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Our Cuesday Letter

From Yale University.

New Haven, March 12, 1903. Editor Nebraskan:

Yale claims to be the most representative institution in the country. There are doubtless some grounds for the claim, in the fact that it is not situated in a large city, is not dominated by the influence of any particular section, and draws its students from all quarters.

The boast of the institution is her democracy. The dormitory system, which brings all classes of the student body into such close contact, together with the historic tradition that a man must be rated for exactly what he is worth, has gone far to make the boast good. But the peculiar characteristic of the institution is what is called by outsiders "conceit," and by Yale men, "Yale spirit." This pride in the institution and reverence for her traditions and achievements is developed to an almost abnormal degree. It is at once the weakness and the strength of the institution-weakness in that it brings down on her head the censure of other institutions, and strength in that it has built up such a devotion to her welfare on the part of the alumni, and such a feeling of solidarity and honor among the student body, that "Yale spirit' has become a synonym for loyalty to one's institution and commen interest in its welfare. I believe that no son of Nebraska wishes Nebraska spirit to develop into such a slavish devotion to the past, but may we not all seek to cultivate such a regard for the things our institution stands for, and such a loyalty to her welfare, that Nebraska spirit shall become a name that stands for something in the west? Such a spirit of devotion to her interests, and pride in being a "Nebraska man," could not but strengthen the institution and give greater solidarity to the student body and alumni.

From the standpoint of buildings, the old Yale no longer exists. The old buildings have been removed and replaced by modern ones of massive proportions. Old South Middle Hall is all that is left of the old days, and the spirit of the alumni seems to forbid the proposed removal of this last relic of Yale's early days.

To give an account of all, or even of any considerable number of the traditions of the place would be impossible. But some of the more prominent are noteworthy. The first thing noticeable to a western university man is the close class organization. The restriction of the elective system to the last two years has resulted in such close class organizations that the classes have become the basis for all rivalries, and even of social intercourse. The senior class are responsible to the faculty for many of the actions of underclassmen. In a rush or scramble between lower classes, interference by a body of seniors is the signal for placid suspension of hostilities and meek obedience on the part of over-enthusiastic freshmen or sophomores. Should such a rule be departed from, the ghosts of Yale men from one end of the country to the other would arise and ask why a hoary tradition had been broken.

One of the time-honored events of each year is the wrestling match between the entering freshman class and the sophomores at the beginning of the fall term. It is held at night beneath the light of flaming torches, while sen-

fors select men from the contending classes and see that fair play is enforced. The great social event of the year is the junior prom. The festivities extend throughout a week, culminating in the ball in the armory. The feminine contingent is brought in from out of town.

The spirit of competition pervades everything. It is especially prominent in what is called "heeling" for the various publications. An election on the board of editors of any of the publications is an exceedingly high honor. But the highest honor is election into the senior or junior societies. These are chapters of national fraternities, but election is limited to the two upper classes, and but very few men are chosen each year. All round scholarship and recognized high character are the qualifications. The senior societies especially exert immense influence, but in no partisan or arbitrary way. In fact, here, as in nearly every sphere of university life, the object is not the furtherance of the interests of any particular individual or set of individuals, but of the common good of the institution.

So far as I can observe, the instruction seems to be not far different from that of Nebraska. I do not see that merely for undergraduate instruction or facilities for work students would be justified in passing by western universities to come to Yale, where the expense is doubled or trebled. If I might be permitted one generality, I would say that the impression created by the undergraduate work is that it tends more to culture and less to the development of individuality than our work in the west.

The main library of Yale contains about 300,000 volumes. The philosophy department library is especially strong, as are, also, I am told, those of the classical and modern language department. Library rules are very lenient but the catalogue of the main library is exceedingly poor and hard to use.

The graduate school, exclusive of law, divinity and medicine, numbers about 400; the law school 253, medics 145, divinity 112. Of the law, medics, and divinity, the latter, while smaller than the law, is regarded as the strongest, the departments of biblical criticism being especially strong. The divinity school represents a very liberal type of thought, being accused by some of the conservatives of bordering on German rationalism.

On the whole, Yale, while proud of her past, does not give the impression of an institution living on her reputation, but is apparently straining every nerve to keep abreast of the times.

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