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20

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SARAH S. HARRIS, Editor.

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OBSERVATIONS.

The feeling against Greek letter fraternities which has just expressed itself by the Nebraska legislator's bill, calling for their suppression, is due to a few of the less respectable among them. A good fraternity is good for the university, for the student who is a member of it and for the community of which it is a part. It is good for the university because it fosters esprit du corps in its members and stimulates them to do better work. A body is of more consequence than the members of it and the strength and glory of the fraternities is the strength and glory of the university. The fraternity which has traditions of scholarship and character bestows them upon each new member and all the old members make it their business to help the younger ones not to disgrace the history of the fraternity. A good fraternity is a commercial and a social advantage to the community. It rents houses, gives parties, goes trolley riding and in many ways employs and creates rather than destroys.

The benefit of the brotherly interest which the older student takes in the new one is especially valuable if the older student is a scholar and a gentleman.

The influence of a fraternity upon a man depends not much upon the fact that it is a secret society, but upon the character of the fraternity, which is already established when he joins it. It is an evil day for a young collegiate when he finds that he is united by ridiculously inviolable vows to an undisciplined lot of hoodlums whose rank in

the university is low and who are distinguished from street loafers only by their arrogance and aggressiveness. One of last fall's initiates found himself connected with just such an inferior group of men and he sundered the new ties with unexpected decision. In spite of the comparatively short experience that the citizens of Lincoln have had with college fraternities the grocers, haberdashers and opera house managers know that among other excellent societies Phi Delta Theta and Phi Kappa Psi mean manliness, breeding and honesty. To the university authorities these letters mean in addition, scholarship. Their chapter houses are quiet during study hours and they respect the rights of their neighbors. On the other hand the fraternities which have had a tendency to cast suspicion on the whole Greek alphabet have no hours of study, their members spend their time in playing "The Soubrette's Smile," smoking cigarettes and dancing two-steps, while their university rank "is something awful." This is not the worst, they are the terror of the neighborhood on account of their petty depredations which they consider a joke. The merchants have not a good word for them. There is the same instinctive antagonism between them and organized society that there is between the latter and the criminal classes only there is not so much of it and the students disguise their depredations under an air of frivolousness and jocularity. If the legislature could suppress the few which have given to the whole system a bad name, the antagonism which the community feels to the system would subside. A bad man is only formidable when he is supported by an organization. The laws that we have are sufficient to protect society against individuals, but a number of young bad men united by a bond of secrecy is a menace to property and to individuals which the legislature has begun to appreciate. The remedy, however can much more effectually be applied from within. Where a chapter has disgraced the name by dissipation, poor scholarships and bad citizenship, the charter should be withdrawn, thus protecting the community and conserving the good name of the fraternities.

President McKinley as soldier, senator, and governor, has always done what was expected of him. His advocacy of a high protective tariff first introduced him to the American people. On taking the oath of office he said that he had been elected on the tariff issue. Considering the weight and bulk of coinage argument on the street, on rear platforms, and in the newspapers the statement surprises the west. However Mr. McKinley stands for protection as Mr. Bryan stands for free coinage at a ratio of sixteen to one without waiting for the

aid or consent of any other nation. Mr. McKinley's attitude towards free coinage was settled for him by the St. Louis convention and thus individually his position towards the question is negative and he is justified in thinking he was elected on a tariff issue. There is no reason to doubt that he will call an extra session of congress, and that so far as his influence goes all the virtue there is in a high protective tariff will be applied to the country that needs it most.

The irony of politics was never illustrated better than in the late attempt to prevent mayor Graham from having a second term. The partisans of Mr. Webster were anxious to see him nominated because, they said, "there was a man without money and without pride." With him as mayor the interests of the city and the people would come first. In the convolutions of the game, in which the mayor was a winner from the start, Mr. Webster drew all the extra virtuous energy in the party to himself to the exclusion of any other candidate. After Mr. Woodward was out of the way Mr. Webster withdrew, leaving Mayor Graham in command of the situation. This teaches several useful lessons. First, it is not expedient to overlook the power and foresight of the machine. It works noiselessly, it is oiled and it runs night and day, without it city politics would be a jumble of crosspurposes and ineffectual actions. The engineers are men of grim purpose and steady, and nine times out of ten they win because they outgeneral the other fellows. The metaphor is mixed but perhaps Mr. Lindsey will excuse it on account of the great truth expressed. Another lesson to be learned is that the candidates are controlled by influences and circumstances stronger than their professions and obligations. The machine which moves the pawns in the game can not be, and is not, hampered by considerations of the personal obligations of one man to others. Such conditions would break up the game and there can not be but one reason for playing it and that is, winning. But first and last it teaches that it is futile to exalt the superior integrity and honor of any man before he dies. He may do something to make his eulogists feel foolish. Not that Mr. Webster has done any thing dishonorable. He did what was expedient. He is no better and no worse than Mayor Graham or any other common man who is or may be a candidate for mayor. As I said last week, there is only one example of supernatural integrity in the city and he was defeated for president.

The prize fighters in Carson City are secure in the confidence that they are the centers of interest in spite of the

morbid sentiment which is seeking to discourage literature on the manly art of self defense. Pictures of the bunches of steel muscles which they wear on their backs and arms rivals "the glory that was Greece, and the splendor that was Rome's." The dying gladiator would not sell seven to ten against the Nevada proteges. Lecturers on art bewail the lost perfection of physical development that was the inspiration of the Greek sculptor. Yet the refinement of the Twentieth century is shocked by a muscular development and a knowledge of the science of dodging and talking that would have knocked out the most renowned champion of the Olympic games. Seriously though no one desires a prize fighter in the family, he is not without value to civilization if only as an awful example of what the exclusive cultivation of athletics will do for a man. Contrariwise when athletics are ignored, as in the last days of Rome, it is the most dangerous sign of decadence and effeminacy. Then will the nation produce soldiers of the Stephen Crane pattern, who go crazy meditating on war, instead of fighting and bragging as a soldier should.

Hereafter says the Railway Age, entomology will form a part of the curriculum provided for aspiring air brake men. A museum of living and preserved specimens of insects deleterious to the air brake system will be included in the equipment of air brake cars. In the shell of the retaining valve of the air brake system is a little hole one-fourth of an inch in diameter, necessary for the passage of air. There is a valve within the shell easily interfered with by any foreign substance. If the valve cannot work freely, the inspector makes it known by the usual defect card bearing the legend "Brakes click." Until very recently, and then only upon the Burlington road, it was not known what was the first cause leading to this result, and it was only by the exercise of much care and investigation that Mr. Rhodes has been able to tell us what is the matter. And what a funny kind of an enemy after all!

The mischief arises from the preference, tacitly expressed, of a certain kind of mud wasp for erecting its incubating arrangements around the retaining valve. The mud used in the building process interferes with the proper operation of the valve, and the brakes stick. That the practice is by no means accidental is shown by the dozen or so of valves exhibited by Mr. Rhodes, some of which he proposes shall become fruitful in the genial warmth of his office.

As far as at present known the insect has some peculiar habits. It is apparently indigenous to the plains of Nebraska, but prefers as a habitat such cars as are to be transferred from the Union Pacific to the Burlington at or