

Social life at the University.

A most important feature of modern education is the recognition of the fact that the essentials of learning are not merely a possession of the individual, but are the common property of all cultured men. These essentials may be acquired by the individual, not alone by bookish training of the intellect, but also by association with other men. Good books are great teachers. But the varied interpretations of the substance of good books by many minds add much, by interchange, to the value of the teaching. The scholar is no longer a recluse and a hermit; he is a man among men. The silent, grave and solitary owl no longer typifies the possessor of great wisdom. The modern race horse would better typify the modern scholar. Bred from a herd of the best representatives of his kind; possessor of all the best qualities of the equine race; preëminent in the particular quality of swiftness because of special training to that end, his excellence is achieved and preserved because of constant competition with his fellows. Society is itself a great training school, and therein men may learn many things which they may not learn

in books, and gain better understanding of the things taught in books. The social life of a community of students is therefore an important factor in their scholarly development. In our University this powerful agency for good service in the cause of education is turned to most excellent account.

To begin with, the daily class-room exercises are in the nature of a social intercourse of professor and students. As one of the faculty has expressed it, "American colleges, and especially American universities, are rapidly coming to understand that professors and students are not simply classes of beings created for the sole purpose of harassing each other with distasteful tasks and unruly pranks. Rather the University community is an organization with its older and its younger members all bound together by common purposes—the maintenance of morality, the conservation of scholarship, the advancement of learning. To these ends all contribute: the faculties, as the older members, point the way, and train the younger members, that, together, they may hold fast to those things which are good, and hew out new paths to those

things which may be better, and thus together in their generation serve God, the State and their fellowmen." To maintain and fulfill this high ideal of college life there is no stronger incentive than the cordial sympathy created by the social intercourse of professors and students. In this—which may be called the "official" society of the University—all the essentials which should characterize a community bound together by common purposes are preserved. Mutual respect, mutual confidence, mutual toleration are joined to individual freedom of thought and expression. The class-room exercises are no longer what tradition pictures them to have been in the past—dreary performances and irksome bores participated in by a stern, terror-inspiring preceptor on the one hand, and a band of cringing, uninterested pupils on the other—but a keen, active, zealous, "search after truth" (the animating principle of all true education), led by an enthusiastic instructor, and followed by the quickened intelligence of interested students. The "atmosphere of learning" found within the University walls is no longer stratified—with the professor in the clouds and the student on the earth—but is uniform, equable and all-pervading, enwrapping harmoniously both professor and student in its mystic folds, and inspiring both to be workers and seekers together after that which is true and that which is good. It would be impossible to overestimate the strength and worth of the influence exerted upon the student by conditions which lead him to feel himself—so long as he is a worthy member of the University community—a respected member of a society of learned men. The official re-

lation of professor and student is therefore a social relation, and speaking for our University, we doubt if there is another college in the world where the social relations of the teacher and the taught are so intimate and so cordial, while, at the same time, the dignity, respect and deference due to differences in station, authority and age are so entirely preserved.

But the social relations of the University extend beyond the class-room. The office of a great State educational institution is not alone to make individual scholars. It is charged with the rearing of good citizens, men who shall by their talents and acquirements not only make famous among the learned and the scholarly the commonwealth that bore and trained them, but also who shall by daily intercourse with their fellow citizens influence and lead them to better lives and higher ideals of citizenship. Such men need to learn in their youth how such influences may best and properly be exerted, and as the University community is a commonwealth within itself, the social relationship of the students is an admirable training school to this end. A number of organized societies exist in the University community—the Literary Societies, the Greek Letter Fraternities, the Science Club, the Engineering Society, the Moot Court, the Athletic Club, the Glee Club, the Banquet Club, each having specific purposes, but each at the same time affording opportunity for the cultivation of a common purpose—the development of the individual as a member of society and his training to exercise a proper and beneficent influence upon his fellows. In such organizations, not only are wits sharpened and intelligences

quickened by contact with each other, but the members are taught that courtesy, good temper, kindness, unselfishness and respect and consideration for others are useful (if not essential) as well as graceful qualities in every man. The interest and participation of the professors—the experienced members of the community—in the proceedings of these societies add much to their educative value, and they probably accomplish as much if not a greater good in their social purposes than in the specific purposes for which they are nominally formed.

“Society” is organized humanity. Any form of it is sadly incomplete that gives no place to the best element of human kind—woman. As yet law and custom (which may or may not be expedient and wise) bar our class-room doors against the gentle sex. But in many ways the gracious and ennobling influence of woman is manifested in our social life. The University families and the homes of Athens furnish a multitude of kind and cultured matrons and bright, vivacious maidens who, in grace, beauty and accomplishments would adorn the choicest society of any land. In their contributions to the social training of the students they are unstinted in their liberality. For more than a century the “college boy” has been the social ward of the “Classic City.” Refined homes, hospitable houses, cultured social circles are more than freely opened to him; he is solicited and urged to take advantage of their beneficent influences. Within these homes and in this society young men learn what they cannot learn elsewhere—how much there is of sterling worth in social amenities, and how contributive are refinement, courtesy, politeness, and even the

graceful forms of good society to morality and happiness. Some there be who rail and mouth at social forms, and peck their little bills at “society,” as if it were a fetich consecrated to fashion and frivolity. Happily the number of these grows less as civilization and common sense increases. A diamond in the rough may be a very good thing, but it is not a gem until it has received its polish at the lapidary’s hand. “Society” is the lapidary that moulds and harmonizes the best qualities of the worthy man and makes of him a gentleman. Paste crystals may sometimes intrude themselves among the gems, as baser stones may be admixed with diamonds in the rough, but a society that is true to its purposes is no less quick to put a rightful estimate upon the unworthy imitation than experts in other lines to separate the jewels from the dross. We do not think we overstate the case when we say that the well-bred society of the University and its surroundings is the greatest conservator of the morality, purity and temperance of our University life.

To this society we are also indebted for many of the lighter pleasures of our college days. Some of us dance—and some (who can) even dance the “cotillion” (miscalled the “German”)—that epitome of horrors to some well-meaning but ignorant critics, who either never saw it, or have been misled concerning it, or fancy the participators to be as brutish as themselves—and for these the German Club furnishes occasional opportunity for the cultivation and pleasure which attend such a social function. Some of us can “play a part” (or think we can) upon the stage, and the “Thalians” and the

Minstrel Club, reinforced by local talent, by occasional performances to large houses of good-natured and tolerant auditors, cultivate their minor ambitions in this direction. Many of us can neither dance nor act, and these take contented refuge in "evening calls," picnics, straw rides and the lesser functions of polite society. Whether on its graver or its lighter side, the "tone" of society in our community is that of purity, morality, courtesy and kindness. One of the glories of the University is that, although a century old, its society has never known a stain. Woe betide the man who shall dare besmirch its fame!

Social life at the University, in all its phases, makes for good; it is educative, it is helpful, it is inspiring; it awakens enthusiasm in the cultivation of learning; it kindles ambition to excel in those things which are approved and acceptable in the eyes of good and true men; it inspires to thought and

conduct befitting a "gentleman"—a type of humanity combining the "high-mindedness" of the intellectual Greek with the humanity and morality of the faithful Christian. And who of us that has enjoyed it will not say that it also makes for happiness? Have we not all felt the chief charm of our college life to have been the intimate, sympathetic and kindly association of all members of our college community? And as each of us shall pass beyond the walls, will we not hold in constant affectionate remembrance the happy hours of our social communions of every kind, and assign to them a chief and foremost place upon the "sunshine pages of our mortal lives?"

Alma Mater—Kind mother; faithful muse; strong protector; wise teacher; brave leader; sweet contributor to our happiness—*esto perpetua!*

