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THE HARVARD VAGABONDS

"Up at Harvard, which is in Massachusetts, someone has thought of a new idea. It must have been a student." So runs a despatch, announcing the introduction of a system that allows students to drop in at classes whenever and wherever they please. Thinking it over, our own Liberal Arts School might see something in the idea, even if it does come from Harvard. There are at Penn State several men to whom students would by no means be loathe to listen, and it is not beyond reason that these professors will welcome them. Aside from visits by self-declared commenters now and then, Penn State (so far removed from civilization that even the Pennsylvania Railroad can play tyrant with it) hears no voice from afar except in Sunday Chapel, when occasionally a minister from Altoona and even Philadelphia may lecture. And it seems that any opportunity that would enable students to listen to the greatest of their own faculty ought to be welcomed by that body.

In brief, the new idea of which Harvard is so proud, is to allow students to attend classes in which they are not registered. The only objection we can think of is from the Treasurer's office, but it is reasonable to assume that if a student takes the trouble to attend a course for which he does not pay, he will emerge sooner or later with enough knowledge to make up for the financial loss. There is, as some may hint, the difficulty that there are no courses here which a student would voluntarily attend. But that is a lie. We know several.

"TO BE, OR NOT TO BE?"

After years of criticisms which branded it as one of Penn State's many useless organizations, condemned its laxity in enforcing rules and censured its disorganization, the Interfraternity Council will have a splendid opportunity to stage a "comeback" during the newly-instituted three-day conference which will be held here between semesters. Such a conclave may be used as a force to re-establish the organization in the faith and esteem of even the most confirmed doubter. Or it might result in a farce that will evoke more and more bitter reprimands from the conscientious censors.

Problems of almost every nature will confront the attendants of the conference. If these are handled discreetly and put into practical use after the discussion dies, they may prove valuable not only to the Council and individual fraternities but to the College as well. Under "old business," foremost among others, towers the problem of fraternity rushing. After the countless words that have been wasted debating violations of this ruling particularly, the Interfraternity Council should realize that no penalty short of a heavy cash fine (not even temporary suspension of membership) will assure the results long desired. Brazen infringements that are committed annually defy the power and authority of the Interfraternity Council and are a bland insult to its very existence. The worm must turn.

Second semester pledging, a system of merit, may be discussed as a capable substitute. During the parley the status of visitors at dances might be settled definitely and defiant miscreants duly and actually punished. In this way the number of unwholly stag lines—many of them are ineligible as visitors—may dwindle considerably.

Outstanding among the items of "new business" is the fraternity co-operative buying plan, one of the safest and most economical ever proposed and a system which has been used successfully in leading institutions of the West. A new arrangement of representation, whereby the president of every house automatically becomes a member of the Interfraternity Council, suggests a method of re-organization which might seat more interested legislators in the Greek Letter Congress. Methods of raising fraternity scholarship, submission of omnipotent cliques, faculty-student harmony and a possible system of wardrobe checking at house dances are problems of lesser importance which might engage the councilmen between sips at the proposed tea discussion groups.

Created for the purpose of fostering good-will among the Penn State's many brotherhoods and for crystallizing their common problems, the convention may attain its end by inaugurating radical reform and by taking definite action on vital issues. If the conclave becomes merely a veritable word orgy, as such affairs tend to be, it may bring an avalanche of smothering criticism upon itself and the organ sponsoring it. Should it prove a circus of speakers and speeches, a carnival of applause of another social function, it will not have justified its existence. Nor will it warrant its repetition. But should it bear practical and definite accomplishments whose very nature commands respect, the Interfraternity Council may claim an admirable son, and timely saviour.

L. H. B., Jr.

The Bullosopher's Chair

Smuthers:—I see you were down at the Greek Drama the other night.

"With the emphasis on the word down. Aside from the fact that I convinced a senior (Liberal Arts) that Sophocles was a playwright and not a Persian concubine, I spent a disappointing evening. Not a person, save one, on the stage knew as much about Greek drama as he knew about a Turkish bath.

Smuthers:—But the music, Bullosopher, the low, sweet wonderful music, the lights, the incense, and the girls!

"With all respect to the efforts of Director Cloetingh—Booh! Since when has the drama become a pageant of bare legs and mumbled rhetoric and discordant instru-

ments, since when has Sophocles become the plaything of every squirt of a dramatic company? I wouldn't object at all, Smuthers, if there had been an honest experimentation; but Oedipus Tyrannus, or rather Rex as the programs had it, was palpably an attempt to aid the box office, no matter what happened to Sophocles' play, that I am glad, Smuthers, yes glad, that the endeavor failed to produce anything artistic. If it had, Greek plays would soon degenerate to burlesque shows and a tawdry to economy. But they probably will anyway."

Smuthers:—You criticism, Bullosopher, is unduly harsh. Not that the Players did not have it coming to them. As a matter of fact, that makes no difference. All college enterprises, deserving or no, should be praised, and the poorer the performance the louder the hosannas. For if you persist in realism, sooner or later you will find yourself razed from pillar to post as a Destructive Pessimist, and then even Sophocles cannot save you. You recall, no doubt, the criticism of the Thespians last year and how the college took you to task for describing it as a pedestrian metropolitan critics praised it generously, indeed with suspicious generosity. . . .

"Perhaps, Smuthers, since the Players are a College Institution I ought to be less truthful! I'm sorry, Smuthers, but it can't be done. If I said that Anton Hardt played Tiresias as the blind seer was supposed to be played, I'd squirm guiltily, even as I did when my companion confided that he thought the chorus, for co-eds, had pretty decent ankles. For that cast, Smuthers, gave an excellent exhibition of how to turn Greek tragedy into American farce. Without Ben Ricker, the exhibition would have been perfect. As Oedipus, Ricker, though he did not quite contrast the early and later Oedipus, just about saved the show from the idiotic gimmicks on the part of the chorus, that passed as classical dancing. The play as it is written calls for a chorus of Theban senators and since maidens are so much more effective for advertising purposes than a bunch of old graybeards, Director Cloetingh performed what Sophocles would have regarded as a sexual miracle. Indeed, it seemed as if he had chosen Oedipus as a means of presenting this group of co-eds for the delectation of an audience, who, strangely enough, didn't delect, so to speak. True, they did every now and then go through a mysterious ritual, Grecian by courtesy alone, with the appropriate debutante shuffle, but when the play called for the chorus to speak, they moved much in the manner of sick kittens anxious for milk. The accents were bad in the first place, and the mumbblings of Urquhart as the Priest of Zeus and the high treble of Miss Simon as the most ineffective Jocasta that I have known, did not help matters. Even Ricker at times dropped his vowels into his beard, where they remained hidden for eternity. But Ricker, I understand, was physically in poor shape and should have been in bed rather than on the stage; as it was he gave ample proof that he is one of the greatest amateur actors on the stage today. At his best, Ricker could have pulled the play out of the fire; he alone caught the Greek spirit, he alone speaking in the shadow of Roman arches (to borrow a phrase, arches were never used by the Greeks save for their sewers).

Smuthers was conscious of the deep and awful tragedy of Oedipus but handicapped by ill health and by a treatment utterly foreign to Greek intentions and hence pitifully inadequate, he could not possibly succeed. For the play was too much the Oedipus of Arthur Cloetingh and too little of Sophocles. One could forgive a splendid interpretation, however judiciously modernized, but here precisely is the point. The Oedipus as presented Saturday had none of the Greek tragic feeling (on which its success depends) and none of the modern tragic feeling. To be comprehensible, the play ought to have been given in a shorter and grimmer fashion, the chorus had to be men not women, and if the latter, its interludes ought to have been made smaller. How many among the audience commiserated, for instance, that the real climax of the play was not the optical damage that Oedipus commits upon himself, nor even the spiritual suicide which he undergoes, the real climax of the play is in the scene wherein Oedipus struggles the shepherd into blurring out the truth of his terrible heritage. And this effect is lost partly because of Ricker's execrable failure to portray the gradual transformation of over-confidence to utter despair in the character of Oedipus, and chiefly because of the chorus' feminine impotence to play the part of masculine brute force. In another play, the Oedipus of Colonel Sophocles, the Theban King is resigned to his fate and accepts it, but in Oedipus Tyrannus he is utterly crushed by destiny, and again this is not set forth by the Players. So on the whole, I say, that if State College did not get the Oedipus of Oedipus by Sophocles, it did get a tragedy that was poignant. But Penn State idealism, if I may grow lyrical about it, moves me to congratulate Director Cloetingh for even daring to present a tragedy Zeus knows it was complete."

"The money is to be blow up" (Which the author translates as "L'argent est fait pour qu'on le fasse sauter") "She is a wicked" "Who should worry?" "What's the best to do with that kind of a girl?" "Pecorini!" "Never mind. . . we had a nice 'affair' to get."

J. E. A.

The Book Lover

IN THE LAND OF AMAZONS
L'Amour en Amerique, par Ferri-Pisan, Les Editions de France, Paris, 20 fr.

M. Ferri-Pisan has perpetrated one of the most unfair libels against America that has come out of Europe in many a moon. It is not unfair because it is untrue; for it isn't. Every character in it is alive, flesh and blood, and perfectly American. The trouble is that not one of them has an even dubious character; they are all so contemptible that it is doubtful if any recent American author has created men and women more so, what with the anti-vice forces still functioning. . . . The trouble lies in the fact that only a part, a pitifully small part, of the love life of America is presented. It is the stuff that gets into the tabloids. There is no measured survey of country-wide conditions, there is not even a pretense at impartiality; the book is devoted to one-sided, bitter, and unfair attacks against the "feminism" which the author pictures as having made slaves and worse of American men.

But perhaps M. Ferri-Pisan had reasons for not getting at the whole truth. For instance, he comes to grief almost every time he attempts to string together more than two or three English words. A few samples, literally transcribed:

"The money is to be blow up" (Which the author translates as "L'argent est fait pour qu'on le fasse sauter") "She is a wicked" "Who should worry?" "What's the best to do with that kind of a girl?" "Pecorini!" "Never mind. . . we had a nice 'affair' to get."

Americans in the U.S. are invariably described as either "cynical, or hypocritical, dishonest, or hypocritical, or . . . but write your own combinations, being careful not to include any traits which might, by any standard, be judged admirable.

If it is ever made available to the American public—which is ferretly to be hoped—this little masterpiece will probably cause the American Legion to pass resolutions of regret that they did not lynch the author while they were in France. And, if it does nothing else, it will supply thousands of dollars worth of ammunition to these gentlemen of the cloth whose duty it is to depict America as the place which the Cities of the Plain tried—in vain, it would seem—to emulate.

J. E. A.

Penn State Grangers Expect Active Season

With the successful culmination of the Grange Memorial Dormitory drive, the Penn State Grange under its newly installed Master, Thomas W. Cattanach, '29, is contemplating an eventful season. The local lodge was the banner Grange, having made the largest single contribution and having considerably exceeded its quota.

Progress on a proposed Agricultural Pageant, another Grange activity, has been halted by the untimely illness of Walter C. Gumbel '28, who was supervising the project. The staging of the spectacle was scheduled for Easter.

A newly elected lecturer of the organization Miss Jane Creasy '29, is arranging a series of educational lectures, that will soon be announced.

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Columbia, S. D. Sept 9, 1926

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The Playgoer

Beautiful but strange. These were the words that for us Saturday evening best seemed to characterize the Players' production of Oedipus and that still seem as descriptive as any phrase we find.

These were beauty of an Hellenic sort in the words and situations of the play and, in some measure, in the general effect on the eye, there was beauty too, it must be granted, though not of an Hellenic sort, in the modern lighting effects, the well chosen music, the dancing maidens. But there was also a strangeness—a modern in the whole vast grim tragedy, to a helenist the jarring notes that would not down.

To be specific we liked the play. We felt that the audience was strange, but genuinely held and moved, though perhaps they could scarcely tell how or why. The touch as that Sophocles grips men now as he did of old and that this immortal tragedy seizes the soul in its every situation. It was some sinister, half-mystic force that reached out from the stage and laid hold of all the hearts in the hall. It was not necessary to get every word—where we were it was nearly impossible—the re-entics, fated progress of grief swept over on like the development of a mighty opera.

Mr. Cloetingh is to be congratulated for his effort and deeply thanked for his courage and determination. It is no slight task to put on a Greek tragedy; and it takes unusual courage to venture upon one of the greatest, if not the greatest of all. To have seen to have lived through the Oedipus Tyrannus of Sophocles is to have been given the rare treat of experiencing again for a little while the sublime heights and depths of the poignancy of the race.

The cast as a whole did creditable work; but one feels that it came just short of that inevitability and overwhelming capacity that carries the audience away beyond self.

Mr. Ricker, in his terrible and difficult role was splendid. Small wonder is it that, striving these past months to fill that role, the protagonist of our play has nearly ruined his health. We felt very much for Mr. Ricker Saturday evening, knowing his condition, and yet how grandly and how grimly he made the ancient King of Thebes suffer again before us.

This, as it should be, the part of the presentation that will live in our hearts' memory.

Our opening phase applies particularly to the "chorus." They were lovely, in their group effects and in their individual selves, and they did their assigned work well. But we cannot avoid the conviction, though we went to the play resolved to down it, that girls do not belong in this

Alumni of Fraternities Meet to Hold Smoker

(Continued from first page)

anager of athletics, will talk on "Early Days in Penn State Fraternities." He was a student when there were but three national fraternities at the College and has followed their development ever since. "The Motive Power in Fraternities" will be discussed by Dean Arthur R. Warnock.

14 Annual Affair

This annual party for the Greek letter alumni was started two years ago as a means of conveying this campus group together in the interest of all Penn State fraternities, and it is now looked forward to with more than usual interest by college and town fraternity graduates alike.

One of the main purposes of the gathering, at this time is to give details of the approaching Interfraternity Conference to be held here February 15th, 16th and 17th, and to receive plans for any assistance that may be given by the alumni groups.

The committee, of which J. W. Brennan is chairman, urges that all fraternity alumni attend the gathering, especially those newcomers to the faculty ranks and in the town who are affiliated with college social fraternities.

Were we asked point blank to choose between the lovely princesses and the ancient eldes, we should probably be honest and take the girls—from personal preference, but the point we are making is the Sophoclean concept. The modern, as even the later Hellenic theatre, wants no chorus for tragedy. Perhaps a truer way to deal with the situation would be to eliminate all choral effects and to use a small group of old men as stage "audience." "Yes," you may say, "but too play wouldn't seem Greek," to which we can only reply, "Well?" And so we conclude, as we began, with the words: beautiful but strange.

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