

IOWA UNIVERSITY INTERSTATE DEBATERS



WITH the beginning of the winter term, the interest and work of the students of the University of Iowa is shifted from athletics, which are the center of activity in the fall and spring terms, to debate. The success of the university in forensic lines has been quite marked in the past and there is no indication at present that the race of giants in debate at the varsity is decreasing in stature or in strength as the college generations go by. The University Debating league will this year conduct two debates with other state universities—the Wisconsin debate, which occurs at Madison, Wis., on May 17, and the Minnesota debate, which will be held at Iowa City March 8. The University Debating league is composed of two forensic societies, the Zetagathian society and Irving Institute. The preliminary debates of these societies to select the final debaters for the university have already been held and the debating teams elected. The preliminary debates were very even contests this year, the Zetagathian society winning the Wisconsin contest by two decisions and Irving Institute winning the Minnesota preliminary by a like vote. The society winning the preliminary chooses two members of the final team and the losing team one member. For this reason there is the keenest competition between the societies for the decisions. The interest aroused in the big preliminary and final debates among the members of the forensic societies is only second to that in a great football victory for the varsity.

The preliminary debate for the Wisconsin contest occurred January 5 and was upon the question: "Resolved, That the United States government should construct and operate the Nicaraguan canal, its absolute neutrality being guaranteed by international agreement." This debate was decided two for the negative. The Zetagathian society elected to the Wisconsin debate W. F. Moore of Pandora, Ia., and C. C. Converse of Cresco, Ia. Irving Institute elected as its member of the team F. S. Merriau of Marble Rock, Ia. The question for debate this year was submitted by Iowa, in accordance with the debating compact for 1901 and 1902, signed at Iowa City last year by the representatives of Wisconsin and Iowa. The question submitted by Iowa is: "Resolved, That the United States should construct and operate the Nicaraguan canal." Wisconsin has the option of choosing sides on this question or of submitting another question to Iowa.

Minnesota Preliminary.
The Minnesota preliminary occurred January 11 upon the question: "Resolved, That the immigration into the United States should be restricted to persons that can read and write the constitution of the United States in some language, except that satisfactory provision should be made for the admission of persons dependent upon qualified immigrants." This question was decided two for the affirmative. The Irving Institute elected as its members on the final debate H. E. Spangler of Adair, Ia., and H. B. Noland of Iowa City. The Zetagathians have elected J. W. Morse of Osage, Ia., to the debate. The question for discussion was proposed by Minnesota this year in accordance with the debating compact between the universities. It is: "Resolved, That it is unwise to attempt to tax personal property."

The system of debating at the University of Iowa is one that has been evolved by fifteen successive generations of students. For thirty years past the two men's societies of the university, the Zetagathian society and Irving Institute, have had annual debates. The places upon these debates have always been hotly contested for and it has always been considered the highest honor that a senior can win to be placed on one of these contests after three years of hard work on the regular Friday night programs of the societies. The debates have always been the climax of the forensic year and are always attended by the societies in force, sitting on right and left sides of the opera house stage, with all

their friends grouped on one side or the other, according as their sympathies are enlisted between the two societies. One of the features of the preliminary contests is the attendance of the two girls' societies of the university, the Hesperians, who occupy the same halls as the Zetagathians, and are called their sister society, and the Erodolphians, who own the Irvings as brothers. These girls attend in a body, sitting just behind the men's societies in the opera house and adding their yells and murmurs of approval on the appearance and the telling points of their partisans on the debate.

Iowans Have the Best Record.
In 1894, the two societies formed the University Debating league, which was then and has been ever since recognized by the faculty as the authorized representative of the university in debate. A debate with Minnesota was arranged and it was a natural consequence of the good talent developed by the society competition that Iowa should win the debate. Since this time there have been six debates between the two universities. Iowa has the best of the record thus far, having won five of the annual debates and lost two. Minnesota won the last debate, however, and the men on the Minnesota final are working harder than ever this year to prevent a repetition of this contingency in the debate which takes place March 1 on the home grounds.

The university felt that it was able to support two big contests in debate each year and the year following the arrangement of the Minnesota debate was marked by the formation of a compact for two debates with the University of Chicago. The first of these debates, held at Iowa City in the winter term of 1896, was won unanimously by Iowa. The same result obtained the next year, when Iowa went into Chicago's home ground to discuss the municipalization of street railways.

In 1899 the Wisconsin series of debates was arranged for. The debate of that year, held at Madison, Wis., on the pooling question, was won unanimously by Wisconsin. The following year the debate was held at Iowa City on the subsidy question and was won by Iowa. The debating contract between the two universities expired with this debate, but a new compact was formed between the two schools immediately after the debate had occurred. This compact provides for a debate at Madison this year and for one at Iowa City next year.

First Opportunity for Freshmen.
Much of the success of the university in the final debates that it has held with other institutions has been due to the excellent system of training for the debates that has been matured at Iowa. Every member of the societies, it is said by the members, runs for one of the debate elections at least once in his college career. The first election to a debate is rarely to a preliminary. The student must first show his fitness for the debating stage by his appearance in the interclass debates. These are three in number—freshman, sophomore and junior. The first chance that a freshman

has for a debate is in the elections for the freshman debate. To obtain this he must show up well on the regular society program in the fall term. If he does this he will probably get a place on the freshman blowout, held the evening that the society elects debaters. This blowout is a debate by the six best debaters in the entering class of the society. They choose a question, fight over positions and sides and have the same disagreements over judges that the seniors on the big preliminaries have. The two best debaters on this debate are elected to the freshman contest. Here the freshman first gets an opportunity to cover himself with glory and win the undying love of himself and his society. If he does well he will be a sophomore debater the next year; if he does poorly he will be dropped by the roadside, while some other member of his class, less promising at first, goes on to the sophomore debate and finally on to the preliminaries.

The preliminary elections are held in the spring of each year, so that the debaters can submit questions to their opponents, choose sides and make all arrangements for the debate before leaving for their homes for the summer vacation. The men elected usually put in the best part of the summer in working on the question. The junior debaters of the year are apt to be elected first in the preliminary elections, then the sophomore debaters who have done especially well and even occasionally a freshman is chosen. The leader of the Minnesota debate this year, for instance, is a sophomore in the university this year. An occurrence like this is rare, however. The position most sought for on a debate is that of leader, this being the man on the debate that speaks second in the constructive argument and gives the rebuttal. The Iowa debaters usually speak in three twenty-minute periods for the constructive speakers and five minutes for rebuttal. The length of time allowed varies according to the debating compact, however.

Rivalry Between Societies.
At the end of each year the societies make their claims on what they have done during the year. The preliminary debates are of first importance in a reckoning of this kind. But if each society has one of these, as happened this year, the interclass contests are counted and the winner determined from these. Not all of the members of the debating league pronounce the name of the winning society alike. Exciting arguments are sometimes held between members of the two societies as to which society came out best in the year's debates. Often it will happen that the preliminaries are won by one society while the other has won all the interclass debates. On an occasion like this the society winning the preliminaries will of course have the best title to a victory, but the other side has something to show for its efforts and can say that in the future, when the interclass men have become preliminary men, they will win the preliminaries exclusively.

The records of the two societies for the last three years have been slightly favorable to the Irvings. Previous to this the

Zetagathians have an unbroken line of victories, to which they always point with pride in the president's inaugural address of the first program of the fall term. The Irving president makes remarks about living in the present and not in the past. If one society has been beaten so decisively in a year's debates that even its own members must admit the fact, the plea of the freshmen takes the turn that although the other society did win last year, it will certainly lose this year for all its good men belonged to the senior class, which won the debates of last year.

The contest between the two societies for desirable freshmen becomes so intense that it is frequently used to advantage by persons who understand the spirit of the societies. One year the editor of the junior annual wanted to sell more space to the societies than they had been buying in the past. He went to one society and said:

"Now the society across the hall, as you all know very well, are a close lot and they will pay only the usual \$12 for one page of the annual this year. You fellows want to steal a march on them by taking a double page to show yourselves to the public. With a double page at only \$24 you will get all the nice freshmen next year when you show them the relative merits of the two societies in the annual."

The society took two pages at \$24 and its members thanked the editor of the annual for being so considerate of their interests.

Then the editor went to the other society and told them that if they did not take two pages this year the fellows across the hall would conduct the campaign for members the next fall with annuals under their arms. So both societies took a double page in the annual and each thought what a long head it had.

At almost any time the tradesman who can discover that the society needs a new carpet, new rugs, new pictures, new wall paper or new furniture for its hall can persuade the society to go into debt for them in order to make a good showing for the freshmen who will have to pay for the bill anyway.

To Debate with South Dakota.

Besides the debates conducted with other universities by the University Debating league, the Philomathian society this year conducts a debate with the University of South Dakota. This debate will occur at Vermillion, S. D., the first week in April. It will be on the question, "Resolved, that the Porto Rican tariff act is in accordance with the principles of American government." The Philomathian society will deny this question, while the University of South Dakota will contend for the affirmative. The Philomathian society held its preliminary debate between two picked debating teams elected from its membership at the opera house February 19. The debaters elected for the finals are Fred Albert of Reinbeck, Ia.; H. S. Buffum of Leroy, Ia., and J. W. Martin of Fonda, Ia.

The Philomathian society is one of the newer societies of the university and is therefore not so strong as the other two men's societies, but it is growing stronger

every year, and will soon be taken into the University Debating league. The Octave Thanet society, named after the Iowa author, Miss Alice French of Davenport, is the sister society of the Philomathians. The Hesperian society, one of the young ladies' societies, has challenged the Philomathian society of Cornell college to a debate, and one may occur this spring at Mount Vernon. The ladies' societies have always been more successful in the merit of their declamations and declamatory contests than in debates. In fact, a great many of the audience at a debate of one of the ladies' societies expect amusement rather than edification.

There are a number of traditions connected with the literary societies of the university. Many of the alumni of the institution refer to the work and the fellowship there gained as among the most precious fruits of their college course. One of the names that clings to the Zetagathians is that of "Socksless Zets." Where this name arose is not related by the oldest alumnus of the societies with any degree of exactness. It has been supposed that it was given to the Zetagathians by the rival society because the Zets were poorer than the Irvings as a general rule, and perhaps not so much inclined to observe all the customary rules of society, and were inclined to cheat the clothier and the washerwoman. At any rate, the feet of every candidate for the society are always examined by a committee appointed for the purpose, and no man has yet been initiated into the society who was not cleared by the committee of the odium of wearing "socks."

The story is now told that the Zetagathians lost John N. Baldwin of Council Bluffs as a member of their society because of this requirement for membership. The story is not vouched for by any reputable alumnus of the society, however, and may be a later-day fabrication by the Zetagathians to account for their losing such a prominent alumnus and brilliant student.
R. A. COOK.

Fresh Water Sailors

C. F. Bailey of Duluth is thus quoted in the Washington Post: "If any man thinks the American sailor is a thing of the past he should spend a while on the Great Lakes. The American fresh water sailor is every bit as picturesque a personage as was the 'salt' of early days, who carried our merchant flag into every port of the world. His life is just as full of hardships and just as full of dangers. There is a large fleet of three and four-masted schooners on the lakes, and stories of the wrecking of them come with every big storm. A nastier body of water than Lake Erie, when it comes on to blow, can be found nowhere, and some of the experiences of the life-saving crews along its shores are the most thrilling in the history of the service. The men who man the big lake steamers, of course, have not much romance in their lives, but there are enough of the old sailing vessels left to keep a considerable army of men employed. Any skipper who can navigate a schooner from Duluth to Buffalo is a good enough sailor to sail around the world, and he will do as well as the next man to take care of his vessel in the roughest sea the Atlantic was ever able to blow up."

A Bachelor's Reflections

New York Press: "A girl can get along without a lover better than she can without a liver."
You can always tell school teachers by the respectable way they put their hair up. The main difference between a hanging and a wedding is that women aren't invited to the hanging.
If women wasted as much energy catching a man as they do catching a moth, old bachelors over 30 would be as scarce as hen's teeth.
Even a religious woman would lose some of her respect for her husband if she heard him admit before other men that he didn't know how to play poker.