

Notes on Higher Culture at Indiana University

On House-Mothers

By WAD ALLEN.

A GREAT amount of rumpus is being raised right now about the latest scheme which has been devised by our learned keepers in their annual attempt to make the University a safer place at which the children shall gather for their bath of learning. The scheme has to do with house-mothers. It is not the purpose of this article to take any particular stand in the controversy. If this effort has any purpose at all, it is to look into the future, and outline some of the problems which will have to be faced in the event that this new measure is enforced. A careful survey of the matter presents more angles than does a fourteen year old cow, so only a few of them will be suggested here.

It is not believed that there will be any shortage of candidates for these house-mother positions. In fact one fraternity house has reported three car-loads of applications along with the hopeful information that they are still coming in strong. A young man was dispatched to ascertain the authority of this statement, and he returned three days later almost totally blind and with a new pair of shoes. He had read the first three hundred offers, but he failed to make any comment on them.

Bearing in mind the bounteous quantity of these aspirants, the most important thing to consider now is the manner of their selection. With such a large number to pick from, it will be rather difficult to make a correct selection the first time. One lodge has announced that its members will accept a good bass singer for their quartette. Another group reports the need of a red-hot piano player. And still a third suggests that they want some one who can tie a bow tie.

For those who know just what they want, the matter of selection will not offer such a great problem. There are others, however, who are not so fortunate. In view of this fact, a suggested list for house-mother examinations will be included here which may be of some service in making a choice.

1. Does the applicant know French, German, Spanish, Italian, or Greek? This will make no particular difference, but it will be nice to find out.
2. Can she qualify as referee for horse-shoe, pinocle, penny-pitching contests, and gang fights?
3. Does she know the story of the Three Bears?
4. Does she have a lot of relations, and, if so, do they get out much?
5. Is she afraid of lightening?
6. Does anyone in her family have the rheumatism?
7. Is she a heavy sleeper, and, if so, how heavy?
8. What influenced her to become a house-mother? Parents? Teacher? Books?
9. Does she enjoy eating crackers in bed?

Soon after the mother has been chosen the problem of housing these new appendages must be solved. Unless some sort of sound proof vault can be produced to provide them with living quarters, their average life will be shorter than that of a piccolo artist. This brings up problems of construction, and, in some cases, a little figuring in the fifth dimension which has no place in this story. However, there is a report being circulated about that certain of our more far-seeing Boy's Clubs will decline to take any form of architectural action until the selection of the inmate has been made and her size has been definitely ascertained. The new house-mother can be measured if this plan is carried out, and the additional building which is done can be made to fit the occasion. All of our fraternity houses will take on new forms, and, in some instances, it has been suggested that they can be designed in a manner which will spell out the word Mamma. This doubtless will inaugurate a new architectural epoch.

The question of what shall constitute proper care of the house-mother is another problem to be faced, should this new venture be introduced. In cases where her abode is placed on the first floor, she will be so far away from the other in-

habitants of the building that she might be stolen during the night. Carrying the idea still further, someone might try to steal her during the night, and she might not be there. And, still further, she could go home after a certain time in the evening and nobody would miss her. But this is entirely off the subject. Not only must she be guarded, but she must also be amused. All sorts of games will have to be devised for her enjoyment, and it even has been suggested that intra-mural bridge games will be forced upon us in an endeavor to afford her sufficient exercise.

It is time now to look into the benefits which will be derived from this proposed institution. The outstanding advantage has been pointed out to us by the inventor of the scheme, and it is labeled the "economic" one. By an economic reason, it is implied that these house-mothers can be the cause of some great savings in the keeping of a house. For instance, it is believed that the presence of these matrons practically would eliminate the apperaance of tobacco-juice on the walls and ceiling of the living room, or that it would cause what may be labeled an economy of expression. That is, it might cause the stamping out of such highly useless and impractical expressions as, "Pipe down, Freshman," or "Where in the Hell's my shirt?" This idea of economy might also be elaborated upon. Later on, meetings could be held at which the Mothers would report on all that they had saved during the week. One might say, "I saved a potato," or another, "I saved an old shoe."

And, looking further for beneficial elements, it may be supposed that the intrusion of house-mothers among our many other activities will have some effect upon the fraternity songs. If these matrons move into the house, many of the most popular fraternal vocal numbers never can be sung again. There will be a new school of song introduced, and this will be the "Mother Song" series. In some instances the song might be "That Old Irish Mother of Mine," but in most cases it couldn't be. New songs such as "Mother Sig," "Mother Delt," or even "Mother Tukolwartz" would become the vogue, and old favorites like "You've been a Mother to More Than Me," might be revived.

It is rather difficult to foresee just what the effect on

University life will be after all this has become a well established and smooth working system. It will mean that our freshmen will be spared the first few weeks of agony spent in crying for their Mammās. It will necessitate the abolishment of punishment for all unruly yearlings simply because there will be none of these things to punish. In fact, it will cause such a revolutionary change in existing customs that, perhaps, the best way to summarize the entire thing, would be to draw a sort of verbal picture portraying a typical night scene in a fraternity house during the contemplated Age of House-Mothers.

Suppose it to be about 9:30 o'clock on most any week night after spring vacation. The scene is in the living room of the Epsilon Rho Sig house, and it is evidently a special night of celebration because the freshmen are still up and about. All the older boys have grouped themselves about the piano, and are singing. Mother is settled in her favorite rocking chair, and, as she clicks her knitting needles in rhythm with the song, she continually exhorts her charges. "Sing, Rudolph, sing," she says, or, "What's the matter Martin? Does your eyes hurt? Let me see your tongue. Sing, boys, sing." This, until the host of lusty voices swells the wave of dashing song, and the plaintive strains of "Home Sweet Home" blast forth upon the night with a reverberating force which shocks the very hearth-stones of the manor.

But look! We've missed the most engaging sight of all. It is the Freshmen. They are up or, rather, down upon the floor; and such a time as they are having. "Choo-Choo twain come," chortels one of the little sprights; and blocks, carts, teddy-bears, everything, is scattered in wild profusion with the merriment which follows. Such riotus gaiety cannot last forever, however, and soon it can be noticed that old Mr. Sandman is coming this way. Bright, curly heads are dropped in listless abandon. The wheels of the train are stilled, and heavy eyelids shade the youthful fire in eyes which tire of dancing. The song has long since died. A calm, not unlike stupor, enshrouds the little nursery, and all is still save the creaking sound of Mother's rocker.

A tiny head is stirred. Two half-closed eyes gaze up into her face, and a voice, made husky by impending sleep, drawls

out this supplication, "Mrs. McDougal, why don't you sing us a song?" It is the lullaby time.

Slowly, the knitting is stowed into its basket. The head, till now bowed over drudgery, is poised to take off on its flight of song, and a voice almost steel-like in its purity of tone, pours forth a song which makes one strangely reminiscent. Ah, yes! We've heard this song before. It is the melody which we know. The words are new, and do not fit.

THE SONG.

M—Stands for the Money that I cost you.

O—Stands for the Orders from the Dean.

T—Stands for the Trouble that I'm causing.

H—the largest House-bills ever seen.

E—is for the Eye with which I watch you.

R—for the report on things I view.

Put them all together, they spell House-Maw,
A word which makes things awful tough on you.

Football Pep Session

First speaker: (To student body) Let's have no alibis!

Second speaker: (To student body) It's your fault we didn't win!

Order of Peons

Official Bulletin: All applicants for the Council of Peons must submit their names at once. The purpose of the Council is to assist in congealing student opinion. References must show that aspirant has never had an opinion on any campus question and that he has never engaged in discussion on any current event. It is planned to have the membership distributed among the various organizations; so each organization is urged to submit one candidate. He will probably be chosen whether he has the qualifications or not.

Rotarian Culture

Studiosness of culture-seeking Rotarians as announced by local press:

A few weeks ago Rotarians were told why the National Dairy Show should be and is of importance to the business and professional man.

This week Major Crea will tell us what National Defense means to all citizens. His subject is, "Bloomington and the National Defense Act."

This character of address does broaden the view of every man who has ability to think, and your program committee believes every Rotarian is a student and is after more information.

The Daily Student Confesses

Heroic stand taken by the Daily Student last year in the following audacious editorial defending the much maligned Babbitt. The bold face parts define the policy of the paper as being against intellectualism, in favor of boosterism, light and spasmodic criticism, and *immediate* gains, which are the striking earmarks of George F. himself.

Out in the proverbial "cold, cold world," where the stern problems of daily life prevent people from wearing their intellectualism on their coat sleeves, a defense of the Kiwanis and Rotary movements—dubbed by our super-thinkers "Babbitry,"—would be astounding. So seriously do the insiders and outsiders of such organizations take their endeavors and so thoroughly accepted are the benefits that it would sound strange to them that there should be any grounds for criticism.

Babbitts, deriving their appellation from Sinclair Lewis's character by that name, are the type of citizens who flit from committee meeting to luncheon to banquet to office and so on around the course of daily activity, always boosting something, but never pausing for deep reflection or study and thus missing some of the most worth while things in life. Certainly Indiana University is infested with Babbitts!

Obviously a Babbitt is superficial. He talks much about everything and knows relatively little about anything. He is ostentatious and bent on making himself a man of affairs without the cost of too much painful thinking on any one subject.

From such as these have been recruited the ranks of our civic organizations. Bringing it closer to home it can be said that we have perfect examples in the form of many of our campus organizations.

Disregarding the individual human element—if we did not do that we would forfeit any chance we might ever have of being recognized as intellectual—what has been the result of Babbitry? Has it been harmful? To some individuals who might have become powerful students if they had not been caught in this maelstrom of American life, it probably has. But on the whole we need only look at our vast cities, our parks, our play-grounds, our public libraries and multitudinous other products of united action to perceive what this "terrible scourge" has done.

If our Kiwanis and Rotary and Lions and other civic clubs are superficial and rather school boyish, more power to them. They may not be building great intellectual leaders, but they are filling human

needs as they meet them and creating happiness by their activities. They are performing those deeds which never would be performed if left to the self-centered dreamers. They are bringing men and women together for a deeper understanding and friendship and allaying the jealousies and suspicions that are quickened by estrangement.

The Daily Student has been called an exponent of Babbitry. We are proud of that accusation. It means that rather than attempt to parade ourselves as intellectualists we have boosted Indiana University, we have devoted our energies to getting action on immediate projects, we have condemned only lightly and spasmodically.

It is fortunate there are some to point out the weaknesses of Babbitry. But it is equally fortunate that we have Babbitry. It has its place in human existence, that place is important, and there is no workable substitute that is better. Intellectualism can solve many problems, but it can't change human nature or the psychology of the human mind.

Systematized Exultation

Social service of The Booster's Club by standardization of enthusiasm:

The student body can play a larger part in a fitting dedication of the Memorial Stadium this season by well organized yelling, properly conducted by competent yell leaders. It is for the student body to choose and to support its yell leaders. We ask that every student give support this afternoon at Stadium Field during the try-outs for yell leaders.

THE BOOSTERS CLUB.

Death Rattle

Dying struggles of boosterism as manifested in a Communique to the Daily Student:

What about that pep session yesterday? Where was the old time spirit? If our fight and pep among the students in the bleachers is going to be such as it was Wednesday what can we expect of the eleven men on the field? . . . What about taking this yell leader business more seriously?

Antimetabole

The following interesting article we read in "Music and Youth" under the title "Some True Anecdotes of Musical Tendencies in Animals."

A woman's voice at a concert once overcame a mouse's fear of man. Soon after the lady began her song a mouse was seen by those sitting

in front sauntering leisurely up and down close to the skirting of the platform. All attempts at driving it away failed, so entranced was it by the singing.

At the end of the song the little animal disappeared, but returned with a companion when the next song started. The two mice listened spellbound to the song, and at its conclusion they vanished, reappearing with a third mouse at the beginning of the next number. Eventually half-a-dozen mice trooped in regularly when each number began and vanished at its end.

Now we have a similar anecdote to tell that is no less interesting and hardly less true.

Once upon a time there came to Indiana University a woman with a very beautiful voice. About 8:00 o'clock one night approximately two thousand animals from the University gathered at the Men's Gymnasium to hear her sing. At the end of every song several hundred of the animals regularly trooped out. Finally, before the program was over, the last of the animals had gone so that there was no one left to whom the woman with the beautiful voice could sing the rest of her lovely songs.

So Long Alone

I have been so long alone . . .
The ribbon of smoke,
Trailing, climbing, falling,
From my cigarette,
Is no less stable than your love.

But now you were here . . .
Yet I am less alone,
For the you of those old memories
Your late staccato presence drowned
Is come again.