

STUDENTS NOTE BIRTH OF DICKENS

Interesting Exercises Held at
University Yesterday.

LECTURE BY DR. WAUCHOPE

Life and Character of English Author
Pointed Out in Effective
Manner.

The centenary of the birth of Charles Dickens was observed by the university community yesterday with a lecture on the famous novelist by Dr. George A. Wauchope in Davis college. A short sketch of the varied and brilliant career of Dickens, whose genius carried him from a blacking warehouse to a tomb in Westminster abbey, was given. A reference was made to the cartoon by Brantley Smith in The State yesterday representing the great reading public as Oliver Twist calling for "More of Dickens" for another hundred years.

The effect of Dickens' early struggles and hardships upon his work as a novelist of the lower middle class of English society was brought out. His cruel treatment at the hands of harsh and tyrannical schoolmasters finds an echo in the persecution of innocent and helpless children in the schools in which Squeers, Creakle, Dr. Strong and Dr. Blimber presided. Much credit is due to the novelist for the reforms which were brought about in the badly managed private schools conducted by ignorant, sordid, brutal men who traded in the avarice, indifference or imbecility of parents.

Similarly the wretched shifts and petty trials of poverty experienced by the family at the time of his father's imprisonment for debt in the Marshalsea furnished material for the prison scenes in "David Copperfield," "Little Dorrit" and other novels, and gave Dickens an impulse to strike a blow for prison reform and a more humane treatment of the unfortunate and the criminal.

The value of the training which Dickens received as a special reporter for the London Morning Chronicle and other newspapers in forming his direct, concrete and highly picturesque style, and in cultivating keenness of observation, was brought out. His tendency to exaggeration was due to his marvelous eye which was photographic and his imagination which was akin to hallucination. Dickens saw things as others see them by flashes of lightning. He once strolled into the castle yard at Exeter to identify for the amusement of a friend the spot where he had reported a speech of Lord Russell in the midst of a crowd of roughs engaged in a riotous election fight, and in a pelting rain with two men holding a handkerchief over his notebook. "I have often," he says, "transcribed for the printer from my shorthand notes important public speeches in which the strictest accuracy was required, and a mistake in which would have been to a young man severely compromising, writing in the palm of my hand, by the light of a dark lantern in a postchaise and four, galloping through a wild country at the dead of night at the then surprising rate of fifteen miles an hour."

Dickens' genius first flashed on the world in 1835 in his "Sketches of London Society by Boz." This was succeeded by "The Posthumous Papers of the Pickwick Club" in 1837 in which the original plan of the publishers to issue a book of drawings by Seymour with the letter press by Dickens was completely reversed. Beginning with these works which are characterized by broad farce, burlesque and caricature, Dickens rapidly developed a vein of pure comedy of manners, with a touch of melodrama. From this time until his premature death in 1870 he poured forth with astonishing rapidity and exhaustless energy and boyish vitality and exuberance of spirits that wonderful list of masterpieces, including his great autobiographical novel, "David Copperfield," his one excursion into tragedy and historical fiction, "The Tale of Two Cities," "Martin Chuzzlewit" with its interesting references to America; "Dombey and Son," "Bleak House," his two studies of the upper class of society, "Great Expectations," by many considered the author's most perfect plot; "Little Dorrit" and "Old Curiosity Shop," with their immortal children; "Oliver Twist" and "Nicholas Nickleby," two novels in De Foe's picaresque manner, and "Our Mutual Friend," his last complete work, a remarkable and epoch-making contribution, creating

a whole county or city full of folk,
and creating the impression that life
is a vast, tumultuous play of counter-
motives, full of chance and change, a
thing of sweetness, awe and mystery.