

THE VARSITY.

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TORONTO, DECEMBER 9th, 1903

WE learned with the deepest regret of the serious loss by fire sustained by the University of Ottawa on Wednesday last. The fine main building, including a very valuable library, was destroyed, entailing a loss of \$500,000, on which there was only \$150,000 insurance. The friends of the University Toronto know how to sympathize with our sister institution, having sustained a serious loss by fire themselves some years ago. The undergraduates of "Toronto" heartily co-operate with President Loudon in his message of sympathy to "Ottawa" in her loss. The *University of Ottawa Review* is one of our brightest exchanges, and we feel even more closely allied with "Ottawa" since her entry into the Inter-University Debating League. We hope that friends may come willingly to the rescue and restore the loss sustained.

IN the December number of the *Canadian Magazine* "Norman Patterson" contributes an article on Toronto, entitled, "A Typical Canadian City." Among other features noted is the University of Toronto. True, the writer does not display a too intimate knowledge of the constitution of the University, especially since 1853, but as this is merely a matter of information and of judgment, we pass it by. We wish, however, to take exception to the sentence, "The University has since become a first-class institution, but at present is suffering from a plethora of mediocre professors," in which the writer evidently aims at giving in a word a true estimation of the University. Whether there is any truth in the statement is not the question at issue. We do claim that it is unfair. To give a concrete example we might say that the *Canadian Magazine* is supported from a sense of duty and of loyalty to

Canadian institutions, rather than because of its intrinsic value as a magazine. This is undoubtedly true, but its fairness may be questioned, inasmuch as it does not take into consideration conditions which make a really good Canadian magazine very difficult of production, nor does it credit the editor with what we are willing to admit are honest attempts to provide such a magazine. Then even the editor of the *Canadian Magazine* would hardly claim that all the articles appearing in its columns possess high individual merit. So the general criticism of the University referred to does not take into consideration the splendid work which the University—always more or less hampered by its peculiar position as a State University receiving only a portion of the necessary support from the Government, and yet because of its peculiar relation to the Government being deprived of private benefactions which might otherwise come to it—has done. It does not take into account the difficult and delicate work accomplished in endeavoring to assimilate the various faculties which from time to time have been incorporated with the University, and it must be admitted that such an undertaking necessarily requires much of the time and energy which might otherwise be expended upon the perfecting of details and in the ordinary work of instruction. Again, it overlooks that fact that many of the brightest men in the American universities are our alumni, and that our graduates occupy the very best positions in Canada today. Nor it credit given to the very many excellent members of the faculty, even if, as is quite inevitable, there may be some among the one hundred and fifty or more upon our staff who are not pre-eminently qualified for their work. We do not claim to have reached perfection, nor do we contend that there are no weaknesses in our institution. Yet we do claim that we have made much progress, that we are doing much excellent work, and that in regard to equipment, the efficiency of our faculty and the standing of our graduates, we compare very favorably with any university on the continent. In view of this, we consider that our position has been grossly misrepresented. The criticism quoted is at once subtle, unfair and lacking in that frankness which we might naturally expect from those pretending to be our friends. The editor of the *Canadian Magazine* cannot consistently criticize us as to our ability to produce scholarship men, since he does not believe in them, having stated at one of our meetings that after a careful perusal of the results at McGill, Queen's and Toronto, he had come to the conclusion that nine-tenths of the scholarship men are failures in after life.

And yet he is not a wise man who does not learn from his critics. It has been well said that only two classes of people really give expression to their true appreciation of us—the close friend and the enemy. The same may be said of an institution. However loyal we may be, we cannot afford to overlook criticism, however subtle and however incompetent its source. We should