

* * * **History of the Demosthenian Literary Society.** * * *

HISTORY is such a plausible theory of the past that few men are bold enough to deny it. It deals with all things, and intermingles fact and fancy in a bewildered, yet pleasing, confusion.

It is not necessary that the historian should have been intimately associated, or personally connected, with the characters who animate the labyrinth of ideas and ideals by means of which he hopes to perpetuate something of the past in the memories of the oncoming millions. In fact, if the above were necessary, our so-called knowledge of the past would be embarrassingly limited, and the schoolboy would advance to maturer years before his powers of memory were awakened from their innocence and lethargy.

Thus it is that we are asked by these theorists of the unknown past, to accept the plausible and say nothing, while they, like the promulgators of Grecian myths, muffle the cries of their consciences with the terse fabrication, "Ignorance is bliss."

Impressed with these facts, the historian of the Demosthenian Literary Society pauses with his pen in his hand, turns his eyes inward, and, for a few moments, is lost in meditation.

To be specific would not be just; on the one hand the mention of the dead might provoke a tear in the eye of an unreconciled friend; on the other, an allusion to the living might cause an external extension of that organ which at present is woefully deficient in internal development. Generalization is, therefore, my object, and in this I acknowledge, that with respect to many exceptions, I am generous before I am just.

The history of the Demosthenian Literary Society began in the early dawn of the nineteenth century. This society tottered out modestly yet firmly, and, early in the twenties, before it was even of age, it was the proud owner of a home and the still prouder exorter of a magnetic influence.

I do not claim for her all the laurels which have been gathered by the disciples of the pen; I do not hold that every victor on the oratorical arena once knelt at her altars and took her vows; but I do hold that many of these who have proudly illustrated Georgia in church and in State, caught their first inspiration within her classic walls and gladly pay her homage to-day. The names to be heard in the roll-call of her alumni put to shame the thought of superiors and awaken respect for those properly classed as equals. With each recurring year she adds new names to this illustrious roll, and the fall of '95 found her gathering together the votaries of the all-powerful art and holding out to them the magic wand of eloquence.

Her active sons, drawing inspiration from the deeds of their forefathers, agree with Cicero of old, that it is most glorious to excel men in that in which men excel all other animals. The verdant Freshman, emboldened by Demosthenian's influence, discards the motto of Carlyle that "silence is the eternal duty of man." Timidly, yet hopefully, he ventures forth to make his maiden effort, and while his ideas grow few and his words avoid utterance, the sympathy of his hearers crystallize desire into determination. As a Sophomore he may be found proudly discussing the practical problems of the day and, with wonderful feeling, declaiming in touching accents, "Ye call me chief," etc.

So it is, step by step he advances until he begins to reap the rich harvest of fluency and ease. Then it is that the golden glories of oratory present themselves in their true and natural light. A simple taste is all he has had; he longs to satisfy a growing thirst. He has overcome the sterner difficulties; he would now seek fields anew. Proudly he remembers the victories of the past; hopefully he anticipates the conflicts of the future and gladly he acknowledges his debt of gratitude to his Alma Mater.

The Demosthenian Society closes the year '95-96 with no self-laudation save active, earnest work. For the results of this work she is willing to wait, and since each year adds a new chapter to her history, she will jealously guard her future advancement. If her future proves as bright as her past, her sons will be satisfied and her influence most potent.



• • • History of Phi Kappa Literary Society. • • •

THE history of Phi Kappa during the session of '95-96 is not one—sad to relate—refulgent with brilliant advancement. It is true that the number of our members is greater than ever before, having received into our Society this year the entire Law Class, with their “massive eyes and eagle brains,” and the majority of Freshmen and Sophomores whose burning ambition has sustained Phi Kappa during the entire year.

Our financial condition is indeed worthy of remark. It is mainly through our efforts that the old Magazine debt has been paid; and besides we have paid all other arrears and still have a large surplus.

Since last year, through the kindness of the trustees, our Society hall has been thoroughly renovated and fitted up with all modern improvements, and now presents a neat and comfortable appearance. The lower floor, which was formerly used as a storage room, has undergone a wonderful change, and is now used as a study-hall. We have extended the use of this floor to the Y. M. C. A., and now that organization holds its weekly meetings there.

The members of the Society, though negligent of their duties as debaters, have shown that within their hearts they have the true spirit of ambition and patriotism, and our contests have all been marked by a greater number of participants than at any time in the last few years.

There were twelve contestants for Anniversarian's place, and the Anniversarian, Mr. W. A. Harris, of Macon, may well feel proud of his victory. The Society, too, has just cause for feeling proud of its Anniversarian exercises this year. More interest was manifested in the exercises this year than in the past, and everything passed off grandly. The orator of the day, Mr. Harris, acquitted himself nobly and added one more flower to the wreath of literary victories that now adorns him. The subject of his speech, “The Reserved Forces,” was particularly appropriate, and his closing address to the Society was full of noble sentiment. His speech throughout was characterized by deep thought, sound logic and beautiful language, and in his frequent bursts of eloquence he proved himself to be an orator of unusual ability.

The Champion Debater's contest this year was marked by unprecedented interest. The subject debated—“Resolved, That the signs of the times point to the decline of our Republic,”—was ably discussed by

thirteen men, and the three men selected are well worthy of congratulations. They were: Mr. G. T. Jackson, of Augusta—who won the medal—Mr. O. H. Gray, of Butts county, and Mr. J. T. Moore, of Jackson, Ga. From all the signs, we may, with almost absolute certainty, predict a victory for Phi Kappa over Demosthenian in the Champion Debate at Commencement this year.

Though our contests were full of interest, our debates, as has been previously remarked, did not come up to the high standard characteristic of them in the past. A faithful few have attended all the meetings and have earnestly endeavored to infuse fresh spirit into the Society, though we must say that their efforts have not been crowned with success. The lethargy hanging over the Society was fully recognized by the members, and a committee was recently appointed to frame a new constitution. In the new constitution radical changes will be made, such as non-compulsion of membership, fines for misbehavior and absence, and all in all, promises to restore interest in the Society. When the new constitution has been adopted, we trust, and really expect, that the Society will undergo a complete metamorphosis. Our old Hall once reverberated with the eloquence of Hill, Stephens, Grady and many others, who once shaped the destinies of our State and of our Republic, and it should be our constant desire and purpose to emulate them in this respect and see that as much interest is taken in the Society as of yore, and that the grand old flag of Phi Kappa shall always wave triumphantly.

I. J. H.

