

PRESENTATION EXERCISES.

The Class Oration and Class Poem of '98.

The Class poem was delivered in Battell Chapel on Monday afternoon, June 27th, by Forsyth Wickes, and was up to the high standard set by the class poets of the past four or five years.

The opening stanzas are quoted below:

Swifter than mist forms driving through
the grey
Our days go on
From whence we know not nor can say
Whither their flight may lead.
Each new-born creed
Seeking these mysteries to unfold
Dips deeper into doubts untold
And leaves the tide of years still drifting
Voiceless on its way.

But though from deep to deep we journey
on
And truth's full sounding to faint echoes
fade,
As we draw near shall we in terror turn
From out the way and lay our burdens
down?



FORSYTH WICKES, CLASS POET.

Sheaves of the field grown golden in the
sun,
Long Summer twilights into darkness
run,
Resistless is the burden of your song.

Deep in the bosom of Time's crystal
glass
The sands are shifting with light-falling
grains,
The moments pass whose cloud or sun-
shine shapes

Into the nobler or the baser mould
Our slender lives. And yet no helmless
barque

On tides of chance we drift, but strong
and free

To hold past rocks and shoals where
sirens sound

The long drawn music of the heart's de-
sire,

Or by still channels to the open sea
Bearing in gentle courage through the
storms

Till love make music of our smiles and
tears.

So free, so strong, we entered on the
way,

And wild with all the new life seemed to
bring,

Saw but the golden lining of the clouds,
The rose that opens by the slender
thorn;

And in a world half dream half light
passed on

Seeking to read in thousand separate
strains

The open secrets old yet ever new
Laid far within the inmost heart of
things.

No vacant hours made the day's pas-
sage slow,

No dark blue dawning ushered in the
reign

Of binding sorrow. Care was then
light-winged

And at the door of knowledge far re-
moved

From the world's nervous life some en-
tered in

To think again the thoughts of the great
minds

Who first tore from truth's book the
heavy seals.

And some with souls to gayer music
set,

Holding in fellowship all secrets lay,
Sought in the open manuscripts of life
Another reading of the self-same truths.
Slowly the fuller revelation came,
Through deeper streams and the long-
shadowed glades

Of Time's rich heritage, and purpose,
dim

So long, dawned bright along the way
And many voices faded into one.

S. E. Bassett's Class Oration.

The oration by Samuel Eliot Bassett of Wilton, Conn., on the theme "The Force of an Idea," was an unusually fine piece of straightforward and vigorous writing and speaking. Lack of room prevents the WEEKLY from printing more than the few extracts reproduced below:

"We are about to separate after four years spent together. On this occasion it has often been the custom to present some truth that shall express the essence of the real education, not of the body or of the mind but of the self, which we have received. But it seems an idle thing to try to put into words so easily spoken, what the lives of men whom we have met daily have impressed upon our minds with the true eloquence, the eloquence of action. These subtly molding forces need no help of passing words. Their effect is sure. Let us rather before we part linger for a little while on the brooding and ennobling influence which has been over us; all that lies behind the name we shall so soon use, Alma Mater Yale.

"The four years have not been spent in vain. We have gained a little learning, much of which, except as applied to our special fields, we shall probably forget; a little culture, a little mental training, a little glimpse into the great minds of those who have pried deepest into life. Friendships are ours that shall end only with life. We have met men whose influence upon us can never be lost. We have obtained a little better perspective. Estimates of our fellows are based a little more on what they are and a little less on what they seem. We realize a little more clearly how very small a place after all we occupy in the world. A wholesome distrust in our own infallibility has been developed and opinions of others receive a little more consideration. We see a little better the possibilities of life. We have progressed. But not a man will say that any sum of improvement in ourselves will express all that we have received. Over all this and fused inseparably with it is this intangible, impalpable, yet potent force, this connotation of the word Yale. We go forth stamped as Yale men. Unless this invisible but unmistakable trademark appears on each man he is a spurious article."

TO THE PRESIDENT.

"In thinking of our College and what it stands for, our minds naturally turn first of all to you, its official head. For under your guidance the force of the idea has been greatly increased by the broadening of her sphere. As we have advanced in our course the honor and respect which your presence always inspires in us has increased, while the many acts of kindness of which the world has never learned, which those in need have received from your hands, testify to the largeness of your heart. We feel that the honor and prestige of the University could not be in better hands, and in parting fervently wish that the years may be many during which you continue to guide the College we love."

TO THE FACULTY.

"We have received from you much wise instruction and our minds have been trained by you for our future work. But the greatest good, perhaps, which we carry away from your class rooms, will be the influence upon us of your personalities. The silent appeals which you have made to whatever of manliness there is in us, will continue to influence our lives long after the greater part of our text-book learning has passed away. We cannot say farewell to all under whom we have studied. Since we parted a year ago one has been called home. I think no one who was privileged to sit under the instruction of Dr. Thompson failed to appreciate the earnestness and strength of his

character and the deep interest he took in every man under his care. By his death Yale has lost a scholarly instructor and we a faithful friend.

In parting we wish to thank you for the personal interest you have taken in us, for the insight you have tried to give us into the world's history and meaning, and for the wise counsels you have given us. May you live to confer the same benefits upon our sons!"

TO THE CLASS.

"This is our formal parting time. We meet no more together by ourselves as a class with the consciousness of parting over us. What is our last word to each other? Is it not that we are brothers, sons of one common mother? Diversity of conditions, of interests, of



S. E. BASSETT, CLASS ORATOR.

tastes cannot break the bond which binds us together. As long as memory shall last the close association of four years in the class room and on the Campus will give to any member of the Class of Ninety-Eight a peculiar claim upon us. We are not all here. Four of our number have been graduated from the world into the next life. Some responded to the first call of our country because they believed she had a right to the services of her best men, and are now enduring the drudgery of the common soldier. The time has come for us who are left to say goodbye to the happiest years of our life. Just beyond us lies the world in which we are to win a place for ourselves and honor for Yale. The sorrow of parting from the old sweet life is overwhelmed by the shouts of the new life beckoning us. One more tight grasp of the hand and our college life is over. But its memories shall last."

The DeForest Oration.

The DeForest prize-speaking contest was held in Battell Chapel on Friday afternoon, June 24, and was won by Herbert Wescott Fisher of New Haven. His subject was "The Italian Plays of Shakespeare." The other contestants with their subjects follow: Charles Edmund Merrill, Jr., of New York City, "Tennyson"; Robert Kilborn Root of New Haven, "Archbishop Laud"; Edward Clark Streeter of Chicago, "The Romances of Defoe"; Henry Burt Wright of New Haven, "The Decline of Spain"; Herbert Draper Gallaudet of Washington, D. C., "The Jacobites." The compositions were all well written, but suffered much in delivery, Mr. Fisher's being the exception.

The closing portion of Mr. Fisher's oration follows:

"But it has been said that Shakespeare has no heroes,—only heroines. And what redeems these romances from a suggestion of sentimentality is the true loveliness of the women. Bassanio's reverent homage was altogether deserved by that gently dominating mistress of his. Portia is the queenliness of mercy—a strong, sweet nature, to which one might confidently go in hours of despondency. Hers was the heart and hers the womanly courage

to make a man brave; and, if ever Bassanio met reverses in life, they must have been grandly submerged in her love. There is a contagious buoyancy about her: the ripe optimism of a woman in character, if a girl in years. For between the lines we may read the life of a soul, not harshly disciplined, and so marred, but nevertheless tutored by some mild griefs of her own, and so mellowed:—deeply aware of the sorrow of the world. Hardly enviable was the position in which her father's whim had left her. 'By my troth, Nerissa,' she would sometimes say, 'my little body is weary of this great world.' But in another moment, with characteristic rebound, she would be breaking merry comparisons on her foolish suitors. When Bassanio at last both won and rescued her, she was caught up in a rapture of tender emotion. For after the irksomeness of a life which had held in fruitless abeyance her womanly talents, she lavished them with all the more joy now that she had found an object.

"There are men perhaps who find Portia rather too wise. But indeed her little homilies are all sweetness, and entirely casual,—not officious. Moreover, they are incidental to her deeds. She is a woman and her thoughts must speak, but her deeds speak the louder, and both spring from a kindly and humanitarian nature. Fortunately her wisdom did not afflict her with any constructive theory of life; she simply lived and was lovely. To make others happy was as the breath of life to her, and she entered on her judicial exploit as blithe as a maid preparing for a masque-ball. And then that playfulness of hers, so gently arch and loving-mischivous, that sparkled on the surface of her deep woman's nature! There seemed to be nothing wanting to make gracious music of Bassanio's life.

"Such are some of the creations with which Shakespeare has adorned human literature. It is always the quality of his greatness that he wins the unconscious surrender of his audience, and never more effectually than here, where the romance of life supplements its reality. The ultimate spring of this power is of course the reality: in a broad sense, realism. It is something which resides in the obvious human coloring of all he writes. He has nothing abstruse, however close his observation. When Shylock says, 'Still have I borne it with a patient shrug,' he illustrates a scientific truth laboriously ferreted out by Darwin, namely, that the shrug is a physical expression of patience. But here it is shown in its obvious human aspect. And this aspect is fundamental with our poet. He assumes certain human passions, biases, intuitions, as the element in which we all move and have our being,—things to be presupposed, not dissected; and those who would read philosophical systems into Shakespeare, not only misconceive but depreciate him. For it is the work of mere learning to cope with sage and bewildering problems;—genius alone can appeal to child and philosopher alike. What a man believes in the abstract will not determine how he hates or loves or laughs or cries, or even his emotion toward the universe; and these are what strike home.

"If, therefore, Shakespeare is the prince of poets, is Matthew Arnold altogether felicitous when he calls poetry a criticism of life? Is it not rather an exposition of life?—or, better still, a crystallization of life? For besides realism, there is a second element in Shakespeare's greatness; and that is ideally carried so far as in these plays it becomes what we have chosen to call romance; but everywhere it is that which differentiates the artist from the mere intense observer like Tolstoi. Life as it comes to us is uneven, exasperating, with many odd ends in search of a connection; and of such we may have our surfeit outside of books. But within the covers of Shakespeare we find that selective tact which copies things with a sense of symmetry; rejecting all that contributes nothing to a desired effect, and touching only the heart of experience; so that even his tragedies leave us satisfied.

"Thus this realist who draws from life, this idealist who combines his strokes in harmony, has that immortal power to master us like music or the sound of the near sea. So long as humanity is human and can sympathize with its own heart, it will never cease to love the world which Shakespeare made; and in proportion as our nineteenth century lives are specialized and dry, do we need in particular that fresh, romantic side of him, which is found in the Italian Plays."

Please hurry to this office every scrap of war news about Yale men which comes your way. Put in every detail you can. Please send this news as fast as it comes to you. It is especially necessary to get it promptly.