



Life, Literature and Education.

Our Literary Society's First Competition.

Our first competition has come to an end, and truly we have had no easy task in deciding upon the two best essays. The answers sent in were, to a remarkable extent, uniform in quality, and were invariably neatly written and well composed. In reading them over, too, we felt doubly glad that we had set the competition, in the first place, because it demonstrated so fully that the farming public of Canada is a reading public; in the second, because it demonstrated, quite as fully, the capacity of our farmers to think and compare, and assign relative values to things. This, in itself, is no small power, and one that should be developed and stimulated in every possible way. The day is coming when our farmers will occupy a greater number of seats among the lawyers and doctors in our Legislatures than they do now.

To return, however, to the details of the competition: Three competitors were ruled out on account of their having exceeded the regulation 500 words, and one or two others because the events noted were not considered the most important or the reasons given not the strongest. Now, we have learned something good already from our Literary Society, and that is, at the outset, invariably to read carefully the statement of the topic for an essay or debate, and to observe strictly the conditions. Not to do that is carelessness. Hereafter, let every member be careful to the letter, and accurate. The prizewinners then selected were: First Prize, "Auld Scotia"; Second Prize, S. A. O'Hara; Extra Award, G. F. Jenkinson.

The answers to these questions may not, it is true, commend themselves to all. Many competitors, for instance, put the local option movement as the most important event in Ontario. S. A. O'Hara's answer, also, as to the Church Union Movement, being more important than the Legation of the G. T. P. railway, may also be questioned by others. Upon neither of these points do we pronounce decidedly. We have been obliged, in accordance with our forewarning—"Literary merit will in all cases be considered"—to pay some attention to the literary style of the articles, and on this basis, in part, have our awards been given.

We thank our competitors heartily

for the interest they have shown in this, our first competition, and trust to hear again from all in subsequent work for our Literary Society. Our Eastern Provinces have been sadly behind in responding to our competition. However, we do not give up hope, but trust to see representatives from all our Provinces along the seaboard and Quebec figuring in the near future in the L. L. & E.

Competition I.

Subject: What was the most important event in the year 1905, (a) in your own Province; (b) in Canada; (c) in Great Britain; (d) in the United States; (e) in the world?

FIRST-PRIZE ESSAY.

Every year is crowded with notable events. The year 1905 had its full share. In Ontario, the downfall of the Ross Government, which occurred in January, is easily the most prominent. With it closed the longest term of office ever enjoyed by any party Government among British self-governing peoples. For thirty-two years the Liberal party had been in the saddle. Their administration of public affairs had, on the whole, been wise and economical, but the overturn, when it came, was complete. The loosening of the strict party bonds accompanying this event is a hopeful sign for the future of our country.

In the Dominion there have been the inauguration of two new Provinces, the long wrangle over the school question, and the tour of the Tariff Commission, before which the voiceless farmers found their tongue; but more important than these has been the beginning of work on the G. T. Pacific, the new transcontinental, all-Canadian line. While it will cost millions, it marks the beginning of a new era for Canada. It will be the shortest line from Asia to Europe, will give another outlet for the products of the great West, and opening up, as it does a vast hinter-land for Quebec and Ontario and new territory in the West, will for generations operate in the development of our resources and the increase of our population.

The year in Great Britain has been marked by a growth of the desire for harmonious relations with neighboring countries. Good King Edward had his share in promoting this change of sentiment. The confirmation of the friendly understanding and agreement with France was the most conspicuous instance of the working of the new policy. As a result, France, who for years has been fed us and suspicious of Britain, is now changed into one of her warmest allies.

The fight between the State of Missouri and the Standard Oil Company, and the rigid inquiry in New York into the methods of conducting life-insurance business, show that the heart of the people of the United States is sound, and that, while good-natured, they can stand only so much. The most notable manifestation of this excellent feature of character, however, was in the revolt against corrupt bossism at the November elections in Philadelphia and New York. The others show the feeling; this shows actual results.

The most important event that has happened in the world for many a long year took place last fall, when the treaty of peace between Russia and Japan was signed. The Japanese had won victory after victory, surprising the nations with their desperate valor; yet, though the Russians had lost Port Arthur, been defeated at Mukden, and had their fleet destroyed in the Sea of Japan, they sullenly refused to admit defeat. While negotiations went on, the two vast armies stood ready to grapple again to the death, and when terms were unexpectedly agreed upon, the whole world breathed a sigh of relief.

"AULD SCOTIA."

SECOND-PRIZE ESSAY.

Few years in the history of mankind have been so full of epoch-making events as that which has just closed. We are at a disadvantage in being still too near the events to judge quite correctly of their relative importance. But they will stand out as landmarks in the perspective of time.

The most important event of the year 1905 in our own Province was the defeat of the Ross Government, on January 26th, important because it showed the strength of the people. As soon as the Government ceased to do the will of the people it went down in defeat; important, too, because it showed that, to the mass of the people of Ontario principle was more than party.

The Church Union Conference, held in Toronto, in December of the past year, will be a landmark in the religious history of Canada. A joint committee on church union, representing the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches of the Dominion, met, and a tentative basis of union was agreed upon. A union of these three religious bodies would be for the glory of their common Lord and the more rapid extension of His kingdom on earth. Such a union would be far more effectual than the Transcontinental Railway in blending together as a nation the people of Canada.

In the United States, the most important event of the past year was the Peace Conference at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where Russia and Japan agreed to terms of peace, on August 29th. By giving up what she could easily have obtained by force of arms, by sacrifices of great magnitude, in order to obtain peace, Japan has won an enviable position in the front rank of the nations of the world.

In Great Britain the year has been notable, in that its close finds the Liberals in power, the Balfour Government having resigned in deference to the hostile trend of public opinion. The new Premier pledges himself to continue the foreign policy, which was the brightest spot in the record of the late Government. A strong Liberal Government would mean the inauguration of several measures which, we are told, the country very much needs, especially land reform in the direction of single tax.

The most important event in the history of the world in 1905 was the triumph of Japan in the war with Russia, important to Japan because it placed that nation among the

world powers; important, also, in its relations to a large part of the human race. It has changed all Western calculations as to the fate and future of Asia. The broadening of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, which is regarded as a pledge of world peace, the downfall of the Russian autocracy, the dawn of political freedom for the people of Russia, are some of the results of Japan's victory, and surely sufficient reasons why, in a year of "tremendous happenings," the victory of Japan should be the most important.

S. A. O'HARA.

EXTRA-AWARD ESSAY.

What I consider the most important event happening in the year 1905.

(a) In the Province of Ontario, the investigation of the plumbers' combine, commenced in 1905, is perhaps the most important event in Ontario that year, taking into consideration the tendency of the age to combine and intrigue to defraud, and the consequent embarrassment in trade and business. The thorough exposure and censure, also punishment, of the guilty parties may do more to cause a healthy tone in business, and also serve more as a moral lesson for the people of the Province than any convention or political event.

(b) In Canada: The work of construction of the great Grand Trunk Pacific R. R., begun in 1905, may do more for the young country of Canada than anything else happening in the past year. The opening up of the great North and West, its vast mineral and agricultural worth, the hampering of trade by the lack of shipping facilities, and the need of competition with the Canada Pacific R. R., have made the G. T. P. R. an absolute necessity, and will doubtless cause Canada's population and wealth to increase as nothing else would.

(c) In Great Britain: The year 1905 has seen one of the greatest religious revivals in her history, and what does more to uplift a nation than Christianity? It makes its citizens moral, temperate, law-abiding, loyal, industrious, peace-loving, and helpful to each other. What event could do more for a nation than that which has caused thousands of its citizens to live lives such as we have described, many of them formerly immoral, drunken and criminal?

(d) In the United States: The peace conference held by Russia and Japan, through the instrumentality of President Roosevelt. The value of the example given by their President to the people of the United States, will be far-reaching and never-ending. There will be handed down in history a work to be proud of. By his tact, diplomacy and perseverance, President Roosevelt was a cause of bringing about the ending of one of the bloodiest and most disastrous wars of the times.

(e) In the World: The ending of the Russian-Japanese war is, without doubt, the greatest event of the year. The war itself may result in much good to the world, namely: First, the example of what skill, bravery, industry, perseverance and sobriety did for Japan in fighting a