

**Catalogue of the Members of the Dialectic Society, Instituted in the University of North Carolina June 3, 1795, Together with Historical Sketches**

**"Love of Virtue and Science."**

**Printed for the Society  
1890**

**Editors Note**

The first catalogue of the members of the Dialectic Society was issued in 841. It had little to distinguish it from a mere list. The second catalogue was published in 1851. Owing to its many defects a second edition was issued in the following year. From 1852 to 1885 no effort was made towards the publication of a new catalogue. At this time, however, the need of one having been long felt, a committee was appointed to take the matter in hand. At first little progress was made. Mr. N H. D. Wilson soon assumed entire supervision and, though graduating in 1886, continued to prosecute the work at his home. A large correspondence furnished him with a great deal of valuable information. For some months the matter was suffered to remain in abeyance, but in the Spring of 1888a committee consisting of Mr. E.M. Armfield and the writer were instructed to direct the revision and publication of Mr. Wilson's catalogue. They decided to print it virtually without change, as a preliminary step to the preparation of a fuller and more accurate form. In June, 1888, this trial catalogue was published in an inexpensive manner and distributed among the alumni. In the fall of that year, as Mr. Armfield did not return to the University, the undertaking fell to the direction of the writer. After mature deliberation he concluded to prepare a catalogue on an entirely new plan, and re-wrote the list of members, as far as possible, from original and contemporary sources. Necessarily, in the early years of the Society less accuracy was attainable than in the later. The information given with each name has been obtained only after great labor and difficulty. The "Centennial Catalogue" has been freely used, but additions and corrections have been made to over fifteen hundred names. Besides availing himself of many of the letters received by Mr. Wilson, the Editor has carried on a very large correspondence for the purpose of collecting information. Great care has been exercised, and it is hoped that comparatively a high degree of accuracy has been attained. The Editor regrets sincerely the large number of names about which he has been unable to obtain any information whatever. He earnestly hopes that at some future time the Society may see its way clear to the publication of an historical catalogue of its members on a much more extended scale than the present modest effort.

A word must be said as to the sketches which precede the catalogue. They were prepared for the Centennial re-union in 1889, and all but one were read on that occasion. The editor is confident that all the old members will cordially welcome their publication, which was ordered by the Society early in April last. For the matter necessary to piece them together in order to furnish in some degree a connected history, the Editor is responsible. The Society greatly desired to publish, in connection with the Centennial sketches, the able address of the Hon. S.F. Phillips, delivered in 1848, on the occasion of occupying the new hall in the Old West building, but in the chaos consequent upon the suspension of the Society in 1868, the MS was lost.

## **Sketches of the History of the Dialectic Society**

The first student of the University appeared at Chapel Hill on the 12<sup>th</sup> of February, 1795. Others soon joined him, and the career of the University was commenced. It was not long before the need of a society for training in speaking and writing was recognized. The earliest record of a meeting of "The Debating Society" is dated June 3d, 1795, though it is probable that the society was organized before that time. The Debating Society continued in flourishing operation for more than a year. The nucleus of a library was formed, and much interest was manifested in the debates, which were held every Thursday evening. There was, however, some irregularity in the meetings. The members were divided into three classes, who read, spoke and composed alternatively. Two objections sufficed to reject an applicant for membership. The price of entrance was one quarter of a dollar.

After the society had lasted only a short time it was considered that a division would be advantageous and that there was ample room in the University for two debating clubs. Probably this conclusion was aided by the heightened political feeling of the day. But whatever the cause, on July 2d, 1795, the division took place, and the new "Concord Society" was formed on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August, which a year later, on August 29<sup>th</sup>, became the Philanthropic Society. There is no trace on the minutes of any great excitement at the time of the division; simply the fact is stated, with the names of those who stayed in and those who separated.

"The Debating Society" continued unchanged till August 25<sup>th</sup>, 1796, when the name "Dialectic" was adopted. There was, however, no change in the internal workings of the society. The old laws and constitution of the Debating Society are the basis of those of the Dialectic Society to-day. The preamble read on June 3d, 1795, is almost exactly the same as that used now. In this, nearly a century of constant use has failed to find a blemish or suggest an alteration. The names and functions of the officers of to-day are about the same as those ninety-five years ago, except that the secretary was then termed clerk.

Thus the two societies were launched forth on their voyage of usefulness. Doubtless their founders had small expectation of the large and influential bodies they were destined to become. Of this early period of their career the following extract from Dr/ Hooper's Unequaled "Fifty Years Since" gives a vivid picture.

"I must carry you back, ye proud Dialectics and Philanthropics of the present age, to your humble birth and reveal to you your inglorious antecedents. It may be good for you, who now loll upon sofas and survey with triumph your thousands of volumes, to look back fifty-five years and glance your eye 'into the hole of the pit whence you were digged.' The Dialectic library of this college, all there was of it, was then contained in one of the cupboards of one of the common rooms in the East building, and consisted of a few half-worn volumes, presented by compassionate individuals; and I think it was in the habit of migrating from room to room as the librarian was changed, for you may be sure the responsibility of taking care of such a number of books could not be borne long by one pair of shoulders. And besides, there was some ambition to choose, as librarian, a man who could wait on the ladies with something of that courtly grace which distinguishes the marshals of this polished age. But the cavaliers of that early time, poor

fellows! Had to make their way to the ladies' hearts without the modern artillery of splendid sashes, moustaches and goatees. The naked face, with native flush or native pallor, was all their dependence. The cupboards were not only small but full of rat-holes, and a large rat might have taken his seat upon Rollins' History, the corner-stone of the library, and exclaimed, with Robinson Crusoe:

'I am monarch of all I survey; My title there's none to dispute.'

"Such was the fancy of the Dialectic knowledge, such meagre fare provided for Dialectic literary appetite in those primeval days.

"And what is told of one library may be told of the other, for they were as much alike as the teeth of the upper and the lower jaw, and as often came into collision. When one library got a book the other must have the same book, only more handsomely bound, if possible. I am sorry to record that the contest between the two societies, at that time, was not confined to an honorable competition which should have the finest library or the best scholars, but that it often amounted to personal rancor and sometimes seemed to threaten a general battle.

"The societies then had no halls of their own, but held their sessions on different nights in the week in the old chapel (Person Hall), without any fire in winter, and besides with the north wind pouring in through many a broken pane. Think of this, ye pampered collegians of this effeminate age, and bless your stars that your college times have come fifty years later."

The societies met in the chapel ill some time in the year 1815. The South building was now at last finished--a grand building for those days--and on its third floor were the two society halls, the libraries occupying the walls. The dialectic Society went somewhat into debt in the fitting up of its hall, but the amount was soon paid.

For thirty-three years the societies met in these halls. The period saw much advance both in numbers of students and in the wealth of the University. Long before its end the societies outgrew their quarters. Towards the last of the thirties it was determined to make an effort to obtain new homes. To this end the following circular letter was sent out. Who its author was is not known; he certainly was a man of some talent and skill in presenting his cause.

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Dear Sir: - Your younger brethren of the Dialectic Society, the successors of the rich intellectual legacy which your liberality has bequeathed them, desire to address you with that diffidence and propriety becoming the relation.

From this quiet and sequestered retreat, sacred to learning, we send you a voice of greeting, which, we doubt not, will strike upon chords sympathetic with our own--break, for a moment, with pleasing illusion, the spell of busy-world ties--recall the halcyon days of youth, and bring before your vision the Old Dialectic Society, like the almost forgotten, but beloved, features of a dear friend.

The Dialectic Society has been existence for nearly half a century. Whilst it has preserved its original organization, by embalming in its Constitution and Laws the spirit of its founders, it has, externally, undergone many favorable changes. Throughout this period, during the greater part of which, the voice of maturer manhood was but seldom raised in favor of the great interests of public education and internal improvement, there has always been found within the precincts of the dialectic Society a little band of youthful patriots, who have strained every nerve to collect a Library and furnish a Hall, which should be worthy of an institution bearing the name of University. Instead of a few scanty and mutilated volumes in a book-case, and a student's dormitory for a place of assembly, (as was once the case) we now have an extensive Library and furnish a Hall, believed to be equal to any in the Southern States--a Hall of respectable dimensions--rich Damask Curtains, from the looms of France, are suspended from the window arches--the floor is spread with neat carpeting--from the walls hand portraits of various State worthies, like guardian Genii of the place, looking with complacency on the efforts of the young hope of the State.

We have the testimony of men of years and experience, that the great expense necessarily incurred for all this costly apparatus, has not been made with the injudiciousness and extravagance, which, too frequently, mark the expenditures of the young, but with a prudence becoming the sons of plain, unpretending State of North Carolina.

The energies of the State, once dormant, have been aroused and, it is to be hoped, invigorated by the long repose. From the East there reaches us the multitudinous din of works of internal improvement; the West responds in a voice of friendly rivalry.

This renovating spirit has bequeathed upon your Alma Mater and lo! she has laid aside her weeds and put on the "garments of rejoicing." The University grounds are improving--the Gerrard Hall, a new and spacious chapel, has been finished--the old buildings have undergone extensive and thorough repairs--the number of students (168) is greater, with one exception, (1823) than it ever has been in any year since the foundation of the institution.

We have caught the spirit of our elders, and are desirous to improve the interests committed to our temporary gaurdianship.

It is needless to inform you, that the shape and proportions of our Hall never were suitable to the purpose to which it is dedicated. But there are still greater objections; it is too small for the convenient transaction of business with our increased number of members. Its improvement has been carried to the highest degree of perfection of which it is susceptible. We regret to inform you, therefore, that a limit must be put t further improvement, unless we can obtain a larger Hall. But its size and construction are to the greatest objections; it is located in a building constructed, in part, of very combustible materials, constantly exposed to danger from thirty-two fires, incessantly blazing in cold weather. Last winter the roof was discovered to be in a blaze, immediately over our room, and it was the general opinion, that had it remained undiscovered a few moments longer, no human means, within our reach, could have saved the building.

It is distressing to reflect that the rich accumulation of almost a half century, is liable, in one fell moment, to become the prey of the devouring element, and that the depressing effect of such a

catastrophe upon young hearts, yet untraced by trial, may force many to abandon the pursuit of an education, and drive others to distant colleges.

Suspect not your young brethren of vanity, or an arrogation of importance, if we venture an opinion, that it is not only the temporary residents--for four years--who are benefited by the Society, but that she and her generous Rival are institutions in which the whole State should take an interest and pride.

This is, perhaps, the only place in the State where the great labor and expense are incurred, to collect a large Library. And should we succeed in rearing a Hall of suitable size and proportions, we should not only expect to see a rapid addition to our present number of volumes, but our walls covered with portraits, and our niches filled with busts of North Carolina's distinguished sons. Thus we honor talent and usefulness, and snatch from the grave what we can of virtue and worth.

Nor should the idea be omitted here, that by vacating our present Hall and Ante-chamber, we should resign into the hands of the Trustees space for the accommodation of eight students.

Need it be said that the inference from the premises, is that we wish to add one more to the number of the University buildings, and desire your assistance?

We are sanguine of success. Handsome sum has already been subscribed by the acting members, and no doubt, considerably more will be raised in this way, before the completion of the building. The Society will, probably, be able to appropriate \$500 per annum out of its Treasury.

The lowest estimate for the proposed building is \$5000. We would be glad to obtain a larger sum.

The payment of the subscriptions in three annual installments, would meet the views of the Society.

The sum raised by subscription shall be faithfully applied to the object set forth in this communication; and should the amount, thus obtained, be too small to justify the commencement of the contemplated building, it shall be profitably invested until a sufficiency here for can be raised.

Many of the expressions in this circular are, in strictness, applicable only to regular members, but it is hoped that the whole of the spirit and much of the letter are equally suited to the relation of transient members.

Receive from the Dialectic Society the assurance that it takes a deep interest in the prosperity of those who have passed from its hallowed precincts to struggle for a living and a name.

Most respectfully,  
The Dialectic Society

What responses this letter met cannot be said. Certain it is, however, that the agitation bore its fruits. The north ends of the Old East and West buildings were added, solely for the accommodation of the Societies. The old apartments in the South Building were turned into recitation rooms, and were so used until very recent times, when partitions were put in and they were converted into students' dormitories.

The new hall was ready for occupation in the fall of 1848. The first meeting was held there on September 9<sup>th</sup>, Kemp P. Battle presiding. The following is an extract from the minutes of the day. :

. . . "It being the first time the Society has assembled in the Hall, the rev. Dr. William Mercer Green opened the exercises with a prayer, which was immediately followed by a Dedicatory address by Samuel Field Phillips, Esq. To say that it was eloquent and racy, abounding in pathos and replete with solid instruction, noble exhortation and excellent advice, is but paying a faint tribute to this effort.

"The *first* President of the Dialectic Society being present, in the person of the venerable James Mebane, of Caswell, the President called upon him to address the Society. As affecting and interesting a scene was perhaps never before witnessed in the meetings of this Society. After an elapse of fifty three years, one of its founders and its first President was again in our midst.; the patriarch of many winters had returned to witness the Dedication of this Hall. Trembling with age, but retaining a voice almost unbroken, the venerable father spoke of those with whom, in the earliest infancy of this Society, he had been associated. But they had all, or nearly all, gone down to the grave. He gave much good counsel, sage advice, friendly admonition, and kind expression of regard to the youth assembled around him. He concluded by devoutly praying that prosperity and success might ever attend the sittings of this body; that it might last as long as this University; that this University might continue to prepare young men for the active scenes of life as long as we enjoyed the rich blessings of Liberty and the results of good and just government; and that these we might enjoy as long as the sun and the moon should continue to illumine the world."

This sketch of the Society has now been brought to the point where begins the first of the papers prepared for the Centennial Anniversary in 1889.

## **A Brief Sketch of the Dialectic Society, 1848-'52**

By Richard H. Lewis  
President of Judson College

When your speaker entered the University in July, 1848, the hall of the Dialectic Society was on the third floor of the South building, even at that time known as the "Old South." The anteroom was filled with many a quaint, rare and curious relic of ancient, medieval and modern times. And years before, when visiting Chapel Hill, I well remember paying an awesome visit to that chamber of wonders, guided by an exceedingly handsome and courteous student, then familiarly known by his fellows as Matt Ransom. By his kindness to the raw lad he made a friend who, in the forty-odd years that have passed, has never forgotten him.

The hall was a handsome one for its day--we thought it gorgeous. As a centerpiece for the ceiling it had a gilt circle motto of the Society. Upon this charmed circle the eyes of the young Freshman of fifteen summers gazed with reverential admiration. And afterwards, during the Friday night sessions of the body, much of his time was employed in wondering how the painter got up there to pant that circle, the debates having very little interest for the restless boy.

It required five weeks of college life before a student was allowed to become a member of either society, the fiction being that he spent a great part of his time weighing the merits of the two and making an impartial judgment. It was also a fiction that during this period he was not subjected to any solicitation from members of either party. The allotted time having elapsed, the candidates for initiation were assembled in the anteroom, there to be subjected to a cross-fire of mischievous fun. A dark, mysterious uncertainty hung over the whole thing and cast its shadow on the youthful faces of the neophytes. Gloom filled some hearts, and a certain amount of dread brooded over us all. As last the door of the hall was opened and we were marshaled in a semicircle in front of the president's chair of state. Shall we ever forget that moment!

The obligation to keep sacred and inviolate all the rules and usages of the Dialectic Society is administered, to the keeping of which we pledge our sacred honor. Then one by one, we advance to the secretary's desk and sign the constitution. And many a sign-manual bears marks of evident tremor.

Near me stands a young Chapel Hillian who, years afterwards, in the fateful campaign of 1863, led a gallant company of North Carolina troops in a deadly charge at Gettysburg, and was killed upon the field. The class of '52 will ever hold in highest esteem and honor their kind-hearted, genial classmate, John Henderson McDade. In that same semicircle stood many others whom this State and other states have honored; but we forbear to crown them till their race be run.

After the ceremony of initiation, as we were on the point of taking our seats, my eyes rested for a moment on the face of the president. With amazement I recognized my room-mate in that dignified officer with beaver hat and gold-head cane. He had kept his secret well. He was then

only sixteen years of age, a Senior and a "first mite"<sup>1</sup> man. You all know him--the State knows him, the Hon. Kemp P. Battle.

As I looked around upon the august body of grave and serious men and witnessed the proceedings, I was struck with the senatorial air that marked each countenance, and selected the extreme southeast corner of the room wherein to hide my diminished head.

The members were divided into four sections. The first and third always debated against each other, and the second and fourth. The alternate sections performed duty on Saturday morning following the Friday night's debate by the other two. The Seniors were required, once in each term, to deliver orations. And the "mite" men used these occasions to test their powers of oratory preparatory to their final appearance on the rostrum as the coming commencement.

In the fall of 1848, the northern end of the Old West building having been completed, the Society belongings were transferred to the new hall located on the second floor. The dedication ceremonies were graced by the presence of the first president of the Society, Hon. James Mebane, who sat side by side with the last president, the latter being yet a president, not now of the Society, but of the University.

We thought our new hall was a gem of beauty. The amphitheatrical form of the seats was a great improvement over the chairs on the floor. It was in this room that a young Buncombe student, class of '52, began to win fame as an incomparable speaker, and to-day the United States Senate gives close attention whenever Zeb Vance addresses that august body. It was my good fortune to be in the same section with him, and myself being a debater of no power whatever, I relied entirely upon the "gentleman from Buncombe" to bring our side up. It would be a simple waste of time and words to attempt to eulogize one whom the whole State of North Carolina loves, from the mountains to the sea. We will not attempt it. His inimitable wit and humor always lengthened the list of fines whenever he spoke--and the treasury grew fat; for who could resist laughing?

The library was opened twice a week, on Wednesday and Saturday. Members could keep books two weeks. The "concave of fictionary novels," as expressed by a green "Fresh," was the most popular department. There were three editions of Scott's novels and two of Fenimore Cooper's to supply the demand. A few very dignified Seniors affected Byron, Shakespeare, Milton, Locke, Foster's Essays, Ralph Waldo Emerson, etc., but most of the boys preferred the skirmish line of light literature to the heavy artillery of the classic writers.

A High sense of honor pervaded the membership, and they keenly shared in the disgrace and participated in the honor of each individual member. The dignity of the whole body in session was tremendous. The Freshman for a whole year felt crushed to earth when in attendance, and he hardly dared call his soul his own. The lordly Senior had everything his own way, and brooked no opposition from any of a lower class.

A considerable portion of the discipline of the University was, by consent of the Faculty, placed in the hands of the two societies, and a rule made by them was far more strictly observed than

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<sup>1</sup>This word "mite," or "might," meaning "honor," is now seldom used. It is probably peculiar to this University.



any regulation of the College officials. The members of the societies were very stringent in governing themselves, but were restless under restraint from their teachers.

On commencement occasions the members of the two societies were distinguished by their badges and color of ribbon. The orators wore long black silk gowns, the property of the societies, on the stage, with wide flowing sleeves; and one of the smaller speakers of the class of '52 came near taking an undignified broadside fall on the platform by stepping upon the trailing silk.<sup>2</sup> It was always a matter of pride and congratulation when the majority of the honor men in the graduating class was composed of "Di's." At the time of which I speak only those Seniors were permitted to deliver orations at commencement who had received one of the three distinctions.

Of the value of the work by the Dialectic Society of its members from 1848 to '52 it may be said that it was solid. Lessons were learned in regard to the rules of parliamentary practice which have since borne fruit not only in the legislative halls of our own commonwealth, but also in the councils of the nation. Some "Di's" of that period have won names not soon to die. Two of the class of '52 have won gubernatorial honors--one a governor, the other a lieutenant governor--and one of these has, for three terms, been a United States Senator. Two have represented their districts in Congress, and a very many have made their mark in the halls of our General Assembly. Some of them commanded brigades and regiments in the late war.

It is impossible to fully write the history of our Society during any four years' period without going more or less into details concerning the personnel of the members of that time. And it would be an unpleasant and invidious distinction to mention a few without doing injustice to others.

We close with a prophecy:

When the history of our State, nay, of the United States, shall be written a century hence, it will be found that among the men who guided the affairs of state and moulded the institutions of the country, there will be found none more prominent than those who, in the "love of virtue and science," trained their youthful minds in the hall of the Dialectic Society."

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<sup>2</sup> These silk gowns, called togas, were stolen by some of Kilpatrick's cavalry when Chapel Hill was captured in the spring of 1865, and have not been replaced.

**The Dialectic Society  
of the  
University of North Carolina  
from  
1850 to 1854**

**An Address by the Hon. Richard H. Battle, of Raleigh**

The Southern States of the Union never enjoyed greater material prosperity than during the years succeeding the Mexican War and before the War of Secession. The University of North Carolina experienced the reflex influence of this prosperity in a great increase of her number of students during those years, and this increase was but little impeded by the money panic of 1857. The Freshman Class of 1849-'50 was the largest that had ever assembled here up to that time, and its successor of 1850-'51, of which I was a member, while not quite so large, increased so much in the next two years that our Senior roll was the largest ever known, and in June 1854, we graduate even sixty members, three more than the class of 1853. An examination of the catalogues will show that, in the decade from June 1849, the number of students had about trebled that of ten years preceding. During the first half of the decade embracing the period of my connection with my Alma Mater as a student, her forces were nearly doubled. The catalogue issued in the spring of 1854 shows the matriculates during the year were 281. After graduation I served as a tutor in the College until June, 1858, and the matriculates the year preceding were 453. Nine years before they had been just 150.

During the years of my active membership of the Society our numbers were generally in excess of those in the Philanthropic Society in the proportion, say, of seven to six. Early in August, 1850, I was admitted a member in the "New Hall" at the north end of the Old West building; the removal from the "Old Hall" on the third floor, south side of the South building, having taken place just two years before. About forty others were admitted with me. Residing in the village, and having never been away from home three weeks at a time in my life, a delicate boy of fourteen years and weighing less than 75 pounds, I felt a great awe as we were ushered into what appeared to me a very magnificent and august chamber. A "first honor" Senior, to me then the greatest of earthly beings, was in the president's chair, with beaver hat on as evidence of dignity, and gold-headed cane in hand as the emblem of his authority. The president was a young man of grace and ease of manner, of fluency of speech and good memory. He recited the charge to the new members without confining his eye to the book, and the impressiveness of the pledge was so awe-inspiring to me that, during my whole course, to be on the safe side, my lips were sealed to all outsiders as to everything that occurred within those sacred walls. I did not stop to enquire what might be the tendency outside, if known, of anything that was said or happened there. To me it was a society secret and sacred. My fellow-members took about the same view I did of the nature and sacredness of that pledge, and I am now, after the lapse of from thirty-five to forty years, of opinion that it was well for the society, and for us as members, that we did place such a construction on the charge given us and the pledge we assumed. It added much to our estimate of the privileges to which we were admitted. The consciousness that we were clothed with a great

trust, to preserve the dignity of a body that was over half a century old, and self-governing and self-sustaining, and the confidence that information of our slips or failures as writers, declaimers, or debaters would never reach the ears of the *profanum vulgus*, or of our Philanthropic colleagues, exerted an influence among and over us that was at once elevating and conservative.

The Society being divided in four classes, as nearly equal in number as practicable, new members being assigned to one another of them to preserve the equality, we all had some duty to perform once every week, except the College Seniors, who were excused from declamation and writing compositions, but who were required to write and speak, each, one oration each session. Friday nights were devoted to debating and reading compositions. The Seniors, except those filling offices which made their presence necessary, were required to attend only on the nights when they respectively had to take part in the debates, and half of them were privileged to use the Friday evenings in visiting the ladies or in other agreeable pastime. As our numbers grew, the Hall became so crowded that the privilege of being absent, except when they had duties to perform, was extended to the Juniors, so that those holding no offices requiring attendance were compelled to attend only once a week. Space in the Hall was economized by raised benches arranged amphitheatrically, but when leading offices were to be filled by election, or other matters of interest were to come up, they were nearly overcrowded in my day; and soon after that, the erection of the new East and the New West buildings recognized as a necessity, by Faculty and Trustees, for the accommodation of the two societies. Additional dormitories and class-rooms were provided by this erection; but the accommodation of the societies was, I pine, the principal consideration. Such was the estimate of the value of the societies to the institution entertained by our *Senatus Academicus* and the *Curatores* of that day!

This Society, during all the years of my active membership, was certainly an admirably managed body. The best men, those most faithful to college and to Society duties, were generally selected to fill the offices, and to the officers was accorded all due respect. Order was enforced by fines most impartially inflicted, and good attention was almost uniformly given to a member when performing any duty. To those of us who made any effort at elocution the sympathetic and indulgent attention of our fellows was an inspiration to do our best, and we acquitted ourselves in declamation much better than in the chapel before the Faculty, or in the class-room of the Professor of Rhetoric, where we had the fear of unsympathetic criticism. Many of the older members fully recognized in the exercises of the Society opportunities of great improvement and honestly and gladly availed themselves of them; while we young and diffident lads were improved by association with them, and encouraged by their example, and gradually acquired more confidence as well as experience. It is not too much to say that many acquired such skill in debate and such knowledge of parliamentary usage during my day here, that on going out from the walls of this Society they were, and felt themselves to be, fully able to cope with older men in the arena of legislative halls in this and other States. The most practiced and skillful debaters of my own college class, in this Society, will serve to illustrate this assertion. One of them Thomas Newton Crumpler, of Surry, afterwards of Ashe, as a member of our House of Commons in the stormy legislature of 1860-61, and one of the very youngest men in that body, was so entirely at home on the floor and such an accomplished dialectician that he easily stepped to the front as a leader among the opponents of Secession, and was a worthy foe of the talented leader of the Secession forces, the Hon. Samuel J. Person, who had acquired much experience of men and affairs by service on the Bench of our Superior Courts and as a legislator,

and who was in every way an able man. He, by the way, had been an honored leader in this Society near ten years before Crumpler began his career here. What a gallant fellow Crumpler was, and how near he came to being a *genius*! Well do I remember him as he looked when he first made his appearance as a Freshman. Tall he was, and slim, gaunt and sallow-faced, careless in his dress and scorning all adventitious aids to good looks. He had been poorly prepared for college and apparently had little desire to excel in the class-room, but he soon made a mark in this Society that was phenomenal. Possessed of a remarkable memory and well read in general literature, he was a fluent talker, and he soon developed a great talent for debate. To the members of the higher classes, who made themselves debaters by hard work and longer experience, this gawky youth from the hills of Surry was a veritable "*singed cat*." In him the very best of them found his match. With head thrown back and with keen eye and thin prominent nose, he looked like a gamecock; and his flowing words and easy action were quite electrifying to us diffident boys who had helped him, during the week, to pass muster in the recitation-room. He was poor and unable to complete his college course. He made law his profession, but I doubt not he was much more fond of contests in State cases before a jury than of the patient labor necessary to make a jurist. Politics were suited to his bent and disposition, and he would have been a very conspicuous figure in the State had he lived. The mark he made in 1860 and 1861 fully justifies me in saying this. Though an ardent advocate of the Union, he volunteered early, at the call of his State, when the war was inevitable, and having attained the rank of Major, he fell in one of the battles before Richmond, and fills a hero's grave. I alluded to his memory being remarkable. It was said of him when in college that once, on a wager, he committed to memory one side of a country newspaper in the time it took him to read it over. And I remember one morning just before an ante-breakfast recitation in Livy, I read the lesson over to him once, and when called upon to recite, by Professor Ashbel G. Brown, he glibly repeated in English, word for word, of a paragraph as I had translated it for him, though I had a shrewd suspicion that he could not have applied one-half the words to the corresponding Latin.

Another prominent debater in my class, as different in habits of study, etc., from Crumpler as one young man well could be from another, was Leonidas John Merritt, of Chatham. I can hardly mention his name without bowing my head in respect to his memory. Well prepared for college by that great teacher of the past generation, William J. Bingham, and over the age of twenty-one years when he first entered the doors of the University and of this Society, he was attentive to every duty and faithfully availed himself of all the advantages offered here. He did not compete for the first honors of the class in the college course, but he easily took and kept his place in the second rank. In the Society he had no superior in our class. In composition and declamation he did his best, and for the debate he was always prepared. Earnest and strong, he always spoke to the point, and his ringing voice never failed to command interest, and if the decision of the query was not in his favor, it was from no fault of his. He, too, became a lawyer, and in the four or five years he was at the bar gave much promise of success. That he impressed himself greatly on the people of his native county is apparent from the fact that when all the counties of the State were sending their very best men, he was sent by Chatham to the Convention of 1861-62--probably the ablest body of men ever assembled in the State. One of the youngest members of that convention, he did not aspire to leadership with Ruffin and Graham and Badger and other like statesmen of age and experience there assembled, but he so bore himself as to command the confidence and respect of all. He might honorably have remained in civil life, but he would not allow other young men to do the fighting while he occupied a seat in the legislature or continued

to perform the duties of office of the Clerk and Master in Equity for his county, which held with credit to himself at the breaking out of the war; but in the spring of 1862 he went to the front as first lieutenant of a company from Chatham, and with some others of our best and bravest, who had contended with him in honorable rivalry here, fell at Malvern Hill. Take him all in all, I thought him the most promising member of our class of sixty, and I was so fond of him personally that I grieved for him almost as an older brother.

Another member, more ambitious than either Crumpler or Merritt, the hardest student of our class, by the manner of his performance of Society duties, gave promise of success as a professional man and politician. He was one of our most elaborate speakers, and the gravity of his demeanor gave weight to what he spoke ; I refer to the late William Lafayette Scott , of Guilford. He became a lawyer of high standing at the Greensboro bar, and in the army (nearly all of my classmates took an active part in the War Between the States) he rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel of a regiment. After reconstruction he espoused the Republican side in politics and was nominated for a seat in Congress. He made a vigorous contest with Hon. James M. Leach, one of our most successful popular leaders, and was defeated. Soon thereafter, and probably because of the strain of that canvass, he was struck with paralysis, and lingering a few months, died. Well do I remember the last time I ever saw him! I was in Greensboro on professional business and met him on the street. He was on crutches and a wreck of his former self. Because I was decidedly on the other side in politics, and the feeling between the parties was then very intense, he hardly expected my greeting to be as cordial as of old. But seeing my old classmate and friend in that condition, I forgot all political differences and grasped his hand and spoke to him with the affectionate warmth that existed between us when we parted here twenty years before. The greeting was too much for his shattered nervous condition and he burst into tears. I, too, was deeply moved, and, I had almost said, we were boys together again. But I had never known him as a boy. He was of age when he came to college, and seven or eight years my senior. I had had better advantages in boyhood; but the contest for the first honors of the class between one of mature years and a delicate boy of fourteen was an unequal one. However, we came out at the end of our first session neck-and-neck, as the racing men say, and that he spoke the valedictory at our graduation was due to the fact that he was more lucky in throwing high dice than I and the others who took "first mite," as the phrase then was, with him. But he and the other older members had greatly the advantage of us boys in the contests of the Society. We had not the general information, the knowledge of the world, the self-confidence, or the capacity for labor to enable us to contend with them in the arena of debate and succeed in the class-room too.

Another member of my class who gave promise in the Society of his success in after-life was Joseph A. Engelhard, who died in the year 1877, after reaching the high office of Secretary of State. He came here from Yale College during our Freshman year, and was a leader among us from the beginning. He, too, was of maturer years than most of us, being but little younger than Merritt and Scott, and, like them, while he was a successful student, especially in mathematics, he took greater interest in Society duties. His compositions were carefully prepared, and in the debates e was vigorous and pointed. In our Sophomore year I succeeded him as secretary of the Society, and I remember, with a little shame even now, the contrast between him as a good and ready pen-man and myself. His chirography was neat and manly, while mine!--well, the less I say about that the better. He was a Mississippian while here, but fortunately for North Carolina,

he fell in love with one of the belles who made our Commencements attractive, and, concluding to settle in the State, he was married a little over a year after graduation, I being present and assisting as one of his "best men." He became a lawyer, and was Clerk and Master in Equity at Tarboro, where his home was when the war came on. He was adjutant-general of Branch's, afterwards Lane's, brigade, with the rank of major, and made reputation as a very efficient officer. Abandoning the law for journalism after the war, he soon became editor of the Wilmington Journal, a very influential Democratic paper, and in that capacity he probably did as much as any other man in the contest against the corruption attendant upon reconstruction. His nomination for the office of Secretary of State by the Democratic party in 1876 was in recognition of these services, and his able and vigorous campaign is still fresh in our memories. Many of us thought that this success was but a step to still higher honors.

I will be pardoned for making special mention of another of my classmates by name. Samuel Spencer Jackson, of Pittsboro, one of our successful competitors for college honors, and perhaps the best linguist among us, the result of a four year's course with Mr. Bingham, was a young man of striking appearance and superior gifts. I remember how he impressed me when we first met in July 1850. Six feet high, straight, of faultless figure, handsome face and fine address, and with a reputation for scholarship that had preceded him for months, the idea that I should compete with *him* for the honors of the class, as my friends had told me I was expected to do, seemed to me the height of presumption. He had an uncommonly fine voice, and was easily, I thought, the best declaimer of the class. Never did I hear within our Society walls a finer piece of elocution than his, once, in a eulogy on Hamilton. Strange to say, however, he avoided as much as possible the performance of Society duties. He was averse to composition, and often paid fines rather than write an essay, and if he took part in the debates at all, he made no effort to do so in a manner worthy of his ability. Having graduated, he studied law, and was one of my fellow-tutors here; and an admirable teacher of Greek, his department, he was. He and I were the first LL.B's (Bachelors of Laws) of this institution, and soon after obtaining this degree he retired from his Greek chair to practice law. As a lawyer he was well-versed in its principles and a very safe counselor; but he sedulously avoided the contests of the court-house, and taking upon himself a full share in the preparation of his causes, he made his partner or other associates do nearly all the speaking before the judge and jury. Had he resolutely thrown off his diffidence and striven to succeed in the Society as he did in the recitation-room here, he would have soon developed decided forensic ability and become one of our foremost orators. Instead of being admired as he was for his physical and intellectual gifts in the limited circle which had opportunity to judge of his worth, he would have been the object of admiration throughout the limits of the State. We who knew his ability could not but mournfully think, when we heard the sad tidings of his death ten or twelve years ago, of what he might have been.

Time would fail me were I to speak of my other fellow-members here, living and dead, who are worthy of more than a passing notice. I would like to tell of James A. Wright, of Wilmington, too young and fun-loving here to show the great promise he did after he became a man and entered upon life's duties in his native city; and of the handsome Delano W. Husted, of Raleigh, who cared not for the honors of the class-room or Society, but being a dilettante reader, wrote elaborate compositions because he liked it, the leader in harmless mischief; and of William L. Alexander of Lincoln, a noble fellow, one of our first-honor men and my fellow-tutor here, and successively a civil engineer and lawyer. Wright and Husted fell like Crumpler and Merritt in the

battles before Richmond in 1862, the former at the head of a company from New Hanover, and the latter a lieutenant in a regiment from Alabama (whither he had removed to practice law), and Alexander lingered and died from wounds received in one of the battles of the West, at the head of a company, in distant Texas years after our battle-flags were forever furled. These too were my classmates and friends. The victims of the war were surely of our best.

Eulogies on the living are seldom in good taste. Even of our great senator, the peerless Zebulon B. Vance, of Buncombe, who possesses the confidence, admiration and love of the people as no other North Carolinian has ever done before--three times our governor, and by common consent the great war governor of the South--of him, though I am personally under the greatest of obligations to him for taking me out of the army and making me his private secretary when I was utterly broken down in health, and being a good friend to me ever since--of him, I can with propriety now say but little more than that, to my knowledge, while an active member of the Society when a law student, and taking a partial course in other studies in 1851 and '52, he exhibited that ability, wit and versatility, that quickness at repartee, that fidelity to duty, that knowledge of himself and others that made him in less than eight years a leading figure in the State and the great man he is to-day. I wish I could present to you a scene here once when his humor and witty retorts upon his adversaries got the better decorum of the Society, and the treasury was replenished by fines for involuntary tittering and suppressed laughter all over the hall.

And because they are still living I cannot eulogize some of our other leaders who are still lingering on the stage of life--such men as Francis E. Shober, then of Salem, now of Salisbury; Alfred M. Waddell, then of Hillsboro, now of Wilmington, and *longo intervallo*, as to time, Clement Dowd, of Moore, now of Charlotte, who has been honored members of the Federal House of Representatives, and are now enjoying in more private stations the respect of their fellow-citizens; and Jas. Jeremiah Slade, of Georgia, who here exhibited the qualities which have made him a leading educator of his State; and James W. Wilson, then of Hillsboro, now of Morganton, who has made a reputation as a civil engineer of which his Alma Mater may well be proud, and who as a legislator at Raleigh has been influential in advancing the best interests of the State; and Col. John D. Taylor, of Wilmington, who at his graduation in 1853 delivered the valedictory in this Society so full of noble sentiments and expressed in such pathetic language that many of us were melted in tears, and who, ten years afterwards, at the head of a regiment lost an arm in defense of the Southern cause; and E. Hayne Davis, of Iredell, who likewise lost an arm in battle as captain in defense of that cause; and Robert B. Johnston, of Haywood, now Asheville, also a one-armed ex-Confederate captain; and Henry R. Shorter, of Alabama, who is now at the head of the railroad commission of his State; and Theodore Whitfield, of Mississippi, now of the city of Richmond, and S. Paxson Watters, of Wilmington now Culpepper, Va. And James B. Avirett, of Onslow, now of Maryland, and Alexander D. Betts, of Wake, now of the N.C. Methodist Conference, useful and respected ministers of the Gospel; and Dr. Richard H. Lewis, of Chapel hill, now president of Judson College, Hendersonville, the successful instructor of the young, and his brother Wm. Gaston Lewis, now of Goldsboro, whose ability as a civil engineer, backed by rare energy and indomitable pluck, made him one of the best of Gen. Lee's brigadiers; and David G. Worth, of Asheboro, now of Wilmington, whose success as a merchant has not made his old friends forget that he gave promise here of being an eloquent advocate or public speaker; and John K. Ruffin, of Alamance, now of Wilson, Wm. J. Love, of Wilmington,

Jas. W. Ewing, of Montgomery, and Joseph Graham, of Hillsboro, now of Charlotte, leading physicians in the communities where they live; and Wm. H. Hall, of Wilmington, now a successful physician in New York--"Billy Hal," as we affectionately called him, the first gentleman of his day, because, while polite as could be to his fellows and the ladies, he had the courage to be polite and respectful to the Faculty under all circumstances; and John D. Shaw, of Richmond, Marmaduke S. Robins of Randolph, and John W. Graham, of Hillsboro, all in the first rank at the bar of this State; and Wm. J. Montgomery, of Montgomery County, now of Concord, recently resigned, with regrets of the profession, from our Superior Court bench, and Alphonso C. Avery, of Burke, who has lately ascended from that Bench to the Supreme Bench of the State; and Alexander McIver, quite the equal of the best scholar in his class, late Superintendent of Public Instruction, and Robert Bingham, of Orange, now of the Bingham School, many years his junior and graduating, with first honors too, several classes below him, the most successful schoolteacher at the South; and L.R. Waddell and A.H. Merritt, of Chatham, the former now of Smithfield, and John M. Galloway, of Rockingham, once useful as legislators and now useful citizens--and others still living. And long may they all live, growing in all that makes age respectable and honorable, until they too shall join the majority on the other side of the river.

I wish I had time to speak at lengths of others of my comrades who have gone to their rest; of Benjamin Sherwood Hedrick, of Davidson, who gave up a professorship here, before the war, rather than conceal his opinions, which were adverse to slavery, and who filled at his death an honorable place in the Patent Office at Washington; and James A. Patton, of Asheville, Alexander R. Smith, of Cumberland, Leonidas F. Siler, of Macon, afterwards a Methodist minister, and James H. Colton, of Cumberland, afterwards a Presbyterian clergyman--all, like Hedrick, leading scholars in their classes, but taken away by death to soon to fulfil their promise of usefulness in the world; and the polished and popular John t. Taylor, of Granville, who, as captain, gave his life to the Confederate cause; and Wm. Bingham, a first-honor man, who made a name second to none as a teacher and was the author of text-books for classical students of great and widely recognized merit; and Junius I. Scales, of Rockingham, late of Greensboro, as true a man as I ever knew, as gallant when a youth here as when he led a Mississippi regiment as its colonel in the Western army, or contended, a few years ago, in our State Senate for the best interests of the State, in spite of a constitution shattered by the hardships of prison life at the North long years before. He too should go on the roll of honor, to be found on the tablets erected to the Confederate dead of the University over the rostrum in our beautiful Memorial Hall. I might go on and on, all night long, telling of our living and dead members of my day here. But before I stop I must make more than a passing allusion to another of our members of that day--one long since dead, the more is the pity. James M. Spencer, *Magnus* Spencer, as well all knew him, of Alabama, was the most influential member of the Society in my day; and his influence was always for good. He was in the class ahead of mine and had attained his majority before he came to college. Quite six feet high and broad-shouldered, he was a man among boys. A lock of white amidst his brown hair attracted one's observation, but it was forgotten in the contemplation of his fine Roman face, clear hazel eye and benevolent expression. He was a hard student and voracious reader of both poetry and prose; he was a first-honor man throughout his course and seemed to have Shakespeare and other English classics at his tongue's end; he was so manly, so kind, and so true that he could not but be a leader in college; and in this Society, where we heard him in the performance of some duty every week, the admiration he inspired in us younger



members approached hero-worship. His voice was full and flexible and its tones were often very pathetic. He seemed to us the master of pleasant satire and of ridicule without malice. I doubt whether Webster at his best ever swayed his hearers in the Senate of the United States as Magnus Spencer, in some of our debates, swayed this Society. His home being far distant and the means of travel in that direction by no means what they are now, he generally spent his vacations, winter and summer, here, and in his room on the North passage, second floor, of the Old West building he was always accessible to others who remained here, for counsel or friendly conversation. His precept and example did much for those who were without the restraints of study and a watchful Faculty. Blessed is the lot and green should ever be the memory of the collegian who has the will and ability to exert such an influence for the right and the noble as did he. Had he not died early there is no telling what he might have been. I venture the assertion that James K. Polk, one of our members, who became President of the United States, was not a greater man here than was Magnus Spencer.

My sketch is too long already and I must close. Of the 275 or 300 young men who were active members of this Society at one time or another with me, over ten percent are on the roll of the Confederate dead and fill heroes' graves. How many more died after the war from disease or the seeds of disease contracted in camp or on the march we can never tell. Perhaps two-thirds of them all have gone to their final account, leaving a diminishing few to think of their virtues and their faults. Their virtues may seem greater and their faults less than they were; but the record of my memory is clear that the dignity and usefulness of this, our Beloved Society, did not suffer from their or our hands. We found and kept the standard of character and behavior high. On the whole, we guarded the honor of this now venerable Society as the vestals of old did their sacred fires, and leaving its hall, we handed over our inheritance to those who succeeded us untarnished and unimpaired. We of the period 1850 to 1854 loved, and those of us who are left still love the Dialectic Society, *venerable nomen!* And we pray you young men who have taken our places to be watchful and careful that its honor, its dignity and its usefulness do not suffer in your keeping.

R. H. Battle

From 1854 to 1861 the Society continued in unabated prosperity and usefulness. The large increase in members rendered needful certain constitutional changes, and a larger hall became an imperative necessity. The fine hall in the New West building was occupied in the Spring of 1861. Formal dedicatory ceremonies were intended to be held, but something interfered to postpone, and eventually the outbreak of the war prevented their taking place. A large debt was incurred for the furnishing of the hall, which was never entirely paid off till some years after the reopening in 1875.

During the war the Society, with the University, was in a very bad state. The members were few; at one time there were not enough to fill the offices without making use of Freshmen. The general spirit of disorganization affected the Society painfully. The officers grew careless--the secretary often copying the minutes hurriedly in pencil. The debates became towards the last little more than farces. The condition of things was deplorable, but certainly it could not be otherwise. All the students who were old enough went to the front. None but striplings and those incapacitated from service remained to study; and the intense excitement of the time demoralized even them. It was impossible to keep up the *esprit du corps* of a society which had dwindled in

three years from two hundred members to less than twenty. The handful deserve credit for keeping the body in existence at all.

With the close of the war members increased. Something of the old spirit returned, but the wretched condition of the State and the approach of the carpet-bagger forbade any expectation of real and immediate progress. In 1868 the end came. With the University, the Dialectic Society ceased to exist when the Old Board of Trustees and the old Faculty were dismissed from office for the crime of not adhering in politics to the dominant party.

## The Reorganization of the Society

By Wm. B. Phillips, Ph.D.,

Professor of Metallurgy in the University of Alabama

When the University was reorganized in 1875, great interest was naturally felt in the two Literary Societies. A new generation of college boys had grown up since the unfortunate collapse in 1868; in fact, one may say two generations, counting each four years as a college generation. Some of them knew Joseph, and some, alas! Like the Egyptians of old, knew him not.

That some of the old Faculty and of the old students had an abiding faith in the resuscitation of the famous Dialectic Society is shown by the fact that on May 29, 1868, a Permanent Committee on Reorganization was appointed, consisting of the Hon William H. Battle, Professor Charles Phillips and Hon. Thomas M. Argo. This committee was of the nature of the Society itself, for Judge Battle was declared president, Professor Phillips, vice-president, and T.M. Argo, secretary. It appears to have considered it unnecessary to assist in the reorganization of the Society during the dismal period intervening between 1868 and 1875, and justly so, for a literary society without a literary atmosphere is like the anhydrous moon, dead.

It is not my purpose at this time to speak of what the Society was during this unhappy period, for I have no personal knowledge of it. Suffice it to say that it seems to have shared in the general debility, and finally to have succumbed to its environment. No other fate could have been at the time more appropriate, for the University was in the hands of aliens and strangers, unrecognized by the best element of the commonwealth, and scorned even by the colored janitor. Its cup of sorrow was full to overflowing, and nothing remained but to drain it to the dregs, turn sadly away and refuse to be comforted.

The Dialectic Society had always borne herself proudly, numbering among her children some of the best and wisest of men, and cherished by them as an aged mother. Aged, yet vigorous, venerable, yet full of power, stately as a queen, yet kind and condescending to all who came to her with the magic shibboleth upon their lips, she turned away from those who knew nothing of her past glories, and cared less.

One potent reason why the University, and with her, the two societies came so soon to grief after the years 1867-68, was because the students and the Faculty were not imbued with the enthusiasm which comes from *esprit du corps*, from the knowledge of the great achievements of the past and the steadfast determination to maintain the dignity and honor so dearly purchased. Take the catalogues of the years from 1869 to 1872, read the names of the faculty and of the students, and then say whether *esprit du corps* should not rather be *esprit du corpse*.

There were some notable and honorable exceptions, but they serve to render the background still more dismal. The end soon came, and in 1872-'73 the University was closed, much to the

gratification of those who loved the State and who desired to see the instruction of its youth in the hands of its own sons.

In 1875 it was reopened, chiefly through the unselfish and untiring devotion of one man, who for the past thirteen years has presided with most unusual ability over its fortunes, the best part of whose life has been freely and lovingly given to his Alma Mater, and who deserves, as but few men do, that monument more durable and far more costly than brass or marble--the love and respect of his fellow men. It is unnecessary in this hall to speak his name, for wherever the conflict over the University has waged most fiercely there indeed has been heard the voice of Battle, drowned only by the shouts of victory. Fellow-members, I am not given to excessive praise nor to extravagant speech, but I would not discharge the full measure of my duty here to-night were I to allow this opportunity to pass without asserting that, in my opinion, this reunion of the Dialectic Society, here, the resuscitated and rejuvenated University of North Carolina, is, with all that it means, due more to Kemp P. Battle than to any other man.

"Judge ye this day what I say!"

Before recounting briefly the history of the Society for the first two years after the reorganization, it is well that reference should have been made to the necessity of the resuscitation and the means that were adopted. As to the first enough has been said to enable us to judge of the events of those days quietly; as to the second it may be said with equal brevity that the University was rehabilitated, and with it the Dialectic Society, by the liberality of some of its friends. The fund of \$13,000 which was used in repairing the buildings, etc., was subscribed by private citizens. The State has never refunded the money, and, indeed, has never been asked to do so. When the buildings were declared ready the students came and took possession of the rooms which had been rendered habitable, in an institution owned by the State, through the benevolence of private citizens. The State would not repair its own property, and that the students had a roof over their heads and doors and windows in their rooms was due not to the State but to private citizens.

Comment is unnecessary. The reorganization of the University was rendered possible by the generosity of its old students, and as the two societies are parts of the University, they too owed their new birth to the same kindly influence. Without this aid it is doubtful of the year 1875 would have witnessed the dawn of better days, and the reopening might have been delayed indefinitely.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of September, 1875, the Society was convened by Thos. M. Argo, secretary, and the newly elected members proceeded to elect their own officers, Wm. B. Phillips, president, with H.F. Watkins, R. E. Caldwell, R. H. Hughes, K. P. Battle, Jr., and George McCorkle as his associates in office.

The old lines of division between the Eastern and Western portions of the State were re-established. Accordingly the Eastern boys, with a few exceptions, joined the Philanthropic Society, and the Western boys the Dialectic.

Some of the new members had already acquired some experience in the conduct of debating societies at Davidson College, Emory and Henry, Bingham School, Horner's School, etc. Some were even familiar with the especial features of the Dialectic Society, for the Philanthropic Society at Davidson College had been remodeled in 1867-69, by former students of the University and members of the Dialectic Society seeking instruction there, on the plans of this very Society.

The greater part of the new members, however, had not been accustomed to an organization of such dignity and earnestness, so that the work of training and disciplining them fell upon the new officers. How well they acquitted themselves of this task may be inferred from the result of the October elections.

Three of the five were re-elected: W.B. Phillips and Kemp P. Battle, Jr., to the same positions they had been holding, and R.L. Payne.

The first reunion of the Society under the new regime was held during Commencement week of 1876, and it gladdened the hearts of scores of old Dialectics to see the loved Society thus starting on another life of usefulness and honor. The Commencement meeting has always seemed to me the choicest bit of college life, attended as it is by those old members who have realized the burdens of life, the dusty road of daily struggle, and the hard-earned honors of professional activity, and who snatch a day from their desks, pulpits and farms to revive anew the never-to-be-forgotten joys of early manhood. What if they do grow a trifle prolix and lengthy in their reminiscence, or offer a paper of unseemly protraction on the past history of the Society? It is but once a year, and like the annual return of Chemistry and Conic Sections, should be borne with meekness, if not welcomed with heartfelt cordiality.

With the election of officers on April 14<sup>th</sup>, 1877, terminated the writer's active connection with the Society, as he received his diploma at the Commencement of 1877.

During that last year, 1876-'77, there had been a revival of at least one of the old Greek letter fraternities, the Phi Kappa Sigma, not indeed with the full and free permission of the powers that were, but in a quiet, unostentatious, modest way. It did not, however, interfere with either of the Literary Societies, as has, I fear, most unfortunately been the case within the past three or four years when, under permission, these fraternities have multiplied.

The writer's connection with the Phi Kappa Sigma dates from almost its earliest reorganization at Chapel Hill, and he is prepared to say that whatever differences have since arisen between the fraternities and the societies are due to the principles of neither the one nor the other, but have to be sought elsewhere.

That the interest in the societies, as arenas of literary effort, was keener during the first three or four years of the new regime than it has been since is, I think, not to be successfully gainsaid. But the fundamental cause of this is not to be sought in the re-establishment of the fraternities.

Membership in the Society need not and does not interfere with membership in the fraternity, and conversely, membership in the fraternity need not and does not interfere with the proper work

of the Society. If proofs of this assertion be demanded it is only necessary to refer to some, yes, who were zealous fraternity men and at the same time attained the highest honors in the Society, as well as in the class-room and upon the rostrum.

The proper work of the Dialectic Society is of two kinds, first the training of young men by young men in the conduct of legislative business, and second to afford to young men an opportunity of learning what to say and how to say it.

We never realize the immense importance of these two things until we are brought into contact with the great world that lies outside of the college walls, but for which the training within those walls, if it be properly conducted, constitutes the very best preparation.

To know *what to say* is good, to know *when to say it* is better, but to know *how to say it* is best of all.

These three indispensable factors of success are to be obtained in this hall, fellow-members, as nowhere else. The debate, the composition, the speech may each and all be irksome, but they are necessary, and as such are beyond value as they are beyond law.

I care not what position of life one may afterwards occupy, whither he may wander, nor in what environment his lines may finally be cast, as a sweet and precious memory there will come back to him the hours spent in this hall where virtue and science stand ever beckoning, ever solacing, and ever fruitful of the choicest blessings to all who set their faces as a rock toward their eternal habitations.

Wm. B. Philips

The career of the Society from 1877 to 1880 presents little of special interest. With this year begins the last of the Centennial sketches.

## **The History of the Dialectic Society From September, 1880 to June, 1885**

**By E. P. Mangum, A.M. of the Asheville Graded Schools**

The history of all organizations, as well as that of all countries, is a recital of successes and failures; but grateful is the historian who feels that, while he must call to mind the faults and defects of his beloved country or society, he can still chiefly confine his statements to an account of progress and continual improvement. Such is the case with the one who has undertaken to trace briefly, but pointedly, the history of our Society for the period of 1880 to 1885. It has ever been the good fortune of our Society to have among its members men who fully appreciated the vital interest of their charge, and who were willing to sacrifice personal interests upon her altar.

The year of 1880 and 1881 found the Di Society in the hands of some of the strongest men that have ever had the direction of its affairs. They had to govern by a constitution which, though strong and comprehensive from the beginning, had lately been revised, and therefore they were launching their charge upon an unknown sea, to be guided by untried laws. Carefully and diligently did they perform their duties, and to the honor of the class of '81, be it said that those who received their first ideas about society work from them were clearly shown that "duty" was the watchword, and that the direction of the Society lay onward and upward. During this period unseemly customs were changed, new zeal was aroused in all the members, and the closing of the year found the society on a firmer basis than ever since the war.

During the next year, '81 and '82, the Society still went forward. All the former years the work had been retarded by the heavy debt which had been incurred in the furnishing of the hall, and the chief attention of the members had been directed to liquidating this debt. Little by little the debt had been discharged until there were now but a few dollars left to be paid. This was soon settled, and the attention of all was turned to the library.

As the management now was, the duties were divided between the librarian and his corps assistants, commonly known as alcove-keepers. This rendered it necessary to have continual changes in the management, and therefore the work was never properly attended to. The first step towards improvement was the abolishing of this system. The librarian became a salaried officer, and was elected to hold his office for one collegiate year. He was to have entire control of the library and all matters pertaining to it, except such as devolved upon the library committee. This was an important change, and one which proved to be in the right direction. Well and honorably did W.G. Randall perform the duties of his office. Under his strict surveillance all abuses of the library were corrected; persons who had been accustomed to stealing books out of the room, or to spending their afternoons lying about on the furniture, as well as abusing the privileges granted them by the Society, were prohibited from these misdemeanors, and the library became a place where persons could read and study without the fear of boisterous interruption. A natural consequence of this was an increased interest in the regular duties of the hall.

There was a greater degree of unity and good feeling among all the members, and the common aim of all seemed to be the best good for the Society.

Thus, a vessel sailing smoothly on calm waters, our Society moved on unconscious of the dangers ahead. The law of action and reaction is as true elsewhere as in the physical world, and soon we found appearing in the way of our onward march a hideous object, and the wave of reaction set in.

The demon of partisanship, filled with the fierce spirit of society politics, for so long a time slumbering and inactive, rose up from its long sleep with renewed strength and dealt a severe blow to all our interests. Steadily its frightful form increased in size, and with starting eyes those who felt the true love for the Society and knew the terrible consequences of this fatal power watched the threatening storm together. Thus the year closed under rather adverse circumstances, and the members left for home to spend the vacation gathering fresh strength either to overthrow their adversary or give him their assistance in his war against their interests.

Under these circumstances the year of '82 and '83 opened, and the entire period was one of turmoil and confusion. Early in the Fall the conflict began, and regardless of "the love of virtue and science," every action seemed to be directed against our sacred motto. The medals of the Society, together with all Society honors, both public and private, were no longer to be looked forward to with pride as the righteous reward of just merit. He who could find a host of his fellow-members to back him, simply because he was their friend, let him be deserving or not, he was the victor in all contests, and right sorrowfully did those true to their vows look upon the downward tendency of our Society. The high aim of the Society was defeated, and those who were honestly laboring for the good of themselves and of their Society, seeing their work to be in vain and unappreciated, reluctantly withdrew from the fight to wait for the time to come when, its strength being spent, they might strike a death-blow against their terrible enemy. Confusion reigned on all sides, and bitter enmities arose throughout the entire college. Thus the year closed with the clouds still lowering and threatening.

At the beginning of the year of '83 and '84 the storm was still gathering. Ere long it broke in all its fury upon our heads, and we could feel the strong timbers of our Society government tottering threatening to fall upon us. Still the contest was to be no one-sided affair, for each party was determined to die fighting. The first Fall election for Society officers came. The two sections were very evenly matched, and very little was necessary to turn the scales in either direction. One party, fearful of the result, brought in two young men who had not yet registered as students for the year. They came in a few days before the Saturday upon which the election was to take place, registered their names and voted for all the officers. On the following Monday they left college, never having attended a single recitation. Their party was successful, but amid the rejoicings could be heard the fierce growls of disappointment from those who believed that they had been unfairly dealt with, and matters began to take on a more serious aspect. Everything was forgotten in the frenzy of party spirit, and even the meetings of the Society became the scenes of disgraceful conduct. In spite of the laws and the constitution, strong personalities and bitter imprecations were thrown into the debates.



After a little calm settled over all, but soon the struggle was renewed. Taking advantage of the absence of many men belonging to the New West Building Party, the Old West declared the former election fraudulent, and therefore void, and therefore void, and proceeded to elect its own candidates. The tables were now turned; in righteous indignation the New West asserted its rights, and the Society found itself in the possession of two sets of regular officers, each one ready to assert what it considered to be its rights. The affair grew in strength, and all saw that one of two things must happen--either the matter must be settled and the right man take his seat, or the Society would be ruined. As a last resort the matter was referred to the highest committee of the Society for settlement. This committee consisted of two New West and three Old West men, and judging all men by the standard of Society politics, the New West men believed themselves defeated, and looked upon the meeting of the committee as a farce. The chairman of the committee called the vote. Each New west man voted for his own party; one of the Old West men did the same, and the chairman called upon the other member for his vote. Contrary to all expectations, he voted against his party, because, as he said, the votes of those two young men would in no way have affected the election, and therefore the first election was a valid one. This decided the matter; the New West was declared in power, and the Old West quietly, and with good grace, yielded to the decision of their committee, thereby preventing the dissolution of the Society.

"Tis an ill wind that blows nobody good." Never was the truth of this saying more truly demonstrated than in the months that followed this struggle for supremacy between two maddened factions. As soon as cool reason succeeded frenzied and impulsive action, the members saw with horror the abyss into which they had all but plunged, and in commendable efforts strained every nerve to recover the ground lost in two years of unreasonable strife. Rapid strides were taken, and the meetings were enlivened by the spirited debates and entertaining and instructive essays.

Under these favorable circumstances the year closed, and the sun of a new and brighter era was seen to be rising over the scattered clouds of the recent tempest.

The peaceful and orderly manner in which the next term was begun was a surprise to all. Many expected certain animosities of former years, but the good judgement of all pointed out a different course of action, and things that needed remedying, among which were several points in our constitution, and early in the fall of '84 a committee was appointed to take charge of this matter and make all necessary alterations. Long and earnestly did this committee labor, for it fully understood the great responsibility resting upon its work, and when its report was made to the Society it was honored by having its work accepted almost exactly as it had advised. Many laws, before too broad or too limited in their power, were changed for the better, and the Society began once more to direct its affairs by new and untried laws.

Those who had undertaken the task of the revision watched eagerly the progress of matters that they might judge of the success of their labors. They saw an awakening in the line of literary exercises, which was looked upon as almost favorable sign that good would be accomplished by their changes in that direction. Still, however, there was much to be done to improve our work. The old system of giving the medals according to the votes of the members was seen to be often abused. This does not mean to say that none of those who obtained the medals rightly earned

them, but that there was less regard shown for true merit than ought to have characterized any such body in bestowing such honors. Seeing the tendency of things, several members introduced amendments to the constitution to the effect that the Essayist's medal, and eventually the Debater's and Declaimer's also, should be given as impartially as possible, according to the decision of competent judges to be selected by the Society. The wisdom of the measure was apparent to all, and rapidly found favor in the eyes of the Society. The renewed efforts of all were proofs enough that the step would be productive of good.

Late in the spring the Society was astounded by a proposition to the effect that the Dialectic Library be consolidated with that of the Philanthropic Society, and the entire body of books be placed in the building known as the University library. Very little more was said about the proposed change, but there were many in whose eyes the subject found favor, and all knew that it would form one of the chief issues in the work of the coming year.

Nothing further of any importance happened during the remainder of the session, and the class of '86 received the Society into its charge in a far better condition than it had been for years.

Such fellow-members, is a rapid sketch of the history of our Society through one of the most trying periods of its existence, and the fact that it has through all remained a unit is strong and indisputable proof that its teachings are right, its constitution comprehensive and strong, and the influence of its motto is ever alive in the hearts of all who have had it in charge. Nearly a century has passed since our founders placed upon our banner the watchword of "The Love of Virtue and Science." Through all conflicts that banner has never been lowered, and with its never-dying device it still floats proudly over the hearts of all who received their early training under its folds. In this Hall, hallowed by the events of nearly one hundred years, statesmen, orators, divines, soldiers--men have been born; here they built the foundations of that power which they have wielded for the good of the world; and when leaving they handed into our keeping the old flag, with its motto still bright, and those to whom it is yearly given should guard that flag faithfully through life, for it has ever waved proudly over a goal beyond which is the beautiful temple of Fame.

E. P. Mangum  
Asheville, N.C. May 21, 1889

In the spring of 1886 the proposition to unite the three libraries being renewed in a better form was passed, but only after violent opposition. The consolidation was effected in the summer of 1886, and Smith Hall now contains the united libraries of the societies and the university, the combined form being far more convenient and useful than the three formerly were when separate.

In the spring of 1888 the Society was dumbfounded by rumors that Saturday was to be devoted to recitations, thus necessitating the end of Saturday morning meetings. The measure was passed by the Trustees in June, 1888, and the new system went into operation in the following autumn. The Di's had not realized the situation before they were called on to revise their constitution to suit the new order of things. They were appalled at the prospect of ruin to the best interests of the

Society, and determined to struggle against it. After making certain provisional alterations in the constitution so as to hold one meeting a week instead of two, and that on Saturday afternoon, the Society appointed two delegates, Messrs. J. I. Foust and W. F. Shaffner, to appear before the Board of Trustees at their January meeting and plead for a reversal of their action. Despite the opposition of the Philanthropic Society they made a most favorable impression on the Board, and in June, 1889, the matter was compromised so as to allow the two meetings.

Not since the war had the Society passed so dreary and unprofitable a year as that of 1888-'89. The members were disheartened and felt little impulse to give their best energies to society work. But when, by the restoration of the Saturday sittings, the work of the Society received fresh recognition from the authorities, interest revived, the debates and declamations became spirited, and good order characterized the meetings. It is earnestly hoped and believed that the past year is but an earnest of an even more glorious future.

Of the Society library enough has been said already. The old library hall has been devoted to the purposes of a museum and picture gallery. Much that is of interest is already there, and it is earnestly desired that more be added till the place becomes one of the first attractions of the University.

The walls of the Society Hall are to be reserved entirely for oil portraits. Of these there are now twenty-four. Over the president's chair hangs a fine painting of James Mebane, the first president. To the right are Charles Manly, William Hooper, Abram Rencher, George E. Badger, William A. Graham, Willie P. Mangum, Julian S. Carr, Duncan Cameron, John M. Morehead, Thomas Ruffin and Rufus Barringer. To the left of the president's chair are William R. Davie, John Owen, James S. Smith, Alfred M. Scales, James Phillips, David L. Swain, Kemp P. Battle, Paul C. Cameron, James K. Polk, Thomas L. Clingman, and Archibald D. Murphy. A fine portrait of the Hon. Zebulon B. Vance has not yet been hung. Of these some were presented by request, but most of them were painted at the expense of the Society in the days of her opulence.