

HIGH SCHOOL PUBLIC SPEAKING

In the first year of High School our teachers felt that all all students should be able to think and talk on their feet. To give us practice in doing so; we were encouraged to form a debating society.

We met in the evening once a week in the High School auditorium. We had officers, rules of order and exercises in parliamentary procedure. Some read written compositions, but mostly we were urged towards free speech. Topics were drawn by lot. Five minutes to think and two minutes to talk.

I drew each slip with the breathless hope that it would be blank. We must have offered strange, stuttered, hesitant comments on the topics assigned. Stage fright made most of us tongue-tied.

The debates, however, went better. We had a chance to prepare our subjects and a great desire to win for our side.

We settled many vital matters, I am sure--but the subject which remains most prominent in my mind and on which I worked the hardest, was: "Which is the most useful: the cow or the horse?"

There were three in each team. We fought long and hard. We drew from history and literature. We interviewed farmers and merchants. We made it a matter of life and death; the world could not survive without our particular animal.

Finally after long deliberation the judges reached a decision. My side lost! Was it the horse or the cow? I don't remember---