

COMMUNICATIONS.

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HAZING.

To the Editors of THE VARSITY.

SIRS,—I am glad to notice Mr. Steen's letter about hazing in your issue of 3rd inst. I trust you may find room for what I have to say. It is a most important question, and one on which each man must take one side or the other, whether consciously or not. The very existence of the practice is going into the moral constitution of every undergraduate, so that it behoves all of us to consider it carefully. No candid man can afford to dismiss it with a grin; and it is for the purpose of causing others to think the matter over, honestly, seriously, and keeping all the consequences in view, that I ask a portion of your space.

I conceive that hazing is still in vogue, not because any man of enlightened conscience believes in it, but rather because the majority of our fair-minded fellows are indifferent. It is left for a few blood-thirsty individuals to officiate, while the thoughtless multitude applauds. No hope is entertained of convincing of the error of their ways those who seize upon the practice as a means of gratifying their animal natures; nor for a time, those imbecile notions, who being in possession of intellects naturally weak, and warped by early neglect, are unable to see that anything is either right or wrong unless perchance everybody should be continually drumming it into their ears. They denounce highway robbery, doubtless, but clearly they are not very sure why, for they defend hazing. With them practice is everything, principle nothing, conventionalism counts, but to justice they are strangers, these philosophers of an hour. If one were to call the nebular notions of these units convictions, he would be guilty of a deification of an abstraction calculated to make an ante-Homeric theologian imagine that he had forgotten his art. Our appeal is made to the great mass of dormant uprightness referred to above.

No man has a right to interfere with the personal liberty of another unless he find him breaking the law of the land, and then his duty is to bring him before the tribunals of the land. This, I think, no white man except a hazer, and perhaps a Russian, will deny; and although the hazers deny the principle they nevertheless scratch their puzzled heads and plead extenuating circumstances. For the satisfaction of those who consider the latter important I will discuss them, at least partially.

The freshman is cheeky forsooth; and it is for the freshman's own sake that the hazing is done! What unrecognized philanthropy we have here! "Full many a flower," etc.

First of all I do not believe the freshman is cheeky, unless resentment, to which he is often goaded by the insolence of his supposed superiors, can be so called. And who but a hazer will say that such resentment is not righteous? I also maintain that the freshman has a right to be cheeky if he is foolish enough, that he can take his chances among his fellows as he would in the world, and that, if such exist, soon seeing the folly of his course he will quietly alter it. At any rate, it is not for any organized, treacherous and tyrannous brutality to interfere with him. It is unjust in the nature of things, and nothing calls like injustice. As well might a vigilance committee from the Salvation Army bind the Mufti hand and foot and carry him to church as the taking committee of the hazers summon a freshman to appear before his little majesty's court. The intention of the soldiers might be good (the hazers' certainly is not) and, speaking impersonally, it would be a good thing for the Mufti to go to church, but would he be satisfied to swallow his own medicine, or would he consider that the end justified the means? I trow not.

Again, let us suppose the case of an abnormally and unquestionably cheeky freshman. To all appearances it would be to his advantage to haze him; his impudence will hurt him in the world.

I hear a chorus ask, "what about him?" Simply this: The principle enunciated at the outset still holds, that nobody has a right to touch him, and any who do so exceed their authority. But more extenuation is pleaded, and for the sake of argument, let us give the hazers credit for the best of motives. The contemplation of the freshman's error ought to remind them of their own fallibility. Perhaps they are taking the wrong way with him. Still keeping our assumption in view, perhaps they misjudge him entirely, and he, being of a finer nature than they imagine, may be done irreparable injury. If he is really as bad as he appears he will learn better in time, and the lesson will leave no bitterness in his heart.

I had hoped to discuss this question more fully and systematically, but time and space forbid. There is much more to be said, and others may say it. In the meantime, as this is a question of peculiarly collegiate interest, what is your own opinion about it? To the front in the expression of your views on other matters, surely

you are not behind in this. For myself, I am not at war with any individual, but fairness makes it impossible to take any other stand than one of direct and energetic opposition to this practice. It is founded on brute force, unjust in its nature, degrading in its influence, conceived in secrecy, born in treachery, and carried out in the same darkness which shelters the burglar's harvest.

J. J. FERGUSON.

HAZING: A CRITICISM.

To the Editors of THE VARSITY.

SIRS,—For the violent diatribes of Mr. Steen last week I can find no adequate justification. Mr. Steen seems to be possessed by a desire to do away in a breath with a grand old college institution that has stood for centuries.

I shall endeavour to be brief in pointing out where your correspondent is wholly mistaken, and in stating a few of the many reasons which make hazing a laudable custom—a valuable and indispensable factor in the true culture of hazer and hazed.

There is in every man an indefinable something (a necessary concomitant of manliness), a yearning which book-learning cannot satisfy, and which athletic sports, though they may for a time lull it into peace, can never wholly meet. This feeling, this nameless longing of the soul, like every other capacity and faculty of our nature, must be cultivated if we would be truly symmetric specimens of the results of a liberal education. And I have discovered that this instinct—call it what you will—is best satisfied and stimulated by a vigorous belabouring of a fellow-student. Now, what fellow-student is better fitted to serve thus as a stepping-stone in my advance than a Freshman—and the smaller the better?

In the "profanity and coarseness"—so Mr. Steen harshly designates the rough and ready sarcasm, the pleasant wit, which accompany hazing—I see only a blessing in disguise. Mr. Steen may glibly answer that the blessing is probably in disguise because it does not wish to be recognized as present at an initiation ceremony, but I scorn all such quibbles. Seriously, we come to college to hear just such language, to pass through just such experiences. It is proof of a liberal culture to be able to do so without blushing. Hazing, that is to say, is of value in knocking off the sharp edges of scruple and prejudice, in steeling our boyish hearts and making men of us. In this connection let me quote Vinet, who, able defender of the faith as he was, seems to have been wholly in favour of hazing. "When," says he, "we have to recall an insolent offender to his duty, and to maintain a menaced authority, we have not always a choice of language."

Mr. Steen rashly declares—(having proved to my satisfaction the advantage to the hazer, I proceed to the advantage to the hazed)—that a Freshman is never arrested in his mad career of impudence ("vulgarily called cheek") by being subjected to the indignities of this process. This is plainly fallacious. Have we not known many of the most offensively cheeky of the breed so altered in a single night, that next morning, and thenceforth, they have been deemed worthy to be the bosom friends of their correctors? Mr. Steen should be careful.

Really, Messrs. Editors, there is a deal of cant in connection with this matter, of which we must rid our minds before we can discuss the question fairly on its merits. Much too great a stress is laid on mere intellectual acquirement. Man is many-sided. The strain of intense mental effort must at times be relaxed; therefore it is that our best and ablest students are always prominent on such occasions. Surely even Mr. Steen must admit that those who are now in a majority in the conduct of the hazing are well qualified to decide what constitutes true impudence.

Into the sufficiency of the charges enumerated by Mr. Steen I shall not enter. In the hands of the great Mufti—chosen by the worthiest men in the college—I am willing to leave all that. Dare Mr. Steen question his wisdom, his justice, above all, his mercy? Dare he suggest that though this year he was lenient, next year he may be cantankerous and harsh? If he dare I answer thus: He is ancient! "I should reproach myself almost as much," says Vinet, "for want of respect to an old thing as to an old man." The Mufti, as an institution, is old; he is from all ages of college history; ergo, he should last forever! Curiously, the devil is older than the Mufti. But I suppose that even him Mr. Steen would presume to abolish.

Verily, the iconoclast is abroad! The Mufti insulted, threatened! Truly, I had thought that ten thousand swords must have leaped from their scabbards to avenge even a look that threatened him with insult. But the age of chivalry is gone. That of calculators, economists, namby-pambies and Y. M. C. A. men has succeeded.

And Y. M. C. A. men never countenance hazing. Never?

UBIQUE.