a somewhat less heavenly vantage point in the cellar. Thus were indicated the relative positions of science and religion in this infant Hercules. The college library was a six-foot bookcase in the north entry. When North College was built two years later, the founders could boast that its rooms were sufficient for the beginning of a library of fifty thousand volumes, but they did not mention that there were only about fifty books on hand.

Humble and poor as it was, Amherst had begun, and the first act of our play closes. But there were rumblings of disaster to be heard if one cocked an ear to the northwest and listened carefully. These shall call the tune of our second act.

First President

AT THE birth of our suckling seminary in September, 1821, its destiny reposed in the person of its first president, the Reverend Zephaniah Swift Moore, D.D. This morning I would ask that you take with me a benevolent backward glance at this personage in our drama and regard his shape and motion as he passes all too briefly across the Amherst scene.

His shape is somewhat singular. If it is true that the aura of legend envelops those who are first in things, the pioneers, then it would have to be an aura of more than normal dimensions enveloping Dr. Moore. For he was endowed with an outsize corporeal encasement. Like many another founder, he was enormous, tipping the scales at about 240 pounds, with not quite enough height to carry that tonnage in pleasing proportion. But he cut an impressive swath as he went about his business in knee breeches and long stockings in the manner of the Puritans of an earlier day.

For Dr. Moore was a Puritan and a Calvinist, rigidly orthodox of course, yet wholly unlike the bleak bluenoses of the cartoonist's tradition. In him, generous girth was matched with generous heart, and of all the figures on our early stage none was more beloved by his students than this big man.

He was industrious, hearty, and kind. To many a needy scholar he opened his purse. He was an able teacher, how able may be seen by the number of students who followed him from Dartmouth to Williams and later from Williams to Amherst in order that they might remain under his guidance. He believed in his young men, trusted them, never lost faith in their essential honesty. He addressed himself always to the best in them, and they in turn repaid him with a deep personal loyalty and unquestioned devotion.

His speech was polished, his manner polite. When he met a student on the street, he made a point of lifting his hat first, repeating the gesture if the salute went unanswered. Yet he could thunder in the index, and in the office too when occasion warranted. On matters involving conscience and conviction he was as inflexible as bone. As president of Williams he fought for six years to move that college. You can imagine the hostility many must have felt toward him when he decided to abandon that foundering vessel to launch another that might send it to the bottom. Yet in all that long-drawn wrangle no one impeached his motives or questioned the sincerity of his action, a tribute both to Dr. Moore and many men of Williamstown.

Lest you get the wrong idea, I hasten to add that they were not all magnanimous. "Certain lewd fellows of the baser sort," as Professor Tyler called them, expressed their resentment against Dr. Moore by taking it out on his horse. The cowards, malignant villains, stole into his barn, shaved the horse down to its skin, and cut off its tail. This didn't faze Moore. He drove into Amherst behind his bald, truncated

steed just the same, proud as a pin, saying that he didn't see why the folly of a few rowdies should deprive him of the use of the animal. Legend has it that he also said, "I will say nothing of the treatment I received at Williamstown, but my horse can tell his own tale."

When Moore took over, Amherst was a ship without ballast about to venture through uncharted and certainly dangerous waters. But the trustees had in him a man who knew the reefs and shoals, one who could take them into home port no matter how stormy the passage. And Moore set out and held his course with confidence. Experienced as a professor of languages at Dartmouth, where he had graduated in the class of 1793, and as president of Williams, he was in good repute as preacher, philosopher, and philologist. It was a point of pride with our people that of all American college presidents of the time he alone was a regular paid subscriber to the *Journal* of the Royal Institution of Great Britain.

Many and mighty were his labors. For six days in the week he taught the seniors and sophomores; on the seventh he preached to them, and in between he prayed with them. He organized the curriculum following the Yale pattern; he headed the Board of Trustees; he set forth regulations for student conduct; he prepared petitions and argued them himself before the General Court in Boston, trying to get legal recognition for the College. In this last he failed.

Finally he poured out all his strength leading a great religious revival in the spring of 1823, when anxiety, excitement, and overwork carried him to the pinnacle of exhaustion. On June 25 of his fifty-third year he was seized with violent cramps, probably appendicitis, and four days later he was dead, falling, as one said, "like an ox in the furrow" at the meridian of his usefulness and fame, whispering as his last words, "God is my hope, my shield, and my exceeding great reward."

For the College his death was an engulfing calamity. "Oh, what a shuddering was there within these walls, when the funeral pall which hung portentous for a few days in mid-heaven was let down by hands unseen upon yonder dwelling."¹ And shuddering there was—"a deep, electrical throb of anguish ran through all the classes."² In their grief many students prepared to leave college and were with difficulty persuaded to remain. The loss of the helmsman at the very start of the voyage was an earnest of disaster, and there were many prophets of doom. "The question is whether they can get a successor," said one. To which another replied, "No, the real question is whether they ought to *have* a successor."

But powerful and all-important as Dr. Moore was, Amherst did not die with him, as many feared and more hoped. Another president was already in the wings waiting for his entrance cue. We'll bring him on for the scene after next.

Early Life

IN 1821 Amherst village, which a short time before had been known only as a precinct of Hadley, was a tiny island of farms set in the wilderness. Here is how a member of the class of 1825 described it:

Something more than a score of houses, widely separated from each other by prosperous farms, constituted Amherst center. Along two roads running north and south were scattered small farmhouses with here and there a crossroad, a blacksmith's shop, or a schoolhouse. The East Street, however, formed even then a pretty cluster of houses. Primal forests touched the rear of the college buildings; they filled up with a sea of waving branches the great interval between the village and Hadley.

¹ From Heman Humphrey's Inaugural Address, October 15, 1823.

² Tyler, p. 96.

Towards the south they prevailed gloriously, sending their green waves around the base and up the sides of Mt. Holyoke. To the east they overspread the Pelham slope and they fairly inundated vast tracts northward clear away to the lofty hills of Sunderland and Deerfield.¹

Against this elemental setting was placed our seminary in homespun. For the young men attending, life was simple as well as real and earnest, its goal a pulpit in a New England meetinghouse or a post in a remote foreign mission. The education was classical and in every sense vocational. Many students were mature men hitherto balked by poverty from the education necessary to prepare them for the ministry. They meant business. They worked with dogged fervor, stumbling out in the frozen dark of a winter morning at quarter to five for prebreakfast prayers and classes, and kept going in recitations and study until nine o'clock at night, when prayer meeting brought their arduous day to an appropriately pious close. Sunday was given to the Lord, the day being spent in attendance at church service (twice) and in prayer and contemplation. Occasionally there was great preaching to be heard in the adjacent meetinghouse, as when the Reverend Edward Hitchcock, then of Conway, later to be one of our greatest presidents, spoke on "Retrospection." "Oh, how we wept as we listened," wrote one enraptured lad.

There were few frivolities, fewer distractions. As one early alumnus said, "There were no cattle shows, horse races, nor menageries, no Greek letter societies, no class politics to divide us. We came here to study and had nothing else to do." Whole days were spent in fasting and prayer. At the time of the first revival in 1823 one could hear the hum of prayers rising from every room, stopping neither by day nor by night. Groups of the pious would gather in the room of one as yet unawakened in the Christian sense and, kneeling

¹ Charles U. Shepard, quoted in Tyler, pp. 80-82.

down on the carpetless floor for hours on end, would wait and hope for the moment to come when he would open his bosom to the Lord.

Virtue, hardship, and frugality prevailed. For a dollar a week a man could find his victuals at a friendly farmhouse in the village. If he didn't have the dollar, he could board himself and find and cook his own food for about forty cents a week. One could almost live off the countryside in certain seasons, for there were walnuts and chestnuts in abundance on the college grounds, and nearby orchards offered peaches, apples, and grapes which were theirs for the taking. The college well gave water for bathing and drinking, and there was plenty of cider at nearby mills. It is logical to assume that few students of the time were interested in the brandy distillery that stood near the site of the Chi Phi house.

Some of your rock-ribbed predecessors took their dogs into the woods and shot and salted down their winter's supply of meat. Cutting and hauling firewood was commonplace, and students cared for their rooms without benefit of maid service. In summer they raised their own vegetables in plots in the college grove.

These excerpts from an early student diary are suggestive of the rugged self-denial and careful economy practiced in an earlier day: "26 September 1823. This day I began boarding myself in college and bought bowl, spoon, knife, and fork with half a dozen crackers (probably his dinner) . . . 31 cents. 27 September. Bought share in saw for wood . . . 14 cents." On October second he repented of this extravagance. The entry reads, "Sold my right in saw . . . 14 cents."

It seemed to be an age in which the hardy alone could survive. Listen to President Heman Humphrey in his inaugural address in 1823 extolling the philosophy of strength through cold.

The boy's diet must be simple, his apparel must not be too warm, nor his bed too soft. If you would make him hardy and fearless, let him amuse himself by the hour together in smoothing and twirling the hoary locks of winter. Instead of keeping him shut up all day with a stove and graduating his sleeping room by Fahrenheit, let him face the keen edge of the north wind when the mercury is below cypher and instead of minding a little shivering and complaining when he returns, cheer up his spirits and send him out again. Let him rise early and walk much and keep up daily acquaintance with the saw and the axe.

Yet with all this piety and rigor, this stern living and high thinking, there were occasions when the buckskin vest of the backwoodsman and the hair shirt of the ascetic were doffed in favor of the pink satin waistcoat. One unexpected seat of temptation was the Amherst Academy. Three weeks after Dr. Moore became president, he wrote a letter complaining that an Academy pupil, one Charles Jenks, had invited certain college students, including the son of Noah Webster, to his rooms after nine o'clock for an oyster supper and "that after supper they had cherry rum and gin, that they drank to excess, and that about twelve o'clock they all of them came to the institution and behaved in a very indecent and riotous manner and made great disturbance until one o'clock or later."

Which goes to show that the authorities couldn't be too sure, always, that Old Scratch had been driven off Mt. Zion. "Segars" and cherry rum and oyster suppers were a mighty potent combination—the road to infamy and ruin was paved with them. What measures were taken to combat these evils form part of a future story.

The Struggle for the Charter

OF ALL the many near disasters Amherst had to face and handle in its early history, none was more dire or more nearly suffocating than its failure to obtain a charter from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Without legal sanction the institution could not grant degrees. It could issue a certificate saying that the student had completed a prescribed course of study, but such documents did not pass for legal tender in the educational world.¹ To graduate from here meant nothing. And without a charter Amherst could never hope to receive financial help from the legislature. How necessary that was is seen from the fact that no college of the 1820's was self-supporting. Both Harvard and Williams had been kept alive by liberal grants from the state.

Almost the first move President Moore made when he took office was to apply for a charter. He got nowhere. In January 1823 a new petition signed by him and Rufus Graves was submitted to the General Court. Just before the

¹ Here is a copy of an actual certificate, stating only that the graduate deserved the degree:

Know All Men Who May Read this Document, that the President and Professors, with the approval of the reverend and honorable trustees to whom the governance of this Institution has been entrusted, adjudge that Mr. Jairus Burt, because of his personal merit and in particular because he has completed the whole course of learning and literature as established in the most famous Colleges, is deserving of the title and the degree of Bachelor of Liberal Arts and of the privileges, honors, and insignia pertaining to the aforesaid degree. Of which judgment let this document be evidence. Given in the Academic Halls of Amherst, in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, on the twenty-fifth day of August, in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred twenty-four, and in the year of the United States of America forty-nine.—*Heman Humphrey, President*

session began, a strongly worded diatribe against the proposal was circulated among the members. One can make a shrewd guess as to the origin of this pamphlet. It was entitled "Remarks on the Amherst Collegiate Charity Institution" and it revealed the high battle strategy of the opposition. It said that the Amherst men were seeking "local aggrandizement," that the scheme for the new college was one of "the secret attempts of the foes of Williams College to blast and wither its prosperity" (using the word prosperity in the Pickwickian sense), that the whole business of the founding of Amherst had been conducted in a spirit of intrigue and underhandedness "to accomplish selfish and illiberal purposes." Finally it asked this stumper: "Where is the necessity or even the propriety of establishing a second college in the western part of the State?"

These views opposing the charter must have made an impression, for the petition was summarily and unanimously rejected; even the representative from the town of Amherst voted against it. Incidentally, this resistance on the part of the local lawmaker points up the bad feeling between the two sections of the town, the east and west parishes, feeling which had flared into violence on more than one occasion. East Street was originally the flourishing part of the village, and its inhabitants, of which this legislator was one, took exception to the efforts of the natives on the western hill to rise to power and eminence at their expense. Roundabout, the East Parish was referred to scathingly as Sodom.

In June 1823 the plea for a charter was again entered, and this time consideration of the bill was brusquely postponed for six months. Moore died two weeks later, so the fight was carried on by his successor, President Heman Humphrey.

What manner of man was he? In many ways the opposite of Moore. Where Moore was bland, open, genial, and confident, Dr. Humphrey was austere, stiff, not easily approachable. You have already heard a sample of his cold treatment

for hardening up the young, based somewhat on the theory that if a polar bear can stand the weather so can man. Humphrey was severely orthodox, inspiring respect if not affection in his undergraduates, at least at the start. But it is only fair to add that in his long and often difficult administration he never backed away from a fair fight, that he proved to be statesmanlike in his management of the College, and that in the long run his nature mellowed somewhat. As he took office in 1823, the whole vexing business of the charter landed unceremoniously in his lap. With so many difficulties, the wonder is how he was persuaded to take office at all.

In January 1824 the State Senate granted leave to bring in the bill. A bitter debate followed, but its supporters won in a close vote. The House in its turn, however, turned thumbs down to the charter, 108 to 91. The margin of defeat was narrow enough to give the friends of Amherst hope for the future, but on May 26 we lost again.

By this time Amherst's charter had become a state-wide issue. Newspapers carried accounts of the struggle and special editions printed the arguments of the gladiators. Amherst village seethed; Williamstown boiled. William T. Eustis, Republican candidate for re-election as governor, and sympathetic to the Amherst proposal, was swept into office in 1824 largely as the result of the efforts of Amherst partisans who campaigned for him. All over the state friends rallied, defeated the foes of the bill, and gradually the opposition was whittled down.

After the January debate the picture had become so murky, what with the floods of abuse and invective by those against and the equally impassioned torrents of those for, that a joint committee from both branches of the legislature was appointed to go to Amherst and discover what the fighting was all about and what the facts of the case were. Specifically, they were to find how much money the institution actually had and to discover if there was any truth in the

charges that the Charity Fund had been obtained by fraud and false pretenses and that students had been inveigled into enrolling by improper and unethical means.

Amherst College was truly on the spot. It was a fact that not all subscriptions for the fund had been collected; many had withdrawn their pledges. It was clear that we were in for a public trial and a bad time. For two solid weeks, at the local tavern, the committee conducted a most searching examination. Every pledge, every dollar was scrutinized. Graves and the other agents were quizzed unmercifully. As old President Humphrey said, there were sleepless nights in Amherst, and for those who loved the College there were times "when flesh and heart were ready to fail."

But the happy ending was at hand. Instead of sealing Amherst's doom as many had hoped, the committee's findings boomeranged against the heads of our foes. The trustees found the money to make good on many unfulfilled pledges, and so the committee could report that our accounts were in order. The fund-raising agents, though overly zealous in pressing for subscriptions, were found not to have enticed donations or students by fraud.

With the committee in favor, there was only one possible course for the General Court to take, and to the utter confusion of our Berkshire friends the bill for incorporation became law in February 1825. President Humphrey returned in triumph and was welcomed as a Roman conqueror. All the buildings were illuminated, and the booming of cannon filled the air. It was a day of rejoicing and thanksgiving.

As a postscript I must add that at the following commencement the good president, able at last to bestow bona fide degrees, made the most of his opportunities. In his address, he was carried away—and referred glowingly and proudly to the graduates of the class of 1825 as the first *legitimate* sons of Amherst College. What effect this remarkable statement had on the alumni of the institution is not recorded.