



## A FRESHMAN SOCIETY.

Something Like The Wigwam Needed in First Year.

To the Editor of YALE ALUMNI WEEKLY:

Sir:—Your excellent editorial on "The Wigwam," in the issue of the 3d inst., gives occasion for the expression of a thought which has been in my mind for some time, as to the kernel of truth in the criticisms lately made of social conditions at Yale, especially those relating to the Sophomore societies.

Yale has always been distinguished for its democracy. Equality of opportunity has been the rule there as completely as anywhere in the world; and this, more than anything else, has given to Yale life its charm and power. There never has been and never will be any intentional weakening of this rule. But occasionally peculiar social developments, resulting from changing conditions, may temporarily interfere with its free play.

It is sometimes said that the influence of the Sophomore societies is bad; and this, I think, means—in language apt to the above text—that they interfere with the rule of equality of opportunity. Under existing conditions this seems to be true. Is the trouble in the societies or in the conditions?

Membership in a Sophomore society, because of the prominence it gives and the association it occasions, undoubtedly is an advantage with respect to other social honors, and one which naturally grows with the size of the classes, if the society limitations remain the same. To assert this, is not to criticise, but merely to state a fact.

It is quite legitimate that one college honor should increase the chances of future honors. But an honor which is to have this effect should be won in open competition. If election to a Sophomore society is such an honor, all Freshmen should have an equal opportunity to compete for it. Under existing conditions, as it seems to me, this equality of opportunity is not found. The evil, however, seems to be the natural result of the conditions. Elections to Sophomore societies depend very largely upon pre-collegiate circumstances, especially upon reputation at the larger schools and associations formed in and through them. But can this fact be made a charge against the societies? Does it not result from the fact that the life of Freshman year fails to afford satisfactory tests and evidence of character and ability?

Whether the Sophomore societies should change their methods, is for the members to decide. But evils resulting from outside conditions may be avoided, independently of their action, by changing the conditions. And as to them, I make a single suggestion. Did not the evil which exists find its way in because of the abolition of the large Freshman societies? What caused the abolition, I do not know. Their sins, presumably, were sufficient to demand their destruction. Probably they should not be revived. But is there not need of something which shall supply what the old Freshman societies did supply—opportunity for all to show during Freshman year what they are as men among men, without regard to who they are or whence they came; which shall afford equality of opportunity in this respect in the first year of the college course?

What the organizers of "The Wigwam" have done, is good in itself and

is evidence of appreciation of needs. But in the line of your thought and mind, organizations of like purpose, on a somewhat broader basis, perhaps, seem especially needed in Freshman year.

Very truly yours,  
THOMAS THACHER, (YALE, '71.)  
New York, Feb. 7, 1898.

## Phi Beta Kappa Meetings.

At the regular meeting of the Phi Beta Kappa Society, held on the evening of February 2d, several marked changes in the character of the Society's meetings were decided upon. Heretofore the meetings have been held once a month in some recitation or lecture room and the chief interest of the meeting has been in papers and addresses by members of the Faculty. Hereafter the meetings will be held every two weeks and in the room of some member of the Society. The members of the Society will in turn read papers on some interesting subject. This new departure is expected to make the meetings less formal than they have been and to make them more of a social gathering. The regular routine business of the Society will be disposed of at the beginning of the meeting and then the members will be entertained as shown above. The papers for the next meeting will be read by H. B. Wright, '98, and Franklin Booth, '98.

## Sophomore Surveying.

A change in the scheme of mathematical study of Sophomore year has been made in the privilege of substituting surveying, course 260b of the Catalogue for the work of the course of Sophomore Mathematics. This privilege is extended to members of Professor Richards's division in mathematics only. The course in surveying is given by Professor Beebe and covers the second half of the year. There are five hours of work to count as three hours, as follows: A recitation on Wednesday morning of every week from 10.30 to 11.30, and field work from 2 to 3.50 on Tuesdays and Thursdays for one division of ten men, and another division will have field work on Mondays and Fridays from 2 to 3.50.

The field work consists of the ordinary operations of land surveying, leveling, and elementary topography; the office work consists of plotting surveys from field notes; determination of areas from the map and by numerical calculation; map-drawing, plane and topographical, and examination of instrumental errors. The first recitation in the new course was held last Wednesday.

## Gifts to the Library.

The University last week came into possession of two valuable gifts of manuscripts which have been placed in the Chittenden Library. One of these is the original manuscript of the notes and sermons of Reverend Timothy Edwards, a celebrated theologian and father of Jonathan Edwards, afterwards President of Princeton University. It is dated 1719. Mr. Charles Gormly of Pittsburg, Pa., whose brother, Edwin C. Gormly, was a graduate of Yale in the Class of Sixty-Six, is the donor of this gift.

The second gift is a copy of the Ulster County Gazette of January 4, 1800, containing an account of the opening of the Congress of 1800, and the first address of President John Adams. This comes to Yale through Mrs. Henry Barnes of New Haven.

## DEGREES AT MID-YEAR.

President Eliot Advocates Them in His Annual Report.

[Correspondence of YALE ALUMNI WEEKLY.]

Cambridge, Feb. 9.—The annual report of President Eliot, which appeared during the week, is characteristic of the author. These reports are attracting more attention each year because the ability of President Eliot to carry forward his plans to ultimate realization becomes each year more apparent. He dominates the governing boards of the University, the committees and the Faculty. When his measures are voted down he doggedly brings them forward again until he exhausts the opposition. He won the fight for the elective system in this way and recently the enlargement of the suffrage in the election of Overseers. So his annual reports come to be regarded as forecasts of the future policy of the University. Like an expert at chess, he looks ahead and announces moves in advance.

In the current report, the most radical feature is the proposal to confer degrees twice a year. Such a step, when viewed from Yale standpoints, encounters immediately the objection that it threatens the solidarity of the College life by intruding upon the organization in classes. But here at Harvard it is a natural step in pursuance of the policy to which the College is committed. The elective system has already invaded the class organization and deprived it of much of its charm. The proposal of President Eliot, although it comes as an innovation, to supersede an established custom of more than two hundred and fifty years, is likely to receive the favorable consideration of the Corporation.

In advocacy of the change the President says: "The English and German universities count residence by one term or semester, and confer degrees several times during the year; and in this country the University of Chicago has set an example of conferring degrees four times a year. It has been the practice of Harvard from its foundation to confer degrees only once a year—a very natural practice so long as residence was counted only by the year, and a specified length of residence was the most important qualification for the degree. But now that the passing of examinations on a definite number of courses or half-courses of instruction has become the most important qualification for a degree, some reasons come into view for conferring degrees twice a year.

"The requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts being to pass the examinations in eighteen full courses of study, persons who have passed in sixteen courses within three years have before them but a scant half-year's work; yet they must wait a whole year to get the degree. Again, short-residence students who seek a degree from Harvard may easily find one year too short to accomplish their purposes, and yet two years may be too long. When students in college suffer some prolonged illness, which makes it impossible for them to pursue their studies for three or four months, they generally have to spend an extra year in attaining their degree, although the real loss of time was only half a year.

"When a young man has failed to obtain his degree in four years through some neglect of duty, or through misfortune, he is now obliged to wait for his degree until the end of a fifth year, although his deficiencies may amount to much less than a year's work. In all these cases there would be great ad-

vantage in a second date for conferring degrees, a date not far removed from the tenth of February."

It will be seen that this move on the part of the President aims at the present four-year term required for a degree. Already the four years course is shortened for those students entering the Law and Medical departments by allowing them to enter the professional schools after three years in the College if a certain amount of work has been performed, such students, however, receiving their college degrees only after four years from their matriculation has expired. The President now proposes to allow students completing the required eighteen courses to obtain the degree in three and a half years. This point gained, it will be but a short and easy step to a three years' course for all who can complete the required work in the time.

TO UNITE HARVARD AND M. I. T.

Of equal interest, perhaps, to College men is the progress of recent negotiations looking to a union of Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The President reports that "on the 12th of April, 1897, the President and Fellows invited the government of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to consider whether some plan could not be devised for a useful alliance between the several schools of applied science in Boston and Cambridge. The government of the institute having indicated their willingness to confer with the President and Fellows on this subject, committees of conference were appointed by the two institutions, and proceeded to make a thorough examination of the subject. At the meeting of the President and Fellows on June 21, the committee to confer with the committee of the Institute having made a preliminary report, it was voted 'that this board is willing to modify or limit the present scheme of instruction in technical subjects at Cambridge if the Corporation of the Institute is willing to consent to some satisfactory plan for the ultimate union of the two institutions.' At the close of the academical year no conclusion had been reached."

SECONDARY SCHOOLS ELECTIVES.

In view of the increased attention that is being paid to instruction in secondary schools by college authorities, particularly to the end that uniform admission requirements may be agreed upon, the remarks of President Eliot on the subject of extending the elective system in the schools are significant. His attitude that no particular studies should be required for admission to college, provided only there has been a sound training of some sort, is strange doctrine. If students are to be admitted to colleges without any knowledge of Greek and Latin, there will be further protest from the friends of classical education. Dr. Eliot says in this connection:

"Harvard College has long represented the principle of election of college studies, and has found nothing but advantage in the free publication of that principle. It is natural that the college should seek to further the adoption of the same principle in secondary education and in requirements for admission to college.

"At the same time Harvard College has no desire to make its own terms of admission lower or easier. Its effort has always been in quite the opposite direction. In its past efforts to raise the standard of admission requirements

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