

THE REIGN OF THE BOARDING HOUSE

On the student's first arrival at the University of Nebraska he is impressed with the peculiar and large variety of ways in which the two thousand students located here obtain their food. Since the question of satisfying the "inner man" is of prime importance to all, and especially to the student who must practice economy—who has to eat where he can and what he finds edible—the Nebraskan presents an article on where, what and how the student eats, and what he pays, together with a brief comparison of conditions at Nebraska with those of eastern institutions.

Students Board at All Kinds of Places.

The student boards almost any and everywhere. Nearly every place intended for his accommodation has a representation of students. There are the chop-houses for those who find it inconvenient to get around for meals before 8 o'clock in the morning, and for those who have to take their meals irregularly. Other advantages in this kind of board are that the meals can be so gauged as to suit the pocket-book, and the bill-of-fare to suit the appetite.

The fraternities have their homes, where the members have a voice in the make-up of the bill-of-fare, for boarding is conducted among those organizations on the club plan of eastern colleges.

Then there is a class which does not eat meat, and so boards down at the Hygienic, where foods of a light character can be secured.

A large number have no regular place to board, while a few may be found who prefer to cook their own food and enjoy the comforts connected with a bachelors or old maid's hall.

But the large majority of students board with private families, or at private boarding houses or clubs, where they find more of the conveniences of home, and have the opportunity of making a small circle of acquaintances. The board of course is made to accommodate every class of students and so varies in price among the different houses accordingly.

They Eat Anything and Everything.

Students eat anything and everything edible they can get. They are always hungry; they are even greedy. They are never satisfied. One may see them get away with soup, meat, turnips, potatoes (sweet and Irish), beans, pudding and pie, and then fail to refuse a box of bon-bons. Never offer a stu-

dent anything to eat if you care for it yourself. That is one occasion when the "Gaston" act won't work. But the question of what students eat may usually be reduced to a matter of purse. There may be some students who are able to frequent the cafe a la mode and indulge in something more than the "staff of life." But you may be sure, even then, they get their money's worth. Nobody can get more out of a dollar than a university student. Then there may be others, sad to relate, who, in counting the poor little pennies, need to patronize the little corner bakery, reducing their lunch or breakfast to tissue paper rolls or cookies. It is more often correct, however, to think of them as consuming this frosted pastry at the midnight spread, not as a substitute for a day's nourishment.

The first thing we should expect to occupy the students' consideration would be the hygienic requirements of their diet, but it is safe to say this is the very last idea to enter their heads. Any noon you can see girls lunching on peanuts or slabs of candy, when perhaps the next day will find the self-same creatures the victors over a seven course dinner and two pink teas. There was one boarding house mistress, though, who said that she had made students' board a study for years, that she had found that they needed plain wholesome food, plenty of it and not too much of a change. She certainly could not help but feel repaid for her efforts, since many of her student boarders had been with her for years. All of them were bright, healthy looking specimens, with good appetites. Perhaps this is the reason the students are such romping good fellows, always good-natured and capable of self-preservation—because they eat so much.

In short, the food that the student eats depends upon where he boards. If he desires a variety he merely changes boarding places frequently.

Meals are Taken on the Fly.

The way the student eats depends largely on the kind of a boarding house he patronizes. In Lincoln there are so many kinds of eating houses that it is almost impossible to pick out any one of them and say, "Here you can see how the average student eats." There are the cafes, restaurants, dining halls, private boarding houses and the fraternity tables. All of them are as different from each other in their style of serving meals as they are in what they serve. The restaurants and cafes probably feed the majority of our male students. This is very likely due to the fact that students can eat there at any time and can vary the kind and price of their meals. The student rushes into a chop-house with a pack of books under his arm, and, without removing overcoat or hat, seats himself at a counter, glances at the bill-of-fare and then orders the same old course—pork and beans, wheat bread and coffee. While the waiter is filling the order the student looks over the headlines in the daily papers found scattered along on the counters. As soon as his pork and beans arrives he drops everything and begins to eat as if his very life depended on devouring what was placed before him.

At a private boarding house one finds a large number of young lady students and a few gentlemen. They gather shortly before meal time and wait in the front room till the meal is served. Then there is a free for all race to get the best place at the tables. Some of the boarding houses assign chairs at

the table for each boarder and thus avoid the free for all. Conversation is usually subordinated to the more immediately important task of "doing the meal." Sometimes, however, there is a student who is always trying to start a general conversation by asking others their opinion on some debatable question in sociology or political economy. His persistence in arguing soon grows tiresome and is sometimes met by the cutting sarcasm of a disgusted young lady or the bold rebuke of a young gentleman.

The fraternity table is more homelike. The students know each other and do not eat in such a hurry. They carry on a conversation at the table just as they would in their parlor. The reason for this may be that the crowd is always the same and is not continually changing as at the other places.

The student necessarily eats rapidly because he sleeps so late in the morning that he is obliged to take his breakfast on the run to his first class; at noon he may have a long ways to go and only have an hour in which to eat his dinner and get back to the University again. In the evening he must hurry back to the library to get the book he has been looking for all week. The irregularity with which the average student eats is noticeable, and to be regretted. He takes his meals at all hours, and skips many altogether, not seeming to realize that some day his system will revolt and demand the price of folly.

Prices Vary, but Few are High.

Students as a class are economical. Even those who are well to do seem to prefer modest living. A large number carry economy too far and eat only two meals a day, missing usually their breakfast. A large number take their breakfast at down town restaurants, ordering up merely a "stack" of cakes at the phenomenal price of five cents. Those who keep boarding houses quite strenuously oppose the two-meal plan because those students who insist on taking breakfast at the chop house or none at all demand a two-meal-a-day rate and expect to get three meals in two. Boarding house women claim that a few such students can almost "eat one out of house and home," but to say that they even then get more than their money's worth would be superfluous. The ten o'clock evening lunch is another injurious practice indulged in by a large number of students, and it is a common saying among waiters who hold the "dog watch" that every student must have his piece of pie and cup of coffee before he can go to sleep. Yet, for a student to order a "half fry" or smothered porterhouse is unheard of. Such luxuries cannot be enjoyed by the ordinary western student. In spite of the fact that students must practice economy, boarding houses and restaurants fail to bring down the price of board to a figure that compares with that of eastern cities. Board ranges from \$2.50 per week to \$4.00. The average student pays not less than \$3.00 for what he eats during the cycle of a week.

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