

# THE ' VARSITY:

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF  
EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY POLITICS AND EVENTS.

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## OUR IDEAL.

Did ever on painter's canvas live  
The power of his fancy's dream?  
Did ever poet's pen achieve  
Fruition of his theme?  
Did marble ever take the life  
That the sculptor's soul conceived?  
Or ambition win in passion's strife  
What its glowing hopes believed?  
Did ever racer's eager feet  
Rest as he reached the goal,  
Finding the prize achieved was meet  
To satisfy the soul?

DANIEL WILSON.

## COLLEGE CHUMS AND COLLEGE FRIENDSHIPS.

I was reading quite recently an instructive story by Dr. J. G. Holland, the distinguished American writer, in which the career of two college chums is graphically sketched. That career and the varied experiences connected with it, as pictured by the writer, may differ widely in details from the corresponding ones of students in University College. And yet they are otherwise substantially the same. Both are controlled by, or are subject to, a potent influence not peculiar to college life—the personal influence of one student upon another, of one individual upon another.

An influence of this kind, if exerted at all, is almost always sure to be irresistible. The causes are not far to seek. A young man may be ever so "independent"—all fancy themselves to be so, and many are really so—and yet he cannot resist the subtle influences of those around him. And why? The answer is simple and yet complex. Self love is, however, at the bottom of it, and is really the key. The desire to stand well with our companions (and by the younger to be considered manly) often impels us at the time to fall in with views and opinions which in the abstract, and on communing with ourselves afterwards, we are compelled to dissent from. Many a time, it is sad to think, have the sweet influences of home life been dissipated, the reverence for sacred things laughed away, and the very germ of the Christian life in the heart destroyed in a weak moment, and in the effort to exhibit independence of thought and so-called manliness of spirit.

This is one side of the picture. And that side presents an example of the rule of the strong over the weak, or, properly speaking, the stronger will controlling the weaker. And yet this has its bright and better side, too.

A college chum, with clear, sharp views of life—its responsibilities and duties—its binding obligations to fulfil the purposes for which that life was given—has a tremendous power for good, and in favour of the true and right, in his unspoken utterances, or by his testimony in favour of a divine life in the soul. Such an influence is potential in proportion to its unobtrusiveness and genuineness. The daily consistent life of the sincere yet unobtrusive Christian man preaches more eloquently to his comrades than any sermon or homily can do. May I appeal to the student-reader to reflect upon these truths—rendered doubly so by many a sad, as well as by many a pleasant experience.

Every student is subject to the personal influences surrounding him to which I have referred, whether he wills it or not, or whether he is conscious of it or not. There are positive and negative poles in personal intercourse as well as in electricity. We admit and apply this principle in effect, when we speak of personal magnetism or of its opposite. It is as powerful and unerring as are the laws governing both electricity and magnetism.

Students are repelled from or attracted towards each other; and it is equally a matter of fact that those who unconsciously repel some attract others.

Few, however, stop to deliberate on these matters, or to estimate character, or to weigh motives. They generally decide as to both of these by the varying standard of feeling and impulse. And yet, on the whole, this student-instinct is rarely at fault. As a rule young men understand young men better than do their seniors.

College friendships, however formed, are generally lasting. They are as a rule the most pleasant and hearty of friendships in after life. A college chum of my own (long since dead), put it thus in a letter to me:—

"A 'college chum'—that delightful association of words. There is something about these words that will act like magic . . . There springs up to view immediately the old associations of college days, and all the good old things said and done a thousand times over . . . They carry one back to where he enacts over again the scenes and the times long gone by; and lives over again that part of life which must ever seem to bring the sunniest side of it. There are certainly constituents of a college life which render it the best,—the most fondly remembered of any of the different periods of our existence. And we will always cherish it with feelings of the purest kind—such as cannot attach to any other sort of life whatever."

Truly, the student, even more than the child, is father to the man. There is something unerring in the estimate formed at college of each student by his companions. And the estimate then formed of personal character, of ability and peculiarities, is generally verified by after-life experience. Speak to the graduate of some years standing of his former companions, and he will tell you with tolerable certainty (what you probably know yourself) as to how John Smith or John Jones has been acquitting himself in the battle of life.

Few students estimate at the time how truly their measure is being taken by their companions, or how insensibly each one has formed his opinion of the other at college.

I find, however, that I have fallen into a strain of moralizing rather than (as I probably should have done) dealing more pleasantly with the subject which I had set for myself at the beginning. My only apology is that life at college is so exceedingly momentous in its consequences to the individual student, that I could not refrain from saying a word or two—based on my own experience—as to the serious aspect of personal intercourse at college.

I hold (as my old college chum, quoted above, says), that there are as a rule no friendships more pure or lasting than those formed in our college days. Would that they were always as ennobling as they are enduring!

A word now of appeal as to personal responsibility. If it be so, as I have stated, that we are so much under the influence of fellow-students and others, how is it as to our influence on them? Is it good and wholesome and bracing? or is it the reverse in any particular? These are questions which none but the individual reader can answer. That we cannot rid ourselves of this personal responsibility is perfectly clear. The late Rev. Dr. Chalmers, in strong and eloquent words, puts this matter in the clearest light. He says:—

"Every man is a missionary, now and forever, for good or for evil, whether he intends or designs or not. He may be a blot, radiating his dark influence outward to the very circumference of society; or he may be a blessing, spreading benediction over the length and breadth of the world, but a blank he cannot be. There are no moral blanks; there are no neutral characters. We are either the sower that sows and corrupts, or the light that splendidly illuminates, and the salt that silently operates; but being dead or alive every man speaks."

J. GEORGE HODGINS.

Toronto, December, 1884.