

The Varsity

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TORONTO, January 31st, 1900.

The Inter-College Association is deservedly attracting considerable attention at present within the Toronto Colleges. The broader the trend of thought of the college man, the more he will get out of college life. When members of different faculties or professions meet together to discuss questions of life economic, social or political, the effect must ever be salutary. The proposed measure tends to two things—a more general and unprejudiced college sentiment, and a better understanding of many of the problems of the day. The ground which the club would thus cover has heretofore never been covered by a single college organization. The association should have the support of all earnest thinkers at University College.

It is invigorating to listen to such remarks—straight from the shoulder—as Dr. G. M. Milligan made at the oratorical contest. As he said, too often the subject handles the speaker and not the speaker the subject, but we need not look solely among students to find such—we can find it in many a higher sphere. Students of all persons appreciate highly the words of the man who thinks and says what he thinks. They like to feel that behind the speaker there is a distinct personality, a force unseen, ever present but never dead.

When the students departed from the oratorical contest they felt that they realized as never before what oratory was—they felt that they had learned a mighty truth from the judge's criticism and Coleman's speech. When they listened to Dr. Parkin in Massey Hall some months ago they may not have become Imperialists, but they at least carried away a greater enthusiasm for their empire and their Queen. When they heard Prof. Goldwin Smith at the Knox-University College Debate in Association Hall a year ago, they felt that every word he uttered was the product of thought, and that every word uttered was leavened by his personality.

Were there more men in the pulpits and professors' chairs who put their individuality into their work, who lent to their hearers even a small portion of that enthusiasm which they should possess, there would to-day be fewer empty pews and empty desks.

An oration, a sermon or a lecture should have life and energy and the imprint of thought upon it—if it has not, no more should it expect an audience, than a themeless book a reader.

THE LOOM OF DESTINY—A REVIEW.

Even if the author of this little volume of short stories were not one of our own graduates it would be a satisfaction to notice Mr. Stringer's work because of its intrinsic merit. There are fourteen stories in *The Loom of Destiny*, nearly all dealing with child-life in the slums of New York City, and all told in a manner which prevents their similarity making them monotonous. Each story presents some phase of the child mind as it is discerned with genuine artistic insight and touched with a fine pathos. At times there is a tendency for this pathos to lose its artistic effect in a moralistic tinge, but upon the whole it is distinctly the artist's rather than the moralist's stamp that is upon this work. Mr. Stringer shows himself to be a writer of originality, clear discernment, exceptionally fine sensibility and strong sympathy. He is original in his choice of subject-matter and in his method of treatment; he reveals his fine sensibility in the emotional effects which he has transcribed; and his sympathy is apparent at every turn. We get a clear picture of the manner in which the minds of children living in the slums and tenements are stung into premature ripeness by the attacks of an unsympathetic world, yet we see, at the same time, how there is bred in them a certain satisfaction with their environments, a certain delight in the midst of their misery. Something of this is admirably brought out in one of the best of these stories, "The Undoing of Dinney Crockett." This story tells of the attempted adoption of "Dinney" by a kind hearted lady and gentleman who had lost their only child, a boy. But "Dinney" could not endure the strangeness of his new world; the more kindness he received the deeper his longing for his old life became, until finally, when he could endure it no longer, all his feelings burst forth in a fury of rage,—"I'm sick of all dis muggin', an' dis place, an — an everyt'ing else, and I want to go home, see! I want to go home—I want to go home!" (It is in such situations that the author seems at times to feel a certain hopelessness and to reveal a consequent sympathy too strong for the first effects upon the reader).

What is probably the chief defect in these stories is a lack of humor. It is, however, a defect only of the work and not of character, for Mr. Stringer shows a fine sense of humor in his portrayal of certain situations and in occasional bright flashes, such as "Georgie saved the life of Mary Edith's doll when it had a most terrible sawdust hemorrhage." The difficulty seems to be that the pathos is allowed at times to become slightly morbid for the want of a little fuller play of strong humor. These little bits of humanity are often very grave and very pathetic, but they also have a keen appreciation of a certain kind of humor which serves to make their life tolerable.

Something has been said of Mr. Stringer's originality. A most false charge of slavish indebtedness to Kipling has in this connection been imputed to this writer. One meets with such a statement, as—"Mr. Stringer knows his Kipling well,—from Kipling Mr. Stringer has learned the trick of setting the child mind and child nature in a story that in itself appeals strongly to the intelligence of the grown man or woman." Surely it is time someone rose in his might and destroyed some of these false gods of criticism. Criticism after this fashion is worse than unfair; it is immoral. It blasts the hopes and blights the prospects of many young writers of merit.