

THE VARSITY

A Weekly Journal of Literature, University Thought and Events.

VOL. XVIII.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, DECEMBER 14, 1898.

No. 9

THEN AND NOW.

I.

It was the dinner that did it—not the cucumber, as the modern rendering* of, "*abiit, excessit, erupit, evasit*," hath it. It was the dinner, I say;—a dinner which was to have been such a success, so cheap, so informal, so temperate, and withal such a sure means of bringing close together the various elements that went to make up University College in the year 1886—87. Instead of that, it was a——!

Convocation Hall was the scene of action, for it was the centre of our College life, most of the great events of our little world unfolding themselves there. The price of tickets was a dollar and a quarter, so that everybody might come, for high prices in former years had kept many men from joining in this festivity, as well as in others. Gowns were full dress, as some of us, with republican simplicity, had insisted from our Freshmanhood they should be for all College functions. Dances were not allowed in those days, so republicanism could have its way without the gown making us either ludicrous or uncomfortable. How can a man dance in a gown without the aid of pins?

There was to be no drink but tea, coffee, milk, water, and lemonade. McLaughlin did not flourish in those days; and the Temperance League had done its work. But oh! the lemonade! ! ! Shall I ever forget it, and its milky whiteness? It certainly had a *soupcou* of lemon rind about it, and that was all. There *must* have been other beverages of a stronger sort introduced by some persons unknown, for in no other way can one account for the broken crockery the committee had to pay for, which, like the beautifully solid jellies, did duty admirably for balls in the games of pitch and toss which were played down near the gallery.

The year before we had been at *the Queen's*, and had had a dinner that left nothing to be desired, on our part at least, except cheaper rates or a larger attendance. But the proprietors of that excellent hostel, though not saying in so many words, "We do not want you," had blandly asked us four dollars a plate. Perhaps they had reason to know that we had faced a deficit a twelvemonth before, and that we, in trying to make it up, had asked subscriptions from our invited guests—among them from our Professor of Classics, who had made one of his exquisitely clever after-dinner speeches!

A certain other caterer, whose name shall not appear here, was not anxious to have us either; and yet, if the dinner were at the College, he did want to furnish it. But, alas! quite unmindful of the fable of the

* *Abiit*, he went out to dinner; *excessit*, he drank too much wine; *erupit*, he hurriedly withdrew for good reason; *evasit*, he said it was the cucumber.

Wolf and the Lamb drinking together at the brook, he talked in a fashion most disquieting to us about a longstanding balance due him, of which balance we had never heard before. Moreover, to protect himself against all possibility of loss, he actually demanded that the signature of a Professor, or of some other person of substance, who could be sued, should appear upon the contract, which in the end another man got, it is almost needless to say.

Freeborn, independent Englishman that he was, the caterer absolutely refused to be imposed upon by the steward's demand for a fee before he should be allowed the use of the kitchen, and he heroically set up his cooking apparatus in the quad.

There have been better dinners, but never larger crowds at them. No other dinner, which I have ever heard of, left behind a surplus of over forty dollars—enough to pay all the expenses of the delegates we sent to dine at McGill and elsewhere later in the year. No other committee, in settling up, was treated to good champagne (the other fellows said it was good!), which was a proof that the transaction had been a good one—for the caterer at least. And it was a temperance dinner, be it remembered!

Looking to its main purpose, this particular dinner cannot be called a success, for it did not bind the men together, as some of us had hoped it would do. It did prove the futility of trying, with our comparatively small numbers, to give a large dinner, while, among other things that grew out of it, was the idea of having a University Song Book. The idea was thrown out in a speech made by Mr. J. Edmund Jones, '88, and was afterwards worked out by an able committee (if modesty may let me so speak), under that same gentleman's energetic direction. Unhappily, however, seeds of discord were sown in spite of these and other good results, and these seeds bore their full fruit only when the time for the Literary Society's annual elections was drawing near. For this reason, I said, at the outset, it was the dinner that did it.

A. H. YOUNG, '87.

EDITORIAL BOARD.

At a meeting of THE VARSITY Editorial Board, held last Wednesday, the Editor-in-Chief, Mr. Kerr, following the example of his predecessors in the chair, tendered his resignation, to take effect at Christmas. To fill the vacancy thus caused, the Board unanimously selected Mr. G. W. Ross, who will, therefore, take charge of THE VARSITY after the New Year. In the hands of Mr. Ross, THE VARSITY should be a success. He has been a frequent contributor to its columns, but not to its pages alone, for work from his pen has appeared within the covers of some of the best Canadian periodicals.