

# THE VARSITY.

*A Weekly Journal of Literature, University Thought and Events.*

VOL. XVII.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, DECEMBER 2, 1897.

No. 8.

## Undergraduate Life in the University of Chicago.

It would seem almost the part of presumption for me to attempt, at present, to give any exhaustive account of undergraduate life in the University of Chicago. Not only is it impossible for anyone to enter thoroughly into the spirit of a great university world in so short a period, but the complete separation of the graduate from the undergraduate interests is so marked, that it is a matter of real difficulty for the graduate to gain a clear idea of the elements which go to make up the life of his younger fellow-student. And so, in this paper, I shall try merely to give a few "impressions," however fragmentary and incomplete, noticing particularly those features of student life here, which are most apt to suggest comparison with our own Alma Mater.

Perhaps the most noticeable difference is to be found in the utter absence of class spirit. There can be no class spirit, for strictly speaking there are no "classes." A student, on entering the University here, does not find his year's work mapped out for him in advance, as he does in our own University. The elective system prevails throughout. He must take a certain number of "majors" in order to be given credit for the work of the quarter, but he has entire freedom regarding the choice of these subjects. Perhaps I should not say entire freedom,—a certain number of courses in certain subjects is required before graduation, especially in the Junior College—but, comparatively speaking, a student has very great freedom indeed in choosing his work. The Junior College takes up the work of the first two years, the Senior College that of the last two. Accordingly, the genus *freshman* is unknown; all undergraduates are either juniors or seniors. A student is ready to graduate whenever he has completed the required number of courses, and as this may occur at the end of any quarter, graduation exercises are held four times in each year. Under such a system class spirit is of course an impossibility.

The question of examinations is a comparatively simple one. Three majors constitute the full work of a quarter, and for the purpose of examination in these subjects two days at the end of each quarter are found to be sufficient. Some credit is also given for work done during the term, and the final test is partly oral, partly written. As a result, there is no more serious examination at the end of the college year than were those encountered at the end of the preceding quarters. The advantages of such a system are obvious. It tends to secure more systematic, regular work throughout the year, and besides relieving the student of the unnatural strain at the end of the year, discourages cramming. On the other hand, its disadvantages are perhaps equally apparent, if one considers the thorough review and constant application which the Toronto man

finds necessary. To me it seems certain that the ideal examination system—if such exist—must be found in the adoption of a middle course between the two systems.

It is only when one sees the undergraduate life of a new institution like Chicago, that he can appreciate how much he owes to the men of former days in his own Alma Mater, for institutions which have come to mean to him almost as much as the routine work of lectures itself. The University of Chicago was founded in 1890, and whether the short period since that time has been insufficient for the evolving of numerous student organizations, or whether the preponderance of the graduate school tends to discourage their establishment, at any rate, we find them almost entirely lacking. There are no departmental societies corresponding to Toronto's numerous associations and clubs; there are no Hallowe'en traditions to fire the heart with a noble enthusiasm to rise above the domination of the policeman, for at least one night in the year; there is not even any society comprising the whole body of the students, which in any sense corresponds to our Literary Society. An undergraduate, whom I asked for some information, assured me that there was "no undergraduate life." Perhaps we may here find the explanation of the intense enthusiasm for football, in which almost every student takes the keenest interest. The enormous crowds who pay enormous prices for the privilege of watching the games, are such as would delight the heart of a Toronto managing committee. A bill is now before the city council providing for the suppression of the game, but footballists feel that it has not popular support, and without any great concern Chicago men go their ways. The University eleven has thus far been victorious in every match it has played during the present season, but the University of Michigan, with which they still have to play, is expected to present more serious claims to the championship of the Western Association.

The residence system is almost perfected as far as women students are concerned, though the men fare hardly better than in Toronto. Three large buildings—Kelly, Beecher and Foster Halls—provide college homes for the great majority of the women students, in both the college and graduate school, and a project is already on foot for the erection of a fourth. I am informed that the management of these halls is on a very democratic basis, a guiding principle being the avoidance of everything savoring of a "Ladies' College." One hall—Snell House—furnishes a residence to a very small proportion of the men undergraduates, while Graduate Hall and Divinity Hall are much more extensive, and provide in a similar way for graduate and divinity students. Occasional "At Homes" are held in the women's halls, and the professors also entertain students at their homes, but on the whole, social functions are much less numerous than is the case in Toronto. One very apparent cause for this is the absence of the class societies, clubs and associations, which have multiplied so freely of late years in our own University.

The relations between the students and professors are of the easiest, freest kind. There is an entire lack of al