

The Voice
Of the
Phi Sigma
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W. H. Beard
Editor

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Once again has it become our duty to take the Editorial Chair, and we will turn for a moment, and look at the past—which has flown so quickly from us, so quickly it seems that we had scarce moment enough to snatch from time the opportunity which, like the driftwood on the swift current if would we catch, must be anxiously watched for, and grasped ere the rushing water carry it beyond our reach forever. Then turning again would we look at the future which though so dim in the distance, cometh upon us before we are even aware of its approach.

Another winter (if so we may call it) has gone, and we would ask what has the Phi Sigma accomplished? What have each one of its members gained. As to the P.S. we think it has done well. It has afforded its member many pleasant evenings, and not only some pleasant but also many very profitable. Some of us who are now taking our places in the outer world, do feel indeed how much help a society of the kind renders us. Of course we might say, “We could read as much at home,” but see what a pleasant incentive to study it is to us. Then too the assistance we gain by our class in composition in accustoming ourselves to speak before others and in the interchange of ideas.

Sometime must naturally elapse before we see or feel the reward for our labor. Many days have to pass ere the seed we have sown breaks through the dark earth, to brighten & beautify the wide expanse with its refreshing green. But these days are past. We have during the last few months, begun to see the earnest of a rich harvest. There has been we think a marked improvement in all our exercises, a decided growth in the abilities of the members of our class. More interest taken and consequently more interesting results. We have accomplished much in exchange for our time. “Time is money” and we have made a good trade.

Now as to the future. We have already suggested that the green blades, have made their appearance but they have to grow, to ripen, & bear fruit before we obtain the full harvest. Now to attain this end we have much before us, much earnest and tedious work, remembering that

“Life is real. Life is earnest and the grave is not its goal.

Dust thou art to dust returnest was not spoken of the soul.”

Knowing that our daily growth in wisdom & goodness will prepare us for a better & higher life.

“Let us then, be up & doing
With a heart for any fate
Still achieving still pursuing
Learn to labor and to wait.”

Editor

We have a few items for the members of the Phi Sigma to ponder over.

- 1st The necessity of a few more members –Rope them in –
- 2nd Who is our next Chairman –Canvass the County –
- 3rd Can we introduce any new exercises to vary the program and aid in our studies “Put on your thinking caps.”
- 4th Shall we have any breaking up Exercises “To be or not to be that is the question”
- 5th Lastly but not least. To be prompt in the fulfillment of class duties.
“Splice the main brace.”

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We are sorry to say the article of “Scott at Abbotsford” is not ready for this issue of the Voice. But the gentlemen need not feel very much troubled on this score, as we have two splendid Articles in this number of the Voice, one by our corresponding member Mr. C. H. Small on “Cape Cod” which is very interesting we think as it gives some slight description of a small part of New England, as to the character of the Country People & etc. We notice that Mr. S. has as usual woven in one of his theological Jokes, or at least bearing in that direction. This Article is one of two or three which the gentleman intends to send us describing the Cape. The other article by Mr. G. H. Beard is an Essay on “Words,” the subject is a good one, and is well handled indeed as we all know Mr. Beard has a very strong part in this direction. Has not the wisest of men said “A word fitly spoken is like Apples of gold in pictures of silver.”

Also let us remember the words of our Master “But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of Judgment.”

Words

This is a subject over which we believe much careful thought and study might be profitably spent; and if in this brief space we shall succeed in opening to the readers of "The Voice" such a train of thought as it undoubtedly deserves, the suggestions which we shall endeavor to put forward may not be entirely useless.

The tendency of the age is to underestimate or fail to appreciate their importance. On every hand we hear the cry: "No matter what the man says, no matter what he teaches, what does he do?" In these times of ceaseless activity, action sways the scepter before which all men bow. Action draws to itself, with magnetic certainty, the praise or the censure of public criticism.

This is not wrong. But as with many other things which float on the wave of popular opinion, the danger lies in imagining that whatever catches quickest the general eye, secures soonest public attention, must necessarily swamp all else. So here there hangs on the tongue of everyone of those numberless self-constituted critics, who infest our churches, our legislatures, our exchanges, our street-corners, the well known maxim, "Actions speak louder than words."

Yes, & there even dwells in the mind of many of those who think better & speak less, the current impression that deeds alone tell the tale of a character.

But does careful consideration sanction such a conclusion? We think not. The thoughts we voice, the words we utter, make marks indelible, & surely we ought not to ignore them! – "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." This is true of all men, except when words are despicably woven together to make hypocritical cloaks; and fortunately there are but few who do not scorn to be hypocrites.

Without further argument, then, we assume,
1st That, as words are the product of thoughts, so they, in their turn, engender more thoughts, of the same nature, both in him who speaks and him who hears. That a man, by his speech, degrades or elevates his mind; and that his character is largely formed by thoughts & words, given and received, which are reciprocal.

2nd That a man's character is, as we have intimated, in the main, fairly represented by his words; that careless words indicate a thoughtless mind; that words whose principal ingredient is silly wit, or frivolous nonsense, speak loudly of a decidedly "hair-brained" individuality; that harsh, severe words tell darkly of a tyrannous spirit; that gentle, meek, silvery words bespeak the power of harmony; that generous, noble, grand words are messengers of royal thoughts, the ambassadors of a kingly life, & 3rd (as a natural result of both these) That words have an immense power in establishing a man's influence. By speech one true man may create another. A few sentences may be the cause of untold ruin, a few words destroy the good of years of action; that to the large majority who can know nothing of the actions of their fellow men, words must necessarily be a potent power for good or evil.

Well, then, since these gigantic truths (we say "gigantic," and we say it advisedly, the power of words is gigantic) since these facts stare us in the face, are we not called upon, as young men worthy of the name, to employ our earnest thought, our utmost effort in the endeavor to elevate the quality of our speech?

Are we not in possession of a power which requires the most wise and careful direction?

We can only suggest here one or two lines in which we may thus improve, without attempting to enlarge upon them. In the first place, there is, without doubt, room for great improvement in what is usually called "small talk." What is exactly meant by this term, however, it may be rather hard to determine. If by "small talk" we are to understand the light, cheerful interchange of salutations & pleasantries, these undoubtedly have their place; but if people choose to designate by "small talk" all the trash & nonsense & buffoonery, that so often fills the vacuum caused by the absence of common sense, then away with it forever. No company, however uneducated, should demand it; no time, however short, should call for it; no desirable place ought to make it appropriate. Next, there are the business circles, the stores, & the offices, & the exchanges where oftentimes all that is low & vulgar & belittling, seems to be welcomed. Here the jest which savors of the perfumery of badness, may make sure of creating a coarse laugh; here the tale of crime or failure is listened to with eager ear,

regardless of the reputation it may ruin. And so we might go on, but do we need to? Do you not all of you know how much below what they might be, - what they ought to be, such conversations are? Need we say that by your countenancing such things or not; by your laughing at them, or not; by your joining in them, or not, you wield an influence which you never ever can recall?

And in social circles the same thing is true, to a large extent; though not perhaps in the same degree, the opportunity for improvement is certainly as great. The lack of intellectual conversation must be apparent to all. We need to cultivate our tastes, to educate ourselves to better enjoyments.

It is not necessary that we wait for others. Let us take the initiative, & introduce into companies in which we gather, subjects worthy of our attention.

The objection may be urged, that such conversation would fail to interest & would not be welcomed by others. But this is largely a mistake. The man who thinks the best thoughts, who speaks the best words, will receive the best attention.

There are probably many others who would gladly avail themselves of such an opportunity, should we thus present it to them; and even if we come in contact with some minds which have tasted only of the milk & water trash, to which they have become inured, they will naturally look with respect on anything which is superior to them. He who believes that the lower the grade of his conversation, the higher will be his grade in society, condemns either himself, or the society, or both.

Then again, there is the family. Here we might naturally look for something better, since the thin veneer of artificial finish deemed so essential in society, does not stand in the way.

But, unfortunately, the danger lies in the other extreme. The careless indifference, the habitual neglect of cultivating our best faculties, which is common to home-life, produces in our conversation a similar tendency. Seldom, we fear, those things which instruct, educate, & elevate, are made the subjects of our home-talk.

And lastly we notice public speaking, in which as we pass into manhood, we all may take part more or less. We suggest only, however, that

purity of speech; boldness in upholding the right & condemning the wrong; careful avoidance from indulging in petty slanders; & last, but not by any means least, an unwavering determination to adhere to the solid truth, stand foremost among the qualities most needed by those who would be public speakers of worth. And to this we may add, that in speaking to an audience of whatever size or character, we should hold highest the aim of benefiting them, rather than the desire to secure for ourselves renown. And so we might go on, but enough.

Let us awake at once to a sense of our situation, nor turn a deaf ear to the call of duty!

How long, oh young men, shall we be content to float along with the dark current of this murky stream of bad, impure, debasing language?

How long shall we tire and sicken society with these miserable bubbles of wit & humour, tainted with the foulest of the foul, but whitewashed with the ready smiles & applause of so-called respectable audiences?

How long shall we squander & fritter away this matchless treasure of time, with vain & useless, idle & fruitless talk? Or indulge in efforts to win renown by acquiring fame purchased at the mean expense of another's injury; fame which comes of using with all the force of cleverness & brilliance, bitter & hateful & rancorous & cutting words, those common seeds which bear abundant fruit in strife & discord, contention & unhappiness.

When shall we, who glory in the advancement of a Christian civilization, reject in scorn these baleful habits, and take forever a determined stand to stem the increasing tide of the already widespread evil?

"By their fruits ye shall know them," was taught us in our boyhood & impressed upon us in youth. But if trees are known by their fruits & we by our actions, they are too recognized by their blossoms & we by our words. Though the blossoms of fair words are oft blown away by the wind of our faltering, the fruits of our actions which outlive the gale, are on them not less dependent, to them not less inseparable.

Though the fruits may win the admiration of the passers by, yet the blossoms are not valued or appreciated less; and the fragrance of these blossoms shall fill the world with perfume, and perpetuate their pure & noble influence when e'en the tree that bore them shall long have passed away!

G. H. Beard

Quips

A man who is intimate on short acquaintance is very apt to be short on intimate acquaintances.

At a legal investigation of a liquor seizure the Judge asked an unwilling witness, "What was in the barrel that you had?" "Well, yer Honor, it was marked Whiskey on one end of the barrel and Pat Duffy on the other end, so that I can't say whether it was whiskey or Pat Duffy was in the barrel, being as I am on my oath."

Three little boys on a recent Sabbath were stopped on the street by an elderly gentleman who, perceiving that they had bats & balls with them, asked one of them the question: "Boy, can you tell me where all naughty boys go to who play ball on Sunday?" "Over back of Johnson's dam!" the youngster replied.

A traveler in interrogating a Canadian received brief but pertinent answers thus. "Whose house is this?" "Mogg's."

"Of what built?" "Logs."

"Any neighbors?" "Frogs."

"What is the soil?" "Bogs."

"The climate?" "Fogs."

"What do you live on?" "Hogs."

"How do you catch them?" "Dogs."

Cape Cod

Since last we spoke with you through the pages of "The Voice" we have left the noise and bustle of the city and spent a few weeks in the country. If you will take your atlases and turn to the map of Massachusetts you will find on the coast a tract of land extending into the ocean, resembling a man's arm bent upwards; tracing almost a direct line from Boston to the extremity of the cape you will have the course of our journey. There was little to relieve the tediousness of the ride except as we watched the people in the stations that we passed. There were the farmers whose only diversion is the arrival of the train; there were the loafers who have nothing to do but stand around the depot; there was the man waiting for the mail bag; there were the small boys standing around with open mouths and wondering eyes; there were the country hacks and stages; they are always there—but you may have passed by country stations and therefore understand what is presented to the view. In the car there were those, the mention of whom would fill several pages, and, perhaps interesting pages, but we have arrived at our destination and we leave the car. It is a small station, about 8 miles from the point of the cape, that we step out at, bearing the name of North Truro. Riding about half a mile we come to a plain country house where we found relatives and a good dinner awaiting us. We made a visit here of little over a week.

Truro is a strange town, it is a town made up of several villages each quite separate and distinct from the other, they each have names according to their situation or some characteristic; thus: the "Pond Village," the "Highland" (This is where we visited), "Highhead," the "Castle," "Hog's Back," & c—the last named is so called from its resemblance, when seen at a distance, to a hog's back.

The houses are simple two story buildings—parlor, sitting room, kitchen, and one or two bedrooms on the ground floor; more sleeping apartments and a large storeroom upstairs. Some of the houses are not painted presenting a dingy appearance, a few are white washed, but the most of them are painted white.

The surface of the cape is hilly and very irregular. The houses are situated, some on the top of hills, some on the sides, and some in the valleys, and often times with little reference to the road. In the town at the extremity of the cape the houses were originally built facing the harbor. As the town grew a street was cut through, and, although it was the design to have as many houses as possible face the street; yet, owing to the irregularity with which they had been placed many had the street at their back door: quite a number have been moved but some still remain as they were.

The soil of the cape is wholly sand, it is one vast sand pile. It is said that all the sand that was left after the world was made was dumped down here to make Cape Cod. At the Highland there is a strata of clay running under the surface in ridges; along the bank where the sand has been worn off of it the clay stands out in prominent peaks, this is called the Clay Pounds, the reason for this name we were unable to ascertain. The shape of the cape is gradually changing. In some parts sand is being washed in and enlarging that part; in others the shore is gradually wearing away and the water now flows where once was land. In some parts of the bay, and in one or two places in the ocean, stumps of trees and other evidences are found that those places were formerly not covered with water. It is thought by some, and on pretty good grounds, that the extremity of the cape, from the point four or five miles inland has been formed by the drifting in of sand; many changes in the appearance have taken place in the memory of the present inhabitants.

The principal vegetation on the cape is pine trees which flourish there quite well; there are some oak and other shrubs. Huckleberries and a small fruit called beach plums are grown quite extensively there. The farming is not very good, turnips seem to grow there better than other vegetables; the farming formerly was better than it is now. But as you may imagine we saw very little farming this winter, the farmers were mostly engaged in looking after their stock and keeping things from freezing.

We have thus far endeavored to place before you the appearance of the cape. In our next it is our purpose to view the cape still further and visit together some of the places of interest.

C. H. Small

Selections

Boston State house is the Hub of the Solar System. You could not pry that out of a Boston man if you had the tire of all creation straightened out for a crowbar.

Holmes

We live in deeds, not years, in thoughts, not Breaths;
In feelings, not in figures on the dial.
We should count time by heart throbs.
He most lives who thinks most,
Feels the Noblest act the best.

Philip J. Bailey

Returning to town in the stage coach which was filled with Mr. Gilman's guests, we stopped for a minute at a Reutish(?) town. A woman asked the coachman, "Are you full inside?" upon which Lamb put his head thro' the window and said, "I am quite full inside; that last piece of pudding at Mr. Gilman's did the business for me."

Auto(?) of Lamb

"Wherever God erects a house of Prayer,
The Devil always builds a chapel there;
And t'will be found, upon examination,
The latter has the largest congregation.

Dan Defoe

One Hour in a Prison

“Behave yerself b’y! Behave yerself: there many better looking men in there than you.” Thus was I addressed in answer to my assertion that they would not shut up as good a looking fellow as myself, by a Irish railway laborer of whom I had enquired the way to the Prison, and who seemed to have the idea that I was afraid I should be locked up on getting there.

All this happened one August morning when in Mich City I was waiting for the P.M. train for Chicago.

The Northern Indiana State Prison seemed to be the only place of interest in the city, so I thought I would spend an hour in visiting it. Walking along the Mich Cen. RR. with the big sand pile on one side which rises to an elevation of about 700 ft and the Car shop on the other, I arrived at length, the distance I believe is a little less than a mile, but anyone who has walked, hopped, skipped or jumped over railway sleepers & soft sand will bear with me in saying that the mile seemed like three. Depositing my quarter for the convicts library, signing my name on the register, and leaving (by request) my whistle in the office, I accompanied one of the officials through the iron gate into the Prison yard. Looking about me I saw the yard was enclosed by 4 high walls along which at intervals were placed Guard houses. The Prison Buildings numbered some 5 or 6, the 1st we entered was one of two containing the cells of the prisoners. It is somewhat hard to describe this building, but imagine a set of Pigeon holes (such as are used for keeping letters & c) fixed with iron bar gates, and then placed in an outer box, and you have about the idea of this building, built of brick as was all the prison property, but inside the pigeon holes were of stone some two or three perhaps tiers I think, surrounded by an iron gallery from which steps lead to the ground. It was with a feeling of horror that I left this building to think of 200 or 300 human beings being packed in and barred up like so many evil animals. We then visited several of the shops or factories where the men were at work. It indeed looked strange to see 100 or 200 men dressed in striped clothes, these were of brown & white color a sort of flannel.

These buildings had to me a very much happier appearance though it must be terrible to the men the quiet as far as speaking, no one is allowed to speak except to the overseers, otherwise than this it might be an ordinary shop, for all the appearances, and indeed for a fact, for many are the factories where the workers do not receive more than these (or even less) their daily bread & clothes. Many different industries are carried on, stockings, shoes, chairs, barrels, carriages, cigars & etc.

Here we see men from all grades of society – white & black-- of all descriptions. Young men, yes many who were only boys, who have thus blighted their future. Many intelligent-looking men who might have risen high in some honorable calling. Speaking to my guide about the employment of the convicts he informed me that all were treated alike no matter what station in life they came. "Indeed," he said, "we like to get these bank clerks telegraph operators & c and set them to work beside a nigger. So ended my visit. I came away with the idea that the visitation was well arranged and well managed. Before closing this brief sketch I should tell you of the dining hall a long room with long tables about 3 feet wide with a form running along each side with a bowl placed at distances of about 70 ins. A strange looking dining room then the kitchen great oven & kettles. On a table stood piled up the days baking immense loafs about 10x24 in size but looking very inviting. Everything was clean & neat. I came away with a feeling of sadness but still thinking it might be a great deal worse, and that the convicts were treated very well.

W. H. B.