

# The Elon College Weekly

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And Elon College, N. C.

## Great Things Have Little Beginnings.

[An oration delivered by Joseph Pleasant Farmer at the Clio Entertainment, February 22, 1910.]

Great things have insignificant settings. There were no flags of pomp and power to wave a glorious farewell to the Genesee sailors as they sailed from the Spanish port of Palos, nor were there shouting and glorying when they set foot on West India soil. The Plymouth Colony, few in number, landed on the silent coast of New England, and the Pilgrims settled with prayer and humble song. And there had been no settlement but for the Indian's corn. All great discoveries have been made when the world was not expecting them and when there was silence. The beginnings have been devoid of show and pomp of power. Every great achievement, every great movement and every great life has had its beginnings in the little things. The little fountain gushes softly and silently from the side of the high mountain, but its waters roar in the valleys below. The little acorn grows into the oak and makes a desert place a beautiful habitation.

The little deeds of yesterday and the day before, to-day fall lightly upon the ocean of time, but their waves of influence encircle the act and spread out, and out for ever. The little habits of last year and the year before are small and insignificant but they are the stones which build the structure of character. Sir Walter Raleigh threw his cloak across the muddy path, that the Queen might pass over with shoes unsoiled and this was the beginning of his favor with Elizabeth and of his immortal knight-hood.

The simple things, the little things, the common place things have made and continue to make the great men of History and of enduring honor. No individual can attribute his success to any great circumstance in his life. He cannot think of one wonderful thing that transformed his life and made his fame all at once. He will recall only the little things and will find that out of these grew his present state.

Demosthenes' fame was not begotten when he delivered that matchless oration on the crown, but when he stood by the seashore and spoke with pebbles in his mouth. Cicero's name had its beginning not in the orations against Catiline, but when he followed his teacher day after day and spoke after him. Webster plead with his brother for the life of a bird, and there began his fame as an orator and statesman. Lincoln lay upon the hearth at night after he had spent the day splitting rails and read, by torch light, the books which were his hidden path to the presidency of the United States.

Small beginnings, these! Shall we wait for great things to turn up and make us great in the twinkling of an eye? We have heard of old that fortune knocks once at the door of every man's life, and so it does; but it knocks more than once — it knocks hour after hour, day after

day, and year after year. And the boys and the girls, and the young men and the young women of this land are entertaining now this knocking guest, whom through life they must needs bear company. The beginnings must be small and the acts very unimportant, but so has been the life's setting of all the great and good.

Not only great lives but great movements of every kind have had small beginnings. The great Student bounteer movement which is spreading over the country and which is meaning so much to the spirit of missions in our own land and for the aid of those across the seas, was started a few years ago when six men met in a prayer meeting behind a stack of hay. The nailing of a few doctrines to the door of a university in Germany was a little affair to Martin Luther, but it meant the revolutionizing of the world in the form of Reformation. When Cranmer and Latimer were burned at the stake it was a common scene, but that fire kindled a great conflagration which, after these many years, has swept across every sea. The night was no brighter than other nights, the stars sang not more happily nor did the moon shine in gentler luster, when over the Judean hills three wise men sought a savior. He lived like other children, going to church and to school as they did, toiling as they toiled. Simple beginnings! But how grand the end; the fisherman fished on the Gallilean sea and sang their familiar songs, as they drew the net, a simple training it was to be fish as of men.

No wonder we read; "Out of weakness comes strength." The Shepherd David as he watched his father's sheep threw rocks at the surrounding objects and played leisurely upon his harp. Later the little stone won a great battle and overcame a great nation. Later the harp was played before kings and princes; and later the Shepherd boy was crowned a king. Grand temples are built of small stones and great lives are made up of trifling events. There are many strokes of the artist's brush which we think worthless, but these complete the picture. There are many taps of the sculptor's mallet which are to us meaningless, but just these touches finish the work.

The great Napoleon was a master of the little things. No details were too trivial for his utmost care and study. His marches were perfectly planned and his battles orderly manipulated, and so came his victories and his name foremost amongst the great military geniuses. "Little things give victory." "Trifles," says Michael Angelo, "make perfection, but perfection is no trifle."

And Charles Dickens upon being asked what a genius replied that he was "a being who paid attention to little things."

So is life, and so is achievement, based upon little things. It seems a law of greatness that it be placed on a foundation of trivial affairs. How far the simple deeds of life throw their light we cannot divine, and when we take an inventory of our past and present we think it vain and empty. Yet the greatest lives of all ages

and of all times have been made up of trifles. "Emergencies and great things occur rarely in our lives. It is the steady strain of little things, trifles, unimportant events, experiences so small as to leave scarcely a trace behind, which make up the sum total of life.

The massive gates of circumstance are turned upon the smallest hinge; And thus some seeming prettiest chance Oft gives our life its after tinge. The trifles of our daily lives, The common things scarce worth recall, whereof no visible trace survives, These are the mainsprings, after all.

## LOCALS AND PERSONALS.

Mr. Joe Pointer left Friday for his home at Semora.

Miss Blondie Kernodle spent Sunday at her home at Ossipee.

Mr. C. J. Kee, of Mebane, spent Sunday here with his family.

Mrs. Robinson, from Boston, is visiting her sister, Mrs. Alma Wilson.

Miss Beulah Foster spent Saturday and Sunday at her home in Burlington.

Mrs. S. E. Jones, of Suffolk, Va., is visiting her daughter, Miss Ruth Jones.

Miss Narvie Hobby, from Raleigh, is visiting her sister, Mrs. Moses Atkinson.

Misses Lila Newman and Mabel Yarbrough went to Burlington Saturday shopping.

Miss Lillian Aldridge led in Y. W. C. A. Sunday afternoon, subject, "Power of Purpose."

Mrs. Willis Lee, from near Norfolk, Va., spent last week here with Mrs. J. O. Atkinson.

Miss Bessie and Mr. Marvin McPherson spent Sunday at their brother's at Haw River.

Mr. E. L. Daughtry led in Y. M. C. A. Saturday evening, using as a subject "Right Living."

Rev. W. C. Wicker preached at Whitsett Sunday afternoon in the Reformed church.

Mr. W. E. Lowe, traveling railroad auditor in West Virginia, spent Sunday with his family.

Dr. G. S. Watson left the latter part of the week to visit his daughter, Miss Ellen, at Tryon, N. C.

Mr. Henry Barnes spent last week in Eastern North Carolina in the interest of The Barnes Safe Company.

Dr. J. O. Atkinson left Saturday afternoon for Chapel Hill. He held services on Sunday at Damascus.

Miss Lola Patton, accompanied by Miss Clea Wagner, spent Saturday and Sunday at her home near Mebane.

Misses Hattie Ashburn and Affie Griffin spent Saturday night and Sunday at the home of Mrs. E. P. McClure in Graham.

Miss Knight, of Greensboro, spent

Saturday here visiting Lida Pierce. She purposes to return soon to take the teacher's course.

Mr. S. M. Patton, class of 1909, visited friends here Sunday and Monday. He has just closed a successful year of teaching in Florida.

Rev. J. D. Andrew, pastor of the Reformed church in Burlington, filled the pulpit here Sunday. He preached a highly pleasing and practical sermon.

Misses Hattie Ashburn, Lillian Aldridge and Pattie Preston spent Friday night and Saturday with Miss Pearl Fogleman at her home in Burlington.

Mr. J. C. Stuart was a leader of a very interesting, inspiring meeting in Christian Endeavor Sunday evening, subject, "Good cheer in dark days."

Quite a number of delegates are expected to attend the Christian Endeavor Convention in High Point, which is to be held the 22nd, 23rd and 24th of April.

The first baseball nine has just returned from their trip to the Western part of the State. They played six games, made a good showing and had a delightful time.

Mr. Mack Neese, of Bellemont, attended the Methodist Protestant Quarterly Conference at Mt. Hermon Saturday and Sunday where he received license to preach the gospel.

The following are the delegates elected by the Christian Endeavor Society here to go to the State C. E. Convention, which meets in High Point next Friday and continues through Sunday:

Mr. and Mrs. Scott, from Philadelphia, were pleasant visitors at the college last week. Old students will remember Mrs. Scott as Miss Sallie Albright, who for a number of years with her sister, was a student. Mrs. Scott was greatly pleased with the growth and development of Elon College.

Those who deserved special mention in the Pspipheian Society Friday evening were Miss Viola Frazier, "My Life's Work." Miss Ruby Satterfield, "Condition of Southern Maintainers." Miss Maggie Isley, "The American Women as discussed by several writers."

Prof. J. T. Cobb, Messrs. W. W. Elder, E. T. Hines, W. F. Warren, C. J. Felton, B. J. Earp, J. C. Stuart, D. S. Scott, R. A. Truitt, H. E. Truitt, J. W. Short, J. F. Morgan, E. L. Daughtry. Misses Hattie Ashburn, Pearl Tuck, Affie Griffin, Bessie McPherson, Cora Lawrence, Lucy Gregory and Nellie Bryan.

In the Philologist Society last Friday evening, the best speaker oratorically was Mr. J. F. Morgan. Debate, Query, Resolved. "That the Republican party is responsible for the present high cost of living." Best speaker on the affirmative, Mr. Arnold Hall. Best speaker on the negative, Mr. E. T. Hines. Question won by the affirmative.

Affie Griffin.