

ips or wooden blocks. On these nights came the disputant with library (?) under arm, a vast "History of the World" in one volume. It is indeed complimentary to the township genius of that time to notice here that this library was well thumbed. Its leaves had evidently been turned by the use of spittal. The stain from toiling hands seemed to indicate that it had not only been marked, but stubbornly read, for "pointers." The debate was mainly noise spiced with sauce. Issues were determined or rather fixed by what ever over-production of racket might ensue in behalf of the "Affirmative" or "Negative." Taunting personalities as generally considered were to reason and fact as Alderney cream is to Alderney "skimmed." It was the richness of spunk that was all admirable and these taunts were the delight of the night and the relish of the week. The "Sir" of Burke and Webster was used with campmeeting emphasis to fill words I believe as certainly as to loop a rumpled brawl to the line of dignity. He who owned the heaviest fist, the deepest lungs, the sharpest tongue was esteemed as "scienced" in oratory. We, boys, what of us? Our great shoes incited the disputants on and on to frenzied declaim by making the floor ring. It was all nuts to us. While incidentally some knowledge was diffused a thoughtful youth here or there daring to tremble forth a fact or truism was ever meet by a rebluff that dwarfed ambitions entitled to encouragement and tender treatment. Thus I remember these old debates in the sadness with which people of my age are ever recalling lost opportunities. What little in the way of fact, truth or oratory the boys had garnered from geography, or the pages of the "English Reader" or what graces of fancy or romance they had absorbed from "Jack Halyard" were somehow recalled to boyish memories by these debates. Thoughtful youths saw plenty of room for reply, comment, proposition even through the feeble lens of the little they knew, through the small circle of budding inspiration. But the opportunity that confronted them was

much too Spartan. The old debate had all that was harsh of spartanism without its motive, strength, skill and its modicum of adjustment to conditions. So that if there ever was a time in which we boys were contended to rejoice that "silence is golden" it was during these nights of far off days, in the wee school house, with its play ground surrounded by banks thick with boys, sand mills and traced with girls' play houses. Will you permit me, Messrs. Editors, to ask just here, why has it ever been that girls played house-keeping and the boys ran saw mills? Is this suggestive as against this or in favor that teaching certain rights which are discussed to-day? We of Chester county are largely of opinion that the intelligence of woman is needed as a factor in the promotion of wise laws and good government. I could not help saying this "right-out" notwithstanding good men, and women too, will disagree with the saying.

In the English of a French phrase, esteemed sufficiently elegant to be popular, "return we to our mutton." The young men and women who read the FREE LANCE know, perhaps more generally than I, of modern literary societies, the lyceums of their time. It is noticeable to us all that the "Sir" of old time oratory is now but little used. The empty, puzzling question is fading away. The speech spun to thinness more dreary. Subjects such as "Which has the more right to complain the Indian or African," "Pursuit or Possession," "Town or County," "Knowledge or Riches" long and boisterously fought over are at last nearly extinct, while in their stead we find a selection made with more design as to profitable research and conclusions. There is now more ease and refinement of expression, better argument because in part of better preparation and resources. There may be some awkward attempts as yet, some inaccurate statements, some unwise antagonism, but there seems at present more pride in a strength that courteously accepts correction. Thus the disputes becomes more learned, attractive, chivalric. Indeed