

THE VARSITY.

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The Office of THE VARSITY is at No. 4, King Street East, Room 10 (up-stairs).

"PRESIDENT WILSON AND UNIVERSITY CHAIRS."

The man who seeks to achieve distinction as a correspondent of the daily press must possess a double qualification: he must know what to write and when to write it. We incline to the belief that that gallant defender of the rights (or privileges) of Toronto graduates who veils his modest merit beneath the disguise "Torontonensis" has displayed an equal neglect of each of these important considerations.

The appointment to the Chair of English has been made. No change is possible,—even were it desirable. Hence "Torontonensis" can have had no motive for attacking as he did the Governments of the Province and of the University but that of revenge for real or fancied slights. The strong language of his letter—applied to a man whose reputation is at least above the reach of pseudonymous scribblers—is ample evidence of the perturbed state of his own mind.

We are not, we hope, transgressing the bounds of propriety when we frankly declare that the man who has been selected for this post is not the man whose appointment we should ourselves have preferred; before the choice was made, indeed, we strongly urged the claims of another. But neither did we favour the selection of any of the men whom, at so late a date, "Torontonensis" so eagerly and so ill-advisedly champions. And, examining now the testimonials of the successful applicant, we are forced to repeat (what we have already declared) that the authorities have in our opinion made an excellent choice.

The sectionalism shown in the letter deserves only the severest censure. When the appointment was yet to be made, the cry was, "Canada for the Canadians," and in a modified sense,—a sense in which every right thinking Canadian would, we think, concur in it,—we joined in the cry. A Canadian has, indeed, been chosen; and what now? Now we have another whine: Toronto University for Toronto University! Sectionalism can no further go. While we admit that, *other things being equal*, Toronto graduates should get the preference in such cases, we must at the same time insist on the principle, Get the best—where, it matters not. And, leaving Dr. Wilson to destroy "Torontonensis" argument, as regards other cases, with his formidable array of facts, we would earnestly invite the *Mai's* correspondent to favour a public which waits to be indignant with the specific grounds on which his present charge is based.

When will men—graduates and undergraduates—learn discretion in these matters? Is it not plain what must be the effect of such an impression as "Torontonensis" endeavours to create? His letter—which, by the way, is much less embarrassing to those he attacks than to those he champions—is an unmanly attack, not on President Wilson alone, but on the University as a whole. For every attempt to injure the reputation of her President; every insinuation of favouritism in her appointments, and, by implication, of the choice of inferior men; every attempt to create dissension among her graduates is a covert and, we repeat, a baseless and cowardly attack on our *Alma Mater*.

PUBLIC LECTURES.

In another column a correspondent calls attention to the public lectures which have lately been delivered at Trinity College, and laments that this example has not been followed

by the University of Toronto. Various disconnected and individual efforts to meet this demand have from time to time been made by members of the faculty, but, so far as we know, no organized movement in this direction has ever taken place. The advantages of such lectures to the public and the enthusiasm with which every tentative step has been met are pointed out by our correspondent; the benefits accruing to the University as a body from the popular interest and sympathy which would undoubtedly be awakened, are too obvious to require explanation; but we would wish to call attention to the important place such a scheme could be made to occupy in the training of the individual undergraduate.

It is a matter of serious concern with many of the leading men of the day, that our courses of instruction are branching off more and more into single subjects and single divisions of subjects, so that our young men are trained to be excellent scholars in their own departments, but receive no encouragement to take interest in the vast body of thought which lies outside this focus. Now, what could serve better to correct this tendency towards mental contraction, than attendance at lectures on the elementary and fundamental principles underlying those arts or sciences for the mastery of whose details they have not time? It may be said that some subjects do not admit of popular treatment. This statement is one we would most emphatically deny. We do not believe that it is possible to name a course of instruction in Toronto University which is not susceptible of being made interesting to an ordinarily intelligent audience. Let any scientist or scholar beware of stating that he is pursuing studies without bearing on public interest, for such a statement is tantamount to a confession that he has wandered from the high road of human thought and life into a blind alley, that he has lost all sense of perspective and is totally unable to perceive the relation which his subject bears to the intellectual life of the human race.

COLLEGE SOCIETIES.

In our last issue we printed a letter in which a correspondent regrets that our College Societies are all more or less in a state of decline, and assigns causes from which he considers this to result—increasing preponderance of "Plugs," and the deadening effect they have on attempts to resuscitate any old College institutions, he assigns as the reason of the lack of interest taken in the Literary Society and the subordinate societies. This week another correspondent combats this view, at least with regard to the Literary Society, and attributes the change not to a degeneracy in the student body—for we must reckon as degeneracy an increase in the number of "Plugs"—but to the changed circumstances of University life. This interpretation would seem the more plausible. Nothing is more common, more universal even, in the history of all institutions than the desuetude of old forms which have become unsuited to new modes of life. The Literary Society was founded some thirty-five years ago, when the College could boast hardly a hundred students, and when the specialization of studies was much less general than at present. It was natural and necessary that they should form one large body and include all students amongst their members, but as our correspondent points out, the Society has grown too large and the interest of its members too various for it to discharge its original functions efficiently. At present it has become principally a machine for giving *Conversazioni* and holding elections, and any change which will re-establish it on a new and active basis will be welcomed.

"THE CONVERSAZIONE."

This, the greatest social event of the College Year, passed off last night with great success, and will soon be nothing more than one of the pleasant memories of our College life. Amongst many agreeable features, perhaps the most prominent was the musical programme, which was excellent in almost every detail and reflects great credit alike on the management and on the performers. The singing of the Glee Club was quite up to the old time standard. The refreshment rooms, as is the case at almost every large entertainment, were some-