

COLLEGE ETHICS.

by

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Every student is in need of the sympathy of every other student. To be a good sympathizer one must be an acute observer. Look into the eyes of those about you and you will see in every life, that the higher and lower natures are in an intense struggle for supremacy. When you are sure you have made a correct observation of existing conditions, allow your best judgement to command your sympathies.

Sincerely,

R. A. Esdon.

COLLEGE ETHICS.

So great is the worth of human nature, so invaluable the human soul, that men have long striven to master the art of living. Their efforts have so educated the rational judgement that the mind of society is to-day ready to admit that the life's work of every individual should result in the winning of some victory for humanity.

To win victories there must be preparation. The various faculties of the body and of the mind must be trained. The influences of the home, the school, the church and the college must mould the character during the formative period. The college graduate should have comprehended the problems of his life's occupation and be ready to enter into active service. Is it not reasonable then, in presenting the subject of college ethics to insist that a normal development for the student depends upon an opportunity, while he is comprehending the problems of his chosen occupation, also to comprehend the much greater problems concerning his relationship in life? If so, is the ethical atmosphere which surrounds our students such as to purify or contaminate those who enter it?

Dwelling upon appearances we may be deceived by thinking that the conduct of the dominant faction within a limited square as of a college campus constitutes an index to the mind of its society. For often such conduct is due to waves of enthusiasm which sweep away the soundest judgment allowing the student to indulge, for a time, in acts that soon become universally offensive as being out of harmony even with the best judgment of the actors themselves. And yet, it is just these waves of enthusiasm that give the student his first lessons in that which later may lead to the committing of acts criminal before the law. For example many times student bodies have assembled at appoint-

ed places, discussed for awhile some exciting subject and at the suggestion of some popular man, made a wild rush in mob-formation for to commit some rash act against the person or property of some, offensive or unoffensive person as the case may be. Wheather the act be one of "boy-cot" or of "hazing" the spirit which prompted it is so similar to the mob-spirit of the "Lynch-Law" as to easily blend with it should the degree of the excitement be intensified or the degree of the offence be magnified. Many smaller factions of the student body go easily from this to house breaking to secure the property of students, or classes of students, as has already been demonstrated in this and / other colleges. Three blocks from where I am writing is a broken "Class Stone" the monument of a recent "class-scrap", which stone was taken from the marble works at night. The act of taking the stone, is by our present laws, "Burglary in the second degree." Had the law been allowed to take its course the offenders must have born for life the impress of several years imprisonment in the state penitentiary. This class spirit appears in the forms of social circles, cliques, fraternities and even too often finds its way into literary societies and athletic associations. The literary clique, though less widely known perhaps, is one of the most notorious as regards its effects upon the students future. In this college at the present time there are several such factions whose influence are being felt at the staff-election of the college paper, in military drill, athletic association and the various class organizations. The members are bonded together to promote their men even at the expense of men who are just as able and more worthy. The other evening the writer was present at a gathering of the representatives of two literary societies who were preparing a "slate" for a coming "staff" election in order that they two might secure justice in spite of a strong opposition from another society.

Such a training is sure to send the student into the world to support policy instead of principle, to vote for party instead of man. The State aims to educate a citizen and receives in return a moulded politician. This may seem in harmony with the spirit of the commercial and political world but is it an appeal to the animal instincts rather than to the will of a free-man? Will not the fostering of such interdependence lead to the adaption of the same standards of study, of work, and of political and social action, thus lowering the once dominant high sense of honor which accompanies the sincere search for the truth?

Some have looked upon the mad rush of the business world, the strenuous, quarrelsome life of the politician, the shallow, flippant mesmerisms of passion and contributed it all to the "struggle for existence." Might they not better have said: the struggle for the promotion of self by the extinction of others? The belief that contest rather than cooperation is the best means of preservation and promotion has hitherto prevailed among the ignorant and educated alike and has been welcomed into the college circles because of the false impression that contests build the strongest characters. But by the laws of Psychology the contest whether physical or intellectual is more of an appeal to the animal instincts. It acts upon the nervous system as a stimulant spurring one to supreme effort only to relapse again when the contest is over. If instead of oratorical contests, joint-debates, inter-collegiate ball-games, etc., where supreme efforts are required, athletics and literary work might be made a matter of continual development where the weak, as well as mental and physical giants, might receive recognition, then might we hope for continuous effort from the student after he has left college, and perhaps avoid the educating annually, of several dozen international sporting men.

Another feature of college life which may be hoped the rational

mind will soon banish, is the double standard which exists for the members of the couplets: Music and Oratory, poetry and prose, women and men. The amateur poet is in general looked upon as an irrational "upstart" who is aspiring to something to which there is no bare possibility of his ever attaining -- A line of action along which only born geniuses can ever hope to reach the least degree of proficiency. While the amateur prose writer is taken into confidence, instructed, encouraged to try again, his productions published and his name placed upon public programs in the hope that some day he will be able to express himself intelligently, or even pass beyond mediocrity and become a writer of classics. Likewise the orator is expected to rise to proficiency by a long process of committing and reciting the productions of others, then composing and delivering his own speeches, and at last being able to simply think until he is so full of his subject he can arise when the occasion offers and deliver what the occasion demands. Not so with the musician, he must largely inherit his ability and secure the rest by private practice, if he is ever to be allowed a hearing before an intelligent audience. Is it not ridiculous to suppose that harmony of sound is any more sacred in song than in speech and that discord is any harder to eliminate from music than from Oratory? There is a stage in the development of everyone when discordant sounds and ungraceful motions have to be tolerated for the sake of acquiring compass and freedom. This stage must be followed by practice of self-control to secure quality and symmetry. If a child were to be restrained from the writing of prose and the reciting of declamations but encouraged in the arts of music and poetry would he not at the time he graduated from college be just as much more proficient in the latter than in the former as are the majority of students in the former than in the latter?

Let us turn now to the delicate subject of double standard

ethics for men and women that exists to-day in college life as well as in society in general. It is quite noticeable that the governing factor in the association of the sexes is based upon social and intellectual, rather than upon ethical or religious equality. Some college men who not only refuse to become affiliated with the Young Men's Christian Association but who never lose a good opportunity to pass uncomplimentary remarks about its members and its work; who never or seldom, attend religious services of any organization, persistently seek the society of Young Women's Christian Association girls who are well known as active "Endeavors", and Sunday School workers, merely for their popularity in social and intellectual circles. The private character of some of these men, (though this does not apply to all) is sadly in need of a changed condition. In society of men alone they are profane, vulgar and even disrespectful of the ladies themselves. On one occasion there appeared in the local column of the college paper an item announcing that two senior students had been up the river, Sunday, hunting rabbits. The very names of the students stood for popularity. One of these men though ranking high in social and intellectual circles is known to the writer to be loose in his language, at times disrespectful in his manner toward religious exercises, and a claimant of disbelief in any religious faith. The same day on which this young man was in search of rabbits the writer saw the special friend of this senior on her way to Sunday School, and knows her to be a regular attendant and active worker in endeavors, Sunday School, a member of the church and of the Young Women's Christian Association. This is only one of many cases that have fallen under my observation during my college course but it alone will serve to suggest what may in many cases lead to domestic discord and divorces.

The mind of society through its intellectual sympathy declares

that the health of the physical man is the basis of an enjoyable and successful life, and that simple wholesome food, regularly and deliberately consumed, the basis of health. Why then does not the mind of society as it exists in college circles demand of the faculty and students a conformity to these laws of health that are so carefully thought out and taught as being of so great importance? There is a law of psychology which demands that action be taken when the emotions are at the height of their activity --that decisions be enforced by the will even if to do so means to face disagreeable things. But side by side with Psychology and Hygiene are taught the preparation and serving of ten o'clock suppers. Out of the dozens of social gatherings that occur during a students college course not one fail to violate grossly the laws of health. The so called refreshments are acknowledged by every rational mind to be, instead, stupefying, and the dreamy eye, the sallow complexion, and the foul breath bear testimony to the truth. On one occasion I took occasion to visit "Pointz Avenue" about eleven o'clock at night. It was immediately after the adjournment of a gathering in the Opera House, and I found two of the most popular resorts of the dissipated crowded full of young men, many of whom were college students, eating and drinking - pie being one of the most popular edibles. Over such resorts the college authorities may have no direct control. But it is well known that the ranks at the bars of college towns are largely filled with members of the fraternities many of whom are dragged in for the first time by the gaiety of club life. And it is over these societies, popularly known as the "Frats", as well as over student social gatherings of the "Domestic Science Department", that authority should be exercised. Our State institutions have fast become honeycombed ^{with} pernicious organizations. In some the substantial, intellectual, social, ethical, and religious work is being

undermined only to be replaced by the trancent gaiety of the "Sphinks" and the "Owles".

So far we have been looking at the darker and shallower side of college life as we find it to-day. There is a brighter side which is too often overlooked. There is a strong undercurrent guiding college and university life which does move rightly to mould character than perhaps any other influence with which we are concerned. It is the college that moulds the rational mind by eliminating falacies and discovering new truths and right relationships; it is the college that x sets the example of overcoming narrow prejudices and of promoting the freedom of thought and of action; it is the college that sets before the students the highest type of manhood and womanhood to direct their ambitions both by precept and example, in the purshit of the ideals which so often possess them. There are many students who testify to the inspiration they have received from the personal magnetism of their instructors. Some have come to this institution through curiosity; some merely to be free from uncongenial relationship elsewhere. They have come under sentence of provintial ignorance, maniced by the most vitious habits; their hearts half full of hatred for the rest of humanity. And within four years experience a complete revolution in personal appearance and in the workings of their inner lives. They have gone forth from college halls with hearts overflowing with love for their fellowman, and intellects alert in their comprehension of the problems before them. The process of reform which has gone on unseen in the life is that of "Diamond Cut Diamond". The cosmopolitan population, brought together under new influences, renders each individual susceptible to the influence of every other. The effect produced is evident. At first it would seem that the student had been loosened from the anchor of established belief and custom and was fast floating

away upon a tide of skepticism. But the strong under current soon furnishes a safe and steady stream of thought which in spite of surface changes, persistently points out the way of duty, not only as being right, but as being the most advantageous. And it is at this point where it seems college life has its surest grip upon individual and national life, that of persuading men, by a strong act of the will, to lay hold of that which is best. In fact, the most a student secures from a college course is the discipline received in pursuing it. Such discipline, together with the overcoming of prejudices, which in themselves require ready observation and discrimination, leads directly to a familiarity with the needs of humanity and consequently to a common sympathy so necessary to a useful career. Little by little, from the first day in college when the student is dazzled by the revelations of his new environment until the commencement of his business career, the light slowly dawns upon the youth until he at last grasps the meaning of his life's work and goes out to meet the struggles which await him.