Stanford University Defended

Writing to R. M. Hofer of this city a Stanford student sends the following able review of the whole matter:

Stanford University, Mar. 31, '08.

I am in receipt of your letter of the 26th and have read the Oregonian editorial headed "Anarchy at Stanford."

Your letter commenting upon the absurd and erroneous sentiments entertained by our people at large concerning the situation at Stanford, and the ridiculous Oregonian editorial, which is no doubt responsible for much of this sentiment, puts the matter before me in an impersonal light. And from this view point I can and have a right to discuss the subject for the people at large, to try if I can, to vindicate the good name of Stanford, to show who is responsible for the unmerited disgrace that has seemingly fallen upon it, and the almost unbelievable methods by which it has been brought about.

I shall try to deal with Oregonian editorial in a dignified manner, though whether I shall succeed or not I do not know. If this editorial were the only thing to be considered I should not think of belittleing myself by any attempt to answer it.

But I am informed that this brand of editorial abuse is prevalent through the entire northwest, and that even in the Eastern states the situation at Standford is viewed in much the same, although in a less absurd and puerile fashion than that indulged by the Oregonian. This is not surprising, since in a case of this kind the prejudice is naturally in favor of the authorities and the burden of proof rests with the students. However, I cannot believe that the obviously ridiculous attitude taken by this Oregonian writer is typical of the sentiment in my home community. Nevertheless, such charges, absurd as they are, are apt to be believed, and for this reason they are a direct slander on the good name of Stanford and call for an answer. I shall therefore touch upon some of the most flagrant falsehoods contained in the editorial and for the rest confine myself to a statement of fact concerning the situation at Stanford.

In the first place that writer has said what he has said upon his own authority, apparently having made no attempt to inform himself concerning the matter he has tried to handle. He has charged the Stanford students with almost every crime under the sun; comparing them with Emma Goldman and her followers and with Schmitz and Ruef. He has expressed amazement at the fact that we have not murdered our professors. He has called us anarchists, debauchees, thugs and drunkards, and he declares that we are in the same category and are the logical successors to those who are now upholding the San Francisco grafters.

Had this writer put himself to the trouble of reading the San Francisco newspapers, which being nearer the scene of action are obviously better informed on the situation than he is, he would have found that every one of the San Francisco dailies with the expection of the Chronicle is on the side of the students in this controversy. Every paper except the Chronicle believes that Dr. Jordan and the committee he appointed have made a ludicrous and uncalled for mistake, and that the attitude of the students is right and perfectly justified. And it may be well to mention in passing for the benefit of this brilliant editorial writer that the Chronicle, which is the only paper against the students, is the only San Francisco daily that is continuously and systematicaly upholding the cause of Calhoun, Ford and Glass and of Ruef and Schmitz, their allies and tools.

I am not fond of superlatives, but in dealing with the idtorial I have before me I cannt consicentiously refrain from using them. I have read the article through carefully several times, and I am stating exactly what I mean and what I know when I say that there is not one single element of truth i nthe editorial as a whole or in any particular part of it, and whether intentionally malicious or due entirely to the writer's ignorance every statement in the editorial is an unqualified falsehood.

In the first place, student drunkenness as such does not exist and never has existed at Stanford. I wonder what the Oregonian writer considers "student drunkeness." His article would seem to indicate institution are continually intoxicated and divide their time between smashing university furniture and lying about the campus in a drunken stupor. Let me inform him that "student drunkeness" as considered by faculty and students alike at Stanford admits of no such broad interpretation. Stanford men are not and never have been allowed to get drunk at all, whether they do any damage when drunk or not. Students and faculty for the most part live together on the campus. In many of the fraternity houses some of the professors live with the students; in my own fraternity for example we have two faculty members living with us continually. Moreover, it is the duty of every member of the faculty to report any student whom he sees intoxicated.

The authorities therefore are in the best possible position to know what the students' actions are in regard to drunkeness. Yet in the two years that I have been at Stanford only two students have been expelled for drunkeness, and these two students, according to the report of the Student Affairs Committee, were "not badly but only noticeably under the influence of liquor." Does this look as though Stanford were a "hell-hole of drunkeness."

Our embryonic college reformer charges in his editorial that Stanford is a place of debauchery and riot and that the smashing of college furniture is indulged in with impunity, no such thing as a riot has ever occurred at Stanford, and by inquiring of the oldest students and professors I am unable to discover a single instance where any college furniture or anything else has ever been destroyed or even molested by the Stanford students. This applies not only to the present controversy but to the whole history of student activities. As for debauchery, that is something absolutely unknown at this university.

If the Oregnian writer would visit Stanford, he would find out from professors of national and even international experience and reputation that Stanford is the cleanest morally of any large university in the world. 'One thousand young men and five hundred young women associate here together. Most of them live on the campus side by side in the halls and fraternity houses, and in the fifteen years of Stanford existence there is yet to appear the first instance of any form of scandal whatsoever. Can any one point to another large university in this country with such a record?

To show the amazing ignorance on the matter of men like the Oregonian writer who attempt to advise people upon something about which they know absolutely nothing, let me quote, almost at random, a sentence from this editorial:

"When Stanford university is once well rid of the lot, its reputation for sobriety and scholarship will be vastly enhanced, and parents who have their hearts set on other things than football, wine-suppers, and college yells will soon fill the vacant class rooms with a more promising band of youth."

Has this person ever consulted any college statistics? Does he know anything at all about colleges? If he does, he certainly knows that sobriety at Stanford is held in much higher respect than at other representative colleges like Yale, where even the divinity students drink, or dozens of other universities having no dormitories or places of residence on the campus, the very organization of which renders it impossible for the authorities to have any supervision over the men outside the class room.

If he has taken the trouble to inform himself on college scholarship, he certainly knows that the standard of scholarship at Stanford is higher than at any other university in the United States. A passing grade in two thirds of the work carried is required of all regular students, and in the case of special students a passing grade in all the work carried. If this record is not made each and every term the student is not merely "flunked" in the course, but is suspended from the university. Some of the most brilliant students who ever attended Stanford have been suspended for scholarship simply because they engaged extensively in legitimate student activities, and is was impossible, on account of the high standard of scholarship, for them to attend to both sides of college life and remain in the university.

The same conditions in the matter of scholarship, drinking, etc., that exist at present have always existed here. To use the words of Dr. Jordan, no graduate of Stanford has ever disgraced the name of his alma mater. As for scholarship, the record of Stanford in its short existence of fifteen years in producing such men as Hoover and the Erwins and a score of others equally as famous in their respective fields is without a paralell in the history of American universities. And when the Oregonian mentions football and wine suppers as things which Stanford students regard more than their studies, I reply that when American football reached such a stage that it was overshadowing every thing else in nearly every large college in the country, Stanford and California were the only two universities that did away with the game, and substituted for it a sport in which the students had almost no interest. As for wine suppers, I am unable to learn of such a thing ever having been given at Stanford.

The whole idea which the Oregonian and many other papers seek to convey, besides being an absolutely false one, is upon the face of it utterly ridiculous. It ought to be obvious to any one with sense enough to be janitor in a newspaper office that it would be a physical impossibility for students to behave as the Oregonian says they do and yet remain in a college with scholarship restrictions like those of Stanford.

But it is a waste of time to make a detailed denial of everything charged against the students by this hopelessly uninformed editorial writer. There was no "organized demonstration of protest" as is charged. The students did not "insult the disciplinary committee," and they did not "seek to bully Dr. Jordan." Moreover, the parade of March 12 was not a demonstration in favor of drunkeness.

I now expect to hear the question. "What then is the cause of all this trouble? If Stanford is not an institution of vice and drunkeness, what is the cause of these wholesale suspensions and the protest of the whole student body against the committee's action in suspending nearly every prominent senior in the university?"

Briefly, the whole cause of the matter is this; and I am desirous and anxious for any one who is at all acquainted with the situation to scrutinize my statements closely, and to point out, if he can, anything I say that is not absolutely correct. The cause of the controversy I say is this: President Jordan is a prohibition fanatic, and has used methods more befitting a character like Carrie Nation than a college president to remedy a situation which at the time he launched forth his drastic action called for little or no remedy at all.

No one will attempt to deny that moderate drinking of beer is and always has been indulged in at Stanford, although in a smaller degree than at other representative universities. It is impossible to obtain the exact figures, but from what I have been able to gather I should say that considerably more than fifty per cent of the students do not drink at all, and as for immoderate drinking, I personally do not know of a single man in this university who is an immoderate drinker.

Now driking at Stanford, unlike that at other universities, confines itself almost exclusively to the so-called "beer busts." It should be remembered that the campus, where nearly all the students live, is one mile from the nearest town and two miles from the nearest saloon. A "beer bust" is given by some organization or crowd of students upon some occasion which they think warrants it, as after a football or track victory. Some of the fraternities give an annual sophmore party which takes the form of a "beer bust." These "beer busts" as they are called have been in vogue since the foundation of the university. Every one, the faculty included, expects them on certain occasions, and whether right or wrong they have become a traditional feature of university life, and heretofore no faculty committee has ever objected to them.

For the benefit of those who have received their information only through the sensational medium of the news distributing associations, or the vicious imaginations of an ignorant sophist like the Oregonian writer, it may be well to explain here just what a Stanford "beer bust" is. On the occasion in question the beer is ordered and is brought to the hall or fratenity houses in broad daylight. It is paid for and charged upon the household bills of the organization. No "bones" are made about it, and as I have already stated no faculty committee has heretofore objected to it. Many of the faculty members drink beer in their homes, and I have heard them repeat many times that such form of celebration was beneficial to the students and to the college, as it prevented the men from going to the city to celebrate an intercollegiate victory, as they would do if they had no chnce to let out their enthusiasm at home.

This may or may not be good logic. I am simply stating the opinions of some of the faculty members to whom I have talked on the subject.

At these "beer busts" the beverage is served by freshmen, who by the way are not allowed to drink. The "hot dogs", cheese, crackers, and tobacco, together with enough corncob pipes to go round are placed on a table in the middle of the room. The students sit around the table, drink their beer, and give the college yells. Toasts are proposed and responded to, healths are drunk to the university, the victorious team, and the atheletic favorites. It is considered a disgrace for a student to make a hog of himself at these functions, and when the entertainment is over the students disperse and return to their respective homes. These functions are always held on Friday or Saturday nights so as not to interfere with the preparation of the following day's work.

This is practically the extent of student drinking on the campus, and very little disturbance has resulte1 from it. When disturbance has resulted at any particular place, "beer busts" there have been promptly forbidden. Only two such cases are on record. Last year the Student Affairs Committee, that is, the faculty committee, believed that these affairs were occurring too frequently in Encina hall, the dormitory where three rundred men live. They put the management of the hall into the hands of a committee elected by and from the students living there, and requested the men that no more "beer busts" be held in the hall. Since that time practically no drinking of any sort has occurred there.

The other instance in question was at a certain fraternity house. The men there gave one of the usual "beer busts" at the beginning of last semester. They did not disperse at a reasonable hour, however, and the Student Affairs Cimmittee thereupon requested that no more beer be brought into that house. Since then not a single drop of beer has been drunk there.

These examples should be sufficient to show that the students have always been willing to meet the Student Affairs Committee more than half-way, and that every time any crowd of students has been told to stop drinking they have stopped. These things happened under the old committee, men who were known, loved and respected by every man in the university. This old committee never consedered this form of student drinking objectionable when carried on in a respectable manner, and it is generally conceded that the toleration by the university authorities of moderate drinking on the campus is responsible for keeping students who live on the campus away from such places as Menlo; and if the rest of the students lived on the campus instead of in Palo Alto, which is a dry town, there would be absolutely no excuse for any one going to Menlo, San Jose, or San Francisco and getting drunk.

I was talking with a professor a few days ago who is a graduate of Princeton and he said that it was to prevent students from going away and getting drunk, that an inn, selling beer to students, was maintained on the Princeton campus as an integral part of the university.

President Jordan, with the attitude of a howling prohibition fanatic of the Carrie Nation type, overlooked the whole situation entirely and apparently he does not yet understand it. He began his campaign four months ago when the situation on the campus was the same as it is now and always has been. He gave utterance to the most absurd and groundless statements; statements that contained no element of truth, and which, in one instance which occurred recently, he was forced by decency to apologize for. These utterances of his were upon the face of the facts absolutely uncalled for, and the Student Affairs Committee let him rant and paid no apparent attention to him.

Dr. Jordan never addressed the students on the situation. Had he done so it is safe to say that, no matter how absurd his contentions were, the student body would have complied with any reuest he might have made. They had done so in the two cases above mentioned and they would have done so again. He refused to deal with them as gentlemen, as the committee had done. Instead he made speeches all over the country calling Stanford a "hell-hole of vice and drunkeness." He gave interviews to newspaper reporters containing nothing even remotely resembling the truth. These things were said away from the university where the president spends a great deal of his time.

He never went about talking with the students as the committee was in the habit of doing. I do not remember ever to have heard him discuss the situation in the student body meetings, but he still persisted in making his ridiculous remarks to the outside world. The newspapers took it up and sent it broadcast over the country, giving the morally cleanest university in the world and the one most free from vice and drunkeness, the most unsavory and the most undeserved reputation.

No one could understand the President's attitude, and the President did not, and has not yet, offered any explanations. The students resigned themselves to the only possible view to be taken under the circumstances: namely, that President Jordan seemed actually trying to ruin the university. Personally I cannot bring myself to believe that Dr. Jordand would intentionally do anything to hurt the good name of Stanford, but the cold blooded fact remains that he has hurt Stanford, and that he, personally, more than any one or anything eles is responsible for the whole disgraceful position in which Stanford is placed at present. What his intentions were he has not explained. I shall certainly not try to interpret them. And the fact still further remains that Dr. Jordan is still following along his accustomed path. In the last statement he made before he left for Montana the other day, he said what everybody here knows and what he certainly ought to known is not true, namely, that the parade of March 12 was an "organized demonstration, not only against the Student Affairs Committee but against the university."

Now what did this parade amount to; this "monstrous organized demonstration against the university" which has been heralded abroad throughout every state in the Union, colored, exaggerated and distorted by every newspaper hireling in the country, until it is utterly beyond recognition by any of the two hundred and fifty participants?

I wish to make this statement calmly and deliberately, and I have no hesitation in saying that it will be backed up by every student ,man and woman, in this university, that the parade of March 12, in itself and in the importance attached to it by the participants, was absolutely insignificant, that it did no damage and no harm to any person or to anything, and that it called for no drastic action or even serious consideration by the Student Affairs Committee.

Let me say at this point that parades are among the commonest of all form of student expression of any sort. They may be foolish if you like, but they are of such usual occurrence that they have become almost traditional. A parade occurs on any and all occasions, and is an expression of condemnation, commendation, protest, or applause as the case may be. The parade of March 12 differed in no respect from a hundred of other parades, a dozen of which have occurred this year. So unimportant in the eyes of the students was this parade that the Daily Palo Alto, the student newspaper, in its issue of the following day did not even mention the fact that the parade had occurred.

The cause of the parade was this: Dr. Jordan's ceaseless and absurd ranting on student drunkeness, something that did not then exist and which everybody knew did not exist, naturally made no impression on the students and certainly did not make the professors on the Student Affairs Committee change the policy which they were wisely and successfully carrying out. President Jordan demanded immediate and drastic action, but as there was nothing to act upon either immediately or drastically, the Student Affairs Committee acted neither immediately nor drastically. President Jordan thereupon requested the resignation of Professor Durrand, and the other professors resigned with him.

Here the usual parade followed. Some two or three hundred students gathering together spontaneously on the night the resignations were announced. They visited the house of each members of the committee, expressed their condolence, sang "Hail, Stanford! Hail!" and dispersed. This, however, was not "the notorious parade."

Dr. Jordan straightway appointed another committee. The announcement of the personel of this committee was adequate cause for another parade, and I have never been able to figure out why one did not occur. The contrast was starling. In place of the venerable and beloved chairman of the old committee the President appointed one, A. M. Clark, head of the drawing department, prohibition mayor of Mayfield, and the most thoroughly hated member of the entire Stanford faculty. Probably the worst mistake of Dr. Jordan's next to appointing Professor Clark, was in the appointment of Professor Whitaker, a hot-headed young man entirely void of sympathy with the students. This is the same professor who struck the Stanford graduate in the face at a political meeting in Palo Alto several months ago, and who at a recent meeting of the Unitarian club characterized the suspension of the forty- one students as a huge and amusing joke.

This new committee never held any meetings or consultations with the students as is the custom of committees to do. Instead, on the evening of March 12 it issued an ultimatum of a vague and hostile character which no one understood. It spoke of "student drunkeness and other thing equally absurd, and ended with an edict which some construed as prohibiting drinking of any kind at any time or place, and which others considered as having no meaning at all.

But the paper, as far as anything serious was concerned, had very little, indeed to do with the parade. It was considered entirely superfluous and unwarranted, and the body understood it in the same light that any body else did. Plainly speaking, I am of the opinion that it was looked upon by most of the students as a superfluous bit of hot air, and I heard several people joking pass the remark, that "If the committee couldn't write a better sounding paper than that, they ought to have a parade in their honor."

This was just before dinner. As of the crowds met and the paper had not been discussed except at the dinner table. There was no semblance of organized protest. Just after dinner we heard a cry of "Parade!" "Parade!" from one of the fraternity houses on the next street. In a body poured out into the street. The chance for a parade was not to be missed. Those who had musical instruments brought them along, and the parade started spontaneously and without organization, but for no place in particular. Some one suggested that Professor Clark address the multitude, so everybody started for his house. Clark was not at home, so the parade marched back to the "Quad." It marched through the library and out to the memorial court, where the old committee was read and three cheers given for the old committee. The parade then disbanded and as the next day was Friday, the students returned home and went to work. The parade consumed little more than an hour's time.

This was all there was to it. It was entered into with a spirit of gaiety, it was spontaneous, it was not an organized demonstration, and nobody was bullied. There were no ringleaders and everybody was equally guilty, if there is any guilt to be attached to it. The question did not enter into the spirit of the affair. A great number of students were in the habit who never tasted a drop of beer in their lives; among those were the president and the secretary of the Students' Temperance Association.

Twelve men were [illegible]

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