

Literature and Art In Historic Newberry

(By W. P. Houseal.)

Time makes no alteration for the truth of things. So when one begins a record of impressions and incidents connected with experience or observation, things are still the same they are, no allowance whatever being made whether things be past, present or to come. One is supposed to have due reverence for things of the past, so that things present or things to come may always receive unbiased judgment. The celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of a newspaper which is the successor of several journals which had previous existence in Newberry furnishes an occasion for some reminiscences of times when men and things were true in Newberry. The living, moving factors of former days have made the history of Newberry interesting and attractive to one who would review the past, and in no spheres more truly than in the field of literature and the fine arts.

The work of the artisan precedes in the progress of civilization the profession of the artist. Each of these factors in Newberry have performed well in their spheres. So it is the purpose of these reminiscences to deal with the culture and literary features of life in Newberry as it existed in the period of the writer's boyhood and in the days when Newberry's pioneers laid the foundations so good and strong that a more intelligent and cultivated community has not been developed elsewhere in the Palmetto commonwealth.

The writer's introduction to one of these periods—this article will not observe the rules of chronology—in the development of cultured community is coincident with the founding of The Herald and News, and he can not speak from personal knowledge beyond that time. It was during the commencement exercises of the college conducted by the Rev. Mr. Zealy that he first received the impression that Newberry deserved to be known as a community of culture and refinement. This was in June, 1866. He remembers that the orchestra, in part, was composed of three leading citizens—one a professional musician, F. Werber, Sr.; a physician (also a writer of high order), Dr. O. B. Mayer, Sr.; the third a prominent merchant, John B. Carville. The Newberry Female college was conducted in the residence now owned by Dr. J. K. Gilder, and its commencement exercises were most interesting occasions. The old court house was the place of assembly for all similar occasions, including the final commencement of Newberry college in June, 1868, before its removal to Walhalla. That commencement was re-

markable for the separation of the members of the junior class to finish their education elsewhere—O. L. Schumpert at Copenhagen, William Hayne Leavell at Oxford, Miss, and James Elton Houseal at Walhalla.

The court room was always graced by an audience which represented the intelligence of Newberry, when the collage came back from 1878 to 1881, and thence forward the opera house became the center of the display of the culture and literary talent of the town. Only one of the participants who were officially connected with the building and dedication of the opera house are now living, and a brief reference to that occasion, which took place on February 24, 1882, will doubtlessly be interesting.

Music formed a prominent feature of the order of dedication. A great man has said that music is the art of the prophets—the only art that can calm the agitations of the soul. It is also one of the most wonderful gifts of providence. Some of the present day Newberrians remember the beautiful music rendered at the dedication of the opera house under the direction of Mrs. F. O. Bailey, the talented instructor of this beautiful art in the Newberry Female academy. Mrs. Bailey was assisted by Mrs. Warren Davis of Charleston. Judge Y. J. Pope was master of ceremonies. One of the most brilliant men of the town wrote the dedicatory ode. Charles Gustav Jaeger, author of the ode. He was a native of Germany, but had come to Newberry from Laurens. He was also a musician, and as linguist wrote fifteen languages and spoke many of those he could write. Others on the stage of action included Dr. Geo. W. Holland, representing the college; Capt. A. P. Pifer, representing the Newberry Female academy; Capt. O. L. Schumpert, the Newberry Thespian club; the mayor of the town, Jordan P. Pool, and the aldermen, James Y. McFall, D. W. T. Kibler, Geo. A. Langford, D. M. Ward (the only survivor).

One of the most notable occasions in which the people assembled in the opera house was the memorable service to the president of the Southern riles in a manner befitting their importance. In this respect the town and county has a written history that is unexcelled in detail by any of her

These occasions are typical of similar assemblages in which the people were accustomed to observe anniversaries in a manner befitting their importance. In this respect the town and county has a written history that is unexcelled in detail by any of her

neighboring communities

Interest in the drama in the '50s enlisted a number of the leading citizens, who formed a society for the entertainment of the town, which then had scarcely more than 700 or 800 inhabitants. The organization was called the Thespian club, and it presented the Shakespearean drama in its own hall which then occupied the site of the office on the corner of College (or Adams) and Boyce streets. Thespian hall was burned in the fire of June 6, 1866. This fire also destroyed the office of The Herald. The Thespian club maintained a high reputation in the character of its rendition of the drama. Prominent citizens again formed the Thespian club and revived interest in the drama, with their hall over Wayes & Martin's (now J. T. Mayes & Co.) store. As in the old Thespian, some of the best histrionic talent was included in its renditions of legitimate drama.

It was in January, 1875, that the town was first visited by a theatrical company, with three consecutive per-



formances, and six performances on a return visit the following week. Thespian hall could not accommodate all who sought admittance. It is a remarkable fact that a play, "Sam'l of Posen, or the Commercial Traveler," which made its author a millionaire, was first produced in Thespian hall, in Newberry. When M. B. Curtis, its author, arrived in town billed for another play, his leading supporter was taken sick, and he substituted "Sam'l of Posen" for the regular bill. It was a success, so a Newberry audience thought, and a Newberry audience has always been capable of judging in such matters. Mr. Curtis went to New York with his newly discovered success and it had a continuous "four hundred nights" in the metropolis.

The remark is pertinent that present day theaters must either be placed upon a higher plane or succumb to its parasite, the moving picture film,

which is affecting vitally its very existence. It is a pity that such a vehicle for the development of a high degree of intellectual attainment should have degenerated with such rapidity in a generation.

Time can not make things more true than they were at the beginning. It is true that time and thought extended themselves more in the periods embraced so far in these random notes than is bestowed in similar instances at the present day. We live in an electric-impelled age and intellectuality is forced into the same groove as the commodity called modern progress. The mirrored past is a form of useful retrospect. The writer hopes the Newberrians of today will maintain their reputation as a cultured community by training the rising generation in the tenets of the pioneers in intellectual achievements.

Newberry must be praised for her noble efforts in always keeping the torch of knowledge after the town had been incorporated until the Newberry Male academy was founded in 1806 by the liberal subscriptions of her citizens. This school was always famous for the men whom it introduced into the public life of the state and the nation. It was merged with Newberry college in 1858. Its last site (Halcyon Grove, in the rear of the residence of James M. Bowers) was the scene of the martyrdom of the gallant Texan, Calvin Crozier, in May, 1865, whose memory Newberry has preserved in purity and valor on a marble shaft.

The academy was practically reopened in December, 1868, and conducted one year by Capt. A. P. Pifer in the Baptist church annex. Next in its own building, in 1870, on west Harrington street, with J. C. Hardin of Chester, William M. Brooks of Chapel Hill, N. C., and R. H. Clarkson of Columbia, as principals, who were followed by James P. Kinard (now president of Anderson college), John P. Glasgow of Texas and Miss Willie Cozby (now Mrs. S. C. Byrd) of Columbia. The separate existence of Newberry Male academy ceased with the establishment of the graded schools in 1890. This date brings the educational period within the memory of the larger portion of the present generation in Newberry. How the years nest! Six-year-olds who were the first pupils of the graded schools have taken on the responsibilities of mature thought and life's experience some time ago—in the case of some of his friends among the fairer sex he could scarcely be expected to tell the exact lapse of years!

While in the graded school system Newberry has provided for the educational training of both the boys and girls, it must not be supposed, in the absence of any exact historical record to the contrary, in the establishment of the Male academy early in the history of the town that means for the education of her girls had not also been provided. The Newberry Female academy must have been founded about 1830. It occupied buildings once variously located—at one time in Halcyon Grove, when the Male academy had been removed elsewhere. The

Male academy again occupied the Halcyon Grove building, and the Female academy, removed from place to place, ceased its existence, with the establishments of the graded schools, in the building which Mr. Joseph Mann bought and converted into his residence.

One of the buildings first used to accommodate a portion of the pupils of the newly organized graded schools in 1890 will always be remembered with peculiar interest by the writer. He first saw it standing out against the horizon on the morning after the fire of June 18, 1866. It was the only building left, with the exception of Jones' livery stables, on the block bounded by Thompson, Adams (College), Harrington and Main streets,

fronting on the latter after the destruction of Dr. Thompson's residence. This building was Dr. Thompson's kitchen. It survived two other fires, but was burned in the fire of March 30, 1907. As a boy it thrust itself upon my sight every time I looked toward town from the eminence of College hill. Now it no doubt entwines its associations in the memories of many more Newberrians. It was a modest building, but would now be considered very pretentious for a kitchen. It was one of the old Southern style kitchens when it served savory food for the guests of the big "white house" in ante-bellum days.

This purveyor of sustenance of the

(Continued to Page 7)

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