

## THE VARSITY.

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"Sigma" reminds us that the scholarship system intensifies all the evils of competitive examinations. As our correspondent has used this argument in his presentation of the case against material rewards for merit, it will not be unfair in us to pursue the train of thought suggested to its logical conclusion. The whole letter seems to be a bit of special pleading for the unsuccessful candidate. Here follow in their connection some of the points raised. The system encourages wrong methods of work. The same objection applies with equal force to all examinations. For the student who "is laid under the base compulsion" of examinations must have "an unworthy ideal placed before him." What intellectual immorality is occasioned by "studying the whims of an examiner," by "encouraging not truth, but skill in passing examinations!" Forsooth! students, real students who are alone worthy of the name, need not be compelled to sacrifice their ideal culture to the hated compulsion of obtaining a minimum of marks to entitle them to academic standing. Then our idealist friend must open the trenches against all examinations. Let the Senate grant degrees to all who on their own showing have spent the required four years in cultivating their intellects in the orthodox ideal way. Further, we think that the same class of arguments can be used to impugn any system of University distinctions. The possession of a degree "gives undue prominence" to some members of the community "at the expense of all the rest." "Often this prominence is not earned." Many men of fine ability and wide culture never become students of our University. "In any case there is not that difference in merit between" the possessors of University degrees and their fellows "at all commensurate with the reputation that is attached" to the designations of B.A., M.A. and LL.B. This is so manifest an injustice that as soon as the attention of all sensible men is called to it, it must be remedied. "Down with the University!" will be the next cry of the levellers. It exists purely for the wealthy; poor men's sons are practically debarred. It is an old abuse, no doubt, and old abuses die hard; but, courage, let the people arise in their might and force the Province of Ontario to cease inflicting this evil upon them.

Superiority and inferiority are relative terms. They may or may not be accurately determined. But they are hard facts of our everyday experience, to which convention and—prejudice, it may be—attach a very great deal of importance. Absolute equality is a most difficult thing to measure with any degree of accuracy or fairness. To arrive even at an approximate estimate of relative superiority or inferiority some test is necessary. It may be more or less arbitrary; it must of necessity be conventional. Relative intellectual superiority or inferiority can only be measured by methods confessedly faulty, and perhaps in many cases inaccurate. But if any order of merit or demerit is to be established, it stands to reason that some will either attain to or fall below the given standard. This standard is—as all standards are—determined by the fallible judgment of mankind. But this is the only court of appeal left to us. Rank then, whether in the abstract or as indicated by the gaining of a definite prize or reward, is an entirely necessary and unavoidable coincidence. This brings us to the question whether the winners of scholarships are, as a rule, the ones really in need of pecuniary assistance. In the case of our University students, we can almost unequivocally state that they are. And in asserting this we are not saying anything offensive or derogatory to the

student body. That a man is poor may be his misfortune, but it certainly is no disgrace, and is nothing of which he need be ashamed. There are very few students of whom it could be said that the money won by them in scholarships is of no use. In nine cases out of ten it is of real and positive benefit. It might as reasonably be objected that men should teach for nothing. Men should not be "hired" to teach; they should do it for its own sake. The Sophists were arraigned by Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, for using their knowledge as a means of making money; such conduct, it was asserted, betokened a lack of philosophic earnestness; and evidenced a desire not to seek Truth absolute, but Truth relative to national prejudice and convention. But we cannot, and we take it our correspondent will not consent to accept such a doctrine, which is, after all, but a logical conclusion drawn from his arguments against scholarships, in so far, at least, as they encourage superficiality and intellectual immorality.

"Sigma" refers to the fact that "the students of University College have time and again protested against being "laid under the base compulsion of scholarships." As far as we are aware there was only one protest entered against scholarships by the students of University College. This was some five years ago. Those who have had any experience in the getting up of petitions know that it is the easiest thing in the world to obtain signatures thereto, especially if the petition is directed against any action of the dons. We have only to refer to the petition presented to the College Council *re* the library deposit to show what value can be set upon the average student "petition." And, furthermore, the action of the students of five years ago does not bind the students of to-day in any degree. Precedent is all very well in its way, but it is not an infallible or entirely safe guide. And students, above all other people in the world, should not lay too much stress on precedent. They are supposed to be in the receptive, not the dogmatic, stage of their existence. If they see fit to change their opinions they should be allowed, and even encouraged to do so, without being charged with inconsistency and without having precedents hurled at them. Sticking to one's opinions is a very laudable thing, no doubt, but a dogmatic and final settlement of questions by young men who are still students is mere egotistical self-assertion. Even consistency can be carried to an extreme. Students can only hope and strive to arrive at conclusions which shall serve for present guidance and evidence mental activity and development. They should not presume to settle questions in such a manner as will be final for future generations of students. Among the principal benefits, we conceive, to be derived from a university training is the cultivation of a proper mental attitude with regard to important subjects. While it is certainly desirable to arrive at conclusions, everything should not be sacrificed to this striving. To attempt to settle for oneself a tithe of the questions which one encounters in his daily experience is task enough for a lifetime. To settle all is absolutely impossible. All one can even attempt to do in his student career is to gather data from which, with the greater experience and mental development of later years, one can hope to arrive at conclusions which will satisfy and justify previous opinion. To gather together and arrange data for future thought and consideration is about as much as students should strive to do. And this will prove no easy task.

Our correspondent states that those who are really in need of such pecuniary assistance as scholarships afford, cannot compete with those who do not require such assistance. And for this reason: That the sons of rich parents have, by the superior educational advantages placed within their reach by reason of their wealth, been able to acquire superior training and more accurate knowledge. But so far from this being the case, the very reverse is what usually happens. Sons of rich parents, knowing that they will be provided for, generally take their education as a matter of course, as a genteel and proper way *pour passer le temps*. But those who are always aware of the fact that upon their own exertions their future largely depends, are the ones who, as a rule, make better use of their time and opportunities. These do as much, if not more, real solid work than their more wealthy companions.