

The Varsity

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TORONTO, October 25th, 1899.

THE RESIDENCE QUESTION.

THE publication this week of Prof. Goldwin Smith's letter, which will be found on another page, may be taken as an indication of the importance which VARSITY still attaches to the Residence question. It is true that this matter has already been discussed very fully; still, for the most part, the discussion has been carried on by those who would be but indirectly affected in the settlement; and the question cannot, as yet, be said to have been presented to the student body. Indeed, at the time when Council took action in the matter, there could not properly be said to be any student body, and even the majority, perhaps, knew but little of the action—certainly little of the details—until their return to College; however, we shall hope that the cooler judgment, which we may naturally expect now, will quite compensate for any possible lack of a more general interest which might have been expected under other circumstances.

As most of the students are quite aware, Residence is now closed in accordance with a resolution passed by the Council last summer. The grounds upon which that resolution was passed seem perfectly rational. A large deficit had been incurred during the year, owing primarily to the fact that Residence had been patronized only very slightly by the students; there was no general fund upon which the authorities could draw, as the Residence was self-sustaining, any surplus being used in making improvements, repairs, etc.; and, in the judgment of the Council, there was practically no possibility, under the present state of affairs, of avoiding another deficit in the ensuing year. The one course of action open, therefore, was to close Residence. This was done, and immediately upon the announcement of the Council's resolution, certain gentlemen were instrumental in gathering together a few prominent graduates and undergraduates to discuss the matter. As a result, a special convocation was called. Meetings have already been held; various opinions expressed; the government interviewed; and movements

are now on foot to find the approximate cost of making Residence a more desirable place for habitation, or, in the event of other arrangements, of converting it into suitable quarters for the work in Geology and Mineralogy, which at present is carried on under very great difficulties.

Now, outside opinion is almost unanimously in favor of the re-opening and maintenance of the present Residence building; and, while we cannot but acknowledge a genuine interest in the welfare of the University and its interests by these gentlemen, we cannot but think that the sentiment which controls them, however admirable in itself, is not altogether compatible with the intensely practical interests and demands made upon our Residence under the changed conditions of to-day. In days gone by it could truthfully be said that the Residence body was truly representative of the whole student body; the benefits which accrued to those living there were undoubtedly very great; and the memories and recognition of these, are a natural stimulus to the present action. They warn us, that, if precedent be established by closing Residence, we shall have vastly increased for us the probability of permanent abolition; Residence life is the source and secret of influences that can be gained in no other way; this Residence is the only undenominational one connected with the University; and there is strong probability that, with fraternities rapidly increasing in numbers and influence and holding out special inducements to members, if extreme care and much astuteness be not exercised, we shall not only lose the present Residence entirely, but all hope of getting one of any kind will be finally set aside.

It is quite easy to understand, therefore, from this point of view, why the outsiders are so deeply concerned in this matter. Personal associations have prejudiced many in favor of the re-opening of the present building, but as yet have not been the stimulus to the successful production of some practical scheme whereby that might be accomplished. Utopian dreams of a palatial Residence, with board at six dollars per week, fortunately are not chronic affections among Varsity undergraduates, or indeed, among the graduates themselves. But what, we may ask, is there inherently evanescent in the Residence *idea*? Why should it not be retained as a desideratum, even as in the case of founding new departments, etc.? VARSITY cannot think that the silence of the Council is an unfailing indication of utter lack of resource; and surely—even if, as some say, the government is somewhat antagonistic to Residence—were the lack of a Residence shown to be prejudicial to the best interests of the University, and thus indirectly to the country at large, there would not long be hesitancy on their part. The matter, after all, reduces itself largely to an expression of opinion by those *immediately* affected by a Residence or the lack of it, the weight which such an expression would probably carry, and the guarantee it would furnish to the Council in their efforts to gain control of funds that would serve to adjust matters.

What then, we may naturally ask, seems to be the predominant opinion of the undergraduate body? VARSITY believes that the general feeling is strongly in favor of the