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EDITORIAL

A FRESHMAN TELLS WHAT HE IS HERE FOR— CAN YOU?



TAKE my college course seriously—I am only a freshman, and it has been six years since I graduated from high school. What difference does that make? When I say “seriously,” I do not mean that I am forever plugging away at my books, a bookworm—though I do study. I am not gifted with any knack whereby I may glance at a page and assimilate it. Many nights I study until two or two-thirty o'clock. Neither am I a “long-faced Puritan” student. There are activities—student activities—fraternities, publications, clubs, parties, athletics, all these—different from the regular school work, though nevertheless important and recognized as such by University officials, so that they have become part of that college course. But even among these activities, I limit myself; I know my capacities.

My classmate, a fine chap, only last year graduated from high school, does not take his work so seriously. His attitude is to “get by”—to miss just as many class periods as the officials will allow, but to make passing grades, of course. The school requires these. Last spring he graduated from high school, and if he regards his mental equipment now as I regarded mine when I graduated from high, why come to the University at all? For I was led to think (as too many high school students are led to think) that I was capable, with only that education, and no more, capable of rising to the top in any line I chose. Had I then come to the University, I would have considered it only a part of the plan of education ordinarily outlined for us—a course to be taken and completed in the easiest, smoothest way possible.

I understand that to come to the University was the path of least resistance for my classmate. His father, a professional man, is sending him. The father realizes the value of the training for his son. No such urge, such influence from without ever bore on me, nor did I, within myself, have any inclination, any desire, for further education following my high school.

Now, after six years, I have come to the University. I have come for a purpose; that purpose concerns me. My coming is the result of the experiences of those six years. Now I realize that university training has a value all its own.

During those six years I discovered—often to my dismay—that there are a great many rough corners. Everyone is not living for a common interest as I had found them to be in the community wherein I lived when I had attended high school. There people were contented. They did not have many things money could buy, yet none wanted; they were happy. In general, they lived for each other. On the other hand, in the busy world, I found a different situation; there was friction; there was strife. There were men, refined gentlemen; there were men, red-blooded men; there were men, unscrupulous and without principle. And there were dollars. How different from the place I had left!

But I observed a difference among those men, the professional men, those men who effect as well as among those men who aspire. They were university men. Their success was not measured in dollars alone, though as a group they were prosperous. Yet more than that, they had something different from the average man. It was something within the individual, within the being

of each. What was it? It was poise, I believe—mental poise and physical poise—mental poise from a balanced education, builded on a broad foundation; physical poise from courage, the courage from confidence, the confidence inspired by KNOWING. There was also another difference—their speech reflected it, their little mannerisms betrayed it. What was it? Something about their appreciation of the finer things of life—art in its multitude of forms, poetry, song, and more than all else, life itself.

I felt that I lacked that poise, that courage, that knowledge. Life was not giving me its all. Will my college training do for me what I expect? I shall give the university a chance; I shall help myself. Hence, I take my work seriously.

WANTED, AN EQUATION

Zooie! Some remarks not audible to by-passers and another student or engineer has become the victim of an autoist whose marksmanship is unerring in splashing mud and water on days when Jupiter Pluvius has turned on his faucet. The fellow who wrote, “Don't Mind the Rain,” has never been on our Campus during bad weather.

The engineers who are having a class in field work, machine laboratory, or some other course that requires working clothes, don't mind it so much because if they get a little mud on their overalls or breeches they will look as if they had been working and this may soften the instructor's heart a little. But woe to the fellow who has a date with his best girl at the Library. He will have to run home and change his clothes and then run back again. By this time he will find his girl busily engaged with some candleleg, probably trying to find a four-letter word meaning “love intensely.”

The roadways around Brown Hall have been greatly improved. About the best place not to walk during wet weather is just east of the Chemistry building. Dozens of victims are caught in this trap every time a certain hole in the pavement gets full of water. It seems as though the autoist never misses this hole; probably because they cannot very well miss it and still stay in the roadway. Other bad places are the drive past Lord Hall and from the Union to Neil Avenue.

What seems to be needed is an equation that the motorists and Ford owners can use so that when they hit these holes the mud and water will all be concentrated on one spot, such as a curb stone or lamp post. Of course the same equation would not apply to every hole. A thorough study would have to be made along with various tests, such as viscosity of the mixture with so much rainfall, minimum angle of deviation, weight of mixture, texture and composition.

This might serve as thesis material for some bright civil engineer who likes to work harder than we do.

PROGRESS

About three or four centuries ago science, which had heretofore enjoyed a precarious existence from the time of the ancient Greeks to the end of the Middle Ages, began to expand with incredible speed. In all its previous existence a mere handful of men scattered over many centuries had made any worth while contributions to knowledge of nature. During this new era, however, men of unquestionable intelligence devoted their lives

and gave their utmost to the investigation of scientific principles and the establishing of scientific facts. The remarkable progress they made shows that their efforts were by no means insignificant. Most important of all, perhaps, was their questioning attitude, and its adoption by following workers. Galileo could not quite believe the theory which the ancient philosophers had expounded from their parlor chairs to the effect that the heavier a body is the faster it will fall. So he dropped a few stones of different sizes from the top of the tower of Pisa, and as they all struck the ground at the same time, he proved the falseness of the old doctrine. This idea of experiment, instead of dogmatic guessing, took root and spread, and before long the doubters found that the ancients had been fooling them in many ways for a long time.

The fundamental theories and basic laws of the physical sciences were discovered during this period, as a result of the new activity. The striking fact is that with a very few exceptions these men worked solely because of their interest and desire to learn the truth, with no prospect of financial reward for whatever they might do. Up to the beginning of the nineteenth century, approximately, there was a great mass of scientific data and theory worked out in an altruistic spirit, with little idea of the coming revolution of things the work was to effect.

The period following this one includes the present, and is the period of practical application. The old spirit did not promptly die out and give way to the new one, but the trend that way began and has continued up to the present time. Science has invaded every phase of life and affects all civilized people, because useful things have been caused to happen by application of scientific theory. It is unnecessary to say that the results have been beneficial. Yet it is possible that in the scramble to put theories to work original investigation itself has suffered. This may be because there is really no new field for research or nothing new to discover, but men who have said that have always been proven wrong. It may be because such work becomes increasingly difficult as more and more progress is made.

The engineer is a development of the practical side of science. He is, with basic scientific training, fundamentally a scientist, but generally interested only in a phase of scientific development which promises practical results. Some time a saturation point will be reached in the possible applications of the scientific knowledge of the day. Some applications have reached such a state of perfection little change is ever made in their design. When a thing has become so standardized, persons not trained as engineers can duplicate it.

A modern engineer should be prepared to make some original researches of his own. If the cycle of investigation and application which we have traced through the first swing is turning once more toward the pure research of the corresponding earlier swing, we can reasonably expect it to be more extensive than the first one. Maybe our courses are too practical.

PUBLICITY

The Engineers' Round Up has become quite an institution here. We always enjoy ourself all over when we are attending one, and everybody else seems to be having a rip-roaring time. But lots of engineers missed the last one because its existence was so cleverly concealed. Remarkable feat, that, getting off a big annual event without letting the news leak out. Worthy of Sherlock Holmes himself. Valuable asset in wartime, the Engineers' Council. They could mobilize 10,000,000 men and wage the battle to conclusion without letting the news leak out.

HITCHCOCK TO CONVENTION

During November, Dean Hitchcock was sent as a delegate to the Thirty-eighth Annual Convention of the Association of Land Grant Colleges, for which meeting he was called upon to prepare two papers, one for the general session and one for the Engineering section. The first paper was a discussion of a paper by President R. A. Pearson of Iowa State University entitled, "The Especial Responsibility Before the Land Grant Colleges at This Time." The paper delivered before the Engineering section was upon the subject of "Cooperation in Detention and Conservation of Natural Resources of the State." In the presentation of this paper Dean Hitchcock took advantage of the opportunity and dwelt upon several phases of conservation work in which the Engineering College has been active since the beginning of the University. At the close of the session of the Engineering section the Dean was elected chairman of the section for the ensuing year.

On Saturday, December 6th, Dean Hitchcock addressed the Engineers' Club of Columbus upon the World Power Conference held in London during the past summer. In addition to giving the members of the Club some idea of the magnitude of this conference, and the method of handling the large number of papers presented, he touched upon the main technical features of eight of the leading power stations which he visited in England and France.

CRITICISM

Sometime during his life the engineer will meet somebody's criticism. He can avoid this only by doing nothing at all. The criticism will be both favorable and adverse, and too much of the former may have a bad effect unless he keeps his sense of proportion. He may be deluded into believing he knows more than he does, or that his works are more important than they are. The engineers, above the men of any other profession, should be able to analyze the true worth and significance of both himself and what he has done.

He should avoid false modesty by knowing values, accepting in his own mind praise he has earned, and turning a deaf ear to that for which he knows there is no basis. But he is only human; everybody likes praise whether they admit it or not. A sweeping generalization, you say, for which there is no proof? Try it and you will find that it bears the test of laboratory trial.

If the criticism is unfavorable, it will be destructive or constructive. Which type it is should make little difference to him, for he should heed and act on any justified criticism. If it is not clear whether or not it is justified, he should consider the man who offers it. This will also largely determine what kind of criticism is given: constructive or destructive. A business man, for instance, might be quite capable of criticising the handiwork of an engineer, without giving along with it some helpful suggestions for improvement. One engineer criticising another's work would probably have some sound ideas for correcting the errors he points out. The criticism of instructors' is usually of type. The critic may be the less able of the two and yet make a just criticism.

The way a man takes criticism is a good index of his character. Men who work hard on something occasionally overlook faults because they are so wrapped up in the work that they are blinded to the mistakes in it. They might profit by the criticism of one with another perspective. To dodge or try to pass on criticism honestly given only lowers a man in the esteem of other people.