

## On Losing One's Illusions

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Everyone has probably lost an illusion at least once before he leaves college, and it is probable that college itself is a major cause of disillusionment. Take the case of the brilliant English student who graduates from high school with nothing lower than an A on his written work. Small wonder, though; anyone who cannot write an adequate paper on "My Favorite Sport" or "The Best Movie I Have Ever Seen" must be a first class moron. Nevertheless, the would be genius thinks to himself, "College will be a cinch."

His first disillusionment comes during the first week of school, when his English professor, with a wicked gleam in her eyes, announces the topic for theme number one: "Why Reading Shakespeare is Preferable to All Other Forms of Recreation." "But is it?" the student wonders, as he sits waiting for inspiration to come or possibly praying for a bolt of lightning to strike him dead before the papers are collected.

"History should be easy, though," he decides; "I'll bet no one else in the class will be able to recite Lincoln's 'Gettysburg Address' from memory." Poor fellow, he'll never know. Assignment for tomorrow,' says the professor: "I want a fifty page discussion on why an autocratic form of government is preferable to a democracy." "It's not," the student decides and dismisses the professor as a radical.

Chemistry comes next. "Problem number one: discuss the relationship existing between auric oxide and the combustibility of a combination  $H_2SO_4$  and any unknown solution." Oh, for the good old days of heating soda water over a Bunsen burner!

Nothing is left now but gym, and the student approaches the Fieldhouse with a sinking heart. The instructor looks like the "after taking" part of a vitamin advertisement. "Just a few simple exercises at first," he says with a fiendish grin.

"Very simple," the student agrees, "like picking yourself up by the neck and holding yourself at arm's length." As the instructor demonstrates the exercise, the student begins to wonder how a contortionist happened to be teaching school.

Social life is probably his major disillusionment. He had heard all about it from big brother and sister: a dance every weekend, with lots of parties in between, augmented by a generous amount of picnics and hayrides. But by the time he has finished his history paper, his chemistry problems, his English essay, and his French translation, he is too tired and discouraged for anything but bed. He wonders wearily how college students find time for all the recreation he had heard about, and which he had always had time for in the good old days, B.C. (Before College). Like Petruchio, he asks himself, "Where is the life that late I led?"

But a lost illusion is not always disillusionment. After a few weeks he begins to lose his scared-rabbit attitude, and he realizes that his professors are interested in him as an individual and not just as "the queer person who sits in the front row and bites his fingernails." He discovers, too, that most of them have a sense of humor, contrary to his first impression of college professors. And gradually he finds time for a minimum of social life, on the assumption that all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy. So out of the chaos in his frustrated mind finally comes order, and he discovers that even the dark cloud of studying can have a silver lining of pure fun.