LIFE AT AN AMERICAN COLLEGE.

IT will perhaps be interesting to many of our readers to hear something about an American college. First let us say that an American college is entirely different from anything you have in England. Indeed, it is quite unlike any educational institution of the same grade in any part of the world. In this article we shall not treat further of its inner character than to remark that the nearest approach in Europe to an American college, in its curriculum, the age of its students, their attainments upon leaving, and its relation to the University—or in the States, to the professional schools—is the German gymnasium. In England, the great public schools bear some sort of resemblance to American colleges, chiefly in the curriculum, but it would be hard to find an American college man who would admit even so much. He is ever comparing Yale and Harvard with Oxford and Cambridge, and his dignity is wounded if you but suggest any other foreign "rival." It was said to be amusing to note the expression on the faces of the students in Yale College Chapel one day last autumn, when Lord Coleridge, in his address, informed them that the college and its students, the general air of the place, reminded him of Eton. Eton, forsooth! To compare an American college "man" with an English schoolboy!

An American youth enters college at about the age of eighteen. He has prepared himself in Virgil and Cicero, in Homer, Xenophon, and Euclid, perhaps at a private school in the city, or perchance from lack of means has been obliged to be his own tutor. He passes a somewhat rigid examination in the studies he has pursued and at once begins his four years' course at college. I will not speak at this time of the instruction he receives, but shall confine myself to a brief description of a typical college town and of a few peculiar characteristics of American college life.

The two great Universities of the New World are Harvard and Yale. They are easily first in the work already accomplished, in the efficiency of their instructors, the achievements of their alumni, and the prestige which attaches to acknowledged merit. If there is anything old in America it is these two seats of learning. Yale, as being the more familiar to the writer of this sketch, has been chosen as the representative American college. It is situated in New Haven, a city of about fifty thousand souls, on the northern shore of Long Island Sound, in the State of Connecticut, about seventy-five miles east of New York. The City of Elms is one of the most beautiful in America. Its long avenues, lined on either side with the stately trees from which it takes its name, its splendid dwellings, surrounded by well-kept lawns, the air of age and dignity and repose about the place, all render it peculiarly attractive to the scholar, and a fitting home for a great University. It has its factories, to be sure—what New England town has not?—but they are nearly all to be found at one end of the city, and do not disturb at all the quiet of the academic quarter. In the centre of the city is an immense square, called "the Green," on which stands the old State House, three churches, and a great number of magnificent elm-trees. Upon the adjoining square, and facing the Green, is the long line of college buildings, the "Old Brick Row," dating from the year 1750, and resembling more a collection of rude barracks or poorer class of New England factories than the buildings of a great college. In front of the old "row" stretches the "campus," a fine lawn some 150 by 700 ft., shaded by the ever-present ancient elms. At one end of the "row," and forming three sides of a quadrangle facing as many streets, stand the more recently erected college buildings, the two dormitories, Farnam and Durfee Halls, the Battell Chapel, Alumni Hall, and the Library, with the Art School building at the opposite end, behind South College on Chapel Street. To outward appearances the elms alone give a scholastic air to Yale. The really fine buildings are too new, the old buildings suggest too strongly the machinery, smoke, and bustle of a great factory, to impress the mind with any idea of academic or cloistered seclusion. But such as it is, it is Yale College, the alma-mater of thousands of distinguished and successful men who have gone from her halls well equipped for the struggles of life, and have, by great and solid achievement, shed lustre and renown upon her ancient name.

The youth of eighteen, upon entrance into the Freshman class, finds himself in a veritable little world by itself, a world of a thousand souls, wrapped up in their own affairs and those of the college, oblivious to all that is passing without, and busy with the cares and anxieties, the ambitions and disappointments, the rivalries and bitternesses of the little world within. The Freshman class usually numbers about one hundred and seventy-five, and is known by the year of its graduation. For example, the class which entered college last autumn is called the class of '88. The freshmen are the traditional enemies of the sophomores, or second-year men. The "sophs" never permit "freshie" to wear a tall hat, carry a cane, or sit upon the fence which surrounds the campus, until he has reached the year of discretion—that is, has become a sophomore—when the honour is conferred upon him with much ceremony and witty speech-making. To sit on the fence is a great privilege, which the three upper classes alone enjoy. The "fence" is the daily meeting-place, the rendezvous after lectures, the delight of the lazy, the place *par excellence* for a chat with one's fellows and a social cigar. On fine summer evenings the throng of students is great, the songs really fine; and with the big elms overhead, through which twinkle the lights from the old "row" mingled with the pale light of the moon, the effect is

simply unique and one long to be cherished in the memory.

The freshman has a hard time of it the first few months of his career. At night he is likely to be disturbed by a call from half a dozen sophomores, and be ignominiously put to bed, or compelled to sing a theorem of Euclid to the tune of "Yankee Doodle." If he refuses it goes still worse with him. His only revenge is to do the same things next year, not to his present tormentors, but to the poor freshmen who come after him. This is "hazing," a childish custom very prevalent years ago, and by no means dead in American colleges to-day, though I am glad to say it is surely, if slowly, disappearing. The great event of the first term was the "rush," recently abolished, I believe, by the authorities, like many another good old college custom. The rush was a trial of strength between the two under classes, aided and abetted by the two upper, the juniors attaching themselves to the freshmen, the seniors advising the sophomores as their historic allies. The rush took place in a large park, some distance from the college, and was witnessed by immense crowds, the number of carriages and fair faces reminding one of an impending polo match rather than a brutal college sport. To those who do not know what a rush is, let me say that the *modus operandi* is simply this :—The two classes, mustering perhaps a hundred and twenty each, are drawn up facing each other about fifty yards apart in solid phalanx, eight men abreast and fifteen deep. At a given signal they advance, and with slow and measured tread approach each other until the opposing armies meet. Then there is a terrible and a mighty pushing. No blows are struck. The front ranks with fists drawn back to the armpits, and with one long inhalation, bear the brunt of the attack. The class that can push the other back, can "rush" it off the field, is the victor of the day. The sport is rough, and though nominally a friendly trial of strength, it of necessity often excited bitter feelings, and frequently led to something more violent and dangerous than pushing. But it was a curious sight to witness, and the breathless hush that fell upon the multitude before the little armies met was such as you might fancy preceded the gladiatorial combats in the days of ancient Rome.

At Yale the class feeling, as it is called, is very strong. By that I mean the *esprit de corps* of each body of men who enter college at the same time. It is intensified by the "hazing," and fostered throughout the course by all the traditions and prejudice of a century and a half. A man seldom knows, intimately, any one not of his own class. In it alone he finds his companions, his "chum" with whom he "rooms," and forms those friendships that often last a lifetime.

The societies, which play so important a part in student-life at Yale, deserve a word of passing mention. I do not refer to the open debating clubs, but to the secret societies of junior and senior years. There are two of the former—Delta Kappa Epsilon, and Psi Upsilon ; and two of the latter—the Skull and Bones, and the Scroll and Key. To receive an "election" to either of the senior societies is regarded as the highest honour by the students. There are fifteen members of each society who are chosen from the incoming

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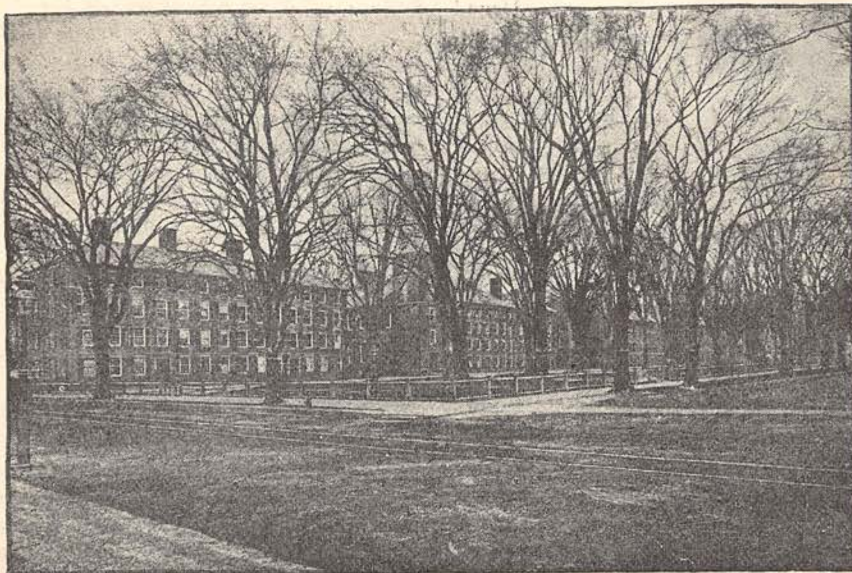
senior class by the fifteen members about to graduate or complete their course. Each society is incorporated under the laws of the State ; each owns a fine hall for meetings ; and each is invested with much secrecy and mystery which quite overawe the undergraduate mind.

The daily life of a student may be briefly stated. The great bell of the college arouses him from his slumbers at seven o'clock. He makes a hasty toilet and repairs to his "club" for breakfast. By "club" is meant simply the dining-room in any boarding-house in the vicinity of the college where six or a dozen men take their meals. Conning his lesson and making his breakfast at the same time, he neither masters the one nor enjoys the other. At eight the bell summons him to chapel, where the whole college assembles to profit by the reading of Scripture and prayer by the venerable President and the singing of the student choir. At 8.30 he attends his first lecture or recitation, which lasts an hour. He is then free to do as he pleases until noon, when the bell rings for attendance on the second recitation. At one he dines, and the afternoon is his own until five o'clock, when another lecture or recitation is held. He is absolute master of all the rest of his time. The dormitories are never locked. He can stay out of college all night, if he please, and no one is the wiser. There is no surveillance, no stringent rules. The authorities expect all to act like gentlemen, and, as a rule, the liberty and privileges are not abused. For sports there are boating and football, tennis and base-ball, and many others. The event of the junior year is the promenade concert or reception given in the Opera House in town by the class to their friends. It occurs in February and makes a pleasant break in the long winter term.



"THE OLD BRICK ROW."

The dormitory life is pretty much the same as in the English Universities, with this exception, meals are never served in the students' rooms. The graduation of every class is attended by numerous and impressive ceremonies, as if the old College would lay her hand in solemn and affectionate benediction on each alumnus as he leaves her halls for ever. Parents and guardians, sisters and sweethearts, all are present to witness the final triumph of their own particular hero. The exercises take place in the month of June, and last nearly a week. What with the prize-speaking, the Baccalaureate Sermon by the President on the Sunday before Commencement, the reading of the class histories on the "campus," when the foibles and weaknesses of each man are wittily exposed by the ruthless historian, the concert by the glee club, the game of base-ball with Yale's ancient rival, Harvard, and a host of minor festivities, the gaiety is fast and furious until Commencement Day, the last of the college course. Then the great procession of the alumni is formed, with the President at its head in his academic robes, and proceeds to the sound of music to the church upon the Green, in which the final ceremonies are performed. After the Salutatory Address in Latin is delivered by the scholar second on the roll of honour, follow a number of minor orations, interspersed with music, ending with the Valedictory Address by the student standing first in his class. The degrees are then conferred, and the alumni adjourn to the banquet given them by the President and Fellows. Thus ends the happiest time in an American boy's career. He carries with him a profound sense of his own littleness, which is perhaps the very best evidence that his schooling has not been altogether in vain.

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