

BEAVER'S



MONTH

WITH a certain sigh of futility the Beaver tore up the carefully planned budget he had labored over at the first of the month and gently deposited the pieces in the wastebasket. He was painfully aware it was an old story as he peered into the dark and dusty interior of his wallet and wondered about the Gym Fund dance that was coming up Saturday—in fact coming up much sooner than the next green check from the Veterans Administration.

He turned and touched his patient roommate on the shoulder. "How much and when do I get it back?" Roommate didn't even look up from his busy slide rule. An old story. The Beaver pocketed the lovely five and wandered out into the court in high spirits. Now he could phone Nancy and go to the Gym Fund dance.

He had heard about the plans for the new gym they were raising money for. Maybe in three years it might be standing proudly in Tournament Park, but it came as a mild shock that he wouldn't be around to make much use of it. He wasn't ready to believe that the Institute could go right on functioning after he graduated. Well, anyway, this Saturday was the dance and the reckoning with roommate seemed very remote. Next year he would follow his budgets with grim fortitude.

An academic year is a funny thing. You enter it in the fall overflowing with enthusiasm, good intentions, and a fine suntan, and go through it at a mad pace, filling reams of paper and never seeing over the top of the immediate week's calendar. Nothing significant seems to happen to stand out from the pell-mell parade of weekday assignments and weekend good intentions shot to hell. Then at the end of the spring term you suddenly push away your papers and sanskrit math scratchings, and lean back in your chair to look back over it all.

Spring thoughts from a chair

The Beaver leaned back in his chair, lit a cigarette, and looked back over it all. It's been a pretty good year, he told himself—as he did about this time of May every year. Not that anything earth-shaking had happened, of course, but he began to see a lot of events in a new perspective. He wondered just what things in the year he would pick out to recount to his friends over future beers.

Last fall he had watched with a fatherly superiority the entrance of a Freshman class that was satisfactorily callow and peach-faced. They had put up with enormous bow-ties and derogatory name-cards, as Frosh should,

and had been well splashed with raw eggs and well soaked in the showers by enthusiastic upperclassmen. But as the year wore on he had watched them enter the swing of activities with commendable energy. The Beaver peered out of his window at the mountains and noted with satisfaction that the "T" looked well-scrubbed for the first time in several years.

The fall sports season had had a familiar look. The Engineers dropped heartbreaker after heartbreaker on the Conference grid and wound up at the annual Varsity Awards Banquet with the coaches' consolation speeches on how the season had "built character." The Beaver remembered with a faint grin that the cross-country coach had got up that night to say his team hadn't built any character but had "damn well won the Conference championship."

The Pajamarino stood out in his memory. He had sacked his limited wardrobe for a red-flannel night-shirt or a green derby, but eventually had pulled his rumpled pajamas over a set of khakis and gone out to marvel at the great pyramid of orange crates and the perennial little house that crowned it, symbolically painted: "OXY." He had hiked through Pasadena in the yelling throng, honking horns and happy to shock the natives with his flagrant pajamas, and had returned to bed with aching feet and an unshakable confidence in the morrow's victory. At any rate it was a good game despite the score, he mused.

Social life of a lowbrow

Of all the social events of the year the Beaver had the warmest place in his heart for the barn dances. Something about the endless kegs of foamy beer, the rustic wooden lodge, and the noisy music and noisier couples seemed to make barn dances the finest of all possible entertainment. He was undoubtedly an incurable lowbrow, but then so were a lot of other people. All his friends, he decided.

Barn dances were the playing fields for that hallowed athletic event, the crew race. Many times he had stripped to his T-shirt and valiantly downed the 12-ounce bottle of beer in the ten-man drinking relay. But his house had lost to Dabney, who had crew members that could empty a bottle of brew into their ironclad stomachs in five seconds time. The Beaver gazed longingly at the Eternal Acme Crew Race Trophy, on the Dabney mantel and thought: Next year it will be Different.

The builders of the student houses, wise in the ways of collegians, had certainly made waterproof structures, the Beaver decided, as the splashing sounds of water-battle disturbed his reveries. He swung his feet off the desk and walked cautiously out into the court. Water-fights were strange phenomena: they always erupted spontaneously, without cause or warning, and developed amazingly fast into highly organized and efficient platoon tactics.

Out into the torrent-drenched court marched the house band, clad in bathing suits, to rally the troops with an enthusiastically dissonant chorus—only the tuba gurgling ineffectually, and rapidly filling with water. The air was full of victory cries and water, as opposing armies cheerfully inundated each other. Hoses and stirrup-pumps appeared miraculously, as did the Resident Associates eventually. The Beaver looked disconsolately at his drenched pant-legs and returned to his dry room. He made a mental note to add water fights to his cherished memories of 1948-49.

Ten minutes to one and time for class again. The Beaver squashed his cigarette in the ashtray and got up off the bed feeling much too tired to undergo the

three-hour rigor of afternoon lab. He decided he wasn't getting enough sleep.

On the olive walk he passed a couple of professors and noted with dismay that, with the end of the year approaching, he was feeling warm and forgiving sentiments toward them. Seniors went by him solemnly, unbelievably dressed in suits. He knew they were going in for interviews to get jobs after graduation. In a few weeks they would receive their parchments, take a last look around, and plunge into the ice-water of outside life. Some of them he knew were getting married.

It would seem strange not to have them around in the fall. It seemed strange that way every spring, but in the fall everything seemed to go on all right without them. The Beaver wondered what all the disappearing seniors did in years to come with the thousands of dog-eared lab notebooks like the one under his arm.

As he entered the lab, he was confronted by his roommate, who wanted the five back. Muttering bitterly, he decided to borrow it from the "Y." He had done it before. It certainly was an old story.

—Jim Hendrickson '50

BOOKS: A challenge to complacency

CRISIS IN EDUCATION

by Bernard Iddings Bell

Whittlesey House, New York, 230 pp. \$3

Reviewed by L. Winchester Jones
Dean of Admissions

THE sub-title of Dr. Bell's little book—*A Challenge to American Complacency*—places it in a class with a significant number of other volumes which have appeared in the last ten years, all written by men experienced in the field of education and all intended to warn the layman that his pride in the American school system may not be entirely justified in the light of what is actually being produced.

Most of these books concentrate more or less on one division of the system—primary, secondary, collegiate—and stick pretty close to matters related to pedagogy. Dr. Bell does not so limit himself. In his attempt to get at the fundamental weaknesses he includes a keen if somewhat devastating analysis of the contemporary American, the product of a school and home influence which has failed to teach him any knowledge but facts, any morality other than expediency, any purpose in life except acquiring goods, or any method of self expression except spending in a wild scramble to buy pleasure. Uncertain of himself, fearful in his heart that perhaps the goals he is attempting to reach are not after all shining castles but rather dingy tenements housing more frustration, he covers his fear with boasting and his uncertainty by an attempt to impose his systems on the rest of the world.

A matter of balance

Dr. Bell is not concerned with any particular level of education or with any particular system. He is interested in training men and women to meet the problems and the challenges of today, and he believes that such training, at whatever level and by whatever system, must contain certain basic disciplines *in balance*. "An education involves developing and increasing expertness in . . . science, appreciation of the nature of things, creative art, social relationships, religion . . . Omit any one or leave it in an embryonic state, and the pupil becomes quite literally unbalanced."

Nor is it enough that these things be offered. They must be learned, and they cannot be learned without

effort, without discipline, by letting the pupil play at what he likes on the theory that he will absorb more easily when the process is painless. Without effort there is little absorption, only a superficial wetting that soon dries off. "The business of the school, the home, and the church is to feed the lambs, not to amuse the young goats."

Chapter 10, Education and Stateism, is worth reading for itself. Few laymen are aware of how very close we are to Federally dictated educational policies. That education can be used to keep one class or group in power has been all too clearly illustrated by the experiences of the past twenty-five years in Europe. Never in history has our school system needed so much money to do its job properly. Only the Federal government can supply the sums that are needed. In the long run the man who pays the piper calls the tune. Only by awareness and vigilance on the part of each one of us can American education avoid becoming, as Dr. Bell says, an instrument for "keeping the general public quiet and tractable."

There is much in this book with which you will not agree. No thoughtful man ever agreed entirely with the words of another. There is much that is unpleasant and shocking to those who want to believe that all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds. But to the intelligent who know that the pattern of the future is set by habits of the present, and to the parents who love their children enough not to trust blindly to the effectiveness of a system about which they are largely ignorant, this book will be indeed a challenge to complacency and perhaps, in a few instances, a stimulus to action.

