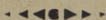


# The First Chapter of the A. & M. College.

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IT IS probable that the headline which I had selected may have led some of you to expect to hear from stories of early college days. If this should be the case, I must disappoint you. In the presence of friends who have known me for many years, I would not dare assert that I had never told a story. I could not do so without injuring my standing as a newspaper man past redemption; but I may say, in all candor, and in the words of some early writer, whose name I do not recall at present: "I'm one of those who never told a tale, but they in telling marred it." Neither shall I attempt to chronicle all events of importance that happened within the college walls or on the campus in three years. There is no epoch in a man's existence, excepting only that one in which it was his good luck to win her smiles who now pours out his evening tea and spans his sons and heirs, on proper occasions, to which his thoughts revert so often and so fondly as to his college days. Should I undertake to tell you but the half of what seems of moment to me, I could not get past the first two weeks without exhausting my allotted time and your patience as well. It is my purpose to sketch for you the A. & M. College as I knew it in my student days and to accomplish this I shall have to neglect details and use bold and rapid strokes.

When, a year ago, I witnessed your Commencement exercises, my first impression was one of delighted astonishment at sight of the changes which nineteen years—a brief period, after all, in the history of a great educational institution—had wrought here.

To those of my fellow alumni who have found it possible to visit these scenes more frequently the transformation accomplished may have appeared less astonishing; but to me, since in all those years I had seen the college walls but once, and then in the uncertain light of an autumn night from a swiftly passing train, they seemed but little short of those enchantments we read about in Arabian Nights. But side by side with the magnificent reality arose a vision of the college as it appeared to me in the early days of October, 1876, when I entered its walls, perhaps the most verdant of all the farmer boys who have enjoyed that privilege.

And now I ask you to turn back with me to view the "Old College," as it stands imprinted indelibly on my inner eye. Exterior surroundings, of course, have changed slightly. We see a broad prairie, a rift in that great belt of timber which stretches almost unbroken from the red banks of the Brazos to the eastern border of our State. From the highest point of this prairie the main building of the college, impressive in its massiveness and severe simplicity of style, rises upward; on the left we behold the "Old Mess Hall," which, even in those days, could scarcely be called beautiful, but was destined soon to become for us an object of tender solicitude, "a name to conjure with," especially after evening drill and morning roll-call. Not a tree nor a shrub relieves the monotony of the prairie, on which but recently herds of deer have browsed in peace and on which the wild beast of the forest, that dread-