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History of the Decennial Anniversary of the Phi Sigma Class

Phi Sigma

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History of the Decennial Anniversary of the Phi Sigma Class.

On the 25th of April 1888, the world was aroused from its lethargy by reading in the columns of its morning paper, the following important information, —

"The Phi Sigma Class, a West Side literary society, met at Hinsley's last evening and enjoyed its decennial banquet, thus celebrating the society's tenth birthday.

It is composed of twelve ladies and as many gentlemen, the officers being Arthur L. Fanning, President; George F. Fiske, First Vice President; and Miss Florence E. Horner, Second Vice President.

Dinner was served at 6-30 o'clock.

This over, Mr. E. W. Ballentyne delivered an oration, Miss Horner read a poem, and Mr. Fanning read the class history and toasts." Then followed a list of those present.

O wise and sharp-sighted reporter, if you could have but stepped inside those doors, would you have informed us that our President read the toasts?

Would you have thought it necessary to explain that decennial meant tenth?

And would you have thought that article and its place in your paper, worthy this august assembly present?

Very different was the impression made upon your critic as she looked from face to face and listened to the conversation of those gathered there to celebrate the tenth anniversary of their organization into a literary club. Her impression was verified when she took from the table their first printed programme, and read the list of subjects to be discussed for the next twelve months.

And as she saw her name as one of the contributors, and realized that she was one of the numbers, scarcely could she restrain a feeling of pride,

and I doubt not that the same feeling rose in the hearts of many present that evening.

Quite promptly to the appointed time supper was announced and by twos and threes we entered the banqueting hall, where amid the dazzling brightness of gas and reflecting mirrors we took our places at one long table.

At each gentleman's plate was a button-hole bouquet, creating envy in the heart of every lady present, until the removing of a paper from the center of the table revealed a mass of exquisite roses of different hues.

Gathered around the table were the Misses Homer, Whittlesey, Morgan, Noble, Marchant, Lyman, Hinckliffe, Rice, Fitch, Fisk, Farr and Belding,

and Messrs. Fanning, Fiske, Ballantine
Gardner, Wilcox, Wagner, Cole, Hoble
and Dr. Fitch.

Why was it that Hinsley and the
reporter seemed to be of the same
opinion? Was it because great
minds run in the same channel,
or was it that appearances are often
deceptive? For as each partook
of his "cousouine Station" he realized
he was taking food for the brain
in alphabetical order.

It seemed to have the desired
effect, especially at one end of the
table, where the exuberance of spirits
and witty remarks bubbled over and
effervesced in a way quite remarkable
for the generally regardled staid literary
society of the West Side.

As everything must come to an
end, so our feast of good things,
and flow of spirits was suddenly
brought to a close by the disappearance

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of the rosy fragrance, which the ladies
apparently took as the signal for
departure.

As once more we were gathered
in the parlor and each lady making
her selection of flowers, the door
opened and we had the pleasure
of greeting one of our number,
who on account of severe illness
had been unable to meet with us
for some time. The hearty hand
shaking showed how pleased we
all were to see Mr. Lloyd so nearly
restored to health.

At a word from our President
we were all seated, and do you
wonder we were somewhat startled
to hear these words from one so
utterly opposed to the sentiment?

"And the best of all ways to lengthen our days
Is to steal a few hours from the night, my dear."

6.

But these familiar words - "We will now listen to the critics report of the last meeting", followed by an appropriate quotation, were all that were necessary to clear the mist before our eyes, and by the time Mr. Gardner had risen to his feet we were all attention.

Yes, that was a very bright and novel idea to introduce each speaker by a short selection of poetry appropriate to his subject, and we hope the originator will not settle down upon his or her laurels but keep right on suggesting.

Mr. Fanning then gave us the "History of the Class" from its organization, stating just the facts and information most interesting and instructive to us all.

We next listened to an oration by Mr. Ballantyne.

"The true use of speech is not so much to express our wants as to

conceal them." And he has so concealed his paper that I am obliged to conform to the true use of speech and not express my thoughts.

The President called for the toast, "Our ladies - long may they constitute the larger half of the Phi Sigma"; and Mr. Fiske responded in a very complimentary manner. The thought occurred to me that perhaps our lady members on the programme committee had a voice in the matter of selecting the speaker for that subject, possibly I am mistaken.

The toast - "Our gentlemen and their relation to the escort system," was then called for, and responded to by Miss Fitch. Some very good suggestions were offered and we, the majority hope the minority will give them due attention.

This was followed by an original poem from Miss Horner, entitled

"Phi Sigma; Seekers after Knowledge."

Going to the fountain of all wisdom
for her task she inspired us all
with the desire to -

"Lift our heads to understand
All that this glorious search may be."
And also to pray -

"Grant He may shed that bush ray
That lighting mortal vision dim,
Shall lead us each to find and hold
The knowledge of the truth in Him."

Mr. Wagner responded to the toast
Our Class - "What it has done for us
What it can do." Can we help
but admire the readiness with which
the speaker admitted what the class
had taught him that very evening?
If we were all as willing to
acknowledge our ignorance, what
might not the class do for us!

Finally our President called for
the toast which nearly every speaker
seemed loath to leave to Miss Marchant

namely - "The social element in Phi Sigma
What and how much? If there was
only one side to the social question,
I think we would all cry out with
the squirrel, "let social life go no
farther." But it certainly has
more than one side for how clearly
our speaker proved to us the necessity
and advantage of this element.
And can we not try and follow
her wise instruction in regard to
bringing fresh, new thoughts to the
meetings, no matter if we are not
on the programme?

We were given a pleasant surprise
by the reading of a bright and
interesting letter from one of our
former members, Mr. Hewell, whose
home is now in Japan. He heartily
thank him for his kind remembrance,
and the amusing account of his travels.

Miss Rice and Miss Finchliffe -
kindly favored us with music

and after our usual custom of joining
our voices in College Songs, we
turned our faces homeward.

Was this what I heard or was
it only an echo of past gaities which
reached my ears? "Thank you,
we have had a very nice time
and hope we can come again".

Anna F. Beldew.
May 22nd 1888.

Report of the
Decennial Anniversary

Apt 2nd/1881

Miss Belden

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