

# THE VARSITY

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## Editorial Comments.



THOSE who were not able to hear the excellent inaugural address of the President of the Literary Society will be interested in the following historical sketch of the Society which appeared in the "Year-book of the University of Toronto, for the year, 1886-7"—

"This ancient and honorable Society, the parent of all others in connection with University College, was established thirty-three years ago. On the 22nd of February, 1854, in a small chamber of the present Parliament buildings, occupied by Dr. Wilson, then Professor of English Literature, now President of University College, were assembled a scant few of the undergraduates of that time. The Society owes its organization entirely to undergraduates, and amongst its founders were Adam Crooks (its first President), W. W. Baldwin, C. E. English, T. Hodgins, E. Crombie and A. McNabb, gentlemen since well known in the professional world. It may be added that the staunchest friend of the Society in its earliest days was Dr. Wilson.

"The Society, for want of a suitable place, was for a time compelled to hold its meetings in the Normal School buildings. Afterwards its members met in Professor Croft's old lecture-room. As a historian of the Society tells us, 'its home at that time, 1854, and a year later when it assembled in the old Medical School (now Moss Hall), was no scene either of substantial comfort or of fairy magnificence, but since the time when the columns of our goodly university building were fashioned in enduring strength and varied symmetry, its dwelling has been in all respects a fair part of that beautiful atom on the broad bosom of mother earth, and which, by its position between the Halls of the Academy on the one hand, and the Residence, the scenes of both cloistered study and joyful merriment, on the other, seems to indicate that the Society is a link between scholastic control and manly sociability, and that here the busy untrained intercourse of men is to be chastened into a just harmony with the quiet dignity and learned seriousness of the lecture-room.' During the session of 1854-5 the Society's Reading room was established, by Thomas Hodgins, M.A., Q.C., at that time Secretary, and afterwards President. This is one of the most important and highly prized institutions in connection with the Literary Society, and has steadily gained in character every year, having now many Canadian, American, English and European periodicals on its files.

"The Society used to grant prizes yearly for public speaking, reading, and essay writing. But in 1884 those for reading and speaking were abolished. The annual elections for officers in the Society take place on the last Friday in March, and are by ballot. At the last election over 600 ballots were cast. The membership of the

Society includes graduates and undergraduates of King's College and the University of Toronto, and students of the School of Practical Science. The number of members of the Society is now about eighteen hundred.

"The regular meetings of the Society during term are held on Friday evening. Public debates are usually held once a month. The annual conversazione of the Society takes place in February of each year, and is an event of great importance in Toronto society. The medal annually given by W. B. McMurrich, M.A., for the best essay on some scientific subject, used to be under the control of the Literary Society. It is now controlled by the Natural Science Association. The Constitution of the Society thus defines its objects, 'The encouragement of literary and scientific pursuits among its members, by discussions and essays on subjects suitable for that purpose.' No controverted point in religion or Canadian party politics is admitted for discussion in the Society. Alterations in the Constitution must be submitted to the College Council, the members of which body are *ex-officio* patrons of the Society.

"The traditions and archives of the Society amply bear out the truth of its motto as applicable to its members: '*Omnium regina rerum oratio.*'"

The recurrence this year of a second supplemental may lead some to anticipate its permanency. This expectation will not be realized. It is but a temporary expedient to nullify the evil effects wrought by sudden and important changes in the curriculum, and the Senate will not yearly grant two supplementals when the expediency of holding even one may be questioned.

Under existing circumstances we think the holding of an examination in January necessary, but we hope that the necessity will not recur at the next quinquennial revision of the course of studies. It certainly will, however, if sufficient notice—two years at least—is not given before putting into effect statutes introducing important changes in the curriculum.

Even if successful in his second "supp," the student is not in a position to make his course as successful as if the standard had not been raised high enough to cause his failure in September. With much of his time in the fall term given to the previous year's work he is likely to surpass his previous record, and failing completely be compelled to take his year over.

It is possible that the examiners cannot determine whether the standard be too high or too low until the examination is over and the results noted; being similarly situated to the shipmaster, who declared in court that a certain lighthouse was so placed that the only possible way for him to find its location was to run his vessel against it.

There are those who advocate the adoption of the Educational Department system—no supplemental, but in lieu