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SOPHOMORE SOCIETIES.

The society system of Yale is going to be changed. We take the liberty to say that, but without authority. The ground for our saying it is simply this:—the society men, who can change things if they will, realize that a change is in order in the interest of the College. Convinced that that feeling exists, we are confident in making the statement that a change is coming.

Few have it clearly in mind what is actually the best thing, and among those who are determined to do something and who are bound to move most intelligently and effectively in the matter, there is a feeling that the details of reconstruction are not so important at this point as the general agreement on the principle which should underlie the change. That principle of change, of course, is to remove the element of injustice now in the situation and to make the conditions of undergraduate life in Yale College those of equal opportunity as far as social honors and privileges go.

The conviction grows that the only way in which these results can be accomplished is by a graduated society system. Many people would like to have no societies whatever in Sophomore year, believing that two years are none too many to leave the class to themselves for purely natural associations among their own members, and believing also that the more free you can leave the first two years of college, the better on the whole for the undergraduate, who has enough to do anyway, and who already finds it difficult, if he is an active man, to keep up with regular work and put in a modicum of sleep and exercise. There is something to be said on this line also for the upper classmen, especially the Senior society men, who, if they be members of the two underclass societies also, find at least four out of six of the nights of the week taken up by their societies. This means, in the case of most of them, an attempt to live on a shortened sleep appropriation, and the results are always more or less unsatisfactory.

On the other hand, there is a feeling that there will be something in Sophomore year and that it is better to make sure that it is the best thing possible. Different plans have already been dis-

cussed in the WEEKLY. The general purpose is to practically transpose the position of the two underclass societies. As it is now, the Sophomore society is in an environment which is least adapted for it and in which it serves least favorably the common good. The same is true of the Junior society. With the class distinctions which everyone wants to see kept up, practically the only way for the upper classmen to know the underclassmen is through these societies. Of course, this excepts the accidental associations of athletics and religious work. It is naturally the desire of those in the upper classes to get as much acquainted as possible with those in the lower classes and the feeling is reciprocated. It is perfectly natural and right, because one of the principal reasons for going to a big college like Yale is to meet as many good men from as many different places and of as many different traits as possible. As it is now, outside of the members of Zeta Psi, this privilege is restricted to fifty-one men in the Sophomore Class, which is just six more men than are taken in in the three Senior societies.

But to the evident unreasonableness of such a situation one of the answers is, that the membership of Sophomore societies compasses about all the first rate men that can be found at that stage in their course in college, and that, as the others develop and show a real claim for social recognition, opportunities are given them in Junior year. This answer is well meant, but it does not answer. The three leading Junior societies are as poor apologies for social organizations as have ever cumbered Yale. Of course, they have lots of good members and good chapter houses. They are parts of great fraternities with honorable histories and a strong fraternal feeling—outside of Yale. But, as far as we can find out, they have here no life or character worth speaking of. It is a wonder that Yale has put up with this state of things so long. It means that society membership that is worth anything in Yale College is restricted to from fifty to sixty men. Of course, such a limitation is altogether inadequate and properly disappoints a large number of men fitted for social recognition and social life and is getting to be an argument of force against sending a boy to Yale College.

We don't hesitate to speak this way about Junior societies because we have seen enough of their elections. They take in many good men first and last, of course. But it is impossible to say what is their principle of choice, except that they indulge in a large number of conspicuous and regrettable omissions. Two years ago, all the eight TenEyck speakers were outside of any Junior society. Of course they were men of ability; indeed, that year they were men of unusual ability. What is more, they were men of excellent character and of good social disposition. If a hundred better men could have been shown in that class, or a good deal less than a hundred, we will eat the words of this editorial.

The situation in Junior societies comes from the fact that they are killed by Sophomore societies. If any man believed that, under the present situation, they could be revised and made something of, he must have been convinced to the contrary by the superhuman effort that was made three or four years ago to put them on their feet. It is the consideration of this condition of Junior societies which has led, as far as we can observe, to the abandonment of the idea of trying to improve the situation by increasing the number of Sophomore societies. As far as can be learned, the

feeling is pretty general now, that such a course would mean to make more trouble. Some ideas have been freely talked about for radical changes in the constitution and methods of the Sophomore societies themselves, with the idea of meeting the difficulty. It is considered that these moves are all in the right direction and prompted by the best spirit, but it seems doubtful to many that anything in this direction can go far enough to meet the difficulty.

The Sophomore year is the place for the large societies. By their position in Sophomore year they are bound to be popular and successful. It is the place where the upper and lower classes first meet and such a place is always a place of interest. Following that, a comparatively restricted membership in the Junior organizations will, of course, make Junior societies a coveted honor, rather than something to be received in matter of course by those who have got the first honor, and will keep them within a size where they may have a strong life and spirit of their own. The objection that the membership in the small Junior society must of necessity be restricted to those who have first gone into the larger Sophomore societies and that therefore there is going to be no chance for development of those who do not make the first society, seems to us not well considered. The sifting process will demand such thoughtful consideration that it will be not impossible, but, on the contrary, very natural, that, when the next elections are considered, those yet outside of societies will have full consideration. The still further restricted societies of the last year will then be reached by a system that will help them rather than hamper them in making the best selections.

This statement of the case is not official in any way, but we make the report of the situation as we see it, in recognition of the interest throughout the body of Yale College graduates in this problem. As we said at the beginning, we are delighted to see that the society members who know the situation best and are on the whole best fitted to deal with it, are taking it up. We wish them Godspeed in their work. Indeed they must not be slow.

LITERARY LECTURES

Professor Weir Opens the Series—
Semitic Verse and Greek Lyrics.

The second course of literary lectures, given under the direction of Professor Cook, was opened Wednesday evening, January 17, 1900, by Professor Weir with the subject, *Some Distinctions between Literary and Other Forms of Art*. The remaining lectures take up the subject of Lyric Poetry, the first of which, given by Professor Sanders, January 24, was entitled *The Semitic Lyric*. A brief summary of the first three lectures is here given:

PROFESSOR WEIR'S LECTURE.

Art is the expression of emotional ideas. Although often springing from a common source, these emotional ideas, once resolved into a particular form of art, are differentiated as well as expressed in the process. Each art has its own characteristic expression and no other means than its own can produce an exactly similar effect. The sculptor reasons through the terms of his art, and if asked to explain his work, answers, "Look at it!" A strongly-developed literary habit of mind is apt to appreciate painting and sculpture only as these arts depict or embody literary themes in a merely illustrative way. The artist receives little assistance from critical estimates like Lessing's *Laocöon* and Ruskin's *Modern Painters*. His motive is too closely related to the

form of his art. Few men have at-artist strives to interpret and accompany the creative plan of the poet. He translates the original ideas inspiring the poem into forms that are true to these ideas, but are not a precise embodiment of the poet's images as verbally expressed. In Mr. Vedder's illustrations of the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* we find a new interpretation of the thought of the poem, not simply a servile adherence to every detail of the original. The painter will not attempt to compete with the power which the poet has of presenting a *series* of actions not capable of representation in painting. Nor yet will he attempt to compete with nature in his realism. The artist does not attempt to imitate nature so as to deceive. For the best art is creative as well as imitative, aiming to bring before us that which is superior to all art, but which may be given us with the *sense* of reality.

PROFESSOR SANDERS' LECTURE.

Semitic verse is of a subjective nature. It tends to register facts of consciousness rather than to tell a tale. The Bible is the repository of all the Hebrew lyrics which have come down to us. But the Hebrews were the disciples of a great race of literati—the Babylonians. They were of a blood with the Arabs and the Phoenicians.

The Arabic lyric was the natural expression of the much loved life in the desert before the days of Islam. It was characterized by intense individuality, tained distinction as both poets and artists. Even Rossetti and William Blake have in them more of the poet. Their art is likely to be derived from a secondary motive originating in a literary theme. The place of nature may thus be usurped by the purely illustrative idea. In general, the finer the art, the less is it dependent on a literary or historical theme.

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