

Acadia Athenæum.

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THE last number of the *Dalhousie Gazette* devotes no less than five columns of its space to the subject of a Provincial University. Our contemporary prefaces its editorial by affirming that "All thinking men, even some of the supporters of of sectarianism confess that a change is desirable." Does the *Gazette* mean by the phrase, "all thinking men," merely the faculty and students of Dalhousie College together with a few satellites that seem to revolve around that illustrious body? But it mentions another class. "even some of the supporters of sectarianism." Does the *Gazette* mean to say that such persons are not thinking men? If they are not we scarcely know where to find men of thought now-a-days, for we know of few persons who are not supporters of sectarianism, either religious or political, in some way or other.

But suppose we take the term, "all thinking men," to mean all intelligent persons throughout the province who are interested in the matter of higher education, and what will be their verdict in regard to the change proposed by the *Gazette*? Will it be favorable? We think not. We are not giving to say that *all* will be opposed to such a scheme yet, so far as our information goes, we believe that the great majority of our

people desire no such radical change. The only alteration they wish to see brought about is that for which they are all striving—the improvement of the present existing colleges.

We are not disposed to look upon the Denominational Colleges as being such lamentably inefficient institutions as the *Gazette* would have us believe they are. Dalhousie College is, in our opinion and in the opinion of a number of our daily political contemporaries, as much denominational as any of them, may answer to the somewhat sombre picture drawn in the columns of its own organ. Yet from our limited knowledge of that institution, gathered from its calendar, its periodical and from acquaintance with some of its students, we have always looked upon Dalhousie as a college by no means to be despised, notwithstanding its matriculation standard is so ridiculously low and its session of study extends over only six months. We can say, however, that no part of this description is in any way applicable to our Alma Mater. We cannot speak so decidedly concerning the other colleges, but we believe that the statements of the *Gazette* respecting the collegiate system, now existing in Nova Scotia, are without foundation in fact.

The question of a Provincial University is one about which we have given ourselves little trouble. Whether the combining together of all the existing colleges in the formation of such an institution would benefit the cause of higher education or not, is a debatable question. The *Gazette* has made some good points in favor of such a step; and if it was worth while, equally strong arguments might be urged against it. But why waste time in discussing this matter when, whether desirable or undesirable, there is at present no hope of ever bringing about such a change? The present collegiate system has been too long growing up, developing and maturing to be set aside in a day, or even in a generation. The many difficulties and adverse circumstances with which its supporters have even had to contend, and over which they have triumphed only by long-continued, patient struggling, have tended to endear to each separate denomination, that college which it has thus been called upon to support, and, in this manner,

the system has been firmly established and riveted upon the country.

What then, is to be done? There is manifestly but one course open to those who really desire to see the cause of higher education advanced in our province; and that is this: Keep the several colleges we now have ever abreast of, rather in advance of the times. Let each interested party support that one in which he feels his contributions will be used to the best advantage. Nor should he be at all discouraged with the prospect before him. So far as our observation goes, each college seems to be determined to keep pace with the requirements of the country. There is a healthy rivalry existing among them, which if nothing else would compel them ever to move forward. No college can any longer expect to attract students to its halls unless it is prepared to give them an education and a culture, that will at least compare favorably with that received at other provincial colleges. Denominational considerations are losing their power to draw students to any particular college, and we think rightly so. Henceforth those institutions must stand or fall on their own merits.

This they are preparing to do. Acadia has during the last few years increased its staff of professors in the arts department from five to seven, and the governors are untiring in their efforts to increase it still farther. Mount Allison College has of late years been putting forth vigorous efforts to increase its endowment, and thus be able to add to its faculty. Dalhousie is rapidly improving. Kings College, that, we may say, time-honored institution, is not going to be left behind in the race towards the goal of popularity, but under its now president a fresh impetus has been given to all its departments and its catalogue of under-graduates is greatly increased.

We are not prepared to speak of the real amount of work done by those colleges, with the exception of the first named, since in order to give an opinion that shall be worth anything on this point, one must occupy the position either of teacher or student in the school about which he speaks. But since each claims to impart a liberal education, we have no right to say that any, or all of them are