

## THE EVOLUTION OF THE VARSITY.

THE first publication by the students of Toronto University of which any trace can be found was a little book called *Fasti*, published when the University was known as King's College and which contained a list of names of graduates, up to that time arranged by their years. In 1887 there was just one copy of the book in the University Library, and using it as a basis to work from, Mr. W. F. Maclean, now of *The World*, and Mr. W. J. Loudon, published another volume of *Fasti*, giving a list of graduates by years up to that date. Unfortunately, the only copy of the original "*Fasti*" was destroyed in the big fire, but the information contained in the 96 pages of the second *Fasti* is really the basis of all the information as to graduates and class lists published in subsequent books.

College journalism by the students of the University of Toronto had its origin, as far as we can trace, in a little four-page paper called *The White and Blue*, published in 1879, the editor of which was Mr. W. F. Maclean. Mr. Maclean, as far as can be learned, has the only bound copy of the paper now in existence, and promises some day to present it to the University Library. *The White and Blue* ran for one year, during which time Mr. George Sandfield Macdonald began to agitate for a new paper, in which he was aided by Mr. Maclean. At the close of his graduating year, 1879-80, Mr. Maclean was in a position to report to the Literary Society that a joint stock company had been formed, consisting of Graduates and Undergraduates, and *THE VARSITY* was the result. Some slight opposition was offered to this way of controlling a college paper; some objection was also made to the name "*Varsity*," which was held to be merely an importation of English slang. It is interesting to note that the term *Varsity* occurs in Tennyson's "*Northern Farmer*," which was written in 1847. However, the change was made, stock was sold at \$5 a share, *THE VARSITY* became a private enterprise and was issued at a subscription rate of \$2 a year.

Mr. G. G. S. Lindsay became the first business manager, and proved an energetic one. Mr. Macdonald also gave a great deal of time and attention to the paper's commencement and did much to help it along for the next year or so by contributing articles written in what was called at that time "the Johnsonian styles of English." The paper started off with much promise, but after a few years began to decline. It was not a success financially, and incoming Undergraduates refused to invest in a concern that paid no dividends, so eventually the paper came to be owned entirely by Graduates, while it was still edited and managed by Undergraduates. This state of affairs could not long exist. The paper came out very irregularly; the number of issues in the year was decreased until, in 1889, publication ceased. During the year 1889-90—the year of the fire—no publication was issued at all; but the students, having become accustomed to the advantages of a paper, kept up an agitation for the establishment of a new one. A movement to start a tri-weekly journal was made by Mr. Jas. Breebner, who was then an Undergraduate, but this proposal was not carried out.

At length the Literary Society, largely through the influence of Mr. W. S. McLay, now of McMaster University, decided to publish a paper, and, without paying anything for the privilege, appropriated the title of the defunct journal. Objection was again made to the term "*Varsity*," this time by Sir Daniel Wilson, who urged that some name of academical or classical suggestion should be used and suggested the title "*The Magi*." The objection was ignored and a constitution was drawn up by which the editor and business manager were appointed directly by the Literary Society, while the editor was allowed to choose his own assistants, subject to the approval of the Literary Society. This order of things continued until the spring of

1894, when an effort was made to extend the constituency of the journal so as to make it include the whole of the University of Toronto. A constitution was passed to this effect, and in the fall of 1894 the editor and business manager visited the various societies most representative of the different faculties of the University with a view of getting them to support the paper. This arrangement lasted for only one year, for the only supporters of the paper were found in University College and in the School of Practical Science. Accordingly, in 1895, a constitution was drafted by Mr. Jas. A. Tucker and adopted by the Literary Society under which the paper was to be controlled by representatives elected by the societies most representative of the men of University College and the students of the School of Practical Science. One feature of the new constitution was the independent editorial and business boards, the object of which was to increase the power of the editorial at the expense of the business board. This constitution, with little alteration, remained in force until the spring of 1902 and has proven a very satisfactory one.

In 1895 an incident occurred which served to bring *THE VARSITY* very prominently into notice. The University authorities took exception to certain editorials relating to University affairs and demanded a retraction. The situation so far as *THE VARSITY* is concerned served to bring out the fact that the authorities cannot control the publication of a paper, though they can withhold the use of the University's name and seal, can prohibit the paper from coming into the building and can suspend from lectures those responsible for its publication.

In 1897 a rival to *THE VARSITY* appeared, namely, *College Topics*, a paper which was circulated in all the colleges and which aimed merely at being a newspaper. As a business venture the new publication seems to have been a success. It remained a private enterprise until the fall of 1901 when the Undergraduates' Union purchased the sheet with the object in view of advertising and strengthening the Union. Accordingly, the Undergraduates found themselves with two papers on their hands which were covering, to a certain extent, the same ground. Two business managers were operating upon the same advertising field and business men were losing faith in the value of advertising in college journals. Something had to be done to get rid of one of the papers, but difficulties stood in the way of an amalgamation. At first, many of the Arts students demurred at the thought of giving up their paper—a paper which had been so long and so closely associated with University College. The Union Executive were equally unwilling to drop their new venture without giving it a trial. At length the proposal was made to have a distinctly University paper, and the argument used in favor of this change was that such a paper would help to bring the various faculties of the University closer together, and time would build up a stronger and more united University; Undergraduate sentiment changed, and out of a larger feeling of loyalty to the University as a whole, the Art students consented to an amalgamation almost to a man, and *THE VARSITY* was handed over to the Undergraduates' Union, which is the only body representative of the whole University. The editorial board now consists of representatives from each of the different faculties and affiliated colleges in the University of Toronto.

*THE VARSITY* has had a chequered but yet a somewhat distinguished career. It has always been edited and managed by the best life of the University. Many of its past editors and associate editors are now occupying first positions in all parts of the world. The ablest Canadian writers have contributed to its pages. It possesses a dignity and a prestige which no new-comer can command. To help to retain this high reputation is the duty of every Undergraduate.

W. J. BAIRD, '03.