

## The Influence of Fraternities in the American College

The presence of fraternities in the American college is thought by some to be beneficial, by others their presence is regretted. But good, bad or indifferent, they are here, nearly 1700 chapters strong, and any further active opposition seems useless.

Sketching briefly the history of the fraternity movement, we find that secret societies have passed two periods of growth and are now in their third. The first was that of active antagonism, and wherever possible, prohibition.

At the College of William and Mary December 5, 1776, five students organized the first Greek-letter fraternity in America. Non-collegians were occasionally admitted to membership; the aim of the society was social and, incidentally, literary. The Chi Delta Theta, a senior society, founded at Yale in 1821, was a select literary society. These must be considered preparatory to the modern fraternity movement. In 1832 the Phi Beta Kappa was forced by Harvard's president to resign its secret features, but other secret societies were formed, constitutions adopted and also their traditions which have both governed and hampered. Many of the fraternities were founded during the stormy period when anti-Masonic feeling was at its height and any secret society was regarded with aversion. Colleges, therefore, strictly forbade secret organizations and all known members were expelled or lost their college honors.

Some years later the faculties began to look upon them as something that must be endured, although with some opposition, as they were believed to be the cause of destruction of the debating societies. During this period fraternities, which had formerly held secret meetings in the rooms of individual members, now occupied rented rooms and organizations were gradually growing stronger.

About twenty-five years ago the fraternities entered upon their third and present period of growth—in which they have become thoroughly rooted in University life. They have won recognition, are influential in college, while relations between the undergraduates and the alumni have grown so close as to make the fraternity an important bond between college and its graduates.

Greek-letter fraternities are now found in all important colleges