

THE VARSITY.

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All communications should be addressed to THE EDITORS, University College, Toronto, and must be in on Wednesday of each week.

No notice will be taken of anonymous contributions.

A SUGGESTION FOR THE LIBRARIAN.

In the report of the University of Pennsylvania noticed last week, there was a portion to which we did not refer as it did not exactly bear upon the question then under discussion. If our remarks of last week were taken by any of our readers to be of the nature of destructive criticism, this week we offer some of the nature of constructive criticism. The suggestion which we have to make is not an original one with us; it was made in 1885 by Mr. James Barnwell, M.A., then Librarian of the University of Pennsylvania, and doubtless has been put into practice elsewhere years ago. So THE VARSITY merely passes the suggestion along, alike to the Librarian and to the graduates of the University of Toronto, in the hope that, if it has not occurred to them to act upon it heretofore, they may do so now, to the great benefit of the Library and the University.

We cannot do better than reproduce the circular which Mr. Barnwell issued to the alumni and friends of the University of Pennsylvania, and hear his testimony as to the success of the idea. They are both worthy of perusal.

"The Librarian of the University of Pennsylvania hereby appeals to all friends of that Institution, or of Learning, for the gift of Pamphlets, Speeches, Sermons, Reports of Societies, (charitable and literary), Annual Reports of Corporations (whether of railroads, commercial companies, or commercial enterprises), Catalogues, etc., etc., in short, for the gift to the Library of all printed matters which accumulate annually in offices, counting houses and homes and is generally consigned, as rubbish, to the waste basket or to the cellar.

"This 'rubbish' is the history of to-day, and upon this 'rubbish' the historian of the future must depend. Out of similar 'rubbish' grew Macaulay's History. It is hard to realize that the future will hold dear what we now hold cheap. Pamphlets which in their day cost but three pennies have been, in our time, gladly bought with a hundred pounds for every penny. The Journals of our City Government have been so little prized in the day of their publication, that the City itself does not, or, at least, within the writer's recollection did not possess a complete set, and but two complete sets are believed to exist, which are in private hands. How many of our corporations of all descriptions, which have existed for many years, are able to show a set of all their Reports or Publications? The Mercantile Library, even, does not own a set of its own Reports, nor a copy of its first Catalogue. Of the Reports of the Board of Education, a series of great importance, but two sets are known to exist, and a collector of this city, having special facilities, has been unable to complete a third, after a search of thirty years. Even here in our own library there is not a set of our Annual University Catalogues. So true is it that 'What we have we prize not to the worth while we enjoy it, but being lacked and lost, why, then, we rate the value.'

"It is this 'rubbish' which contains the record of the busy work of the world to-day, and within the walls of a library it should be garnered, where students can use it, and learn the methods of original investigation and research.

"Let it be also understood that the Library will be most grateful for all donations of books which are by no means 'rubbish,' but which, if little used on your own shelves, will do the greatest good to the greatest numbers when transferred to the use of our earnest young students." (1)

(1) University of Pennsylvania. Annual Report, 1885, pp. 43, et seq.

Mr. Barnwell thus refers to the response to his circular:

"A circular asking for donations of pamphlets was issued in June, addressed to about 900 persons. The result shows the experiment to have been a success. Already over 4,000 pieces of reading matter have been received, the value of which is considerably more than the pecuniary outlay involved, which was very small. But the *indirect* results are likely to be of still greater value, as it has developed an interest, hitherto latent, of many of our friends, and it has shown activity on the part of the Library." (2)

The VARSITY commends to the favourable consideration of the Librarian and the alumni of our University this scheme—simple and practical—which has yielded these excellent results. We believe that the issuing of a similar circular to our own graduates would meet with a very gratifying response, that the Library would be thereby enriched greatly, while a new interest would be awakened in this most important department of the University; and that those who would like to aid their Alma Mater in some way within their means would, in this way, be enabled to gratify their own desires, whilst conferring a signal benefit upon the University. Even should no official intimation reach the graduates with respect to this scheme, they surely need nothing more than this reference to it, to cause them to approve of, and act upon it forthwith.

THE READING ROOM.

Every year the Literary Society is afflicted by a number of amiable gentlemen who, with a laudable though mistaken patriotism, seek to burden the already depleted finances of the Society with the cost of innumerable country newspapers, and also to burden the already crowded spaces of the Society's Reading Room, with these newspapers, which are devoid of any interest except to those who come from the immediate neighbourhoods in which they circulate. We should not object to the annual saturnalia, which brings out a large attendance and creates much harmless amusement, were it not that in fits of general cerebral excitement and temporary mental aberration the Society usually thrusts off some really good periodical, and substitutes for it some worthless sheet. The Literary Society should only place upon the fyles of its Reading Room really good and useful, or clever and artistic periodicals, of general interest, such as the city dailies, the leading English and American magazines, reviews, and illustrated periodicals, the best of the comic papers, and such other literary journals as possess real intrinsic merit. Scientific, and especially professional journals, should be subscribed for by the Societies respectively most interested therein; and it would not be a bad idea if such periodicals were kept on fyle in each separate Society's reading room. At present, by the pernicious system of regulating what papers the Society shall or shall not subscribe for, the Reading Room is burdened with a lot of useless trash, while the money expended thereon could be applied to much better advantage. The right to regulate the supplies of the Reading Room should be taken away from the Society in general, and left to the House Committee or to a special Committee on Periodicals, which could receive and act upon suggestions made to it by members with reference to any paper or papers. The present system is most unsatisfactory, and should be altered.

CLASS SPIRIT AND CLASS ORGANIZATION.

One of the chief reasons why it is so hard to develop or retain a true university spirit among the graduates of the Provincial University is, we are convinced, the absence now and in past years of any class spirit and any system of class organization. The number of our alumni is very large, and as a class they are prosperous and well-to-do. But how many of them have ever done anything for their *Alma Mater*, except attend a Commencement, a Conversation, a Dinner, or the like? Certain it is that the benefactors of the University who were educated within her walls could be counted on the fingers. Sympathy and enthusiasm, however well-meaning, are cheap at the best; they do not touch the pocket.

Individual instances there are of much practical and self-sacrificing interest manifested in the University and its affairs, but any-

(2) Univ. of Penn. Ann. Rep., 1885, pp. 45, 46.