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## Stephen Crane at Syracuse University: New Findings

Thomas A. Gullason

*University of Rhode Island*

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“WAR IS KIND”

VOLUME XXIX · 1994

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# Stephen Crane at Syracuse University: New Findings

BY THOMAS A. GULLASON

MORE THAN A hundred years have passed since Stephen Crane attended Syracuse University (January to June 1891). Yet even at this late date it is possible to correct long-standing "facts," add information, and suggest areas for further study of one of the most original and intense figures in American literary history.

To begin with a minor finding, Stephen Crane's arrival at Syracuse is still given as 6 January 1891, the opening day of the Winter Term.<sup>1</sup> But Crane was already playing "truant." On 6 and 7 January he was visiting his former preparatory school, Claverack College and Hudson River Institute,<sup>2</sup> leaving the impression that he was returning to Lafayette College to finish his freshman year, when in fact he had already transferred to Syracuse University as a "special student."<sup>3</sup>

The generally accepted reasons for Crane's transfer from Lafa-

Thomas A. Gullason is professor of English at the University of Rhode Island. His specialties are Stephen Crane, Ernest Hemingway, and the genre of the short story. He has published numerous articles and five books, including the Norton Critical Edition of *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*.

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1. *The Crane Log: A Documentary Life of Stephen Crane, 1871-1900*, ed. Stanley Wertheim and Paul Sorrentino (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., An Imprint of Macmillan Publishing Company, 1994), 56. Hereafter *Crane Log*. The school year was made up of three terms: Fall, Winter, and Spring.

2. *The Vidette* 2 (January 1891): 43. *The Vidette* was the school magazine of Claverack, which Crane attended from January 1888 to June 1890.

3. In *Annual of Syracuse University for the Collegiate Year 1890-91* (Syracuse: The Syracuse Journal Company, 1890) there was this on the special student: "Students who do not desire to complete any of the regular courses of study, may pursue such studies as their qualifications permit. They are expected to attend such general exercises as may be assigned to them, be subject to all the general rules, and take work enough to occupy all their time" (p. 22). Hereafter *Annual*.

yette to Syracuse do not tell the whole story. No doubt, he was ill-suited as a mining-engineering student, and his poor grades proved it. He may have left Lafayette “without censure,” his professors having encouraged a “change of climate.”<sup>4</sup> Moreover, his mother, Mary Helen Peck Crane, did feel that he was “deserving” of a scholarship at Syracuse University because he was the grand nephew of the Reverend Bishop Jesse Truesdell Peck, one of the school’s founders and the first president of its board of trustees.

The hidden but overriding reason for Mrs. Crane’s decision to have her son transfer, however, was the recurrence of his problems with hazing. In late 1887 he had left Pennington Seminary (where he had been prior to attending Claverack) outraged by the charge of “hazer” leveled against him. At Lafayette College in September 1890, he was reportedly a victim of hazing. Even if his mother did not know all the particulars of her son’s hazing at East Hall, she had reason to be concerned: earlier that same month a hazing with baseball bats at South College had resulted in a severe head concussion. The incident was widely reported in the Eastern press. As a seasoned shore correspondent for the New York *Tribune*, Mrs. Crane could not have missed the long-lasting furor over the “tradition” of hazings and rowdyism at science-oriented, Presbyterian Lafayette.<sup>5</sup> In contrast, Syracuse was a safe ministerial haven—and Methodist.

In attending Syracuse Crane was, in a sense, coming home to his

4. *The Correspondence of Stephen Crane*, ed. Stanley Wertheim and Paul Sorrentino, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 1:22. Hereafter *Correspondence*. For the Lafayette faculty suggesting “a change of climate,” see *The Commercial* [New York] *Advertiser*, 13 June 1896, 17.

5. The full history of the hazings in September 1890 and the press response is in my forthcoming essay, “Stephen Crane at Lafayette College: New Perspectives,” *Stephen Crane Studies*.

Syracuse was not immune from hazing and rowdyism, but clearly not on a level with that at Lafayette. Two early cases of hazing at Syracuse occurred in 1873 and 1881. Several took place during Chancellor Sims’s tenure, though no dates are available. See W. Freeman Galpin, *Syracuse University: The Pioneer Days* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1952), 1:186–87.

The impact of Crane’s initial hazing experience at Pennington is discussed in my “Stephen Crane at Claverack College: A New Reading,” *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier* 27 (Fall 1992): 33–46. Hereafter *Courier*.

idyllic school days at Claverack College, which he remembered in 1896 as “the happiest period of my life.”<sup>6</sup> For Claverack was one of several Methodist seminaries with ties to Syracuse University as a “gymnasium.” This meant that its students were “admitted to the University without further examination upon certificates of having satisfactorily accomplished the required preparatory studies.” As principal of “Gymnasium A,” Claverack’s president and colonel of the military department, the Reverend Arthur H. Flack, served as an ex-officio member of the Syracuse University faculty.<sup>7</sup> Under the Reverend Flack’s command in the military department Crane had risen rapidly in rank, first to captain, then to adjutant.

Most likely, Crane was well disposed toward Syracuse, which enjoyed an excellent reputation at Claverack. For example, in the Claverack student magazine, *The Vidette*, Otto Goebel, a Claverack alumnus and a member of the class of 1892 at Syracuse, had stated: “Syracuse University, still in its infancy, has become, on account of its rapid growth, one of the foremost and best known universities in the United States, and of late years its fame has spread over the civilized world.”

It has been said that only baseball interested Crane at both Lafayette and Syracuse. However, the twin arts of music and painting—so much a part of his family heritage—were well represented at Syracuse, with its “Music Hall” and large collection of portraits, with every “style of engraving and etching”; and the school’s courses in “painting, vocal and instrumental music.”<sup>8</sup>

Besides Goebel there were other Claverack alumni at Syracuse. Two of them—Lincoln Travis and Sanford Brusie—were Crane’s former classmates. It was not long before Crane joined the Alumni Association of Claverack College and Hudson River Institute at Syracuse as its secretary and treasurer.<sup>9</sup> Along with Goebel, Travis belonged to the school’s literary society, *The Athenaeum*.<sup>10</sup> Be-

6. *Correspondence* 1:212.

7. *Annual*, 10, 14.

8. *The Vidette* 1 (May 1890): 8–9 (the Goebel quotation occurs on page 8).

9. *The Onondagan of '92* [Yearbook of Junior Class] (Spring Term, 30 May 1891), 8:148. Hereafter *Onondagan*.

10. *Onondagan*, 118.

cause the records of the society are no longer available, it is not clear whether Crane was a member; however, he must have been aware of the literary efforts of his fellow students.

Also familiar to Crane was the Chancellor of Syracuse University, the Reverend Charles N. Sims, who had lectured at Claverack, when Crane was a student there, on one of the "greater" questions, that is, how to live: "You will never come to know the true value of life unless you learn how to make the distinction between the great and the small, the false and the true." Sims added that "the true value of the things you are striving for in this world, lies more in the discipline that comes from a right and honorable way of getting them, than from the things themselves."<sup>11</sup> While young Stephen Crane, as the offspring of a Methodist minister, was already jaded with such moral wisdoms and may not have been receptive to the Reverend Sims's fatherly advice, he would in his own way come to grips with these matters in his ironic and nihilistic volumes of poetry, *The Black Riders and Other Lines* (1895) and *War Is Kind* (1899).

It was probably no accident that Chancellor Sims, who also served as professor of English literature, was Crane's only "official" teacher at Syracuse. The textbook Sims used was Welch's *English Literature and Language*, volume 1.<sup>12</sup> Over the years, it has been

11. *The Vidette* 1 (December 1889): 12; also 1 (January 1890): 9. Even before this lecture at Claverack, Reverend Sims had been familiar to the Crane family. He won the admiration of Crane's older sister and surrogate mother Agnes in 1873 (see Paul Sorrentino, "Newly Discovered Writings of Mary Helen Peck Crane and Agnes Elizabeth Crane," *Courier* 21 [Spring 1986]: 115-17, 119). Also, Sims was a lecturer at Centenary Collegiate Institute when Crane's father, the Reverend Jonathan Townley Crane, was a member of its board of trustees (see the *Third Annual Catalogue of the Centenary Collegiate Institute of the Newark Conference, 1876-7* [Hackettstown, N.J., 1877], 7; and *Seventh Annual Catalogue of the Centenary Collegiate Institute of the Newark Conference, 1880-81* [Hackettstown, N.J., 1881], 7). In 1876 the Reverend Bishop Jesse Peck had been a lecturer along with the Reverend Sims at Centenary. The Reverend Sims must have left a strong impression on both Bishop Peck and the Reverend Crane, for he lectured at Centenary as late as 1880. This was probably a key factor in his appointment as Chancellor of Syracuse University in 1881.

12. No copy of this textbook exists, nor is there any record of Welch's first



assumed that Crane's grade for the course was an A. But recent evidence indicates that no grades were given at the time, and that Crane's "grade" was in fact the year of his enrollment—91—followed by the + symbol (91+).<sup>13</sup>

The one teacher whom Crane was known to have openly admired at Syracuse—he was, it seems, admired by everyone—was Dr. Charles J. Little, professor of history and logic. There is now strong evidence that Crane attended Professor Little's course, *The French Revolution*, as a free-lance student. Crane owned what must have been a textbook for the course, Bertha M. Gardiner's *The French Revolution, 1789–1795* (his name was inscribed in a copy dated 13 January 1891). To Dr. Little, in a letter of 1899, Crane mentioned "a certain examination in the French Revolution."<sup>14</sup> This corroborates that he was enrolled in the course and suggests his keen interest in history—which was not, as many believe, restricted solely to the Civil War as reflected in *The Red Badge of Courage*.<sup>15</sup>

Crane had always had an ambivalent attitude toward his Methodist heritage and religion in general. He had never been comfortable with the "thou shalt not" rules against smoking, drinking alcohol, gambling, and profanity at Pennington, Claverack, Lafayette, and Syracuse. Inevitably Crane would find the religious observances more demanding and more closely monitored at Syracuse than at Lafayette, because a goodly number of Syracuse students were preparing to enter the ministry.<sup>16</sup> As he had done at Claverack, Crane probably found a way to deal with the religious

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name, but the contents of the book included works of St. Bede, *Beowulf*, and *The Canterbury Tales*. See Mansfield J. French, "Stephen Crane, Ball Player," *Syracuse University Alumni News* 15 (January 1934): 1.

13. *Crane Log*, 60.

14. *Annual*, 35; James E. Kibler, Jr., "The Library of Stephen and Cora Crane," in *Proof: The Yearbook of American Bibliographical and Textual Studies* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971), 1:218; and *Correspondence* 2:429.

15. His Delta Upsilon brother at Syracuse, Clarence Peaslee, once noted: "His favorite subject was history, and his reading in this branch of instruction has been considerable." See Peaslee's "Stephen Crane's College Days," *The Monthly Illustrator and Home and Country* 13 (August 1896): 28. Hereafter Peaslee.

16. *Annual*, 17.

observances on his own terms.<sup>17</sup> A former choirboy, however, Crane was comfortable with choir singing. He attended St. Paul's Church in the city specifically to hear its choir.<sup>18</sup>

Crane needed little incentive to follow new trends in the arts, especially painting, and Syracuse was a good place to develop the sensibilities that led to his inimitable literary impressionism. It is well known that in his room at the Delta Upsilon fraternity his "walls were hung with pictures . . . and pen-drawings," with "some of the pictures being particularly good, for Mr. Crane has always been an ardent admirer of fine paintings."<sup>19</sup>

He may well have developed an interest in Luella Stewart's lecture "Color," which was reprinted in the campus journal *The Syracusean* a few weeks before his arrival on campus. In this lecture Miss Stewart observed: "A modern writer on art advances the theory that great painters are men who have unusually keen vision—eyes more sensitive to form and color than the eyes of people around them. So the painter is as deeply interested in this idea of visual development as is the man of science; for the progress is not in one direction only: it relates not alone to the *perception* of objects but to the idea of *color*." Miss Stewart pointed to the six primary colors of the physicist (red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and violet); noted that the painter recognized three as primary colors (red, yellow, and blue); and divided colors into classes—warm colors (with red or yellow predominating), cold colors (with blue or black dominating), and the color gray (a mixture of the three primary colors). Perspective was "represented first by outline, second by *quality* of outline," and the third "by *color*."<sup>20</sup>

Crane was definitely concerned with the philosophy and psy-

17. At Claverack Crane "volunteered" to pump the chapel organ, which "kept him reasonably busy and made it unnecessary for him to sit out front and listen to the sermon." See Vincent Starrett, "Stephen Crane at Claverack," *The Stephen Crane Newsletter* 2 (Fall 1967): 4.

18. Unpublished letter from Frank Noxon to Mansfield J. French, dated 29 June 1934, Stephen Crane Collection, Syracuse University Library. Hereafter Crane Collection.

19. Peaslee, 27.

20. *The Syracusean* 13 (20 December 1890): 63–64, 67.

chology of color. Following the publication of *The Red Badge* in 1895, he conceded his debt to Goethe's *Theory of Colors* to his Delta Upsilon brother Frank Noxon, who recalled: "After the book appeared he and I had somewhere a talk about color in literature. He told me that a passage in Goethe analyzed the effect which the several colors have on the human mind. Upon Crane that had made a profound impression and he had utilized the idea to produce his effects."<sup>21</sup>

During the period of his enrollment at Syracuse, references were made in *The Syracusan* to Crane's arrival from Lafayette and his exploits on the Syracuse baseball team. In that journal he would have seen three parts of an essay on the poet Sidney Lanier, which stressed the importance of music in poetry. Music helped to free Crane from "the burden of realism," drawing him closer to the Unknown and to the Infinite, and reading Lanier's essay may have sparked his interest in writing tonal poems.<sup>22</sup>

Crane found time for fun at Syracuse. His numerous fraternity activities have often been noted: being captain of the Cricket Club, and a member of both the Coasting Club (the Nut-Brown Maiden) and the Tooth Pick Club (an eating society); visiting a girl's sorority, Gamma Phi Beta; smoking a water-pipe, or hookah, of his own making; and fitting out the cupola of his fraternity house with "exotic draperies" and "cushions."<sup>23</sup>

The serious and extensive literary, cultural, and intellectual activities at Crane's fraternity have been little noted. The name Delta Upsilon, translated from the Greek *Dikaia Upotheke*, means "Justice, Our Foundation."<sup>24</sup> Crane served this motto with a vengeance in

21. Frank W. Noxon, "The Real Stephen Crane," *The Step Ladder* 14 (January 1928): 6. Hereafter Noxon. Like Crane, Noxon was to publish in the avant-garde journal *The Philistine*.

22. *The Syracusan* 13 (13 April 1891): 153-55; 13 (4 May 1891): 168-70; 13 (8 June 1891): 184-85.

23. See *Onondagan*, 157, 167, 172; *The University Herald* 19 (23 March 1891): 102; Noxon, 6; and Claude Jones, "Stephen Crane: An Essay" (unpublished), 1-2, Crane Collection.

24. I wish to thank Steven J. Gerber, former executive director of the Delta Upsilon Fraternity, for supplying me with *The Cornerstone* (a history of the frater-



## The Boys From Syracuse

THIS PICTURE was taken at the Syracuse Delta Upsilon Chapter House on Ostrom Avenue in the Spring of 1891.

In the top row, left to right, were three devoted friends Clarence N. Goodwin, *Syracuse '94*; LL.B., *Harvard*, 1910 and LL.D. *Syracuse*, 1928, a former Justice of the Illinois Appellate Court and now practicing law in Washington, D.C.; Frank Wright Noxon, *Syracuse '94*, a writer of distinction and the son of a noted justice of the New York Supreme Court; and the late Stephen Crane, *Lafayette* and *Syracuse '94*, author of "The Red Badge of Courage," and other stories.

These three last met in Cambridge when Crane was reporting a Carlisle Indian-Harvard football game, Goodwin was finishing his course at the Harvard Law School and Noxon was engaged in newspaper work.

Frontispiece from January 1945 *Delta Upsilon Quarterly* (vol. 63, no. 1).

his two known reports at chapter meetings on 30 January and 8 May.<sup>25</sup>

His report of 30 January to his fraternity brothers was "an essay . . . on some serious political subject related to Russia." In all likeli-

ness). I also thank Jo Ellen Walden and Barbara Harness at the national headquarters of Delta Upsilon for locating the photograph "The Boys from Syracuse." Probably one reason why Crane joined Delta Upsilon was that it was an open, nonsecret society.

25. Noxon, 4. Also Claude Jones, "Stephen Crane at Syracuse," *American Literature* 7 (March 1935): 82-83.



hood this was “A Foreign Policy, in Three Glimpses,” in the form of playlets, giving ironic and sardonic pictures of Great Britain and her imperialistic designs. While slight and sophomoric, they revealed Crane’s early ability to get to the nub of things; make adept use of any environment (a key to much of his success as a fiction writer); capture a wide range of voices (from cockney to dignified English, to the speech of a noble savage, as well as sudden torrents of crude and colloquial Americanisms); create grotesque, absurd comedy; incorporate facts from contemporary newspapers; and show his grasp of history and international affairs. Mansfield French, his battery mate on the Syracuse baseball team, once recalled: “Steve read newspapers greedily and he always looked first to the sports pages, then to international news. He certainly talked about those foreign explosions.”<sup>26</sup>

Crane’s second report may have been “The King’s Favor,” a fictional sketch that he published in his fraternity’s newspaper, *The University Herald*, in May 1891. Not as sardonic and unrelenting in its satire of British imperialism in Africa, it merged a comic foreground (the visiting concert singer Albert Thies desperately tries to find a diplomatic way to turn down the gift of one of King Cetewayo’s wives) and a serious background (where King Cetewayo tries to enlist Thies and America’s aid to overthrow the British in an insurrection scheme). Already in these reports at Syracuse, Crane was preparing for his dual career as journalist and creative writer, using current events and dressing them up as entertaining fictions.

Crane was doing this and much more in his feature story turned playful hoax, “Great Bugs in Onondaga,” originally published on 1 June 1891 and rediscovered in 1963. His only known report as the New York *Tribune*’s Syracuse correspondent, “Great Bugs” was an early exercise in the willing suspension of disbelief, which would resurface on a grander scale in *The Red Badge*. Crane wrote “realistically” and “truly” of a swarm of bugs that blocked the progress of a locomotive between Jamesville and Syracuse. This hoax was an

26. See my article, “Stephen Crane: Anti-Imperialist,” *American Literature* 30 (May 1958): 238. This interview with French was arranged by Lester G. Wells, the late curator of the Stephen Crane Collection at Syracuse University Library. Crane’s essay on Russia is mentioned in Noxon, p. 4.

ironic prelude to his report on the Junior Order of United American Mechanics parade of 21 August 1892 at Asbury Park in New Jersey, which cost him his job. Carried away by both his idealism and his realism, he made heavy-handed, satiric attacks on the well-to-do Asbury Parkers, and the marching working men, whom he called “probably . . . the most awkward, ungainly, uncut and uncarved procession that ever raised clouds of dust on sun-beaten streets.”<sup>27</sup>

Sometime during 1891, Crane was already probing the New York City slum world of *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets* in his most vigorous and extended crusade for justice on native American grounds. Although critics have argued that Crane began *Maggie* in New York City, his fraternity brothers said they read portions of it while Crane was still at Syracuse.<sup>28</sup> Part of an early version of *Maggie*—“Where ‘De Gang’ Hears the Band Play”—first appeared anonymously in the New York *Herald* in July 1891, only a month after he left Syracuse. The existence of this part, recovered by the late Melvin Schoberlin, affirms the claim of Crane’s fraternity brothers that he began the novel at Syracuse.<sup>29</sup>

The early version of *Maggie* was a sampling of Crane’s daring and atypical craft. A “new” literary naturalist, he could write vividly and realistically, drawing on a modicum of experience and observation. But he collected enough to explore and expose the grim depths of city life. At Syracuse he haunted the Central Railroad Station, observing the working people and the vagabonds; and the police court, where he observed the trials of criminals and prostitutes.<sup>30</sup> He frequented a “music hall,” where “pretty girls sang and danced on the stage daringly clad in low neck waists and skirts just above the knees.”<sup>31</sup>

27. See *The Works of Stephen Crane*, ed. Fredson Bowers (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1973), 8:578–80. For a reprint of the New York *Tribune* editorial on Crane’s hoax, see pp. 918–19.

28. Peaslee, 29; Noxon, 5.

29. This early version of *Maggie* was first reprinted in my essay, “The ‘Lost’ Newspaper Writings of Stephen Crane,” *Courier* 21 (Spring 1986): 69–73.

30. Jones, “Stephen Crane: An Essay,” 3–4.

31. See Paul Sorrentino, “New Evidence on Stephen Crane at Syracuse,” *Re-*

Earlier, as a summer shore correspondent for the *Tribune* at Asbury Park and Ocean Grove—bastions of godliness and good works—he had been well aware of sins and sinners: gambling and alcoholism, an alleged disorderly house, speakeasies, petty robberies, pickpockets, card sharks, a confidence man, a case of forgery and embezzlement, an attempted rape, and a murder.<sup>32</sup> All were usable in *Maggie*.

Along with Crane, two of his fraternity brothers, Frank Noxon and Clarence Loomis Peaslee, enriched the literary climate at Syracuse University. Noxon was the Class of 1894 poet. In the early 1890s he published a satiric essay, two stories, and many poems in *The University Herald*. His poems also appeared in the city paper, *The Syracuse Standard*. In the mid-1890s Peaslee published poems and stories in *The University Forum* and in the *American Agriculturist*.

Crane's one "course" in the spring term was baseball, and this has led everyone, including Crane himself, to assume that he had "learned" and "experienced" little else in college, when all the evidence proves otherwise. To the reporter John Northern Hilliard he stated: "I found mining-engineering not at all to my taste. I preferred base-ball. Later I attended Syracuse University where I attempted to study literature but found base ball [*sic*] again much more to my taste."<sup>33</sup>

No one has speculated how the roguish Crane might have met the official training rules enforced by the baseball team manager, E. F. Shepherd. The following rule would have spoiled Crane's "signature"—a cigarette in his yellowed fingers: "From this date [4 February] until close of season candidates shall abstain from use of tobacco in any form, and of spirituous or malt liquor." Another

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*sources for American Literary Study* 15 (Autumn 1985): 179–85. He reprints an article by Crane's classmate, William McMahon, first published in the *Syracuse Post-Standard* (20 February 1955), 13: "Syracuse in the Gay '90s: Steve Crane told to 'Stick to Poems' after 'Bangup' Piano Recital at Party."

32. See my "Stephen Crane at the Shore," *Asbury Park Sunday Press* (22 September 1968), 15.

33. *Correspondence* 1:166–67.

rule, that players must retire by 10:30 p.m.,<sup>34</sup> would have seriously cramped Crane's style: his "day" usually began after nightfall.

Although he had been there only six months, Crane did not forget Syracuse University, nor did Syracuse forget him. Both of the school newspapers, *The University Herald* and *The University Forum*, followed his literary career with pride. Professional biographers and academic critics have made many references to his writings and his movements at Syracuse,<sup>35</sup> but they missed two of the most perceptive and sensitive articles to appear in the 1890s—in *The University Forum*. One is a full-scale review and assessment of *The Red Badge* by an alumni editor, John T. Roberts (Class of 1876); the other is a brief, broad-ranging study of Crane as man and artist, by the *Forum's* managing editor, Howard Hunt Reynolds.

In his lengthy review of *The Red Badge*, Roberts offers some shrewd observations, writing, in part:

"The Red Badge of Courage" is a story of the American civil war. And now, having made this characterization, it becomes necessary straightway to recall the statement; for the work has few of the elements of a story, being without beginning or ending, its personnel being almost anonymous and its geography and calendar reduced to a scrap of unimportance. While it deals plenteously in details of battle there is not the slightest attempt to outline a field or explain a movement, nor is a single term of military technique employed. A true characterization would be rather than a story, a psychological study of an untoughened soldier under fire. . . . It is as he [the hero] were a patient upon the operating table of a college hospital, the face always veiled; not the personal identity but the disease being the important con-

34. *The University Herald* 19 (16 February 1891): 84–85. Practice sessions ran from 9 February to 15 April.

35. For the references to Crane in *The University Herald*, see vols. 21 (23 December 1892): 63; 23 (1 January 1895): 69; 23 (1 May 1895): 131; 24 (1 February 1896): 95; 25 (December 1896): 54; 25 (January 1897): 74; 26 (October 1897): 4–6; 28 (June 1900): 269–70.

For references in *The University Forum*, see vols. 2 (10 November 1896): 96; 3 (4 May 1898): 343–44; and [as *Syracuse University Forum*] 4 (7 October 1898): 21.



sideration. So exhaustively are the young man's emotions analyzed and depicted that the experience of a bare half-dozen days is enough to fill the volume.<sup>36</sup>

In his review-estimate, Reynolds makes an amazingly accurate forecast of Crane's place in literature:

Stephen Crane is unquestionably a force in modern fiction. . . . He is a force from his mastery of the deep secrets of human emotion. He is a force from his startling powers of portrayal. Whether he has enough of the ideal to be called "a great novelist" may be questioned. Men will not christen as "great" one who does not set up ideals high enough for themselves to follow. And Crane's men are too common, their actions too selfish to be ideal. Yet his descriptions and his psychological analyses, in an introspective age, will not fail to make him a leader of a certain, and a considerable branch of modern fiction.<sup>37</sup>

Presently, at least two areas linked to Crane's Syracuse experience and to his personal and literary life remain unresolved. One concerns his older brother Townley's letter to Chancellor James R. Day regarding his youngest brother's status at the University. To this letter, on 18 November 1899, Chancellor Day responded: "Mr. Stephen Crane was not expelled from this University," adding that "the story . . . he was expelled may have arisen from the fact that the Dean, after admonishing him several times, suggested that it would be better for him not to return another year unless he expected to improve his scholarship and standing."<sup>38</sup>

What was Townley's motive in writing his letter? Was it empathy, revenge, or both? Or was the letter a sign of his depressed and

36. *The University Forum* 1 (10 March 1896): 272-74. A university-sponsored newspaper, the *Forum* began as a weekly on 2 September 1895 and ceased publication on 15 June 1900. Its "literary qualities were high," as the historian W. Freeman Galpin noted in *Syracuse University: The Growing Years* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1960), 2:306.

37. *The University Forum* 2 (29 September 1896): 17.

38. The entire letter is in the Crane Collection.

confused state of mind? Townley had been considered the leading journalist at the Jersey Shore, until Crane wrote that ill-tempered 1892 Asbury Park report. Both brothers were then fired by the New York *Tribune* for the incident; and though Townley was later re-hired, he never regained his lustrous reputation. By November 1899 Crane was desperately ill; he died in June 1900. During 1899 and 1900, Townley was in and out of the Binghamton, New York, Hospital for the Chronic Insane. He did not attend his brother's funeral.<sup>39</sup>

Another area—of literary importance—also remains unresolved. What did Crane publish in *The Syracuse Standard*, the *Detroit Free Press*, and elsewhere while he was the university correspondent for the New York *Tribune*? Thus far, nothing has been uncovered beyond “Great Bugs in Onondaga.”

Through its Stephen Crane holdings, significantly augmented in 1984 by the Melvin Schoberlin Collection of Crane letters and other documents, Syracuse University continues its longtime commitment to completing the portrait of an original genius, whose fame remains worldwide.<sup>40</sup>

39. This information is drawn from the talk “Family Matters: Stephen Crane's Brother, Wilbur,” given before the Stephen Crane Society, 29 May 1992, by Dr. Robert Kellogg Crane, whose grandfather was Wilbur Crane. This talk will be published in *Stephen Crane Studies*.

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