

THE PRESENT-DAY COLLEGE

J. A. REED

A PESSIMISTIC view of college education, shared alike by the college itself, by such thoughtful parents as are sufficiently interested to inspect and form an unbiased estimate of the results of college education, and even by the boys themselves prior to attaining the rank of upperclassmen, is generally conceded throughout the country to-day. An intelligent public is awakening to the fact that our higher educational institutions are not fulfilling the hopes of their founders and supporters, and are not meeting the needs of the nation.

HOW THE COLLEGE ESTIMATES ITSELF

The college's estimate of itself is clearly revealed in an extraordinary series of criticisms which have seemed worthy of indorsement by the press, and have been printed over the signatures of college faculty members.

Among these we might mention President Wilson's remark on "side shows"; the newspaper sympathy for one who was trying to make an educational institution out of Princeton, followed promptly by the President's declaration that he did not wish to be president of a Country Club whatever position he might appear to be occupying; President Hall's anxiety for the student who for four years was exposed to the contagion of a college education; and worst of all, the remark of an official, in one of our most reputable colleges, to the disappointed father of one of its students, "You did not think you were choosing an educational institution, did you?"

THE LAYMAN'S ESTIMATE

The same class of expressions can be found among laymen. One keen observer writes, "A college is a factory for turning raw material into case-hardened athletes, kid-finished society leaders . . . Its work is marvellous. It can take an eighteen year old youth with premature trousers, hay-stack hair, . . . and in four years can work him over into a calm-eyed football

champion." Another enumerates the subjects offered in the modern curriculum as follows: How to keep a dance programme straight; Eating in all its branches; How to live on credit; Frat. House construction; The Science of making the hair stand up straight; etc.

The "Uncooked Beefsteak" stories, to one familiar with the institutions of New York and New Jersey, offer much of truth, and comparatively little fiction.

THE STUDENT'S ESTIMATE

But the sting of mature criticism is as nothing compared with the biting sarcasm of student censure. No keener and no juster estimate of our higher educational system is to be found than that which is placed upon it by students, who for four years have been subjected to the supervision and tutelage of would-be educators; educators who too often trifle with characters and futures, experiment in the dark, and allow their charges to fritter away their richest inheritance—youth.

SCIENTIFIC STUDY DEMANDED

Recognition of these unsatisfactory conditions warns us that the time is ripe for a scientific study of higher education. It is time for the public to know where our colleges are failing, and why, and to demand such reorganization as will force each institution to justify its existence by the success of its methods, or admit its failures and retire from business. It is time for the public purse strings to refuse to respond to demands which are making so inadequate a return.

It makes no difference how often the individual college may have won at athletics, how many fraternity chapters it may have established, how much dramatic or musical recognition it may have received. The age of the college, the number and respectability of the alumni, the actual numerical grades, the number of Phi Beta Kappas, are all secondary to the one important question—has each individual student received an adequate return on his financial investment, and more than that, on the four best years of his young manhood?

THE OBJECT OF THE COLLEGE COURSE

Consensus of opinion would declare that the natural results of a college course should be good judgment and a disciplined mind. That the college man should be able to think more accurately, investigate more thoroughly, decide more impartially, take a broader view, and reason more logically than the non-college man.

But does the college accomplish this object? Does it send out into the world men who are abler in intellect, purer in heart, stronger in right living and right thinking as a result of its four years of influence? Sometimes it does, but too often it does not. No one has yet computed the percentage of college failures based upon such a standard, but from estimates furnished by a large number of faculty men it would seem that at least fifty per cent. of the financial investment, and of youth, is wasted. During their college course thousands of young men are fitted or unfitted to solve efficiently the problems of the future. These problems will be more difficult and more complex than ours. It is our duty so to prepare our boys to meet this great responsibility that the future of our country may be safe in their hands.

Looked at from this point of view, higher education is one of the most important business undertakings of the day. Knowledge of its successes and failures is pre-requisite to increased efficiency.

CAUSES OF FAILURE

Several causes appear to be of more influence than others. First among these one may note that the colleges are receiving too many boys who should never have gone to college at all. This is due largely to two errors: (1) improper motives for attending college, and (2) the character of entrance requirements.

A large number of young men have been interviewed as to their motives for attending college. Some had no excuse to offer at all, and did not even pretend to have any motive. Some had parents who were college graduates, and, as loyal sons, desired their children to share in the benefits of their alma mater; parents of others had not had college advantages, and were anxious to give their sons the opportunities which they had missed. Some

were influenced by fraternity friends who had painted college life in rainbow colors and pledged a merry time; others were not backward in admitting that "Dad had the dough" and was willing to give them a good time before the serious duties of life began. This latter type is eagerly sought by the fraternities, while the question of what to do with the rich man's son is seriously disturbing some of our older New England colleges. Faculties of these institutions frankly admit that they are not drawing their share of scholarship material, that honors go to the poor, non-fraternity man, but that as private institutions they must encourage the coming of the rich as their very existence depends upon the contributions of this class of alumni. Sometimes athletics, or glee club, or dramatics, was cited as the great attraction; or, again, that it was customary for boys from the "best families" to go to college. It is marvellous how these words "best boys" and "best families" seem to predominate in the college dictionary; marvellous, in this democratic country, how many parents grow weak-kneed and even bow to the ground, when confronted with the fact that "all the best families allow it."

These, and many other motives of their kind, are in direct opposition to our recognized object of the college course. Less than five per cent. of the entire number interviewed were attending college for the love of learning, and these were mostly men of mature years and little money. It is a severe indictment of American standards that so large a percentage of boys from "our best families," aged eighteen to twenty years, graduates of our secondary schools, enter upon any enterprise with no definite, serious, carefully considered motive. There is a sad lack somewhere, and the responsibility must be shared alike by the school which gives, and the college which takes.

As to entrance requirements, neither the examination nor the certification system has proved satisfactory. The former permits too many students to enter below requirements, and the latter lacks uniformity in standards to such an extent that the same grade of work may be estimated at from 75 per cent. to 90 per cent. Neither has a combination of the two systems been satisfactory, and many educators are coming to believe that no satisfactory entrance system will be established until the motive

for attendance is recognized as the controlling factor in entrance requirements.

Colleges and preparatory schools could soon eradicate the evils of the present system by agreeing that none but college material should be certified or admitted to colleges.

Some experiments have already been made in this direction. In the entrance requirements for the Carnegie Technical Institute, in Pittsburgh, 50 per cent. is based upon a personal interview in which the motive is the main feature. About 20 per cent. of the applicants are accepted. But, as is well known, Mr. Carnegie is a business man, he understands relative values, and his eye is constantly on the waste heap. He is looking for quality, not quantity, and in our average institution faculty, alumni, and trustees are all so bent on "enrollment" that it would be almost impossible to inaugurate such a system. The Columbia University Honor Plan is another experiment along the same lines, and Reed College, in Oregon, has made splendid promises as to its standards and policy. This latter institution has one great advantage—it is being organized in the full light of all the recent criticisms, and should be able to avoid the necessity of reorganization, as well as the difficulty of overcoming tradition. In many colleges half the battle would be won if only the alumni could be convinced.

A SECOND CAUSE OF FAILURE

The second cause of failure is to be found in the "diverting side shows." It has been claimed that the side issues in college life lead to vagrant habits, both physical and mental, and therefore furnish a second link in the chain which has been forged to defeat the true object of college education. The most attractive side shows are fraternity life, various forms of athletics, and dramatic and musical clubs. It is a well known fact, although not always visible to the untrained, naked eye, that these side shows usually begin long before a boy enters college, and that they become bewilderingly visible, both to the victim and to the spectator, the minute the freshman steps off the train in the town which shelters his would-be alma mater.

Fraternity stunts predominate in the first ring. The follow-

ing features offer grounds for criticism and reorganization—the rushing system, the social features of the club, and their moral and intellectual influence.

There is, in this country, a certain old college of excellent repute which has been accorded a position of superiority over all others in the advantage of its fraternity system. I had an opportunity to study this system in detail. After forming some independent opinions, I began to question the source of the various press reports which had been circulated so freely for a decade or more, and which had been generally believed by our gullible public. In every instance the material had been provided by loyal faculty, or alumni, and a pen and ink investigation was being accepted by the press as an accurate statement of fact.

The rules read well. Boys are met at the trains and given appointment cards by representatives of the various fraternities, no more than three boys from any one fraternity being allowed to meet any one train. A new boy is supposed to receive an invitation to visit each fraternity house, the issuance and acceptance of which leaves no obligation on either side. A second invitation from the same fraternity hints at a “bid,” which is later issued in a dignified manner by a senior, after he is sure that the boy has had perfect freedom to know all groups. The entire pledging is accomplished in two days, and then, as we read it, the subject is dropped and the whole college settles down to a period of brotherly love, no initiation being permitted until six weeks after pledging. The object of this rule is two-fold: (1) to give the boys a chance to concentrate their best efforts on study while they are adapting themselves to the college system, and (2) to allow mutual acquaintance before initiation.

So much for the rules. This is the way they work out. On Monday the boys begin to arrive. As the train slows down the whole delegation of cultured students, always representing the “best families,” enters into one wild scramble to make porters and lackeys of themselves for the stranger within their gates. Some of the new boys are fraternity wise and enter intending to play the game for all it is worth. They know when to trump, when to play the ace, and they know full well when they are playing the thirteenth card. Occasionally the entire fraternity dele-

gation is made to feel pretty small by some knowing freshman, but the majority of the boys are sufficiently unsophisticated to be torn asunder by the older and wiser men. Two days of wild scrambling and dishonorable wire pulling will result in the pledging of about ninety per cent. of the freshmen to *something*. Any boy who considers this too rapid a pace is frankly informed that the door of hope will close forever on a certain night, and that such golden opportunities and such flattering invitations will not pass his way a second time.

Next come the six weeks of brotherly love. The Pan-Hellenic world knows more than it cares to publish as to the actual happenings of this period. During one year one-tenth of all the boys who made these hasty pledges informed their prospective brothers that, had they known the other fraternities better, they would have made a different choice, and asked to be released. When a senior was asked if this were true he replied, "Yes, and another one-tenth have been asked to resign." It would appear to me far more creditable to carry on this six weeks of mutual acquaintance *before* the boys are pledged, rather than *after*.

You will scarcely wonder that I smile when I read, "And it is doubtful if there is another college where the fraternity conditions have been higher and where the fraternities have done better work." Then follows, "Most of the members of the faculty are members of some fraternity and thoroughly appreciate the power of the fraternities, and the good work they do." There is absolutely no doubt that the faculty does appreciate, and that other faculties have appreciated the power of the fraternities. This statement has in some instances been so near the truth that insurgent members of faculties have been known to joke freely as to the real power behind the throne.

It is so perfectly well known, and so candidly acknowledged among faculties that drinking, gambling, immoralities, idleness, and various forms of extravagance are encouraged in clubs and fraternities, that it is not necessary to debate the subject. Fraternity life is one round of gaiety from September to June. Some of it is harmless, except for the extravagance and neglect of duty, some is actually immoral.

That the intellectual life is subservient to the social is another

topic which it is unnecessary to debate. The national councils of most of the fraternities recognize this tendency and try hard to check it. Some of our very best articles urging higher scholarship standards and higher intellectual ideals are to be found in the fraternity magazines. Many times have I known local chapters to be "on the carpet" for registering so few scholars. So far as is possible chapters avoid this censure by occasionally initiating a junior or senior who has already made Phi Beta Kappa rank. It is a mere business exchange, a part of the commercial spirit which is dominating our college life. The fraternities found out long ago that it was easier and cheaper to secure ready made scholars than it was to manufacture them within the chapter, and many boys are willing to exchange the glory of the key for a fraternity membership.

So far as comparative fraternity scholarship is concerned, living as I have in so many sections of the country, I have come to the conclusion that western scholarship is producing a marked effect in relative positions, and here as elsewhere conflict may bring good results. Certain it is that the old line fraternities will need to initiate more brains and smaller cash accounts, or in the revolution which is bound to come the old "big four" will find themselves losing to the fraternities which have built up in the middle west. There was a time when Alpha Delta Phi and her close rivals spelled sure Phi Beta Kappa, but that time has passed into ancient history, and what it may spell in the years to come is largely guess work.

The alumni are responsible for much of this decline in standards; not that they are deliberately in error, but with many there exists a sort of blind confidence in the life that was, and an absolute failure to understand the changing conditions. Many of our aged collegians live on in complete ignorance of the fact that all that is left of the fraternity, as they knew it, is its memories, its ritual and its name. Just recently one has written thus: "A band of brothers, feeling a lively interest in the reputation of their chapter and in the character and conduct of its members, by their social gatherings, their literary exercises, and above all, by the watch and care of the older and wiser over the younger, less matured, and perhaps less studious members, they guard the

morals, correct the faults, stimulate the ambitions, cultivate the manners and the taste, elevate the scholarship—in a word, form the character and fashion the life of the membership, and thus contribute no unimportant element to the decorum, order, scholarship and culture of the entire college.”

These are all splendid thoughts, all absolutely in harmony with the true fraternity ideal, but Young America, and the instructors of Young America, know perfectly well that the modern “goat meeting” hardly consists of literary exercises. Neither does it guard the morals and correct the faults of its members. It does try to keep its scholastic head far enough above sixty per cent. to prevent too many cases of “busted out,” and it usually corrects the manners to the extent of insisting that boys rise instantly when ladies enter the room, or that freshmen make duty calls after the president’s reception.

On the side of college politics a few words will suffice. So far as possible, and in small colleges it is always possible, the fraternities control all of the desirable student positions. Whether this, as well as some other elements of fraternity life, has any place in our State universities which are supported by public funds, is a question worthy of careful consideration.

I would not appear to be too pessimistic on the fraternity question. The real facts, as I see them, may be summarized as follows. At the present time the college fraternity does not bring unmixed good to the institution, nor does the membership receive the good that it should. On the other hand, whatever may be the atmosphere of any individual fraternity, there can be no doubt that the constitutions and rituals of all are based upon high ideals and that fundamental traditions call for radical improvement. The fraternity can be made, and should be made, a useful feature of college life.

The first reform should come in the pledging system. If only those who have proved their fitness by one full year of college work could be initiated, most of the evils of the rushing system, released pledges, and many scholarship evils would be overcome. Initiates would be more mature men with more settled principles and hence many of the social evils might be avoided.

The second reform should come in the home life. If the chapter house is to be used as a boarding house it is the duty of the alumni and faculty to co-operate in seeing that these college homes are properly supervised, and that parents are given some assurance that the atmosphere is clean and pure. There are indications that alumni members are slowly awakening to their duties and opportunities, and that the great need of a reform movement is being realized. Several fraternities are employing field secretaries and, although the system is crude and unsatisfactory at present, it may finally prove the best solution of this part of the problem.

Before the first six weeks of college life have ended, the second and third rings of the circus are in full operation and every boy in the institution is making a desperate effort to see all there is to the whole show. Athletics of various kinds, musical clubs, class banquets, and dramatics follow in rapid succession. In truth, the "diverting side-shows" form a veritable "Midway" all along the four-year line. It would be a long task to enumerate the various arguments pro and con each of these activities.

So far as athletics are concerned, the intelligent public is becoming weary of the interminable discussions over gate receipts, schedules, eligibility rules, and that class of press publicity which measures our educational institutions by the standards of the sporting page.

One of the most serious charges made against athletics is that our collegiate games have come to include an economic feature which is entirely foreign to educational ideals and which makes them, from beginning to end, purely commercial enterprises. To begin with, a certain class of men register for the sole and only purpose of majoring in athletics. Such men are placed in a separate class apart from their mates under the tutelage of trained experts. This costs money, and so do many other things incidental to training, travel and carrying out the schedule. Various schemes for meeting these expenses have been tried, but as yet I hear of no satisfactory plan. No matter what plan may be in vogue, it is now generally agreed that each institution should require an exact accounting for all money handled.

Again, the class of publicity which accompanies athletic con-

tests puts them among the public spectacles for which the public will pay. This means that successful advertising is an essential and legitimate concomitant of the college game. "Pink sheet" notoriety has proved such a useful way of advertising that some of our colleges value it more than any other form of publicity.

Finally, as a commercial enterprise athletics encourages moral evils such as gambling, idleness, financial extravagance, intemperance and profanity. In this connection the character of the coach is of the utmost importance. If he be a man of low moral ideals he must of a necessity draw the students to his own level.

A second criticism directed against athletics is that devotion to any form of college athletics is bound to encourage intellectual evils. Too often teams are not properly impressed with the fact that they represent their university, and that their university is an educational institution whose name and ideals must be maintained.

A third charge preferred against athletics has reference to the physical evils supposed to result from dangers and overstrain. These are matters of dispute and will probably continue to be so for some time, but of one thing we may be sure, that a very small percentage of the students receive any benefit from team work, and that certain forms of athletics have no permanent value as a means of recreation.

So far as the few who can take advantage of it are concerned, team play, under the proper conditions, is in perfect harmony with our definition of the object of the college course. It demands self-control, right living and obedience. It trains the judgment to quick, accurate decisions, cultivates the observation and increases power to detect, anticipate, interpret and thwart plans.

THE COLLEGE COACH

Before leaving the subject of athletics I desire to mention the character and the responsibility of the college coach. He is selected because of certain qualities which promise to make his work a success. He is paid according to his ability and frequently, after the president and the deans, or even without these exceptions, he is the best paid man on the faculty. His retention,

as well as his future promotion, depends entirely upon the success of his work.

The duties of the coach are perfectly definite, and are uniform throughout the country. He is required to size up the material of the college in toto and to register in his department men who are especially promising, not hesitating to refuse any man whose presence may be detrimental to recognized standards. Next it is his duty to discover latent qualities of either weakness or strength, and train to overcome or strengthen the same. The ultimate value of the training received will depend upon the character of the coach. If he be a man fully alive to his responsibilities, and not a mere professional trainer, his charges will have cultivated the ability to do well each day's work, to think quickly and intelligently, and to act either collectively or independently as circumstances may demand.

It may be well to inquire if any particular class of students, just because they excel in physical qualities, are more entitled than are others to this careful training by the best paid member of the faculty? Why should not something of this method obtain in all collegiate departments?

A THIRD CAUSE OF FAILURE

This brings us to a third cause of college failures, which may be said to be lack of intellectual ideals. It is claimed that culture is not the all-pervading element in the college atmosphere, that the academic coaches of the faculty, instead of encouraging intellectual attainments, are prone to wink at idleness, neglect of duty, and social and fraternity distractions.

I should be very sorry to admit that our faculties are, in the main, composed of men lacking in scholarly ideals and in intellectual culture, but I do wonder sometimes why such men do not appeal more strongly to our boys as problem solvers who are worthy of imitation. Returning again to the responsibility placed upon the athletic coach, we might pause to inquire what indications there are that the other members of the faculty are studying their problems as the coach studies his. Why are they not seeking out the talent of the college, each in his own line? Why do they not study the personal tastes, the peculiarities and weak-

nesses of each boy, and then, with the wisdom of maturity, try to guide him into the line for which he is best fitted? During my professional life I have met many athletic coaches out drumming up football material, and I have received professional calls from many more, but I do not remember meeting a single pedagogical coach out searching for student material.

Every student who enters college should be studied with special reference to character, intellectual capacity, social standards and moral ideals. His significant tendencies would thus be discovered and could be converted into actual power. Some may think that this has already been accomplished by the advisory, or preceptorial system. I have had some experience along this line too, and while I believe the theory to be excellent I should want to know something about the actual practice before I could recommend it as a suitable advertisement for any college. One of my students selected a college which advertised a most carefully planned and a most adequate advisory system. Ten boys were assigned to each faculty member, who was to be their confidential adviser and best friend. This boy fell to the department of pedagogy and his parents were delighted. He took his registration card to his adviser. It was read over, his entrance credits examined, he was commended on entering without conditions, on his good grades, and then kindly told to be a good boy and maintain the same standard in college and it would not be necessary to come to see him again. That is the first and last time he ever spoke to his adviser, but his room mate was frequently in conference with his. The advisory system in that college was organized solely for boys who were sailing close to the wind—the whole thing was a farce—a part of college advertising.

Good results must come from the study of the individual and an effort so to guide him that he may make the best use of his time both for the present and the future. This has been done in the past, and it will be done in the future. In speaking of the ancient customs in his country a Japanese writer has said, "We were not taught in classes. The grouping of soul-bearing human beings into large classes, as sheep upon Australian farms, was not known in our old schools. Our teachers believed, I think

instinctively, that man is unclassifiable, that he must be dealt with personally, face to face, soul to soul. So they schooled us, one by one, each according to his idiosyncrasies, physical, mental and spiritual, . . . and as asses were never harnessed with horses, there was little danger of the latter being beaten down into stupidity, or the former driven into valedictorians' graves."

A second, and one of the most valid of all criticisms in this line, is the charge that faculty, trustees, alumni, parents, students and the public are all vying with one another to allow mere numerical greatness to displace educational standards. Everywhere there is a perfect mania for numbers until enrollment has assumed so great importance that institutions are often influenced to secure members in a manner which is decidedly detrimental to the best interests and to the good name of the institution.

A third criticism is aimed against governing boards—that they are not composed of men of high intellectual ideals.

Some advocate the appointment of business men rather than scholars. They argue that there is a decided demand for business methods within the college and that the faculty and president should be able to look after the educational ideals. This may be correct theoretically, but it fails in practice as is readily seen by anyone who takes the trouble to investigate. Our business boards do not look after the business end of the college, or if we think they do, why do we not call for some accounting and compare the size of the waste heap with the actual product? Had our colleges ever been conducted along business lines, we should long ago have witnessed a college panic and several of our institutions would have been forced to the wall. If our boards would look after the financial interests of the institutions and employ a president who has a cultured interest in the better things of life and then allow him to give his time to advancing intellectual standards, there might be less ground for complaint; but as a rule boards have very little conception of the high type of sympathetic scholarship which is needed at the head of our higher institutions.

Fourth, the alumni are censured for having too much interest in athletics and fraternities, and too little in intellectual pursuits. This too is a legitimate complaint. The best way to change the

present condition is for all who are really interested in the cause of higher education to take hold and turn out a new generation of alumni which will understand the relative importance of the various college activities better than it is now understood.

SUMMARY

A brief and impartial summary of the college situation to-day would be somewhat as follows:

The Public and the Parent are investing funds in a venture which brings no suitable return, but which, for some reason, they do not appear willing either to abandon or to reorganize.

The Boy is being placed in a situation where, at the very outset, for lack of proper guidance, he is absorbed by the wrong group and hence looks at college from the wrong point of view. Often the very surroundings in which he lives destroy the ideals which he has brought from home and substitute lower ones.

The College President and the Faculties are uneasy. They realize that the college world is not the world it should be, but they are conservative, their salaries are at stake, and if the public is satisfied why should they complain?

Secondary Schools, too, have their full share of blame. We may find fault with the college for offering thousand dollar boys fifty cent educations, but we must also be willing to admit that we send many a fifty cent boy to college and expect a thousand dollar education. The secondary schools turn out "uncooked beefsteaks"; the colleges turn out "dead game sports." It is a case of tweedle-dee and tweedle-dum, neither institution can over-blame the other, but in the meantime, how about the boy?

President Woodrow Wilson, in Pittsburgh, April 17, 1910, uttered the following words: "I know that the colleges of this country must be reconstructed from top to bottom, and I know that America is going to demand it." Consensus of opinion in the educational world would lay emphasis upon this prophecy and hasten the day of its fulfilment.

HOW TO RAISE THE COST OF LIVING

HAROLD C. RIDGELY

THE cost of living can be raised, lowered or kept as it is, and can therefore be studied from three points of view. Nor does it matter much on which point we fix our attention; the important thing is to study the subject.

If we are in a small town where living is cheap, how would we raise the cost? It is like raising a flag, a simple matter if we pull on the right rope, and the rope is of many strands, intertwined and tightly twisted.

In a small town, there may not be a food monopoly, and that should be attended to at once. By all means, get the food men together and have them work toward a common end. That will not be difficult, as their interests are all alike, and an organization can be effected readily, after which the great problem can be considered in its various phases.

To begin with, we food monopolists must have a market-house. The town council can build that out of the public funds, and the structure can be the ordinary shed type, with stalls to be rented to the people,—our people.

That will take care of a large share of the food supply, and our board of managers can fix prices better under this concentrated system. The owners of stores and smaller shops in the town will be glad to come in with us, and if they do not see fit to do so we can have a few conversations with those who supply them with vegetables and other products. If the supply men sell to stores outside our organization, we will buy nothing from those supply men, and that ought to be a strong argument in our favor. Besides, we can buy out half the shops in town, especially after we get well on the road toward cornering the market and have secured much of the trade formerly handled by the small trader.

The farmers and hucksters who bring food to town and sell it from house to house are very annoying, and it is a question how best to get rid of them. If they are allowed to engage in such business, they should be made to pay a high license. That