

**THE YALE LITERARY
MAGAZINE. VOL. XXIX,
OCTOBER, 1863, NO. I**

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The Yale literary magazine. Vol. XXIX, October, 1863, No. I by Lyman Hotchkiss Bagg

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LYMAN HOTCHKISS BAGG

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THE
YALE LITERARY MAGAZINE.

VOL. XXIX.

OCTOBER, 1863.

No. I.

EDITORS FOR THE CLASS OF '64.

M. C. D. BORDEN,

L. GREGORY,

S. C. DARLING,

G. S. MERRIAM,

A. D. MILLER.

The Yale Literary Magazine.

As our Magazine, more venerable than ourselves and yet new born to-day, is once more "renewing its youth," and is once more making its solicitous bow to the College world—necessitating a fresh subscription from the buyer and a fresh cover from the binder—it will perhaps be neither inappropriate or uninteresting to jot down a few facts relative to its past history, and a few thoughts which these facts and our own convictions suggest concerning its present condition and prospects. The origin of the Lit., fortunately or unfortunately for the antiquarian enthusiast of prospecting ages, is not "involved in impenetrable obscurity." Not merely the natal day of our precious legacy, on which from the school of preparation it ventured boldly into the light of public criticism, will be transmitted to an appreciative posterity, but the very names of its originators, which, with thoughtful generosity, they have left us, together with the prospectus of this glorious enterprise, will, doubt it not, "go down time together." These illustrious ones, whose memory grateful generations of Yalensians ought not willingly to let die, were Messrs. E. O. Carter, F. A. Coe, W. M. Evarts, C. S. Lyman and W. S. Scarborough, all of the Class of 1837.

The first No. of the Magazine appeared in February, 1836, the herald alike of a new year in the College Calendar and a new era in Col-

lege Literature. With noble abnegation of self and devotion to the cause, the five pioneers of progress were not content to see their charge safely through the first breakers of adversity, but, until prosperity seemed no longer problematical, but sure, and until they themselves were forced to resign the honors and responsibilities of undergraduates, they stood magnanimously at their post, and, at length, having paid their votive offerings, in the shape of Vol. 1st, to the "tuneful nine," adding, as was meet, three propitiatory gifts to the "sisters three of destiny," they consigned to their successors, as a success, that which they themselves had commenced as an experiment. The *spirit* which animated the founders of the Lit., as seen in their few professions, and better in their productions, seems truly admirable. And first, the correct appreciation which they exhibit of the desirability of such a Magazine, and of the proper sphere which it should occupy in the College world, was in itself a sufficient guarantee of the vigor which was to characterize its youth, and of the longevity which was to attend it. The following constitutes its unassuming Prospectus: "An *apology* for establishing a Literary Magazine in an Institution like Yale College, can hardly be deemed requisite by an enlightened public; yet a statement of the objects which are proposed in this periodical, may not be out of place.

"To foster a literary spirit, and to furnish a medium for its exercise; to rescue from utter waste the many thoughts and musings of a student's leisure hours, and to afford some opportunity to train ourselves for the strife and collision of mind which we must expect in after life,—such and similar motives have urged us to this undertaking. So long as we confine ourselves to these simple objects, and do not forget the modesty becoming our years and station, we confidently hope for the approbation and support of all who wish well to this Institution."

A model Prospectus, indeed, aside from its intrinsic worth: so wonderfully, as a College production, is it characterized by brevity, candor, perspicuity, and—modesty. And, indeed, all the communications between the editors and their readers, in the earlier days of the Magazine, seem beautifully characterized by these estimable qualities. One thought, by the by, in connection with the quality of *modesty*, must suggest itself to all who have made the history of preceding College Literary Magazines the subject of the slightest investigation; which is, the refreshingly original omission, in the first appearance of the Lit., of any nervous conjecturings concerning the future notoriety of "Dear Maga," or the literary immortality of its god-fathers. In con-

tradistinction from this delightful characteristic, let me quote an extract from the first number of the first of *Lits*, and indeed of all College periodicals, the *Literary Cabinet* of Nov. 15th, 1806. Say these zealous supplicants for undying fame:—"The *Literary Cabinet*, it is probable, will exist for many years to come, and future students will zealously contend for the honor of contributing to its pages. The papers which we publish will doubtless be searched into many ages hence by our successors, who may want them for the purpose of guides or beacons on their course." And then it adds, as if apologetically for this amusing bit of defiant prophecy, "It is feared by some that the *Literary Cabinet* is the offspring of an hour, and will perish with the other ephemerals of the day. Disgraceful would it be to this College, should such be its fate." With perfect recklessness, however, did the College incur this disgrace, in October, 1807. So also, up through the list of abortive *Lits*, all of which evince more or less of this itching for posthumous fame, we come to the *Medley*, born March, 1833; died after three effusions. "Never, ah, never shall the sorrowful task be assigned to us of inscribing upon its (the *Medley's*) tomb, the mournful epitaph, "The *Medley* was, but is no more." Alas! after three sickly struggles for existence, the suggested epitaph of its editors was quite appropriate. Wisely then did the *Lit.* refrain from meddling with what lay behind the veil of futurity, and modestly marking out her sphere of effort, and earnestly endeavoring to fill it was she content to leave her name and fame in the hands of an appreciative posterity.

Again, the articles in the first volume of the *Lit.* are of no mean order of merit, either in thought or style. Indeed, the *Lit.* is hardly an exception to the general maxim, that Periodicals, unlike most other creations, soar highest when first fledged. There are, indeed, I venture to say, in it two or three Papers which, if published now, anonymously, in these pages, would create no little furore of interest and curiosity. For example, there are a series of piquant articles, purporting to emanate from the "Coffee Club," for whose authorship, to my mind at least, the Country Parson might, with complacence, hold himself responsible. The "Omnibus," too, and "Hora Odontalgica," are two as original and witty things as Collegians are often culpable of. And, more especially, the half dozen Papers on Greek Anthology, seem the product of no small amount of scholarly research, as well as of rhetorical taste, and altogether, were as diverting and interesting reading as I had perused for many a day. But we must not stop to particularize. A leisure hour spent with volume 1st, the *title*

page, in more senses than one, of the Lit's history, was, to me at least, an hour of real enjoyment, and I confess that I experienced, at its close, a feeling of mingled pride and satisfaction, that the Lit. began its career under such bright auspices—in the hands of such sensible, able, and faithful men. If I were to describe, in a word, the quality displayed most noticeably, in the early conduct of the Magazine, it would be that of *practical wisdom*. The modest, yet by no means distrustful manner in which the Editors presented their handiwork to the College World, the reserve and almost reticence which they ever preserved with regard to the Magazine and themselves, while it was yet *an idea*, and the uniformly judicious selection and graceful handling of the subjects which first appeared in its pages, all marked them as men who knew *how to do well* what they had undertaken. Before leaving them and their memorial, Volume First, I cannot forbear making a single extract from their Valedictory—"too good to be kept" in dust-covered bindings, and so true that I almost wish it could be placed as our platform, beneath the good old Governor, on the title page. "The office of the Editors is no sinecure. How much soever matter contributors may furnish, and however few pages they may reserve for themselves, still, upon their energy and their devotion to its interests, the tone and spirit of the Magazine will mainly depend. Relying on so fickle, procrastinating, and irresponsible a set of beings as students proverbially are, exigencies are constantly recurring, which they must be able promptly to meet. Add to this the labors, the annoyances of delinquent subscribers, the vexations of the Press, and the interruptions of private occupations, and the life of an Editor is not all 'a gilded show.' The apathy and indolence of many of those who are best able to render the Magazine entertaining and useful, and the persecutions of those who have none of these gifts, are two things most trying to an Editor's temper. To incite the former and to avoid the latter, without giving offense, in this consists all art. Our opinion of the advantages resulting to the Institution from such a publication has undergone no change. So long as its proper sphere and province are well observed—so long as it is sustained with unanimity and vigor, it will be an honor to our community; but should it ever be allowed to transgress the modesty which our years and station enjoin, its beauty and utility are at once destroyed." Sound words, say we, though they have the smack of antiquity.

That the Lit. has, throughout succeeding years, uniformly appreciated its province, or filled it with uniform ability, it were idle to affirm. But that there has never been a decided diminution of literary talent

and enthusiasm, without a corresponding and almost immediate reaction, I am quite confident; and that there have been subsequent enlargements of its sphere of usefulness, which even its founders would ratify, if called on to do so, I am none the less sure. To name the more marked of these innovations, in their order of precedence, may not be out of place.

With the first No. of the Second Volume began a decided improvement, in the shape of the "Epilegomena," partaking a little of the character of our Memorabilia, but more after the rollicking style of the Editor's Table; and furnishing, for the first time, an editorial, on each appearance of the Magazine. In this new department of the Lit., the "we" of periodical literature could wield at will the pen critical, satirical or jocose, and, with perfect immunity from individual responsibility, they could bepraise their friends, belittle their enemies, or be simply funny, for their own gratification and the public's amusement. I can discover, however, but little advantage, which was taken of this privilege, and in the latter subdivision, grieve to say that achievement was not always commensurate with endeavor. This department appears to have continued through upwards of four volumes, until, in Aug., 1841, the Editor's Table proper appeared, which immediately superceded it, and in its main features resembled the antiquated, jovial old "Table," now the property of the Board. It included, however, at its introduction, the notices to Correspondents and Contributors—a department from which, I believe, it is now distinct, at least at every occasional appearance of these individuals in these pages. The order of Commencement Exercises, too, it may be well to know, appeared, for the first time, in the Editor's Table of the August No., 1844, at which time, also, the five Townsend Essays, with a copy of the instrument containing the grant, were inserted; in July, also, of the next year followed the Sophomore and Freshmen Prizes, of various designations and denominations; and finally, in May, 1851, appeared the most important innovation, and, we may safely say improvement, which has yet characterized the Lit. I refer to the introduction of the Memorabilia Yalensia—the design of Prof. D. C. Gilman—and a department which has been, since its inception, second to none, if not preëminent in the conduct of the Magazine. In this May No., too, under the head of Memorabilia, appeared, for the first time, descriptive notices of the Spoon and Junior Exhibition. Apropos of the Spoon, a bit of information in connection with the Lit. will, probably, be new to most of us. From the time of the first Spoon Exhibition, and for a considerable period subsequently, the initiatory proceeding in the

matter was, that at the beginning of second term Junior, the Editors of the Lit. selected some individual from the aforesaid class, who, "with such other persons as he might see fit to choose," brought the matter before the Class; at which time three men were chosen from each division, (himself, I conjecture, among them,) as the Spoon Committee, and then, at the call of this Committee, the non-appointment men, the *Cochleareati*, chose the Knight of the Wooden Spoon. But to return. Hardly second to the Memorabilia, as instrumental in enhancing the value of the Lit. to students, and second to no College honor in its design to increase among us the spirit of true literary enthusiasm, is the YALE LITERARY PRIZE MEDAL, offered for the first time in Aug. 1850, and awarded in the following December. A list of the fortunate recipients of this Prize is, up to the present time, as follows. In the year

1850, Joseph Sheldon,	1857, John H. Ward,
1851, Andrew D. White,	1858, Luther M. Jones,
1852, William C. Flagg,	1859, Clarence E. Dutton,
1853, Isaac E. Clarke,	1860, Henry Holt,
1854, Charles R. Palmer,	1861, Daniel H. Chamberlain,
1855, John M. Holmes,	1862, George S. Hamlin.
1856, Augustus H. Strong,	

But one or two other items of interest, and they of a minor character, occur, in a somewhat hasty retrospective glance over the volumes of our Magazine. One fact, however, seemed rather surprising, that the contributors to these pages could have so long and so well restrained the universal desire of the literary portion of humanity to be *known*, as well as *read* of men, that it was not until December, 1852, that the Editor's names were placed on the first leaf of the Magazine, or that aught beside a single initial was afforded as a clue to the authorship of the most absorbing article. It may be of some interest also to know, that the Board has, of yore, not overlooked melody and versification, in its devotion to force and beauty of thought, and felicity of expression. We find in the issue for November, 1855, the generous premium of five dollars, offered for the best College song—with the admonition that the tune, as well as the intrinsic merit of the song, would be taken into consideration. We look, moreover, in vain through succeeding numbers, for the name of the successful "child of song and story," who was at once the most poetic and the most melodious of his peers; though we find, after diligent investigation, a mere allusion to the matter, in a very funny Table three months later, wherein it is stated, that the Prize will not be awarded, "partly be-