

## ***Who I Am and Why I Came to the Institute***

Theme in English at Worcester Polytechnic Institute

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There is no doubt that I could have given but a very dry answer to the question "Who am I?" before I entered high school in 1898. Up to that time I was merely an average boy—a little below the average in some respects perhaps—following the paths of least resistance and having, incidentally, merely a hazy notion of higher education. I was not, however, without idiosyncrasies. Electricity appealed to me as something bordering on the supernatural. So much was I impressed by its powers, when very young that I tried to soar over the housetops by jumping as high as possible and at the same time grasping a battery zinc. It was only when my mother vividly described what would happen if the virtues of the rod really became manifest that I was frightened into leaving the dangerous implement alone.

When I entered the Boston English High School, I slowly underwent a change, although it must be confessed that the studies which were most interesting received most attention while the others were as little noticed as possible. Instead of continuing researches with battery zincs, I tried to crystallize carbon and, quite by accident, succeeded in producing minute crystals which actually scratched glass. Mr. Bergen, my instructor, became interested in the matter, and upon examination, concluded that they were composed of carbide of iron. Experiments were continued until a hydrogen generator exploded, doing considerable damage and greatly frightening the servant girl, when parental opposition resulted in an untimely but fortunate end to my efforts.

My stay at the Boston English High School was brief, for just as I became a sophomore, I was obliged by sickness to leave school for two years. This was rally not unfortunate for it gave me time to appreciate some of my advantages and to develop tastes which would have remained necessarily dormant had my school life continued without intermission. My selection of a school in which to complete preparatory study was a happy one, indeed; for, with my newly acquired scientific tastes, together with the effect of Dr. G. Stanley Ha;;'s stirring dedication address, I began work at the South High School with a keen delight in all the sciences and no small interest in the other studies of the curriculum. There is certainly magic in the enjoyment of work and school, for I steadily rose from a participator in the first scientific rhetorical, to class president and speaker at graduation, with highest honors. The teachers were remarkable for their patience and good will; the work was delightful; and, on the whole, I cannot hope for many pleasanter moments than those I passed at the South High School.

It is easier to narrate past experiences than to explain why I cam to Tech. There are, however, strong reasons for my doing so. For years the Institute has been pointed out to me as the goal toward which I must aim. Besides, many graduates have spoken in very high terms of the college and have supported their statements by proofs. Thus the Institute has become, in my eyes, the very type of ideal engineering college. Notwithstanding this, there have been moments when I did not feel particularly enthusiastic over the prospect of an engineering career, and even my instructors have hinted at other lines of work, to the extent of suggesting literature. Sciences, however, have attracted my greatest

attention. In each one there is a certain pleasure in searching to find more than what is evident on the surface of a matter.

About a year ago, I endeavored to find how the gyroscope obeyed the law of action and reaction, and after a few months of experimenting in spare moments, I succeeded, after a fashion, in showing what my physics instructor did not make me understand. But gyroscopes were driven from my mind by one of Dr. Hodge's lectures, and for some time I was occupied in collecting butterflies by his methods. Not satisfied with this, I prepared microscope slides of wing scales of different species of these insects, and was rewarded by finding that there really was a sort of classification of butterflies possible, based on these minute scales. Thus, from time to time, I have taken a cursory glance at many fascinating subjects. In this predicament it is not surprising that there is sometimes the temptation to choose an elective course, where several interests can be further cultivated; for, after all, practical education, from an economic standpoint at least, should tend to develop what is best in a man and to make him as useful a unit as possible in the community.