

## YALE ALUMNI WEEKLY

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## PRESS AND PUBLIC IGNORED.

It is not pleasant to say it, but we feel bound to observe that the method chosen by the Bi-Centennial Committee, for the announcement of its plans, is most surprising and discouraging. The first general idea, which has gone beyond the Committee membership, of the way in which Yale means to declare herself to the world at her Bi-Centennial, was told in an informal talk by a member of the Committee to a small company of gentlemen at Boston; and practically no arrangement was made for its reproduction in the newspapers.

This was ignoring the best opportunity Yale has had for years to give the general public an idea of what she is really doing and aiming at. For long months a company of her most distinguished professors and alumni have been studying the plans for this, the greatest event in modern Yale history. For all this time, the newspapers and news agencies of the country have patiently waited for some word from the Committee. The invariable message to them has been a request to say nothing until matters were ripe; that Yale deprecated a premature announcement; and the understanding certainly has been that, in fulness of time, these plans would be declared. So the newspapers and the Associated Press and the University press have all held their peace, and made no attempt to pry into the future. "We are ready for you," was their attitude, when you are ready for us, and we will be glad to help you in circulating the information concerning this National event."

Here in New Haven is the Connecticut office of the Associated Press. Its manager is a Yale man, exceedingly loyal and firm, eagerly looking for all the news of the most importance and of the highest quality about Yale, particularly when he is so frequently called upon to stand between the University and the fiction and scandal writers. He connects with papers the world over. A number of correspondents of the largest papers of the country are in New Haven, ready to make extended articles in regard to events of importance to the University, which have the quality of news. As far as the members of the Yale family were concerned, this paper had offered to place in the hands of every Yale man in every part

of the world, any fair statement of Bicentennial plans, provided only, just as in the case of all newspapers, that material should be in the nature of news. And with the simplest planning all these interests could have worked together most harmoniously, and hundreds of thousands of the best people would have been informed simultaneously of the best things of Yale.

And all these papers and agencies were ignored. The Boston Alumni Association is a splendid collection of most loyal Yale men, who are willing to work for the University. But that does not alter the fact that hardly a hundred men were in sound of Professor Woolsey's voice. One Boston paper caught a very fair report of Professor Woolsey's speech; but that is not distributing news which has an interest all over the country. That is anchoring news.

The Committee's representative at Boston was an ideal representative, and his speech was a dignified and clear statement of the high ideal of the Committee's plans. And to Professor Woolsey this paper is indebted for helping it to give that most interesting speech in a complete and reliable form. But it was seven days after that speech was delivered before the nearest readers of the WEEKLY could have it, and its contents had lost all their news value by that time.

Yale has spoken to and of the press in terms of surprise, and sometimes of contempt, for the space which papers have given to the bubbles of College life; and Yale has asked in a superior way why something is not said about what there is really doing here. Yale had a fine collection of news material, about what the University is, really doing and what she stands for, and the University's representatives put it deliberately out of reach of the press. The very excellence of these plans, the very character of the Committee, whose personnel is unexceptionable, make the situation all the more unfortunate. At just the time when interest in Yale is keener than ever before; when a splendid administration is just closing, and the whole country is interested in who shall take up the new work; when the time is coming on for the great opportunity of showing what the spirit and workings of this place are, it is sad enough to contemplate such an incident at this. It smacks of the old exclusive secret-meeting, purely personal, conception of Yale's status. It shows either a lack of desire to acknowledge Yale's relations to the public and to emphasize her position as a National institution, of which her orators so gloriously declaim at times; or it shows a woful lack of knowledge of how to treat with the people of this city, and of this commonwealth, and of this nation. In the light of Yale's past treatment of the press and the public, it is not surprising that the general influence is that it shows both these highly regrettable traits.

## DEBATE, AGAIN.

Another contribution to the debate discussion is printed in this issue in the form of an editorial from the Yale News. We miss the usual directness and confidence of News statements in this editorial. It is what a famous debater used to call a "northeast by southwest opinion." It declares that there are some things in favor of both plans so far proposed; many things against both; that the present situation is safe and practical, and that the present situation is unfortunate.

The position taken by this editorial is free from some objections that per-

tain to that taken by Mr. Wells, in his letter in the last issue of the WEEKLY. But we prefer the general character of Mr. Wells' letter, as it leads somewhere. It seems to us unfortunate, that its writer went into the realm of discussion of a certain feature of the society system, whose connection with the present theme we fail to see. The WEEKLY, intending to lay down some very simple rules of action, used the analogy of successful secret societies. We did not thereby commit ourselves to the general society system of Yale. We did not intend to discuss it. We might just as well have taken the illustration from any successful organization—a club, social or literary.

The only organization that succeeds is the organization where membership means something. We do not believe that this general principle needs any exception, and we stand just where we did before. If debating is going to succeed, it must succeed by building on the instinct of organization as it is shown in experience. We say again, that we would rather have a debating club of twenty, in which membership indicated capacity for debate and a determination to develop debating qualities, than a debating club of a thousand, in which membership meant nothing. If it is undemocratic to be practical we must be "undemocratic." We fail to see how the scheme for debate is going to succeed by preliminary and arbitrary limitations drawn from theories of Yale's social life, which have nothing to do with the question of the debating society.

Further, we have no patience with this fear of politics getting into a thing. It is time to be wholesome and confident, and to do a thing for its own sake and do it well. Why construct debate on the principle of saving Yale's social life? One thing has nothing to do with the other. We are inclined to appeal to the Horace Greeley sense of Yale men, and to suggest that if they desire to debate it is well to debate. This seems to us better than to theorize about Yale's social life.

In the issue of the WEEKLY of February 8, reference was made to the origin of the Pundit Club, and the statement was made that it was founded by the Class Eighty-Eight. This was one point out of the way. The Class of Eighty-Seven created the Pundit Club. We apologize to them for an error which attributed to other sources this worthy act.

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## Yale in the Civil War.

To the Editor of YALE ALUMNI WEEKLY:

In "Universities and their Sons," just published by R. Herndon & Co. of Boston, on page 438, I make the statement that the number of Yale men in the Union Army during the Civil War, including non-graduates, was over 800 (the number given in the Yale Book, Vol. II, page 256 is 836), and then add in quotations the remark with regard to Yale that "she gave more men to the war on the side of the Government than any other college in the land." The writer quoted is shown by Mr. Thayer's statement on page 100 to have been mistaken. The total which Mr. Thayer gives for Harvard University graduates is 1,232, and the number of men to be credited to Harvard would be larger still, "if it were possible to know exactly the number of non-graduates who likewise enlisted." Even if the comparison be confined to the undergraduate "colleges," excluding the professional schools, which were much larger at Harvard than at Yale, the advantage would still doubtless be on the side of Harvard. The figures given are: Yale 687, Harvard 626; but it is fair to assume that if Mr. Thayer could have included the non-graduates, the number for Harvard would have exceeded that for Yale.

C. H. SMITH.

Feb. 20, 1899.

President Eliot says that at least 82 per cent. of all Harvard College students and young graduates are physically fit for the service of the country in time of war, just as they are fit for all sorts of strenuous work in business and the professions in time of peace.

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