

# THE ' VARSITY:

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## THE ABOLITION OF SCHOLARSHIPS.

The question of the abolition of scholarships and prizes was discussed at the first meeting this year of the Debating Society. The subject possesses uncommon interest at present, as the abolitionists are admitted on all hands to be gaining rapidly in number and influence. Evidence of this fact was liberally supplied at the assemblage in Moss Hall, to which we have referred. The unusually-large attendance and the thoroughgoing way in which the opposing sides sifted the respective contentions, drew forth unqualified words of satisfaction from the President. The ordinary recapitulation of the arguments was omitted as superfluous, on account, as he stated, of the clearness with which they had been exhibited during the course of the debate. Mr. HOUSTON, who is not liable to praise unduly, declared that, so far as he could recollect, a better conducted debate had not taken place in the society. By those who have had experience of the last two years' meetings, these high compliments will be appreciated with the zest which only previous suffering can impart.

The decision given in favor of the proposed innovation was followed by what seemed to be unanimous applause. Few of those who attended the meeting will hesitate to infer that, so far as the Society is an exponent of undergraduate opinion, the conservative party in the matter of scholarships is a small minority. The plea that minorities sometimes more than make up for want of numerical, by an abundance of intellectual strength, is rendered groundless in this case by the most remarkable feature of the debate; we allude to the avowed abolitionist views of three scholarship men, whilst only one such man gave dignity to the weaker side. Mr. SQUAIR even went the length of condemning scholarships altogether, on the ground that they were productive of much anti-social feeling. A more convincing test of how largely the reform aspect of the question is the prevalent aspect could not reasonably be desired. When individuals testify against an institution, the benefits of which they enjoy, or have enjoyed, the verdict as a rule goes in the direction of this most disinterested kind of testimony.

There are reasons for hoping that the graduate and undergraduate majorities are in substantial accord on this topic. It will, in all probability, come up for discussion at the next meeting of Convocation; and it may be expected that attention will be directed to the stand taken by the present winners of scholarships. The advocates of reform, however, will doubtless recognize the goodness of their cause to be dependent on practical considerations. The endowment fund is not vast enough to spare the reservation of \$5,000, because it is deplorably insufficient for more pressing requirements. Before indulging in the luxury of gorgeous prizes, the proper equipment of the Provincial University should be secured. The library, according to the statement of Mr. VANDERSMISSEN, as cited by Mr. HOUSTON, is at least "ten years behind the times;" no additions to speak of have been made to the museum for the last ten years; the present attend-

ance on lectures at University College is far in excess of the accommodation; there is no Chair of Civil Polity and Political Economy, a chair which would be of greater general service than those of Classics and Metaphysics; the salary of a professor here is much too low to attract teachers of eminence; and there has not been the ghost of an attempt to establish a system of tutorial aid. These are the furnishings of a university which are necessary to substantiate its claim to the front rank, and scholarships from this point of view are not necessary. The President expressed the hope that the day would soon arrive when the endowment would be so rich as to provide for the needs of the University and for scholarships as well. We also earnestly hope to see the day. In the meantime it is inexpedient to play the spendthrift by sinking outlays in what is not primarily needful.

## PAINE AND VOLTAIRE.

"We read that when panegyrics on PAETUS THRASEA and PRISCUS HELVIDIUS were written by ARULENUS RUSTICUS and HERENNIUS SENECIO, these authors suffered the extreme penalty of the law, and the fury of the despot broke out not only against them but even against their works, and these monuments of the loftiest genius were publicly burnt in the forum. It was even thought that in that fire were consumed the voice of the Roman people, the freedom of the Senate, and the moral sense of mankind, and that, with the banishment of philosophy and the arts, nothing liberal would remain. Former ages had seen almost unlicensed liberty; we, deprived by inquisitorial interference, of freedom in exchange of words and thoughts, saw the depths of slavery. With freedom of speech memory itself would also have perished had it been in our power to forget as well as to be silent."

Thus, with a few graphic strokes TACITUS gives us a dark picture of the influence on literature and the arts of the despotism of a Roman Emperor, showing his appreciation of the paramount importance of liberty of discussion by deploring its death under the odious DOMITIAN, and hailing with unfeigned satisfaction its resurrection with the dawn of the brighter era of NERVA. That the spirit and true gist of this sacred and inviolable principle (so thoroughly grasped by the Roman historian) should at this late day again demand vindication, seemed almost improbable. Re-argument, however, is apparently necessary. The seizure of the works of PAINE and VOLTAIRE at the Toronto Custom House has evoked the old issue, unfortunately, however, in a shape that obscures the underlying principle. As a consequence the discussion in the pulpit and public press has been obscured by the introduction of much that is wholly irrelevant; but beneath the conflicting and uncertain currents of political animosities, there may be discerned the deeper and steadier current of public censure, aroused by the assumption of the superiority over the people of the Government and its unauthorized and offensive interference with the practical life of the masses, that give the act the distasteful air of a Star Chamber decree. Apart from this, the ludicrous and unnatural union in one individual of the functions of Collector of Customs and Censor of Letters, increases the general feeling that an authority, inquisitorial at the best, has been unwisely exercised.

The arguments in favor of the utmost possible liberty of discussion, consonant with the maintenance of law and order, are so conclusive that to reiterate them seems almost a waste of space; the great and acknowledged difficulty lies in the application of the general principles. Contested cases should, it is clear, as far as possible be dealt with before the acknowledged tribunals of law. It may be, and it probably is, in accordance with the public weal, that the Government should be empowered to seize certain publications of a trashy and offensive character; that authority, however, should be exercised as rarely and as cautiously