

THE 'VARSITY:

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF

EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY POLITICS AND EVENTS.

Vol. I. No. 24.

March 26, 1881.

Price 5 cts.

THE D. S. NOMINATION MEETING.

The ceremony of the principal nomination on Friday before last had all the sweetness that brevity could impart. The cursory way, however, in which Mr. KINGSFORD's claims to the suffrages of the undergraduates were set forth can only be explained by the apathy into which his supporters, enervated by the absence of opposition, had perhaps fallen. It is regrettable that they did not go to the trouble of informing the Debating Society about the reasons which decided them in the choice of their candidate. The information would be doubtless superfluous for those who have been residents for some considerable time in Toronto, but there are a large number who do not come under this category, and to whom a plain and concise statement of Mr. KINGSFORD's qualifications for the Presidency would have been most acceptable. If the expression, a conscientious vote, has any meaning, it implies a knowledge of the career and opinions of the person against or for whom the vote is registered. This consideration, among many others, might well have spurred condescension to the extent of giving a hint why the exercise of the Society franchise should not have been abstained from. A want of thoughtfulness and of good taste, a suspicion of high-handedness, and a discourteous indifference as regards announcing the merits of their candidate, may be justly charged against the gentlemen who have labored in Mr. KINGSFORD's behalf. The party whose sweep of influence is so wide as to clear away even the shadow of resistance need not necessarily be strong enough to ride roughshod over common observances, the violation of which is denoted by the above charges. The Debating Society should have sufficient self-regard to inflict deserved penalty for any attempt at 'rushing' a candidate without being enlightened as to the good faith of his backers. Certainly the nomination this year was little more than the ill-disguised swagger of party organizers who have accomplished their ends. A number of gentlemen entered Moss Hall at the usual hour of meeting; one of their number in two or three laconic sentences gave the assembly to understand that Mr. KINGSFORD was the nominee; after a long pause of most uneloquent silence the suggestion was made that that gentleman should signify his willingness to enter into the contest if contest there was to be; Mr. KINGSFORD carried out the suggestion by a neat little speech of acceptance; another pause then succeeded, which was broken by the nomination for the first 'minor office.' It was a lugubrious fiasco; no enthusiasm was displayed where enthusiasm could so easily have been aroused by a brief sketch of the active interest and progressive views which Mr. KINGSFORD has exhibited in his post-graduate connexion with the University. It was not deemed worth while telling the Society that he has efficiently taken a part in the present liberal policy of Convocation—a policy destined to place them in that proper relation to the Senate which now exists between the Convocation and Senate of London University. As an exponent, if not as a pioneer of this policy (to which we intend making a more copious reference in a future issue), he deserves the highest acknowledgment that the most representative association of the undergraduates can offer. But the appropriateness of the acknowledgment aggravates the over-weening carelessness of those whose duty it plainly was to acquaint the Society with the wide ground for recommendation in favor of Mr. KINGSFORD. The duty was easy of performance, and yet was shirked in such a deliberate manner as to convey the impression to the spectator that, the cause being a victorious one, to explain whether it was good or bad was a matter of indifference.

The opinion is most tenable that should the course followed this year be pursued in the future to any extent, these elections,

with their old character of exciting rivalry between *bona fide* parties, will not only fail to arouse interest, but their greatest title to the attachment of the undergraduates will soon pass away. What is this title? To our mind, the answer is that in the elections the sole opportunity is presented during the academic year for exercising, and enjoying the exercise of, one's political talent. We are not, like Columbia, in happy possession of a School of Politics, and the little practical training in this direction which is incidentally to be obtained in the University is monopolized by the Society elections. But precisely because the amount is small ought we to prize it highly and guard it jealously. Again, the struggle for the Presidency seems to be the one event outside of the examinations of sufficiently-absorbing interest to engage the general attention of the undergraduate body; in stockbrokers' parlance, it bears on this account a 'fictitious' value. This value may be impaired most speedily by allowing the craftiness of extreme partizans to drug public attention and watchfulness into a sleepy assent of their doings. The Debating Society should invariably exact an explanation for every important action undertaken professedly in its behalf, and not permit even the nomination of a presidential candidate without a showing up of his credentials.

EDUCATIONAL SELF-SATISFACTION.

Matthew Arnold has asserted that one great hindrance to educational improvement in England is self-satisfaction. If it is suggested that educational facilities in England are not perfect, that the French system of secondary education is superior to the English system (if the English may be said to have a system), and that there are many points in which improvement might be effected, they point to their great universities and to their great public schools, saying, with evident self-satisfaction: "What country can equal these? Let well-enough alone."

To those of us who will carefully look around, signs of the same danger will be only too apt to show themselves, and how could it be otherwise? In the flattering reports of progress issued by our school inspectors; in the commendatory notices of "Canada's splendid Educational System" by the foreign press assiduously circulated with self-gratulations by our own papers; in the medals and diplomas won at world's fairs by our school-apparatus, complete sets of which—it may be said for the benefit of the uninitiated—are possessed by very few even of our best schools; in the almost uniformly-laudatory addresses delivered at our school exhibitions and closing exercises; in all these there are many inducements to this feeling of self-satisfaction. From these reiterations as to the unrivalled goodness of our school-system, and from this almost entire absence of criticism, it is to be feared: *First*, that the people will soon come to believe even more than they are told, and to regard *our system* as incapable of further improvement; and *secondly*, that parents placing implicit faith in the perfection of *our system* will be too apt to hand over the education of their children almost entirely to Government. Nor are these groundless fears.

That our educational system is not yet perfect many will admit; and it should be our chief anxiety that it does not become stereotyped in its imperfections. However, in some quarters the notion is gradually growing that *our system* is the best possible, but that anyone who wishes to get along in the world—with the exception of those who intend to adopt one of the learned professions, as they are called—had better drop the systematic course of education as soon as possible, and go at the business of his future life. Notwithstanding the opinion which the Chancellor of the University has expressed, that anyone who tops off his education by a university course will make a better farmer, a better merchant, in fact, a better anything, those who think that the less of our system they have the better may not be so far wrong. The main cause of this growing dissatisfaction with the *results* of our systematic popular education lies, I think, in its radical defect, which defect is owing to the erroneous notions of the people themselves. These