

**THE YALE LITERARY
MAGAZINE. VOL.
LXI, APRIL, 1896,
NO. 7. PP. 266 - 308**

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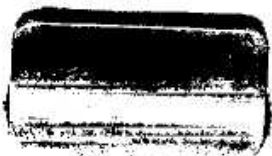
THE YALE LITERARY MAGAZINE.—Conducted by the Students of Yale University. This Magazine established February, 1836, is the oldest college periodical in America; entering upon its Sixty-First Volume with the number for October, 1895. It is published by a board of Editors, annually chosen from each successive Senior Class. It thus may be fairly said to represent in its general articles the average literary culture of the university. In the Notabilia college topics are thoroughly discussed, and in the Memorabilia it is intended to make a complete record of the current events of college life; while in the Book Notices and Editors' Table, contemporary publications and exchanges receive careful attention.

Contributions to its pages are earnestly solicited from students of all departments, and may be sent through the Post Office. They are due the 1st of the month. If rejected, they will be returned to their writers, whose names will not be known outside the Editorial Board. A Gold Medal of the value of Twenty-five Dollars, for the best written Essay, is offered for the competition of all undergraduate subscribers, at the beginning of each academic year.

The Magazine is issued on the 15th day of each month from October to June, inclusive; nine numbers form the annual volume, comprising at least 360 pages. The price is \$3.00 per volume, 35 cents per single number. All subscriptions must be paid in advance, directly to the Editors, who alone can give receipts therefor. Upon the day of publication the Magazine is promptly mailed to all subscribers. Single numbers are on sale at the Coöperative Store. Back numbers and volumes can be obtained from the Editors.

A limited number of advertisements will be inserted. The character and large circulation of the Magazine render it a desirable medium for all who would like to secure the patronage of Yale students.

All communications, with regard to the editorial management of the periodical, must be addressed to the EDITORS OF THE YALE LITERARY MAGAZINE, New Haven, Conn.



THE
YALE LITERARY MAGAZINE.

VOL. LXI.

APRIL, 1896.

No. 7

EDITORS FOR THE CLASS OF '97.

CHARLES B. DECAMP.

CORNELIUS P. KITCHEL.

NATHAN A. SMITH.

CHARLES E. THOMAS.

FREDERICK TILNEY.

A SPRING TIDE HOMILY.

IT is somewhat the fashion, the Saint tells us, for him to ascend the pulpit every spring and deliver a homily on the value of college writing. Not that he expects to accomplish much by his discourse, nor is he always satisfied with the feeble utterance and halting style of his spokesman, as certain testy splutterings on the present occasion would seem to indicate. Still, it is something that ought to be done, and so let us come in for a moment from the warm, clear spring out-of-doors, with its multitudinous noise of robins and hurdy-gurdies, and give the old gentleman his say.

It has been often disputed whether the thing called college literature has any reasonable ground for being. During the period of its existence it has vacillated, as the dusty and forgotten volumes of the LIT. will show, between two extremes of purpose; the one, to hold the mirror up to college life, and the other, to produce articles of interest and merit as general literature. It need not be greatly wondered at if it has failed in the first instance, since it is particularly hard for college men to

write satisfactorily about college life ; they are much too near what they are writing about. One needs a certain distance to see an object in its true perspective and color effect. The artist who would paint a flower does not poke his nose into the petals. It is a canon of criticism that one can describe faithfully only what he has experienced in his own life ; it is no less true that he should wait until that experience is over before he begins to write. The old Wordsworthian phrase, "emotion recollected in tranquility" comes to mind. If undergraduate literature has failed in the other direction, that of producing something of permanent value, it is only what might have been expected. Compare it with the writing of the outside world, disallowing the plea of youth and inexperience, and the result is lamentable enough. It is absurd to suppose that boys could make a real or even partial success in literature, the subtlest and profoundest force in human life. An able writer, himself a striking proof of what the undergraduate can do in literature on occasion, once remarked in the pages of this magazine that after the college man had received competent criticism on his production and had gotten all the profit he could for himself, it would do no great harm if it were consigned to the flames instead of to the printer ; that, as literature, college writing is valueless.

While admitting both these charges of inefficiency, it is still possible to claim for it real worth and power in the college world. It would not be better to burn it than to print it. As bound up in the files of the Harvard and Columbia monthlies, the Nassau *Lit*, and, we speak humbly, St. Elihu's own venerable infant of sixty years, it is a very helpful and precious factor in the development and expression of undergraduate thought and feeling. Briefly stated, the purpose of the Yale *LIT* and of every other college literary paper should be to give expression to undergraduate idealism ; to convey to the little world of the campus the results of those hours of patient endeavor 'to think clearly and feel deeply,' to come close in touch with the master minds of the past, or perhaps to strike

out and depict life a little from the personal standpoint. Undergraduate idealism,—this is by no means the vague, up-in-the-air phrase it seems. Here at Yale it is but another name for the Yale spirit of “energetic earnestness,” which dominates every other phase of our life and should find expression in the field of letters as well. For a fitting portrayal of this spirit, the literary gift is needed and just here lies the value of the LIT, in trying to develop this literary gift.

From another point of view, college writing is by no means valueless; by it the undergraduate gets practice in composition and confidence in his own powers. The trouble with us is not the lack of something to say but the ability to say it. Oftentimes one seems fairly bubbling over with impressions which he feels are fine and true, yet when he tries to write them down, he finds that they have all ebbed away. The trouble comes, not in striking the blow, but in “getting into position.” And so this struggle and painstaking, this critical, honest scrutiny of every idea, this patient moulding and hammering of words till they run like ductile metal under the fingers and lend themselves to every shade and expression of our thought,—all this is worth the while, since by it alone can we get those most needful things, practice and judgment. If Stevenson could spend years and years in absolute slaving to get that wonderful power of expression which is a chief feature of his style, the college man need not despair of the value of his own faltering efforts.

There are a few things, however, against which the Saint feels called upon to raise a voice of protest, and the first is the tendency of the college writer to wander far afield in chase of every fad that lives its little day in the outside world of letters. Of course this is easily accounted for; our reading always soaks through into our writing, and well enough, since without the first we should do but little of the second. Why not be frank and acknowledge that we know nothing at all of ourselves, that it all comes from some one who sees and feels more than we? Going to school to the men and women who have made English

literature what it is and going to school to life, is surely no cause for shame. But in doing all this we should take care to say what we learn in our own way, and not servilely copy. The volumes of the LIT. afford some examples of worn-out and forgotten fads that crept into campus journalism like echoes from the literary strife outside. In the early numbers we get reminiscent lappings of the Byronic wave then running high; a little later it is Tennyson who dominates the boyish heart and fancy, and so on down through the years to Swinburne and Morris, the latest comers in the seat of influence. In so far as this resemblance has been unconscious assimilation it is allowable, even necessary, but where it has merely been conscious copying it has done harm. A man's originality is too precious a thing to tamper with—better a crude originality than a milk and water edition of some great writer.

Just now there is special need of warning to the college man to keep his writing clear and high and genuine. In general literature the tide of decadence, what Mr. Warner calls "the yellow school," has reached the flood, and there is danger lest it creep into college writing and spoil much that is best and truest there. The glory of a boy's writing is his hope, his optimism, the spring-time atmosphere that pervades his work, and he had best guard it carefully from this spirit of cynicism that is abroad. What a wretched thing this decadent spirit is, marring much that would otherwise be lovely, making its followers choose the brackish waters of shoddy pessimism and selfishness, and turn their backs upon that stream that flows by them all the while, from which they might draw, like the masters, draughts that have in them the glint of smiles and tears. Plunging into the mire of "acrobatic English" and "pig-sty ethics," decadence flaunts itself shamelessly amid the silent ruins of former beauty. Hawthorne and Thackeray and Eliot gaze down at Hardy and Meredith and Moore and wonder when truth and beauty will come again on the earth. The thing that undergraduate literature must do is to cease

apeing these follies of its elders and try to write as the best men have always written, out from the heart and simply.

It was a wise thing that Lafcadio Hearn said about Anatole France: "It is not because he has rare power to create original characters that he will live. It is because of his far rarer power to deal with what is older than any art, and withal more young and incomparably more precious; the beauty of what is beautiful in human emotion. And that writer who touches the springs of generous tears by some simple story of gratitude, of natural kindness, of gentle self-sacrifice, is surely most entitled to our love." Just here lies the greatest fault with college writing, the utter lack of sympathy that is so unconcernedly displayed. Sympathy is the most needful thing in literature,—to be called a "humanist" like Walter Pater should be the chief aim of every writer. Only when we get down to what we may call the "heart line" can we touch the eternal verities of life, love, sorrow and religion, those things that will always stir men's souls. Here lies the secret of the power of the great writers; of weak, sick Stevenson, who, even from his bed of pain, stretched out thin hands that sympathized with life and freedom; of the Polish Sienkiewicz, who wrote "through the course of a series of years and with no little toil, for the strengthening of hearts;" of Hawthorne, who from out the dim grayness of his soul yearned so ceaselessly for the sunshine he could not reach.

It is a far cry from such men to the humble devotees of college literature, yet the principle is precisely the same. Whatever of truth and beauty we are to gain must come from the same spirit of love and sympathy for all humanity that animated them. How to see and how to sympathize; that is the secret of how to write. Let us discern the humor and the pathos that lie so close about us, and then write about it feelingly. A tale of childish voices heard in dirty streets, or a small rag-a-muffin sprawling on the green from pure excess of life and happiness; of a woman's grief over the body of a dead ne'er-

do-well, or the look on a man's face when he lays down all for his friend: such things as these are worth more than all the picturesque word-phrasing in the world.

But now the good Saint pauses and nods off into a dreamy reverie. The springtime sermon is done and we may steal quietly out again into the sunshine, where we shall find the same robins, and maybe the same tunes galloping from the hurdy-gurdies. One last thought the drowsy patron leaves with us as we close the door, it is about the celebrated "LIT. style" before which contributors are supposed to bow themselves utterly. Of course there is really no such thing at all, for its very existence would destroy all the freshness and spontaneity we have been talking about. The only "LIT. style" to be acquired is a good style, and any good style is a "LIT. style." It may be boyish; why not, since we are only boys, but at any rate let it be frank and honest, energetic and earnest, with the dawn of manhood even in its boyishness.

Cornelius Porter Kitchel.



STORM.

In my ear there sounds the clangor
Of the sea's supernal wrath,
As it roars deep-throated anger
At the bounds that bar its path.
All its crested surges thunder
As they lash the smoking sand,
Till their black bands burst asunder
In a torrent on the land;
And the frowning cliffs that lower
In their pride, now shrink and cower,
As it bounds in wild exultance over crashing reef and bars,
Till its white hands tossed to heaven lay foam-fingers on the stars,
And the pallid moon and planets know its power!

Huntington Mason.