

THE 'VARSITY:

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A PRETENTIOUS PAPER.

We have been induced to publish, in another column, a communication from 'A Graduate' by reason of the opportunity it affords to define our position more clearly. Such a definition is necessarily uncertain when made prospectively, and is under a tacit claim to be emended as soon as a retrospect is possible. With this purpose in mind we shall offer a few comments on the 'Graduate's,' epistle.

In the first sentence the incorrect assumption that the 'Varsity is a College paper considerably diminishes the relevancy of the succeeding remarks. A distinction, with an appreciable difference, between *College* and *University* journalism has been already maintained in these pages, and the declaration to adhere to the highest standard required by the latter, has met with the approval of men in all the different grades of University standing. In a paper so characterized, "the admixture of fun and sound common sense" is undoubtedly desirable; but also, inasmuch as, from the middle ages downwards, Universities have, to so large an extent, been the bearers and representatives of higher rational culture, a University organ should reflect more or less this mission and trust. Men do not come to Universities to acquire what is ordinarily understood by the term common sense; they are supposed to possess it already and to make use of it in striving after this higher culture. A "modest sheet of College gossip," however suitable in other institutions, would not correspond to the most arid conception of a University paper; and hence a "metamorphosis" was deemed necessary. The title "A Weekly Review of Education," was given whilst bearing in mind what has so often been insisted on by BUCKLE and others—that education is not books. The part examination papers play in University training is, from more than one point of view, comparatively insignificant. The social, religious and intellectual surroundings constitute the vital essence of University education far more than the bare exactions of the curriculum. Yet, to the 'Graduate,' a Review of Education, even when published in a University, only suggests the reproduction of examination papers. The baldness of the statement marks ignorance of the close relation existing between a systematic, sustained kind of study, and the gradual elevation of tone and feeling among those who live together for high and pure ends. The founders of the 'Varsity' have been guided in their course in a great measure by those who *have* so lived, who still retain a nominal connexion with their *Alma Mater*, and do her honor.

The 'Graduate' proceeds by informing us, very unnecessarily, of the competence of the "authorities," and of the cordial intercourse which should subsist between instructors and instructed. Language of this hortatory style is rightly expected from persons who are revered for the large experience they have acquired; but, from a young man, newly-pledged in academical rank, it savors of the pretentiousness which he patriotically endeavors to pin to the 'Varsity. To complete the metaphor, he only manages to prick himself badly. For instance, to carry out the injunction that the columns of a 'College' paper should always be open to, "essays and articles arising out of College studies," would render such a paper dull, past man's wit to tell of. Dissertations on the Absolute or the Past Participle would not, we venture to think, possess the attraction, which attaches to University Freedom and other subjects of more general interest, and, in all likelihood, would turn sour even the 'Graduate's' admixture of fun and common sense. The whole of his apparently- maiden criticism suffers starvation on the score of the latter quality, and it is refreshing to meet with one indisputably-correct statement. Few, who are in the slightest degree familiar with the Universities of the country, will dissent from the view expressed in regard to the absence of *esprit de corps* among Canadian Undergraduates. A coarse indifference to the sunny aspects of academic life seems to thrive amid an almost Calvinistic antipathy towards any ameliorating influence tending to infuse unity of feeling and the sense of a common purpose. But we are convinced our attitude hitherto does not warrant the least suspicion that we are unconscious of this void, and that it was high time for the Graduate to enlighten us as to the great object of a paper like the 'Varsity. Impatience is condonable when a would-be mentor manifests *his* sentiment of public spirit by flippant animadversions

against the tone of an enterprise yet in its inception. The right tone will be imparted in proportion as the undertaking becomes part and parcel of the community. The process involves time and perseverance through a series of trials, of which the smallest is the premature and anonymous carping of a few individuals.

To our own protest, it is incumbent on us to add one on behalf of the "numerous" class of University men, which is asserted to teem with conceit, parsimony and pedantry. The 'Varsity, in the opinion of the assessor, may be pretentious in maintaining these charges to be untrue and unprovoked, but in this case, at any rate, the pretentiousness will be shared with the whole body of Undergraduates.

We again feel compelled to call attention to the prefectorial attitude of the "Notre Dame Scholastic." The following is taken from the issue of October 23:—"Remember the sound advice given you on Sunday last by Rev. Father Walsh, and you'll (sic) blush to even think of doing what is prohibited by the disciplinary regulations of the University." The circumstances under which University and College papers are established, prohibit (if, of course, established by Students) the editors from sermonizing on infractions of discipline. A principle is here at stake, the glaring violation of which demands to be instantly and unreservedly condemned, and we earnestly request the University and College press in Canada and the United States to join with us in so doing.

TWENTY-FIVE dollars measures, for the nonce, the profligate expenditure of a number of gentlemen, who are collectively and grandiloquently styled the Finance Committee of the Debating Society. This sum is to be applied to refurbishing up the President's private room, and represents about one-third of the amount in reality needed for the purpose. It should be pressed upon the Society, or rather upon its financiers, that the President's duties are manifold, at times arduous, and to give him quarters, from which an Irish landlord would not take the trouble to evict a Land Leaguer, looks like an advertisement of niggardliness.

CONVOCATION MEMBERSHIP.

The University Act (Revised Statutes of Ontario, chap. 210, sec. 12), provides that the Convocation of the University shall consist of (1), All graduates in Law; (2), All graduates in Medicine; (3), All Masters of Arts; (4), All Masters in Surgery; (5), All Doctors of Science; and (6), All Bachelors of Arts and of Science of three years' standing. The same statute (sec. 64, sub-sec. 7), confers on Convocation "the power of requiring a fee to be paid by members as a condition of being placed on the register of members."

At the meeting of Convocation in June, a Committee was appointed to form a set of Rules and Regulations. The Report of that Committee came up for consideration at the adjourned meeting on Friday evening last, and a long and somewhat acrimonious discussion took place on the section recommending the imposition of a membership fee of one dollar a year, under the authority of the above sub-section of the University Act. In spite of the earnest protest of a very large minority of the meeting, and of their pleading for a postponement of so important a question, the report was declared adopted, and, unless something is done at the adjourned meeting on the 26th of November, to render the provision for the payment of fees inoperative, the membership of Convocation will for the next year be confined to those who pay the required fee. It is only fair to add that, at the meeting on Friday night, there were comparatively few graduates not resident in Toronto, and that, of those who were there, one or two stated that they had not received any intimation that the question of membership fees would come up for consideration.

As the matter must come up at the next meeting of Convocation, it is important that the issues involved should be clearly understood before a final decision is arrived at, and I therefore take the liberty of stating my view of it in the 'Varsity, leaving others to do the same, if they please. I am entirely opposed to the imposition of any fee whatsoever, at the present time, and for the following reasons: