

THE YEAR BOOK.

Some time ago, after a careful perusal of the Year Book, I jotted down some of the impressions received, intending to use them in the criticism which was sure to be called forth. This decision was not arrived at through any spirit of personal hostility to any or all of the members of the Board, who have presented us with such an artistic souvenir. On the contrary it is based on the right to criticise which the publication of any work bestows, whatever its nature may be. In further justification of my course, I must say that I am one of the many who were greatly disappointed with the work of the committee who undertook in the name of the class to write its history. Perhaps, too, this feeling is all the more acute because of the brilliant literary reputations with which the individual editors entered upon their labor of love. They, one and all (for the male portion of which I speak exclusively), were known to journalistic fame both in college and in the wider world without, and brought to their work a wealth of knowledge and experience possessed by no other students of the year. Rightly then did we look for a production of which we could all feel proud, and show with pride to those who might wish to see the record of our college life. We even dreamed expectantly of the gems of literature which the judges thereof and the prize of \$5.00 should preserve in lasting form for us of less fitting discernment. But what a rude awakening. In a book replete with many admirable features, which cannot be too highly praised, we found obtruded a spirit of personal ill-will in certain of a succession of biographies ranging from a page to half a dozen of lines, from a spirit of glorification to cowardly, anonymous attack. To this was added a purely literary department, thoughtfully labelled such, as if to strengthen by implication the fact that much of what preceded was far from literary.

Glancing over this department I was rather surprised to find only one production (an excellent one) from a member of the class, who, by the way, was also a member of the Editorial Board; all the other contributions, with one exception, being from the pens of graduates. Surely here was food for reflection. How could this arise in the book of all books especially devoted to the year? Was it because of utter lack of literary ability on the part of our classmates? Hardly so, because some of them have written for the press, and written most acceptably. Was it then that their productions failed to satisfy the ultra literary taste of the editors and failed to reach the lofty pinnacle upon which the \$5.00 was placed, or was it that they failed to respond to the urgent and enticing invitation extended to them, from a feeling that the Year Book was no affair of their own, but merely the venture of a committee by no means representative of the class. Whether one or both of these reasons prevented a more spontaneous contribution from the great body of the students we do not care to say. It is only too obvious that those who undertook the work failed to meet with general approval.

I would gladly pass over the biographies (?) were it not that such might be construed as tacit approval. All are by no means bad; some are clever, but unfortunately others are not. In the case of these never was more unmitigated trash foisted upon members of a graduating class, in the fond hope that they would turn the other cheek and cheerfully yield up the price demanded in return for the petty personalities aimed at them: of these just one example. It must indeed require colossal nerve to inform one member of our class that "he has made very few acquaintances during his four years at college," because perchance he evinced a desire to select his own company. This is the spirit which unfortunately pervades too many of the biographical sketches. Of some of the other dis-

tinctive features of the book, the antiquated jokes, the impenetrable wit, the extreme mathematical finesse displayed in the relative rating of legs, swaggers and pompadors, what need to speak. They all betoken a marvellous misapplication of a high order of genius.

Had the editors confined themselves to this innocent nonsense, no one could complain of wounded sensibilities, but such is not the case. There are many at whom back-thrusts have been aimed, but in none does the spirit of revenge appear more clearly than in the covert attack upon Mr. Macfarlane. Who the author of that effusion is I don't know and should be indeed sorry to know; whoever he may be, he has proved beyond a doubt the success of the object ascribed to Mr. Macfarlane. Never was bray clearer or more unmistakable than that on page 221 Torontonensis.

Time and space precluded calling attention to the many other features of this book, so attractive and yet so repellant. A splendid opportunity to produce a work worthy of the class and worthy of the University has been lost by the unpopular policy of those who undertook it. Instead of a book in which we might look with pleasure for facts about each student, and for student literature, we have a delightful souvenir marred by sickly inanities and bitter personalities. We have a production which any student of taste would hesitate to bring forward as the work of his graduating class, and say that it represents the elevation of thought to which that class had attained. People would be aghast to find school-boy thought and less than school-boy language in the last college work of the class of '98.

It has been urged by some, by way of apology, that the Year Book being a first attempt should not be criticized too harshly, but met in a spirit of kindly indulgence. If this means that all first efforts are essentially juvenile, we bow to the inevitable; but at the same time we fail to see any logical reason whereby this includes license to indulge in what must surely leave a legacy of unpleasant memories. It is a matter of genuine regret that there should be such lack of consideration, especially in view of the permanent nature of the book. However, what's done is done. All that is left for those who disapprove of a work which, to quote Mr. Inkster's prophetic words, "is not at all of an inviting nature," is to place themselves on record.

But should the Business Manager relent and publish Vol. II, so dimly foreshadowed on page 56 and so eagerly looked for, we fervently hope that his literary aides will strive to attain a somewhat higher ideal, though their heroic altruism should again force them to "accept their positions after many refusals and with much reluctance."

J. T. A. SMITHSON.

It is reported that while prospecting this fall in the Rainy River District, Mr. Lawson made some very valuable finds of gold and will probably again renew his prospecting as soon as spring opens.

Why do ye delay?

A paper cannot be run without cash.

If you have not paid your subscription to VARSITY, remit at once to the Business Manager.