

**THAT FORTY-FOUR LETTER.**

**Class Secretary Tells the True Story of its Origin and Travels.**

To the Editor of YALE ALUMNI WEEKLY:

Sir:—A story which has been going the rounds of the daily press recently purporting to give the history of the letter of the Class of Forty-Four begins with the following statement:

"Probably no letter in the whole world, in all time, has been traveling so long as that of the Class of Forty-Four, Yale College." "This letter," continues the article, "the postmaster calls the Flying Dutchman of the Mails; it knows no rest, it is always on the rounds. For fifty-three years it has traveled and never been lost, although in this time it has traveled a half million of miles. It has crossed the continent 150 times and paid 1,500 dollars in postage; and if the stationery on which it was written be added, fully 2,000 dollars has been expended on it. This letter, like the Flying Dutchman, never grows old, indeed it renews its youth each year. Like the Flying Dutchman too, it will finally find rest. Every year its stopping places are fewer and fewer, and the time will soon come when there will be no one to send it on its further journeyings."

This is a beautiful fiction, as fresh and newsy to the Class of Forty-Four as to anybody. About a score of years after graduation a few of the boys of Forty-four from Connecticut were located in Illinois in the practice of their professions. They met in Chicago to renew their acquaintance, and just a little weary of the broad Western world and hungry for intelligence from their classmates, they resolved to open a correspondence with them and learn what their fellows would say about themselves and of the world outside of Illinois. They named the men in the different states who, they thought, would take interest in the matter and began the correspondence.

The next day A wrote as agreed to B and told him all he knew about himself, whom he married, how many children he had, what he knew of other classmates, and in short, anything one classmate would like to hear from another from graduation up to the date of writing. He gave B a list of the men named and told him after he had read the letter just received to write one himself and inclose the two in the same envelope and forward to C. C received the two letters, read them, wrote one himself and forwarded the three letters in an envelope to D, and so on.

When the package reached the last man selected, he, after reading the letters in the package, inclosed his own and sent the entire lot back to A, and the circuit was complete. Thus the package brought in a letter from every man in the coterie. A then opened the package and after reading the letters took out his own, wrote another letter, inclosed it and sent the package around the circuit again. Each man now when he receives the package takes out his own letter, writes a new one, in-

closes it and sends the package on its way.

The coterie of the Class of Forty-Four consists of twelve men. We have recently added to our number our former Tutor in Yale—the Rev. Dr. Strong, of Pittsfield, Mass., the only survivor of all the professors and tutors who were our instructors at Yale.

We have two rules to be observed by every man of the circle: Our first forbids political discussion in our class letters. Our second allows twenty-four hours to each man to read the letters, write a new one and post the package to the next fellow on the list.

If the man is sick or absent from home his wife is expected to write for him. The best letters are often written when the head of the house is sick or absent.

Our letters have made the circuit monthly until recently; one of our number has removed to California and now the time is about forty days. Only two of the original members are now living: Savage, of Chicago, and Camp, of Sierra Madre, California.

The addresses of the members of the coterie at the present time are as follows:

Isaac Atwater, Minneapolis, Minn.; Rev. Charles W. Camp, Sierra Madre, Cal.; A. A. Coleman, Birmingham, Ala.; J. W. Dana, Worcester, Mass.; W. Fewsmith, Merchantville, N. J.; Professor Marshall, Tufts College, Mass.; Virgil M. D. Marcy, M.D., Cape May, N. J.; Abner Rice, Lee, Mass.; Rev. G. S. F. Savage, D.D., 628 Washington Boulevard, Chicago, Ill.; E. D. Selden, Saratoga Springs, N. Y.; Rev. Edward Strong, D.D., Pittsfield, Mass.

Yours very truly,  
H. D. SMITH,  
Class Secretary.

**DEGREES AT MID-YEAR.**

[Continued from 1st page.]

it has been admirably supported by the best organized and most ambitious secondary schools in the country, and it confidently expects this support in the future."

**EXCESSIVE ATHLETIC TRAINING.**

Touching on the athletic side of college life, the President says:

"The number of students who were engaged during the year in the various sports for which a physical examination is required was approximately four hundred and seventy-nine, excluding the sport of lawn tennis. It is very unlikely that a student who takes an active part in athletic sports can win good standing as a scholar; but on the other hand a smaller proportion of athletes get put on probation in Harvard College than of other students. This remark is not true of scientific students.

"The evil of excessive training has not been cured. The baseball team of last Spring was distinctly overworked, and half the crew gave out in the four-mile race. In all probability the nervous strain resulting from prolonged training, many exciting contests and an anxious sense of responsibility has not been sufficiently considered."

Dean L. B. R. Briggs of the College discusses in his report the need of some plan to prevent the loafing which compels the dropping a large number of men in each Freshman year class at the end of the year. Thirty-seven members of the Class of 1900 were thus dropped. The Dean proposes a provisional membership in the College until the student has demonstrated his ability to do respectable college work.

**HARVARD FINANCES.**

The Treasurer's report, which is appended to that of the President, shows the receipts of the University during the year 1896-7 to have been \$1,327,360.57, and the payments \$1,228,941.50, leaving a balance of \$98,419.07, which is the net increase of the funds and balances, excluding gifts for capital account. The Library, the Observatory and the Veterinary School are the only departments where expenditures have exceeded receipts. The rate of income, compared with that of 1895-6, shows a loss of three-hundredths of one per cent. The amount of gifts and bequests to the University was \$337,820.56 as compared with \$243,791.05 in 1895-6.  
J. WESTON ALLEN.

**An Unwise Conservatism.**

The familiar saying that "The conservative man is the safe man," is not always true. Taken in the broad sense in which Meredith wrote the words, it may be granted: but considering the statement solely as it stands, one is not so ready to agree. It is a good enough thing to "go slow," but don't go too slowly. Conservatism may prevent mistakes, but there is an irrational conservatism that cheats one of many benefits. There are not a few people who, when they are approached on the subject of life insurance, announce that they will "think it over." This is a clear case of going too slowly, of irrational conservatism. Life insurance needs no thinking over now. All that has been done by those who have lived before you, and the decision they made in their time, you may wisely make your own to-day. In The Mutual Life of New York there are over a quarter of a million policyholders who fully considered the matter in every possible relation, and concluded there was but one thing to do about it—and they insured. You can think of nothing that this army of insured have not already thought over,—to ally yourself with them is to prove your conservatism to be of the soundest kind.

This "thinking over" is often disguised procrastination. The "sober second thought" saps the vitality of half of the noble impulses that make this world so livable a spot. How many men would wear the Victoria Cross if it were the invariable rule to think things over? What would become of bravery if every life-saver took a sober second thought? The fame that comes of noble actions bravely done has never been sponsored by that sort of conservatism.

As for life insurance in this connection there are two things of which you may be sure. You can think over the subject as long as you like, and the longer you think the more your policy will cost you when at last you have decided it is a good thing to have. The second point is that every day of this thoughtful thinking lessens the chances of your ever getting insurance. For more than one the time to insure was spent in that same thinking, and his clock has struck twelve.

That hackneyed line of Shakespeare's is simplest truth: "There is a tide in the affairs of men which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." Is it a wise conservatism that sits down on the bank and watches the water flow slowly past while carefully thinking things over? Lo! the ebb has set in—opportunity is passed.

The object of this is to impress upon the reader the folly of delay and of putting off till to-morrow the obvious duty of life insurance which should be attended to this very day. It is comfortable often to shirk responsibilities, but they have an unfortunate habit of coming back to inquire when you intend to shoulder them, and they ask that question in louder tones with every day of your evasion. Do not then longer waste precious time in thinking over that which has all been thought out before and which can only result to your advantage, but call to-day upon the nearest agent of the Great Mutual Life of New York, and under his guidance fall into line with those whose conservatism consisted, not in doubting the wisdom of life insurance, but in choosing the best company to which to ally themselves—The Grand Old Mutual.

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