

## IVY SUPERIORITY

Henry Morton Robinson

Gold and precious stones couldn't induce me to speak slightingly of Amherst, Bowdoin, Colgate or a whole alphabet of liberal arts colleges that turn out splendid facsmiles of the Ivy League product. I stand in awe and ignorance before the standards and accomplishments of the great technical schools like MIT and California Tech. Nor can I bring myself to say truly uncharitable things about those educational rabbit warrens known as State Universities, whose inmates, I hear from reliable sources, gradually learn the use of commas and can be trained to perform simple feats of logic connected with chain-store management, ethical embalming and other disciplines much revered by the American demos. All of which -- in a society that exalts the drum majorette above Minerva -- should be regarded, I suppose, as sheer gain "a triumph of mind over smatter" as Irwin Edman used to say.

Regrettably, however, these folkish activities have nothing to do with education as conceived by the eight eastern colleges that make up what is known as the Ivy League. Despite leveling influences that would "democratize" the B.A. Degree -- that is, being it down to the level of a vaccination certificate -- the Ivy colleges cling to the somewhat mystical notion that a candidate for the 800 year old degree of Baccalaurei in Artibus shall be, among other things, a person of marked intellectual promise. They hold further that he shall be capable of achieving a rigorous kind of excellence, not limited to the mind, manners-- or even muscles -- but penetrating into the very marrow and

matrix of life itself. Dean McGeorge Bundy of Harvard states the case for all the Ivy League colleges when he says :

"Harvard exists for the student who wants to become a liberally educated man. It is not the place for a person who is interested only in preparing as fast as possible for business or a specialized occupation such as agriculture, journalism, or accounting. It is a college for those who feel the need for a broad development of their powers, for a greater understanding of their world, and for an enriched cultural life"

These patrician ideas sometimes baffle, irk, and infuriate the denizens of Outer Mediocrity. But that's the Ivy League system, men, and if you want a glimpse of the system in action read on.

Gossip, that malicious crone who gets about on the Canard Line, tells her listeners that the Ivy League is a self-esteeming coterie of eight eastern colleges bound together by secret covenants inscribed on tablets of bronze. The arithmetic here is fine. There are indeed eight colleges in the Ivy group; Harvard, Yale, Columbia, Princeton, Dartmouth, Brown, the University of Pennsylvania, and — in Cornell man ~~main~~ Morris Bishop's plaintive phrase — 'perhaps Cornell'. Intensive digging has failed to turn up any bronze tablets; and the only existing covenant, secret or otherwise, is an athletic code designed to keep football players simon pure on the gridiron and wide awake in the classroom.

Despite basic similarities (which I'll describe later) it would be a mistake to suppose that Ivy League colleges or the men they produce are cut from the same bolt of Ø cloth. There's a woof of difference between Hanover flannel and Nassau tweed. The tailoring differs too: Columbia's metropolitan drape is distinguishable at a glance from Brown's more parochial

cut. Before this Sartor Resartus metaphor gets out of control let me wind it up with the moral tale of the necktie maker who tried to popularize an Ivy League tie. His basic premises were sound enough: there is always a brisk demand for old-school ties, and the Ivy colleges are certainly old. Therefore (reasoned the necktie maker) a terrific market awaited the four in hand item he had in mind. But here he fell flat on his Ascot, and deservedly went broke. Like a lot of other people, he failed to realize that it would be easier to design a single plaid for all the kilts in Scotland than unite Ivy League clans under the aegis of a standardized cravat.

What then, is the tie that binds these colleges in common cause against the barbarian? Personal observation leads me to believe that they **all** suffer from an identical form of paranoia. They imagine, each and severally, that they are the special custodians of a sweet, sharp, salty, priceless and quite generally neglected tradition of humane learning that antedates the pneumatic tire by many years. History supports this stewardly illusion, which began to take shape shortly after the incident at Plymouth Rock. When Chicago was "a place of wild onions" (that's what it means in Ojibway), the Harvard elm had been sheltering scholarship for more than two hundred years. While the natives of Detroit were trading bearskins with the aborigines, sheepskins embossed with classical Latin were being handed out at Yale (1702), Columbia (1754), Pennsylvania (1755), and Dartmouth (1759). In these tiny colonial seedbeds a few scholars starved and struggled to keep alive a corpus of learning that might otherwise have perished. Whole centuries had to pass before this culture could be transplanted to regions west of Harvard Square. Exactly what happened to it after crossing the Alleghenies is still a matter of conjecture. All we know for certain is that when a youngman wants a superlative education, he usually comes East to get it.

Personally I wouldn't enjoy serving on any admissions board that screens Ivy League candidates. This task of selection becomes, as Dean Chamberlain of Columbia says, "increasingly formidable every year". The statistics alone are frightening: of the 400,000 male students who will besiege the nation's academic gates this fall, Ivy League colleges have room for only 7,500 — or less than two per cent. There's no difficulty in choosing the obviously superior applicant, the standout who would make a welcome addition to any freshman class. The real agony occurs when a director of admissions must make a decision involving four or five candidates of nearly equal merit. Let's suppose that they have all passed their aptitude and achievement tests with excellent marks. Their geographic, racial and religious distribution (all very important) follow the prescribed graph, and searching personal interviews disclose in each case a youngster of high potential promise. Glowing letters of recommendation from secondary-school headmasters testify to their character, qualities of leadership and past performance. It's an agonizing business, but when the ordeal of sifting, weighing and comparing is over, three or four boys must be turned down in favour of the lucky candidate who is accepted.

This heartbreaking process, accepted in the past as part and parcel of Ivy practice, is now undergoing severe scrutiny by its own people. President Dodds of Princeton admits, with his customary candor, that he is finding it harder each year to justify "the exclusion of many qualified students who seek the kind of educational experience we offer". A possible remedy, he suggests, lies in a program of expansion that will accommodate "a more sizable number of students". But Dodds and other Ivy League educators fear that such expansion would entail the "real risk of a deteriorating scholastic performance". It's this frank

insistence on academic quality -- as opposed to assemblyline production -- that exposes Ivy league deans, dons, and directors of admissions to charges of snobbery and elitism.

If there's one thing that Americans won't tolerate, it's an intellectual aristocracy. Why this intolerance should be so widespread and virulent is beyond my comprehension. Judging from Army intelligence tests and the entrance requirements in effect at most State universities, I see no immediate danger of a sudden cultural uprising in this country. But the unanointed majority seems to think otherwise. Hence the popular ~~deunanoined~~ demand that a college education should be made more democratic i.e. reduced to the level of a television quiz program. Some months ago Professor Douglas Bush of Harvard caused quite a flurry by taking issue with this shoddy concept of higher education. In a New York Times article entitled Education for All is Education for None, Professor Bush made the delicate point that higher learning for masses -- however fine as a political theory -- was a shocking failure in actual practice. Herd culture, said Bush, was threatening the existence of whatever intellectual enlightenment we possess.

Dozens of professorlings west of the Monongahela took pen in hand to defend lower educational standards as the main prop of democracy. "Equal opportunity for all" they cried, then proceeded to belabor Professor Bush as a "Piltown Pedagogue" "a champion of elitism" and, naturally, an "intellectual snob".

Come now, gentlemen, can such abuse be justified? no one accuses Casey Stengel of being snobbish when he refuses to clutter up his Yankee infield with stumblebums. ~~A~~ And would anyone dream of calling Terry Brennan "undemocratic" because he selects an elite of brawn for his Notre Dame squad? I suggest that the exponents of cut-rate college standards are holding the wrong end of the stick. Keen competition and emphasis on proficiency are, and always have been, the only guarantees of superiority in Big League baseball, Big Ten

football, or Ivy League education. Candidates for admission to Harvard, Yale, Princeton, Columbia and the others are strictly out of bounds if they claim exemption from the competitive struggle that goes relentlessly forward in every other phase of our national life.

Nor do the men who guide these institutions of higher learning need any tutoring in the subject of democracy. They know from experience that the best cider is made from a mixed crush of apples and they rejoice accordingly when they discover a pippin from Hayfork High School, North Padlock Prep, or anyplace else that will add a regional flavor to the Groton-Lawrenceville-Andover mixture. Nor do these orchard keepers wait for the product to drop in their laps; and they assist its discovery and growth with scores of regional scholarships and quick encouragement to all prospective students of real quality.

One week after a freshman enters an Ivy League college he wishes that he had enrolled at Abilene Christian, Muhlenberg, Yankton, or some other place where the going isn't so rough. For the first few months he feels like a man standing under an avalanche. The required reading ranges from 300 to 400 pages a day — every day — and not random gulplings or dilettante pap, either. Although Ivy League curricula differ widely, both in emphasis and subject matter, the basic materials are as carefully selected and integrated as the works of an expensive watch. Take, for example, the famous Contemporary Civilization course at Columbia — a must for every underclassman. The CC course is a two year survey of man's ascent from anthropoid simplicity to his present state of H-bomb dismay. The better to understand this triumphal progress, CC students are required to march at the rate of twenty parasangs a day (Xenophon did it) across a mountainous terrain of history, literature, science and philosophy. When I first took the course in 1920 it seemed inconceivable that any freshman should ever survive its rigors. Yet when my son took the same course in 1950 it had

become, after a dozen revisions, immeasurably more difficult and comprehensive.

As one of the oldest living survivors of the CC wars, I can assure you this course alone will forever guard a man against the short view and the terror of dark places. Having seen twentytwo previous civilizations raise and fall, the CC veteran is able to set day to day events in a fairly sound frame of reference. The world doesn't fall apart when his football team takes 59-6 trouncing from Army. "Vie le sport" he exclaims, and goes about the business of living.

Whether in CC or the General Studies program at Harvard, the classes are small (usually fifteen students to one instructor) the tempo of the discussion is brisk and there is no infallible side of the desk. On the other hand, there's no escape from the instructor's probing questions, and damned little leniency anywhere. But now an amazing thing happens:- only two per cent of students are flunked out ! Quite a contrast to the forty percent of first year failures in State Colleges. Here is where the Ivy League policy of careful selection pays dividends to the students. Ninety percent of the entering class will go on with the aid of alert and sympathetic faculty advisors - to take the charished degree of BA . No "take" is n't the word. They'll earn it, and not all the frustrations and compromises of later life will have any power to tarnish the prize they've won.

At this point I must pause to consider the possible effect of my remarks upon the loyal sons of Turpentine. Tech and Moline Subnormal- Experience warns me that these gentlemen will spray some mean letters in my direction. Here's how a couple of them will run: "Your article was mighty saddening to one like me who missed schooling in the Ivy League. I almost cried out loud while driving my Cadillac to the bank" and: "Happened to read your article while waiting for a shave at our local tonsoreal parlor. You make a lot of fancy statements about the superiority of the Ivy League

but you don't back them up with concrete proofs"

I had hoped to avoid this embarrassing matter of concrete proofs because it may suggest a purse proud emphasis on handsome architecture and huge endowments. It would be absurd, of course, to speak of any college as wealthy; the Augustan era of great benefactors — Harkness, Flagler and Baker — is forever fled, and all privately endowed colleges are relatively poor. But in the matter of material resources the Ivy League colleges have been comparatively fortunate. Harvard has an endowment of 213,000,000 dollars, Yale 147,000,000 dollars, and Columbia 113,000,000 dollars. Princeton struggles along with 59,000,000 dollars while Dartmouth and Brown must make ends meet with 32,000,000 and 17,000,000 dollars respectively. By contrast, consider the financial ~~plight~~ plight of Guilford (N.C) with an endowment of slightly over 1,000,000 dollars. But even Guilford is relatively affluent: of the two thousand senior colleges in the United States, eighteen hundred are obliged to count their blessings in nickels and dimes.

The Ivy colleges, with resources totaling 700,000,000 dollars attract the best teachers and maintain huge libraries and superb physical plants. Viewed merely as pieces of real estate, Harvard, Yale, Columbia and Princeton are, each in its own way, eye-satisfying developments — handsome academic landscapes fitted with accessories that don't come cheaply. Small wonder that the visitor from Turpentine Tech hugs the illusion (shared by many uninformed persons) that the Ivy League colleges are tenanted solely by sons of Millionaires.

The actual facts reveal that nearly half of all Ivy League undergraduates either hold parttime jobs or receive financial aid through loans and scholarships. With such assistance to offer youngmen who can meet the rugged entrance requirements, the Ivy group exercises a virtual monopoly over the top ten percent of secondary school graduates. How could it be otherwise? Would any

brilliant youngman voluntarily exile himself to a four year term at Wofford or Idaho State, if he could win a scholarship at Darmouth or Cornell?

Anyone seeking a reason for Ivy League superiority will find part of his answer in the quality of scholarship students recruited from the nation's most promising material.

Among the special advantages of an Ivy League education is the unpurchasable element of academic freedom. This freedom has two major aspects: it protects the institution itself against outside interference or control, and defends in <sup>fiercely</sup> ~~fiercely~~ militant fashion the scholar's traditional right to free inquiry and independent expression. The first of these free-doms is based in this country on the famous Dartmouth College case argued by Daniel Webster before the Supreme Court in 1818. Two years previously, the New Hampshire State legislature had ~~voted~~ voted to change the name of the college, sieze its physical plant and appoint a new board of trustees. Webster, a loyal Dartmouth alumnus as well as the greatest constitutional lawyer of his time, fought these intrusions all the way up to the Supreme Court. In his summation before that august ~~body~~, Webster pointed out that if state legislatures, or any other pressure group, could tinker with a college charter, higher learning in the United States would be at the mercy of cranks and meddlers of every description.

The Supreme Court agreed and ~~handed~~ handed down the historic decision that guarantees the inviolability of charters of private colleges. Today, no outside group or individual -- however powerful or well-meaning -- can dictate policy to an Ivy League president or board of trustees. It would be easier,

I think to blast the hinges off Fort Knox than to bully Grayson Kirk of Columbia, Henry Wriston or Brown or their opposite numbers at Yale, Princeton, Dartmouth and the other Ivy League colleges. These men believe that their contract with society obliges them to resist — on moral, intellectual and constitutional grounds — any invasion of the university's right to manage its internal affairs.

This position was grimly tested during the recent showdown between Harvard's President Pusey and Sen. Joseph McCarthy. Late in 1953, McCarthy discovered that a former Communist, Associated Prof. Wendell H. Furry, was teaching physics at Harvard. At one point in his testimony before the McCarthy Committee, Furry pleaded the Fifth Amendment, although he had long since broken with communism and had made his position clear both to his colleagues and the Harvard Corporation. But this intramural settlement of the affair didn't satisfy McCarthy. Various interpretations were read into his subsequent actions. Possibly the senator — an alumnus of Marquette Univ. — simply wanted to make certain that a sister university was not being gulled by the two talk tactics so often used by Communists. Perhaps he was being solicitous about Harvard's apparent refusal to abolish the Fifth Amendment. And perhaps he had forgotten or never heard of the Dartmouth College case. In any event, on Nov. 6, 1953, he sent a telegram to President Pusey. At one point in the telegram he said:

I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHAT IF ANY ACTION THE UNIVERSITY INTENDS TO TAKE IN FURRY'S CASE AND WHAT YOUR ATTITUDE GENERALLY IS TOWARD RETAINING TEACHERS AT HARVARD WHO REFUSE TO STATE WHETHER THEY ARE COMMUNISTS ON THE GROUNDS THAT THE TRUTH WOULD TEND TO INCRIMINATE THEM ... I AM SURE (your answer) WILL INTEREST THE MOTHERS AND FATHERS WHOSE SONS AND DAUGHTERS ARE BEING TAUGHT BY FURRY ...

Catching the old grad spirit of the thing, Pusey wired back that everything was under control at Cambridge, that Harvard had conducted its own research into Furry's background

and was content that Furry was not a spy nor presently a Communist and that he had not attempted to indoctrinate his students. His telegram contained some simple sentences indicating Harvard's awareness that academic and personal freedom are rather more difficult and important matters than the senator seemed to think them:

HARVARD IS UNALTERABLY OPPOSED TO COMMUNISM. IT IS DEDICATED TO FREE INQUIRY BY FREE MEN... WE DEPLORE THE USE OF THE FIFTH AMENDMENT (Note: shortly after this, Furry waived reliance on the Fifth Amendment)...BUT DO NOT REGARD THE USE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL SAFEGUARD AS A CONFESSION OF GUILT

Now deeply hurt by Harvard's lack of concern about her own safety and its fusty old attitude toward the Constitution, McCarthy trumpeted all American parents to alertness:-

YOU AND THE HARVARD CORPORATION CAN OF COURSE CONTINUE TO KEEP FIFTH AMENDMENT COMMUNISTS TEACHING THE SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF AMERICA. HOWEVER HARVARD WILL LEARN HOW REPREHENSIBLE AND UNAMERICAN THE MOTHERS AND FATHERS OF AMERICA CONSIDER THIS ATTITUDE....

Something at this point, had to give way -- and it wasn't Pusey. At a time when Pentagon brass was shivering like the tin jingles on a gypsy's tambourine, Pusey neither ducked nor cowered. Quickly he repeated the gist of his first telegram.." I am content, he finished coolly, to stand on Harvard's record...."

At this writing, Harvard's record still stands intact. Mendell H-Furry still holds his billet in the Physics Department. The mothers and fathers of America confidently continue to pack their sons off to Cambridge, and everyone -- including Marquette's distinguished alumnus -- seems to have caught Pusey's point, i.e. ~~by~~ that a teacher's freedom is his own, and that Harvard is

quite able to run its own show and, in fact, insists upon doing so.

It would be fatuous to claim that academic freedom was invented or is now monopolized by Ivy League colleges. It is as old as Salamanca or Gottingen: theoretically it is the animating ~~para~~ principle of colleges everywhere. Yet one of the tragedies of our time is the reluctance of many scholars to assert their hereditary independence of thought and speech. This timidity is understandable, perhaps most of all in those "denominational" schools whose faculty members are expected to sneeze in unison whenever the prebendary takes snuff. And one can almost sympathize with the plight of teachers in state universities where county politicians "vote the school money". Caution is the watchword in such places and departure from orthodoxy- in curriculum, teaching methods, published findings, even in personal reading matter — may cost a man his job

The Ivy League scholar is happily exempt from these frightening pressures. He speaks out and fears no one. He knows, moreover, that his president and board of trustees will back him up even though they may not agree with his opinions. Such was the case when the late Prof. Charles A. Beard of Columbia published his epochal paper *The Economic Interpretation of the US Constitution*. Screams of anguish arose from a press and public shocked by Beard's thesis that motives of personal profit (rather than twenty four carat idealism) had swayed our Founding Fathers. For a time, Beard's name was anathema: jingo patriots demanded his head on a platter. And what happened? President Butler of Columbia (a very staid gentleman who didn't particularly like Beard or his teachings) yielded not one sixteenth of an inch in defending the historian's right to state the facts as he saw

them. Butler knew, as every college president knows, that a scholar's finds may be challenged or refuted -- but if they are suppressed, the spirit of free inquiry dies, and the university becomes a darkened temple, the haunt of stuffed owls. So Beard kept his job, and lived to see his 'economic interpretation' accepted by scholars everywhere.

The atmosphere of intellectual courage that prevails at Ivy colleges is the breath of life to the student body. Socially and politically, Ivy League men can be fairly described as liberals. Unlike their brethren at European universities, they aren't given to rioting in the public squares (except in celebration of springtime and youth) and I can't conceive of a Hasty Pudding man hurling cobblestones, or even loud epithets, at the existing ~~Government~~<sup>Government</sup>. Their independence takes the subtler form of making intelligent decisions as to what they shall think, say and do as responsible individuals. Naturally a great deal of whey has to be squeezed out of them in the process, but the final result is fairly close to the ideal that Andrew White, cofounder of Cornell, had in mind when he said: I propose to raise up a generation of students who will disagree with me, and I propose further to give them very poor marks if they don't".

Ivy League students sometimes find it hard to disagree with their teachers - not because the students lack courage, but because ( and this is difficult for authoritarian minds to grasp) Ivy League teachers seldom take a dogmatic stand. Columbia's Mark Van Doren, for instance, probably knows as much about Shakespeare as any man living, but he declines to pontificate on the subject. Students who expect to hear ultimate certainties in his classes had better take themselves off to another shop. Van Doren would probably admit that his philosophy of suspended

judgment stems from Montaigne's "Que sais-je?" - a question that underlies all Ivy League thinking. Teachers and students alike realize that the door must be kept open for further evidence, <sup>d</sup> that this constant search for fresh evidence is the true goal of education.

It has always seemed strange to me that this quest for the ever evolving many-faceted thing called truth should be regarded in some quarters as an undesirable activity. I was particularly disturbed by an incident that occurred last year at West Point. The US Military Academy debating team was preparing to meet all comers on the question - then being mooted in Ivy League circles as elsewhere - resolved: that Red China shall be recognized by the UN. On the eve of battle, so to speak, the West Point debaters received orders from GHQ to suspend 'Operation Think'. Evidently the high command feared that it was unwise - unsafe perhaps - for future generations to delve into the pros and cons of a problem that must eventually be faced and decided by everyone. No such fears faced the debaters from Brown. A naughty humor inspired them to send the following telegram to the West Pointers:

SINCE YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO DEBATE THE QUESTION  
OF RED CHINA'S RECOGNITION? WE CHALLENGE YOU TO DEBATE  
THE REASONS WHY YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO DEBATE IT

Now do you understand why I bless the liberal breeze that blows through Ivy League halls?

Contrast this refreshing atmosphere with the smog that hangs over many state Universities where legislative committees are forever prying into textbooks in search of an unorthodox paragraph. In these shadow zones of culture,

luckless chancellors can be twitched into the carpet by veterans' groups of self appointed censors and inquisitors.

More terrifying yet are the laws that require many state universities to accept all comers who have completed high school with a C average. A secret form of revenge is practiced by outraged teachers. Forty percent of the entering class is flunked out during the freshman year to make room for the galloping herd of new arrivals. Meanwhile the democratic illusion has been preserved. Everyone can say that he or she has gone to State U. The heart of the country is sound, though the brain may be as hollow as the bass drum at a Cotton Bowl game.

There remain to be considered a few small, privately endowed colleges of good fame and modest resources - I think of Hamilton, Haverford, Beloit, D P~~o~~uw and the members of the Little Ivy League - which play an important role in the scheme of higher education. I readily admit the advantages enjoyed by members of these provincial academies. But in my opinion, these advantages are outweighed by definite limitations, perhaps not noticeable during the first two years. Many small colleges adequately satisfy the intellectual hunger of freshmen and sophomores. But all too often, symptoms of scholastic malnutrition begin to appear among the upperclassmen. The undeniable fact is that the superior student at a small college eventually becomes bored by the monotony and limitations of his environment.

This slow starvation can't possibly happen to an Ivy League upperclassman. These colleges are part of a university which by definition is a seat of advanced study and learning.

The resources of graduate faculties, tremendous libraries and distinguished scholars are at the undergraduate's command. He may, at will, wade into the unplumbed sea of learning that surrounds him. Ivy league educators seem uniquely aware of the upperclassman's need to venture forth on his own, and have made special provisions for his benefit. Columbia, for example, has instituted a whole new Upper College program designed to challenge the maturing energy of students who might otherwise drift lazily through the junior and senior years.

The second advantage is one often overlooked: the proximity of most Ivy Colleges to large cities. Old Ben Franklin observed that large cities were the natural habitat of inquiring minds. As Ivy League men can testify, Poor Richard never said a wiser thing in his life. If bored in Cambridge, Harvard students can ferry themselves across the placid Charles River to the Parker House, Locke-Obers or Scollay Square. Jaded brain cells can be recharged at the Sheraton-Plaza, the Old Howard or Vincent Club affairs, or even at a Beacon Hill dinner table. The only drawback from the Harvard point of view is the danger of running into husky skiers down from Dartmouth, or quick Brown foxes just up from Providence. Weekends, in the Ivy League, can be as educational (in the largest sense) as any weekday lectures.

Southbound trains from New Haven debouch hourly into Grand Central, carrying the spiritual descendants of Dink Stover, Frank Merriwell and Lucius Beebe. Merely by crossing Vanderbilt Avenue they reach the Yale club,

take a quick shower, and after consulting little black books, disperse in quest of the finer things that New York offers in abundance. It begins to appear, however, that these junkets are due for serious curtailment. Yale's Committee on General Education, headed by Pres. A. Whitney Griswold, now proposes to stiffen undergraduate courses of study at the expense of athletics, extracurricular activities, and the three day weekend - which according to the committee, "involve serious conflicts with important educational goals."

Of all the Ivy League colleges, perhaps the least understood are Pennsylvania and Cornell. The University of Pennsylvania got its start when Old Ben Franklin penned a memo entitled Proposals Relating to the Education of Youth in Pensilvania. The proposals led to the founding of the Charity School at Fourth and Arch Streets, in the heart of old Philadelphia - an institution that later became the University of Pennsylvania. In spite of its name, the U of P is not a State school, but a privately endowed seat of higher learning, now located along the banks of the Schuylkill in West Philadelphia. By far the largest of the Ivy League colleges, it has full time enrollment of 8000 students and a truly awesome campus. To put it plainly, both the University and the college, under the leadership of Dr Gaylord P Harnwell, are a magnificent asset to American cultural life.

And now - perhaps Cornell. There is no earthly reason why I should be especially fond of this place; indeed my undergraduate years were spent in fear and trembling at its name. Hopefully I helped string "Beat Cornell" streamers

across 116 th street, then dejectedly helped take them down again after the annual autumn butchery. But mingled with my physical fear was a kind of intellectual disdain for the Cornell bruisers. I tabbed them as agricultural students - hay kickers, apple knockers - and on one occasion flung my contempt in their faces by wearing brown shoes at a black tie affair held in the Cornell Phi Psi house- just to show them. Pitiful !

Contrition, envy and respect are today my principal emotions about the youngest and in some ways most progressive of the Ivy League group. I'm contrite because I underestimated (or was ignorant of) the traditions and achievements of this great school. I envy the scenic grandeur and spaciousness of the campus perched above Cayuga's waters. And belatedly I have come to recognize the unique contributions that Ezra Cornell and Andrew D. White made to higher education when they founded their college in 1865. It was a time of stagnation, of adherence to outworn philosophies of education. White broke all the academic bric-a-brac in sight, threw away the book and produced a system combining the best features of classic and democratic culture, including girls. .

I propose to let one of Cornell's distinguished sons describe the place in his own language, E.B. White (no relation to Andrew) in his charming essay I'd Send My Son to Cornell; affirms his faith as follows:-

Cornell is not only big and high, it is cosmopolitan and friendly: and it is an infinitely various place. Its students do not run to type. On the Campus are found both sexes, all colors, all beliefs - from the most contempt for the irregular

from the most conservative fraternity sophomore with Republican tendencies and a contempt for the irregular, to the bloody eyed anarchist who wants to tear the vines right off the buildings. My son will probably be a Christian, five feet nine but he will make a great many friends in Ithaca who do not conform to the amazing standard. When I was there I knew two men from Hawaii, a girl from Johannesburg, A Cuban, a Turk an Englishman from India, a Negre from New York, two farmers, three Swedes, a Quaker, five Southerners, a reindeer butcher a second lieutenant, a Christian Scientist, a retired dancer a motorcyclist, a man who had known Theda Bara, three gnomes, a lutist. That's not counting the general run of broad-jumpers, second tenors, and veterinarians who make up the great body of the undergraduates, the same as in any school"

To which I can only add: stet, and thanks, E.B.W., for permission to quote. I never knew any gnomes or reindeer butchers at Columbia, but during my senior year on Morningside I holed up in an 8-12 cell on the top floor of Livingston- a region dedicated to simple living and high thinking. The adjoining cell was occupied by James Warner Bellah, who could fence like D'Artagnan and write (for my money) better than Scott Fitzgerald. We were both racing for the Alfred Knopf Prize- the publication of a first novel; Bellah won by a bodkin's breadth, but made characteristic beau geste by financing my poetry magazine Contemporary Verse with his advance royalties. Across the corridor was a double suite that housed a concert grant Steinway and its owner, Al Fried, who could simultaneously play Bach and four games of chess and tutor me in trigonometry a notably weak link in my a chain of Universal knowledge. Among the chess players was a fellow named

named Mortimer Adler, best known at the time for his psychological experiments involving a mouse, a Barnard girl and a galvanometer (details on request) In the late 20s Adler skipped west, taking with him the Hundred Great Books program, originated by John Erskine but now the official property of the University of Chicago. Other comers and goers on the tenth floor of Livingston were Clifton Fadiman and Corey Ford- then green in reputation but ripening fast. Lionel Trilling, later to gain fame as the perfect don, would drop in with a copy of Sainte-Beuve under his arm. And am I likely to forget Marcus Goodrich, whose novel Delilah ranks beside that other Columbia spring sea tale, The Caine Mutiny?

The rubbing together of ~~these~~ these highly charged personalities generated a special kind of intellectual helium that threatened at times to blast the cornices off Livingston. I recall one particularly gaseous session that was interrupted by a mustached intruder who opened the door and asked if anyone had a copy of Wigmore on Evidence. The intruder was a law student, name of Tom Dewey, who later did a long stretch in a state institution at Albany.

Every Ivy Leaguer is entitled to at least one perfect recollection. Mine came while I was holding the Proudfit Fellowship in Letters (that's really the name). It seems that a bunch of non-Proudfit chaps - including Lou Gehrig and our All American halfback, Wally Koppisch - had neglected to spend enough time in reading Beowulf, The Canterbury Tales Spencer's Faerie Queene and Malory's fanciful account of life at the court of King Arthur. On the night before final exams I admitted fifteen selected laggards (at a dollar a head) into

my Proudfit diggins, and after gazing into my crystal ball, prophesied the questions that would be asked on the morrow. I then provided suitable answers - suitable enough that is, to pull fourteen of my customers through with a creditable C. Paunchy strangers still stop me on the street, wring my hand in gratitude, and say that I gave them the best dollar's worth of education they ever got, and I still glow at the thought that I helped save the Columbia backfield and the New York Yankees' infield from dark outer reaches of ignorance.

Well, that just about winds up my remarks on the superiority of Ivy League men. I'm not sure that I have convinced the jury of my cool detachment and utter lack of special pleading. Quite possibly the trustees of Macalester (Minn) will change their minds about offering me that honorary LLD and perhaps Baylor won't invite me to deliver its baccalaureate address next year. These are risks that I'm quite willing to take. For if even a few readers have detected some seriousness here in my plea for higher standards of college education, I shall be content.

Make no mistake about it, my friends. The levelers are gathering in great strength, and the Day of Rabblement is nearer than you think. In the intellectual Armageddon now <sup>looming</sup> looking over America, the enemies of higher education will attempt to destroy all cultural standards but their own; and if they succeed our final state of mediocrity will be infinitely worse than anything yet seen. The outright collapse of Ivy League ideals is not likely to happen overnight; and I am enough of an optimist to hope that it may never happen at all. But it will be a sad day

for our democracy when and if some prancing drum majorette leads a commencement procession of gowned Harvard, Columbia or Cornell scholars toward that final indignity, the conferring of meaningless BA degrees on students who couldn't possibly have earned them under the present great standards and high demands of the Ivy League.