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At the Co-Op

Our Tuesday Letter

An Alumnus on College Spirit.

Mr. Editor: This thing you call "college spirit" is a thing hard to define, yet quite easy to understand in its manifestations. When we see, as I saw during my junior year, the Princeton students, after their football team had suffered a crushing defeat at the hands of Yale, turning out almost unanimously to welcome them home, as if they were conquering heroes, we can get some hint of what "Princeton" means to them, and of what "college spirit" is—something like that which the Roman senate exhibited when, after the consul had by his rashness lost the battle of Cannae and left his colleague on the field, they thanked him on his return "because he had not despaired of the republic." This influence is only one phase of what we call in one instance "support," in another, "public spirit," in yet a third, "patriotism." The sum and substance of it all is loyalty to whatever particular thing you are interested in. We support an enterprise, an athletic team, perhaps, or a charitable institution, or what not—one side of this large feeling. A citizen who is interested in the building up of his city, engages in such occupations as will result beneficially to it, endows public institutions, founds a library, beautifies or improves it in some way—merely another form of loyalty. Finally, as indicated above, we have seen in the last few years what some have been pleased to term a revival of patriotism. Patriotism is simply love of country, with the loyalty, self-sacrifice, support, that phrase implies. "A sweet and glorious thing it is to die for native land." The soldier, wounded and dying on the battle field is only suffering for the same cause as the boy who trains and works to make the "varsity crew,"—"a more worthy cause," some may say; but I will only repeat what I said a moment since—they are both instances of the same thing, varying only in the means of expression. A spirit that means something, an attraction for the young student, looking forward to a college course; to the undergraduate, often discouraged by defeat and disappointment, an incentive and encouragement; to the alumnus, a pleasant and inspiring memory. That in brief, is the meaning of college spirit to the individual.

Now what does it mean to the school? Something that we can draw from the preceding paragraph. The school, furnishing this attractive element of college spirit, draws to itself the young people from the surrounding high schools, who see the students animated and enthusiastic over its successes, and not disheartened by its defeats, and who long for something of the same feeling for themselves. From the undergraduates the college enjoys their hearty and undivided support and loyalty to its enterprises, along with a consistent pursuit of studies—all, in fact, that goes to make up the life of the active, loyal student. The alumnus looks back over the years, reviewing the successes he has had, which the spirit he imbibed in school has helped him to win, the obstacles it has aided him to surmount, and with a feeling of gratitude acknowledges his debt to the college, and considers what he, as an alumnus, should do to repay it. Thus we go to a contest with a rival college, the stands are full; colors, horns, pennants, are everywhere;

cheers urge on the contestants to greater efforts, reward the brilliant work of the good men, and soothe the pain of the poor. I have played on a football team when the game seemed to be going against us, and we were becoming disheartened, when a sudden enthusiasm would come upon our supporters, and have felt the thrill the well known yell would give, when I knew that the cheers were given from the heart, applauding our good plays, and condoning our faults. Only one who has taken part, and has felt that sensation can understand fully what it means. A base ball player makes a meritorious effort to catch a difficult fly, and fails. Do we hear hisses and groans? By no means. Such things are not to be the portion of the home team—only encouragement, and a wish of "better luck next time." The debater, possibly struggling against better logic, more forcible speakers, or an unfavorable audience, hears the voices of his friends, sees the colors he represents, and is urged on to greater power and eloquence. The sprinter in a hard fought race who knows that the crowd is with him, will exert himself to the utmost to win, knowing still that if he loses there will be for him only the sentiment, "You have done your best." Other things being equal, the one who enjoys the hearty and unanimous support of his mates is the one who will win, and without it no school can hope to win for long.

Another point. By letting the fact become known that we do not support our teams, we give the impression, erroneous, we know, but the public does not, that they are not worth supporting. What does this mean? Simply this: the University of Nebraska, despite its great number of students, is nothing but a second-rate school in the estimation of its students and faculty; they are ashamed to let the world know that they are from the University; they over-rated our institution, and will send their children elsewhere. This is not the work of my imagination. I heard this opinion expressed, in substance, at least, while I was in the University. Men from other schools hold much the same opinion of us: this is a second-class school, and when we want a game with a large college we are turned down. Now, thanks to various influences which need not be mentioned here, this opinion is being changed for a better one.

But how about the student—the average student, I may call him—what is the problem for him, and its solution? To my mind the question is easily answered. The average student, with no particular ability as athlete, scholar, or speaker, in partial payment for what he is receiving from the state, is in duty bound to support all these proper enterprises of the University to the fullest extent possible, and if he fails to do so he is not doing his duty to himself or to the school. The necessity is reciprocal; the University needs his support, and he needs the University influence, best to be gained by support-

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