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James Benjamin Clark¹ and the Southern Experience at Harvard College in the Civil War Era

William Braverman

IN the decade before the Civil War, despite the dramatic rise in sectional tension, young southern students continued to come to the very heart of abolitionist Massachusetts. The Harvard College Classes of 1855 through 1861 contained 67 southerners, out of a total enrollment of 623. Of these 67 students, 40 received the bachelor of arts degree; the remaining 27 stayed in Cambridge between one and seven terms. The southern students were introduced to a nationalizing education, during which they became classmates, rivals, and oftentimes friends with young men of various backgrounds. More than one third of the southern students (compared to one fifth of the northerners) dropped out or performed so poorly that they were asked to leave; but for those who stayed long enough to meet and understand the Yankee, their exposure brought an increased awareness of both the American character and of regional distinctions.¹ Of course, this brief experience did not negate their life-long ties to family, to state, and to region. Thus, it is no more surprising that they joined the Confederate armies than that their northern classmates enlisted in Union armies. Even so, despite their participation on opposite sides of the battlefield, many classmates remained friends. When the war ended, some members of the Harvard Classes of 1855 through 1861 met at reunions; others continued a friendly correspondence.

¹ There are two unpublished lists of southern students in the Harvard University Archives; see W. A. Laurence, "List of Southern Students Admitted to Harvard Between 1826 and 1865," Harvard University Archives; see also Eva G. Moore, "List of Harvard Men Who Served in the Confederate Service 1861-1865," Harvard University Archives. My list of students was derived from these two sources as well as from a reading of the College Catalogues; see *Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Harvard University*, from 1852 to 1861. References to students are given with their class year, even for students who did not graduate.

For most of the southern students, their Harvard education marked the first extended stay outside their native region, although a small minority had attended Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire.² The great majority of students prepared for college in small private schools or with a private tutor who taught them Greek, Latin, mathematics, and ancient history.³ Many of the tutors were Harvard alumni who generated in their students a desire to enroll in their alma mater.⁴ When the students had completed their private school training, they occasionally spent several weeks near Harvard studying with recent graduates or current students in order to pass the difficult entrance examinations.

Almost all the southern students came from cities, the great majority from Baltimore and New Orleans. Except for several of the students from New Orleans, the southerners came from English stock, most of whom had lived in America for at least two generations. Fathers were often lawyers, doctors, or large-scale planters who could easily afford to send their sons to private schools. Several of the students' fathers and brothers were themselves Harvard graduates.⁵

Harvard's seven graduating classes between 1855 and 1861 included descendants of wealthy and powerful southern families: young men

² They were: James Cenas '56 and Raymond Egerton '56 (*Memorial of the Harvard College Class of 1856 Prepared for the Fiftieth Anniversary of Graduation* [Boston, 1906], pp. 18, 83), and Francis French '57 (Amos Tuck French, ed., *Exeter and Harvard Eighty Years Ago: Journals and Letters of F. O. French '57* [Chester, New Hampshire, 1932]).

³ Only one student, John Jacobsen '56, briefly attended a public school before entering Harvard; see *Memorial of the Harvard College Class of 1856* (note 2), p. 166.

⁴ John Prentiss '18 tutored nearly all of the Baltimore students. For a statement about his influence on his students, see Robert Gelston's autobiographical account of his pre-Harvard education in *Class Book, 1858*, Harvard University Archives.

⁵ Students who had relatives included Robert Barnwell '55, John Alston '57, William Elliott '57, James May '58, and Robert Memminger '59. The socioeconomic background of the southern students echoes the northern pattern, as discussed in Stephen Thernstrom's essay "Poor but Hopeful Scholars," in *Glimpses of the Harvard Past* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986). Information concerning the southern students' genealogical background and educational preparation was gathered from the *Class Reports* and *Class Books* in the Harvard University Archives. The *Class Reports*, printed for the private use of a Harvard College class, are issued periodically in the years after graduation. The *Class Books* are folio manuscript volumes in which students wrote autobiographical statements and often provided an account of their ancestry. After graduation, the Class Secretary added to the *Class Book* various communications from classmates and their families, as well as newspaper clippings. The *Class Book* was to be turned over to the Harvard Library after the death of the last member of the class; and this was usually done. *Class Books* were prepared throughout most of the nineteenth century. Both the *Class Books* and the *Class Reports* are an invaluable source of biographical information about Harvard students.

such as Robert Memminger '59, whose father served as the Confederacy's secretary of the treasury, and Robert Barnwell '55, scion of Robert Barnwell '21, U.S. senator, signer of the Confederate Constitution and large plantation holder in Beaufort, South Carolina. William "Rooney" Lee '58, had the most famous father of all the southern students, Robert E. Lee; although the young Lee did not graduate, he left an indelible impression on his classmate Henry Adams '58, who immortalized the lanky southerner in *The Education of Henry Adams*.

Another southerner who made a particularly strong and favorable impression on his classmates was James Benjamin Clark '55; they chose him class orator, the highest nonacademic honor that could be bestowed on a senior by his classmates. Clark's historical importance is due not only to his selection as orator, which distinguishes him from the other southerners, but also to his letters to the class secretary, which shed light on the little-known experience of the southern students both at Harvard College in the 1850s and in the Civil War.

James Clark was born in North Carolina in 1834, the tenth child of General William and Louisa Pearce (Lanier) Clark. His father moved to Jackson, Mississippi, during Clark's infancy and became a large plantation owner and prominent citizen, rising at one time to state treasurer. Mrs. Clark died when James was five years old, leaving him to the care of his sisters in Jackson. "The great event of my life," wrote Clark in 1905, occurred when "I left my Southern home for Harvard." He arrived in Cambridge with an A.B. from Franklin College, near Nashville, Tennessee. Franklin emphasized manual labor, not scholarship; each student worked two and a half hours a day in the garden "with spade, rake and hoe, planting and culturing vegetables." Clark graduated at age 16 at the head of his class and left the country-bred students for the charms of his married sister's home in Holly Springs, Mississippi. He quickly fell in love, "deeply, beautifully and briefly," with Mary Carothers, "as charming a maiden as ever set a boy's heart on fire." Despite Mary's charms, he soon left the comforts of his sister's home and returned to Jackson, Mississippi.⁶

⁶ All quotations are from James Benjamin Clark to Edwin Hale Abbott, 27 January 1905, Secretary's File, Class of 1855, Harvard University Archives.



Harvard University Archives

"Rooney" Lec

There Clark entered the law office of his brother Robert, who started him on a general reading course of nine hours a day that included the Old and New Testaments, Rollins's *Ancient History*, Plutarch's *Lives*, Tacitus, and Xenophon. When at the end of two years he had devoured "everything in the lives of history, biography, romance, poetry, and travel," he decided to matriculate at what he had heard was the best school in the United States, Harvard College.⁷

En route north, Clark stopped to visit his brother Sam, who was in Philadelphia studying medicine, and "thence to Washington, D.C., to witness the inauguration of President Franklin Pierce." On reaching Cambridge, he went directly to Harvard President Jared Sparks with a letter of recommendation from his brother Robert, who "was an excitable, enthusiastic man, and in that epistle he touched matters up in lively fashion." Sparks read the "effusive letter and told me what to do, a smile on his noble, paternal face. I felt I had found a friend."⁸ Because Clark had already completed the college course at Franklin, Sparks recommended that he enter the sophomore class. Matriculation in an advanced class was rare but not entirely unheard of, particularly for southern students, many of whom had been prepared in Southern colleges. Clark had gotten through the admission process exceedingly easily. His brother's letter fulfilled the requirement for "proper testimonials of a good moral character" that every prospective student had to produce; and Clark had been spared the ordeal of admission tests.⁹

For most students entrance to Harvard was preceded by a difficult process of written examinations and recitations. Harvard administered the two-day examinations on the Monday and Tuesday of graduation week. One student described the first day as the "day of misery."¹⁰ On Monday morning at six o'clock the nervous candidates filed into Room 16 of University Hall. After an officer from the university read the candidates' names and after a recess for breakfast, the young men returned to Room 16 for the examinations in arithmetic, Latin grammar, and Greek grammar. At noon the morning's

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*; on President Jared Sparks, "a singularly colorless President," see Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard 1636-1936* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), pp. 281-282.

⁹ *A Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Harvard University For the Academical Year 1852-1853, Second Term* (Cambridge: John Bartlett, 1853), p. 42.

¹⁰ French, *Exeter and Harvard* (note 2), p. 65.



Harvard University Archives

James Benjamin Clark
From the 1858 Class Book



Harvard University Archives

President Jared Sparks
1849-1853

ordeal ended. It was quickly followed by the test in history. The day ended with a three-hour exam in Latin, Greek, algebra, and geometry. "This day's work," recorded one successful student, "was the hardest I ever did; and as I had a nervous headache *extra*, it was as disagreeable as any I remember."¹¹ On the second day the college tutors examined the candidates in Cicero, Felton's *Greek Reader*, Latin prosody, Virgil, and Greek poetry.

At the end of the second day of examinations, the president of the College summoned each student to his office and handed back the corrected papers. The president got through the line of students in less than one hour.¹² The successful applicants presented a bond, with sureties, of four hundred dollars to "pay all the charges accruing under the laws and customs of the University."¹³ Since Clark was admitted to an advanced class, he had to pay an additional forty-five dollars.

The day-to-day life of Clark and his classmates was extremely ordered. Every morning at six-thirty the prayer bell rang, signaling the start of the students' routine. Precisely at seven prayers commenced, followed by breakfast. After up to seven hours of classes, the day ended with evening prayers in the College chapel. Beginning in 1855, by faculty vote morning prayers were delayed til seven-thirty and evening service was discontinued.¹⁴

The regimentation of college life increased the students' feelings of camaraderie. Young men from Boston, Philadelphia, or Savannah all moved through the identical well-regulated schedule. Indeed, at this time the College still required that all students wear the same uniform, which further added to the feeling of community.

In the 1850s the students from South and North also faced the same lessons and the same instructors. All freshmen and sophomores had to enroll in Greek, Latin, mathematics, history, rhetoric, French, natural history, and chemistry. Although chemistry had a formal lecture, the other courses were taught by constant class drills and

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Harvard College: Records of the Class of 1859* (Cambridge, 1896), p. 67.

¹³ *A Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Harvard University, For the Academical Year 1852-1853, First Term* (Cambridge, 1853), p. 42.

¹⁴ For a detailed table of the time and frequency of course meetings, see *A Catalogue of the Officers and Students of Harvard University, For the Academical Year 1857-1858, Second Term* (Cambridge, 1858), pp. 166-167.

quizzes. Only seniors had some choice — among German, Spanish, Italian, modern literature, geology, or anatomy — after fulfilling the required senior courses in philosophy, rhetoric, and physics. Upperclassmen also had more lecture courses, the number having increased to a total of four as the student moved toward graduation.¹⁵

The only significant reform in the curriculum came in 1856, when the College added music as an elective for sophomores and juniors. The method of examination changed in 1857, when the faculty voted to replace the final oral exam with a written one. Under the old system, a public examination was held in front of a visiting committee of the overseers each term. The professor of Greek stubbornly refused to obey the reform and, in a violent act of defiance, burned all the examination papers. He is reported to have said that if the grades improved from the daily recitations, then the student must have cheated.¹⁶

Although the entire college population could easily fit into one of the eleven upperclass houses on the modern Harvard campus, the students of the 1850s considered Harvard a large institution. Even to a rather sophisticated young man from Washington, D.C., Harvard appeared as a "little world by itself, a vast machine so complicated that we wonder at the exactness with which every part received its due attention." In such a vision, the student became quite small, "a cog" in the greater machine of the College.¹⁷ This too contributed to the feeling of equality among the disparate classmates.

Like the classrooms, the living quarters brought together students from different regions. Only four dormitory rooms or boarding houses contained more than one southerner. Although James Clark lived alone during his senior year, he spent his sophomore year sharing a boarding house with two Bostonians and his junior year living with one southerner and two Bostonians at Mr. L. Thurston's home in Cambridge. Because the number of dormitory rooms was limited, most students, like Clark, lived in an off-campus boarding house.¹⁸

¹⁵ All information on course selection and requirements was gathered from the *Catalogue of the Officers and Students* for the years 1852 through 1861.

¹⁶ Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard* (note 8), p. 299.

¹⁷ French, *Exeter and Harvard* (note 2), p. 69.

¹⁸ The number of rooms varied with each class. During Clark's first year, for example, 34 rooms were reserved for seniors, 28 for juniors, 25 for sophomores, and 16 for freshmen; see *Regulations for the Assignment of Rooms, Harvard College (1852-1853)*, Harvard University Archives. Student's living arrangements are recorded in the *Catalogue of Students* for

Four dormitories were available for students who lived on campus: Holworthy, Massachusetts, Hollis, and Stoughton. Proctors or professors lived in the dormitories and tried to control the students' more exuberant behavior. Although Clark's off-campus house did not have an official code of behavior, he knew that extremely raucous activity would lead to disciplinary action and possibly dismissal from the College. College pranks centered in the dormitories, where unsuspecting proctors were often made the focus of student humor. In October 1854, for example, five students caught an old horse and brought it to their dormitory, muffled its feet, and tied it to proctor Theodore Tebbets's door on the fourth floor. Before running away, they removed the cloth from the horse's hooves. About two o'clock in the morning Tebbets woke up, hearing what he thought were drunken seniors returning after curfew. Opening the door, he found the horse rather than inebriated students. After returning to his room, he discovered a group of "strangely attired figures asking anxiously if he was 'often disturbed by night mares.'"¹⁹

Because the College cafeteria had closed in 1849, Clark and the other students had to arrange for outside meals. Only one of the social clubs regularly served food, so most students were left without an organized dining arrangement. Many formed small eating clubs with friends and met in a boarding house to share meals. Clark and another southerner formed one such eating club with nine other classmates. This intimate group became, in the words of a Boston-bred member, "one of the prominent features of our college life."²⁰ They subscribed to the *Boston Advertiser* and discussed the important events of the day during supper. The arguments often became quite heated, so much so that on one occasion the landlady entered and "informed us rather tartly that she rented her room for a club table for dining, not debating."²¹ The arguments over the Crimean War,

each term; the only other southern students who shared a boarding house or dormitory room were John Alston '57 and Samuel Parkman '57; George Collins '59 and William Magenis '60; Charles Pringle '60 and Benjamin Skinner '60. During Clark's junior year he shared a boarding house with Bostonians William Paine '54, and Robert Morse '54, and the South Carolinian David Mordecai '54.

¹⁹ French, *Exeter and Harvard* (note 2), p. 76.

²⁰ James Tyndale Mitchell to Edwin Hale Abbott, 3 January 1905, Secretary's File, Class of 1855, Harvard University Archives.

²¹ *Ibid.*

rather than any sectional issue, remained in the memory of one of the members as the most lively of the numerous debates.

Harvard College also had many organized clubs for the social elites. The two largest were the Hasty Pudding Club and the Institute of 1770. The Hasty Pudding Club was named for the pudding regularly consumed at club functions, a concoction made of "mush and fry, and hominy, with milk or molasses."²² Twenty-six southerners were elected to the club from the Classes of 1855 to 1860. They represented approximately 17 percent of the total club membership, whereas the percentage of southern students during the period was approximately 10 percent. Three of the southerners served as senior officers. The largest club was the Institute of 1770, originally founded to improve student elocution. Beginning in 1835 only sophomores could join, a tradition that continued until it merged with the Hasty Pudding in this century. Southerners composed only 7 percent of the club, but four served as officers.²³ Of the five remaining social clubs, the Porcellian, the most selective and expensive, had the largest percentage of southerners. In the years 1855 to 1860, southerners composed, on the average, almost 20 percent of the club's membership.²⁴ The Greek-letter fraternities also had several southern members, but faculty pressure forced these clubs to close in 1857.²⁵ James Clark's involvement with Zeta Psi and the Hasty Pudding enabled him to form new alliances based on popularity, sense of humor, and social position.

Southern students ranked high socially; academically, taken as a group, their standing was generally poor, with more than 50 percent of them falling in the lower third of the class. Henry Adams '58 offered one explanation: "The Southerner had no mind . . . he was not a scholar; he had no intellectual training; he could not analyze an idea, and he could not even conceive of admitting two."²⁶ A low rank

²² *The Thirteenth Catalogue & A History of the Hasty Pudding Club* (Cambridge, 1907), p. 3.

²³ *Sixth Catalogue of the Officers and Members of the Institute of 1770* (Boston, 1909), pp. 75-82.

²⁴ *Catalogue of the Honorary and Immediate Members of the Library of the Porcellian Club of Harvard University* (Cambridge, 1867), pp. 51-53; other clubs included the Alpha Delta Phi, Delta Kappa Epsilon, Zeta Psi, Psi Upsilon, and Theta Delta Chi.

²⁵ Morrison, *Three Centuries of Harvard* (note 2), p. 310.

²⁶ Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (New York: The Modern Library, 1931), pp. 57-58.

on the class lists, however, did not necessarily signify poor performance on the examinations or recitations. The Harvard ranking system was based not only on academic performance but also on behavior.

Points were deducted for missing a class and for violations of the numerous college rules. Such small acts as smoking in the Yard, raising one's voice, leaning out of a dormitory window, or wearing the wrong clothes would result in a reduction of points. As the Harvard College *Orders and Regulations* made clear, the scale of merit (the equivalent of the modern grade report) was determined by "adding together the term aggregates of each instructor" and then deducting points "for all unexcused delinquencies." Thus James Clark's and his fellow southerners' low ranking must be measured against the fact that they had numerous demerits for disorderly conduct — more than their northern classmates.²⁷

One of the most damaging penalties was "private admonitions," usually administered by Latin tutor Reginald Chase, the faculty's law enforcer. These dreaded "privates" could lower even the best students to academic mediocrity. Absence from prayers, absence from recitations, tardiness to church and classroom, and neglect of particular subjects were the most common reasons for "privates." One of the most colorful disciplinary records belonged to William Magenis of Missouri, who attended Harvard from 1857 to 1860. He was privately admonished for, among other things, "neglect of Latin . . . general indecorum in recitations . . . impropriety of deportment in the Physics exercises . . . for clapping his hands in Mr. Jennison's recitation room . . . for galloping in the yard . . . and fined \$2.00 for hacking the benches in Professor Torrey's recitation room."²⁸ Harvard eventually suspended Magenis "until commencement," but did grant him a degree.

A significant rise in the number of "privates" administered to southern students occurred between 1855 and 1860. Although northern students' "privates" had a similar increase, those given to southern

²⁷ *Orders and Regulations of the Faculty of Harvard College* (July 1852), p. 7, Harvard University Archives. All information about the student's class rank was drawn from two records kept in the Harvard University Archives; see *Monthly Returns, Examinations & Term Aggregates, 1852 to 1861*; see also *Rank Scale, 1852 to 1861*. The students' disciplinary problems are listed in the *Faculty Records*, vols. 14-15, Harvard University Archives.

²⁸ *Faculty Records*, vol. 15, pp. 351, 371, 409, 421, 468, 475, 498.

students grew dramatically.²⁹ It may be that the overall increase reflects tightened standards of conduct or heightened enforcement. It may be that the higher average number of "privates" administered to southern students reflect an uneven application of the rules; but it may also be that the increasingly bitter political relations between the North and the South produced a heightened feeling of restlessness among the students and that the southerners reacted particularly to finding themselves in an environment that was occasionally hostile.

The southern students certainly had opportunities to witness hostility to the South and its "peculiar institution." For James Clark, the most exciting experience of his Harvard days was the trial of Anthony Burns, the fugitive slave. Burns was employed in a clothing store in Boston when he was arrested on 24 May 1854, on a charge of having escaped from slavery in Virginia.³⁰ Theodore Parker and Wendell Phillips organized a public rally to protest the arrest, and Clark and his close friend John Tileston '55, a Bostonian, attended the Faneuil Hall meeting. More than fifty years after the event, Clark vividly recalled the high point of the rally: "a speaker shouted that the slave hunter was in the Tremont Hotel and asked if the proud, free city of Boston could consent to be polluted by his presence." At this moment Wendell Phillips, who had remained quiet, "sprang to his feet, and I thought him the most magnificent man I had ever seen. He seemed to be electrified with power and passion."³¹ Thus Clark left the meeting impressed by the power, beauty, and eloquence of Wendell Phillips, one of the most hated Yankees in the South.

On other occasions Clark and the other southerners reacted defensively to northern assaults on slavery and tried to strengthen their

²⁹	<i>Class</i>	<i>Average Number of Southern "Privates"</i>	<i>Average Number of Northern "Privates"</i>
	1855	1.4	1.1
	1856	3.0	2.9
	1857	3.6	2.5
	1858	4.5	1.8
	1859	2.6	4.2
	1860	6.7	3.6

Source: Faculty Records, vols. 14-15.

³⁰ For a discussion of this event, see *The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison, Vol. IV: Brink of War, 1850-1869*, ed. Louis Ruchames (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 330-331.

³¹ James Benjamin Clark to Edwin Hale Abbott (note 6).

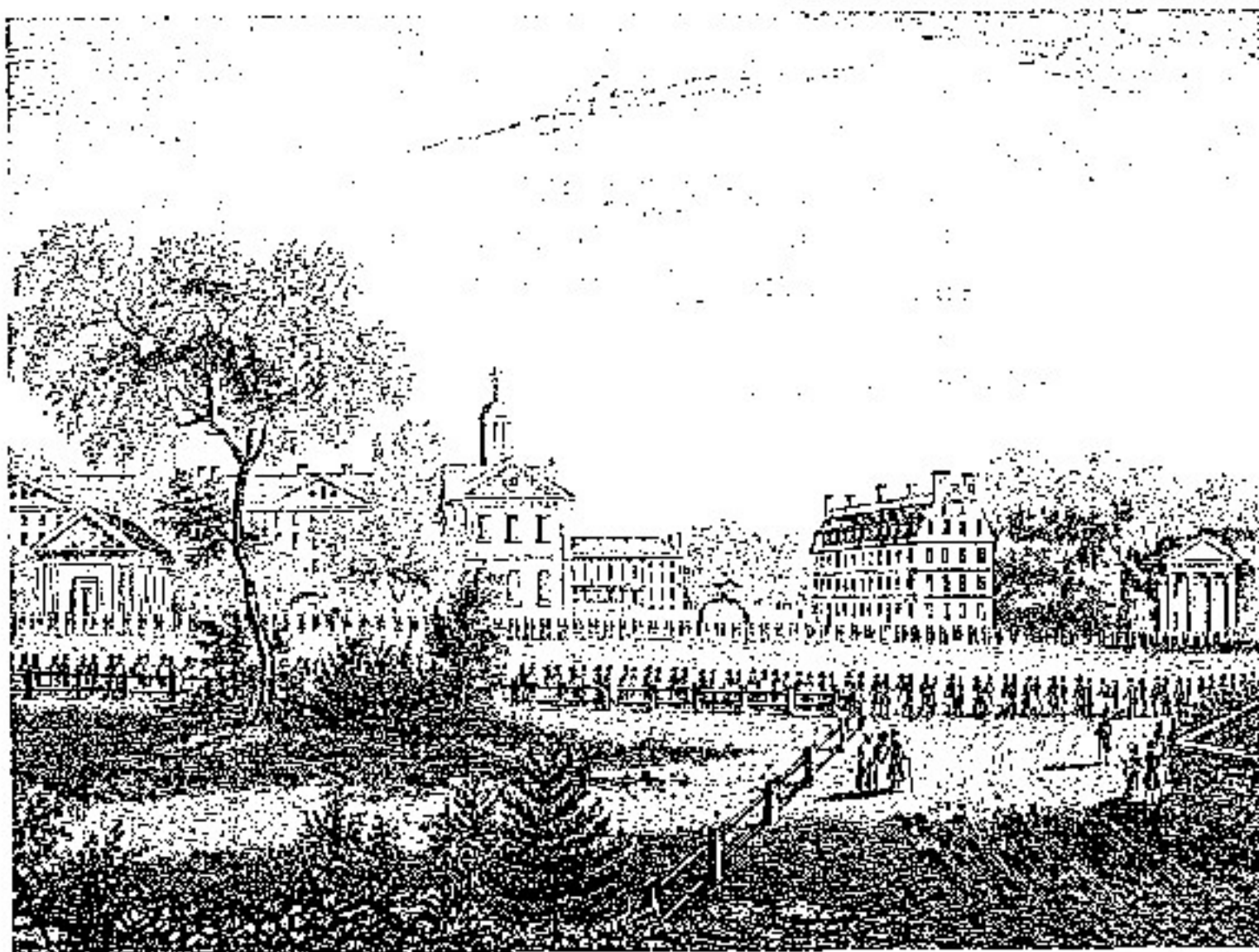
position by referring to northern hypocrisy. For example, one sunny Saturday afternoon Clark and his northern friend Nathaniel Chase '55 were discussing the consequences of slavery while they were walking to Boston. Just as Chase insisted that slavery produced ignorance among poor people, they passed a tree nursery where Clark saw a sign reading "Pair Trees for Sale." He pointed the sign out to Chase, who quickly dropped the argument. On another occasion, Chase claimed that slavery produced cruel and degrading distinctions in social classes. "My dear fellow," exclaimed Clark, "such distinctions exist far more in Boston than in the South. With us a poor young man takes his social rank from his merit, whilst a negro is always an inferior because of his race. You needn't reply, but I venture to say that you have classmates from whose houses you are excluded solely from social considerations, though you are a gentleman and a scholar, as well as of blameless life."³² According to Clark's account, Chase looked down and said nothing.

Sectional hostility there was, but no personal animosity. Clark remembered fondly vacations spent with his northern classmates. One of his most pleasant experiences was "spending Thanksgiving week with dear old Riddle [James Riddle '55], at his house in Manchester, New Hampshire." The weather was unbearably cold, but "what cared youth for the thermometer when there are blazing fires and unrestricted hospitality in the house, and big sleighs full of lovely girls on the outside"³³ Clark spent another Thanksgiving with three college friends in Cohasset, Massachusetts.

Clark, like all Harvard men, began and ended his college years with a rite of passage. On the first Monday of the first term the annual football contest between the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes began. Two classes lined up on opposite sides of an open field (located where Harvard's memorial to the northern Civil War dead stands today) and attacked each other in a semi-organized free-for-all. At the end of the game, all the contestants gathered together and sang "Auld Lang Syne." "We freshman," commented southerner Samuel Parkman '57, "put up the biggest kind of a fight and we had the gamiest little fellow you ever saw. He is from Boston — pretty and nice-looking as anybody's sister — but Great Scot there wasn't a fellow on the other side too big for him to tackle." The two

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*



Harvard University Archives

Harvard Yard at the time of the 1836 Commencement procession
From Josiah Quincy, *The History of Harvard University* (1840)

classmates, close friends in college, fought in opposing armies during the battle of Sharpsburg, where Parkman was killed.³⁴

Clark's final day at Harvard began at eight forty-five in the morning on 16 June 1855. The graduating seniors gathered in front of Holyworthy Hall and proceeded to the residence of the College president, where they breakfasted and met members of the faculty. Graduation exercises began at eleven o'clock in the chapel. The routine ended in a wild dance around the Great Elm, all members of the Class joining hands in a last gesture of unity.

After graduation Clark returned to Jackson, Mississippi, and studied law in his brother Robert's office, secured his license to practice,

³⁴ Clarence Gordon, "In the Fifties," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* (September 1906), 42. There is a discrepancy between Gordon's account of Parkman's death and the *Class Report* published in 1882. Gordon claims Parkman died at Gettysburg, while the *Class Report* names Sharpsburg as the site of his death. I have used the *Class Report* since Gordon's article was written more than forty years after the war.

BALLOU'S PICTORIAL



H. M. BALLOU, PUBLISHER, 207 N. STATE ST., BOSTON.

BOSTON, SATURDAY, JULY 3, 1858.

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CLASS DAY, HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

The sketch on this page is from the pencil of Mr. Hazen, who has frequently illustrated local subjects in our columns with great spirit, and represents one of the time-honored customs of class day at Harvard—that of *skating* round the town in the college, a token of fraternity and fellowship among those who are so soon to part, to pursue different paths through life, and who never expect all to be realized in this world. The class day exercises are all interesting, for it is a student festival. The orator and poet are chosen by the retiring class, and sometimes the selection indicates a preference not shared by the heads of the college. The Faculty are invited and attend the literary exercises of the day, which are followed by a collection and by the dancing on the green which we describe hereafter. There is something deeply interesting in these festivals, to the spectators. An agent of every way towards respect, whether exhibited in a regiment of soldiers or a class of students, and nowhere is it more conspicuous than among the undergraduates of a college. It is not (indeed) least interesting, but those who possess higher studies in company always stand shoulder to shoulder like a band of brothers. In the classic studies of the university they grow from the thousand of youths less well developed gradually—from childish sports and time to the passions and purposes which stamp the character with individuality. Though not losing the merrill life which is born to the student character of the college, yet in Cambridge the young men are sufficiently tutored from the world at large to make their mutual dependence a bond of great power. Their politics and quarrels are in common, and they are bound together by a

common interest. Those were youths and students which would multiply and the pattern of form and feature in the great halls of life together, do not yet come into play; the reason for academic honors being always conducted in a spirit of generous rivalry, and rarely producing those heart burnings which the life and death war of the world excites. And in proportion as the ties that unite the students grow strong, so is the effort requisite to sever them. Yet in the exercise of their parting we are called to admit the high privilege of youth. It is hard indeed to sever the bond of long association, but it is done as a thing when boys in most brilliant, and sometimes in the future most honored men see the imagination holds phantasies and allegories in the future that no other age can ever create for the delusion or an encouragement. Gaily, therefore, as well as tenderly and kindly, hearts are shaken for the last time, and the pilgrim part, to quote such an illustrious instance, with the first year and United. The attachment of every student to his Alma mater, as well as to his comrades, is deep, but no imitation can well find in any mind it, in this country, at the University of Cambridge, the most venerable seat of learning in this side of the Atlantic, and illustrated by the associations and memories of a long chain of years. The classical city, too, has many impressive passages. In sight of the college is the church where Washington was baptized, and the site beneath which he first drew his sword in the service of his country, and farther to the north old mansion where he was established with his military family, and where one of our most charming poets saw market his hours. There are many other spots hallowed by patriotic associations, and along the banks

of the darkest Church are many scenes of exalted beauty it would be difficult to parallel. Though to view the metropolis of New England, a tranquilly hazy one Cambridge—and the very air seems to invite to reflection and study. Edward Everett, in his inaugural address as president of the university, says that it "is probably the oldest establishment for secular education in the western continent. Its foundation was a part, very early extended, of the great work of transferring the civilization of the English Normans to the new found hemisphere—a work in which the first settlers of New England bore an large share. They brought with them those forms of municipal organization in which so much of the pathology of our present republican life dwells; the idea of representative government further developed than in the mother country; the general system of English jurisprudence, and especially its two characteristic features, the trial by jury and the jury, those peculiar principles of the law, which, at the time of their adoption, were struggling towards the mastery in the state, which was soon after won and lost. With these institutions and principles,—beyond comparison of their value,—the civil and religious fathers of New England brought with them an affectionate attachment to their native land, and especially the University of Cambridge at which so many of them had been reared. They found the first opportunity to make themselves, in the home of their pilgrims, for the education of their children in this model of a school and they finally gave the name of Cambridge to this spot which they had chosen for their infant academy." The foundation they secured was named after the first governor benefactor of the university.



CLASS DAY, AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

Harvard University Archives

Class Day at Harvard
After a drawing by Winslow Homer in *Ballou's Pictorial*, 3 July 1858

and began to work "for the deluded souls who confided their business to me." This brief experience led Clark to conclude that he wanted to return to the Harvard Law School. Before beginning school, he went to Europe for an extended vacation. He was in Paris when he received word that the South had seceded from the Union. "I had been an American only," he wrote, "and as such was treated with respect and honor accorded to no other. My eyes had seen the great banner of the Stars and Stripes in foreign harbors, seen it with glistening eyes and beating heart. But now the Union was no more . . . I dropped my head on the table and wept."³⁵ A classmate of Clark's remembered meeting him in Paris, "when he was still wavering" about what to do.³⁶ After months of intense thought, Clark concluded that he had to "go with my people. He wrote his brother Robert and informed him that after a brief visit to Rome he would return home and fight."³⁷

Clark's ship from Europe arrived in Boston in May 1861. The city was full of blue-coated soldiers, who appeared to him like "innocent lambs to be slaughtered."³⁸ He stayed with his classmate John Tilston at his Boston home. During this time, Clark became good friends with Colonel Fessenden whose son John was attending the Lawrence Scientific School at Harvard. After several weeks of relaxation and discussion, Clark left Boston for Jackson, where he joined the 18th Mississippi Infantry as a first lieutenant.

In the four years of fighting, 20 percent of the 34 southern students from the Classes of 1855 through 1861 who fought were killed in active combat, compared to 15 percent of their northerner classmates. Several southerners were wounded, and eight, including Clark, spent time in northern prison camps.³⁹ Although classmates fought on opposite sides, the ties forged by the years at Harvard College tran-

³⁵ James Benjamin Clark to Edwin Hale Abbott (note 6).

³⁶ *The Report of the Secretary of the Class of 1855, of Harvard College July 1855 to July 1865* (Boston, 1865), p. 21.

³⁷ Virginia-born Benjamin Jones '58 also experienced mixed feelings about his loyalty. He was "opposed to the late war, & had no part or parcel in it whatever." This did not stop the Federal Army from taking over all of his personal property during the war. *Class Book*, 1858, p. 764.

³⁸ James Benjamin Clark to Edwin Hale Abbott (note 6).

³⁹ Northern figures calculated from Francis H. Brown, *Harvard University in the War of 1861-1865* (Boston, 1886). Southern dead: Charles Elgee '56, John Alston '57, Henry De Saulles '57, Samuel Parkman '57, Thomas Jones '60, Charles Pringle '60, Benjamin Skinner

scended the bitterness of civil war. In several cases Harvard men went out of their way to secure classmates' well-being.⁴⁰ When Clark was a prisoner on Johnson's Island, classmates Joseph Hays and John Tileston sent him food and money. Colonel Fessenden even secured his release.⁴¹

After the war, Clark returned to his home in Jackson penniless and defeated. An old friend of the family invited Clark to share his law office and use his books. Although Clark developed a reputation as an intelligent and successful lawyer, he chose to leave Jackson after two years when it "seemed evident that the State was going into the hands of the carpetbaggers and the negroes." Disgusted with local politics, he moved to Kentucky, where he married Florence Anderson in 1869. For five years he edited a newspaper in Harrodsburg, Kentucky, "with some profit and much pleasure."⁴² He ended his career in Texas, where initially he practiced law and later served as proctor and custodian general of the newly formed University of Texas.⁴³ He died in 1908 of a heart attack while attending an address in the university auditorium in Austin, Texas. The University of Texas Class of 1909 held a memorial service and donated a commemorative

'60; wounded: George Weissinger '56, James May '58, Lane Brandon '60, Christopher Memminger '61, Lesley Waggener '61; prisoners: James Clark '55, Charles Elgee '56, William Lee '58, Robert Memminger '59, Thomas Jones '60, William Magenis '60, William Schley '60, Benjamin Skinner '60.

⁴⁰ Thomas Jones '60 and Benjamin Skinner '60 were aided when they were prisoners by Captain William Tappan '60, of the Forty-fifth Massachusetts Volunteers; see *Harvard College Report of the Class of 1860, 1860-1880* (New York, 1880), pp. 82-83. Lane Brandon '60 spoke with a classmate on the field of battle; see Captain Lane Brandon to Judge Josiah Gardiner Abbott, *Harvard Bulletin*, 24 February 1909, Harvard University Archives. Charles Macbeth '57 and John Alston '57 exchanged warm letters with Joseph Lewis Stackpole '57; see *Report of the Class of 1857 in Harvard College, Prepared for the Twenty-fifth Anniversary of its Graduation*, pp. 5-6, 179. Colonel Clinton Cilley '59 retrieved books stolen from the library of his southern classmate George Collins; see *Class Book, 1858*, Harvard University Archives.

⁴¹ James Benjamin Clark to Edwin Hale Abbott (note 6).

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ As proctor he was "librarian, disbursed all moneys, made all purchases, kept the books, was custodian of all university property, secretary of the faculty and of the board of regents, answered all letters of inquiry about the university, superintended the campus, and was general disciplinarian." James Clark to James Mitchell, 21 March 1901, Secretary's File, Class of 1855, Harvard University Archives. For additional information on Clark's career at Texas, see his general file at the Eugene C. Barker Texas History Center, University of Texas at Austin.

window to the campus chapel.⁴⁴ He was as popular on the Texas campus as he had been at Harvard.

Clark's career was echoed by many of his fellow southern classmates. The majority of southern-born graduates returned to the South for their careers. Almost all lived in their native states. Most practiced law, as did their northern classmates, several even becoming judges or professors in their local universities. Three served in the U.S. Congress, occasionally meeting after work to reminisce about their college days.⁴⁵

Their memories were probably pleasant. To be sure, southern students had a more difficult time at Harvard than did northern students; but for those who succeeded at Harvard, the social clubs, informal eating groups — the very regimentation of student life in and out of the classroom — created personal bonds that transcended sectional animosities. Even in 1866, Confederate veteran William Perry '59 could write that "in spite of the long and bloody war which has separated us and our sections, I still have pleasant recollections of my college days & my Alma Mater." Despite their defeat on the battle field, the southerners were "disposed to forget as much as possible . . . and live in harmony for the future."⁴⁶

⁴⁴ "The Presentation of the James B. Clark Memorial Window, By the Class of 1909 to the University of Texas, May 19, 1909," Secretary's File, Class of 1855, Harvard University Archives.

⁴⁵ The congressmen were Carleton Hunt '56, William Lee '58, and William Perry '59. For additional information about their informal gatherings, see Samuel Pasco, *Memorial Address on the Life and Character of Gen. William Henry Fitzbugh Lee* (Washington, 1892), pp. 2-5.

⁴⁶ William Perry to Class Secretary, 24 June 1866, Class Book, 1859, Harvard University Archives.

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