

THE 'VARSITY:

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF

EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY POLITICS AND EVENTS.

Vol. V.

TORONTO, March 21, 1885.

No. 21.

THE 'VARSITY.

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The 'VARSITY is published in the University of Toronto every Saturday during the Academic Year, October to May, inclusive.

The Annual Subscription, including postage, is \$2.00, payable before the end of January, and may be forwarded to THE TREASURER, F. W. HILL, University College, to whom applications respecting advertisements should likewise be made.

Subscribers are requested to immediately notify the Treasurer, in writing, of any irregularity in delivery.

Copies of the 'VARSITY may be obtained every Saturday of J. S. ROBERTSON & Bros., corner of Adelaide and Toronto Streets.

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

Rejected communications will be returned if accompanied with a stamp for that purpose.

Editorial Notes.

THERE is no one more deserving of those honors which it is in the power of the students of University College to bestow, than Mr. William Houston, M.A., the President-elect of the Literary and Scientific Society. Mr. Houston has ever been an active and staunch friend of his Alma Mater, and has always been found on the side of reform and progress in matters regarding her real advancement and welfare. Mr. Houston brings with him experience, culture, and an intimate acquaintance with the practical workings of the Literary Society, having held the offices of Vice-President in 1870, and of President in 1875, to which latter position he has been again called. We are sure that under the presidency of Mr. Houston the Literary Society has the promise of a year of great usefulness before it.

THE graduates of Oxford University residing in Canada recently received a circular asking them to vote at the next Convocation against a measure which would sanction the practice of vivisection within the new physiological laboratory in connection with the university. There are certain statutory regulations requiring the use of anæsthetics in such cases, but the opponents of the measure fear that these regulations may be evaded. Among others who oppose the measure, and whose names appear in the circular, we notice Professors Ruskin and Edward Freeman. It was only by the determined and persistent efforts of such men as these that the barbarous continental custom of vivisection without anæsthetics was not permitted to gain a general foothold in England. Whatever hardened physiologists may say to the contrary, there can be no doubt that it is a most pernicious notion that the increase of human knowledge is a thing to be desired at any cost. That knowledge which is only to be gained by debasing and deadening all the finer sensibilities of our nature is bought at too high a price. It is not a sufficient defence for the infliction of the most exquisite tortures on the lower animals that a certain amount of human suffering may thereby be alleviated. No mere physical good can fully justify the commission of a great and revolting moral evil.

PRESIDENT Seelye, of Amherst, approves of the formation of Greek letter societies on the ground that they tend to

elevate the morals of the whole student body. He reaches this conclusion by the very singular reasoning that the societies must demand a high moral tone from their members in order to be popular. But, as the stream cannot rise higher than its source, it is easy to see that the learned president's argument runs in a circle. It is the moral tone of the undergraduate body in general that preserves the morals of the Greek letter societies, and not the opposite, as the friends of these secret organizations would have us believe. For ourselves, we believe that this matter of college societies is entirely overdone. The success of any society requires a certain degree of unanimity of opinion among its members, and when a student belongs to several of them at once there is a risk that he will sink his academical individuality entirely and become a mere section of a large and complicated series of machines. The time which should be occupied in close thinking on many subjects and in arriving at an intelligent individual opinion on them will be frittered away in finding something definite, however shallow, to say on it when next his society meets, or in listening to the opinions of others no better informed than himself. The very highest type of university education is that which encourages the greatest and most energetic development of individual minds in every possible direction, and not that which tends to restrict the student within the confines of academical faculties and societies. Let us have less talking about things and more thinking, fewer societies and more vigorous private thought and original research apart from the control of either text books, lectures, or society discussions.

IN an article on confederation in a city journal recently, Mr. G. Mercer Adam makes incidentally an earnest appeal for a more generous recognition by the Canadian public of healthy native literature. Apart from the intellectual benefit resulting to our embryotic nation from such a development, the writer correctly argues that if it were only for social and political reasons greater encouragement should be given to Canadian writers, since literature and the literary spirit are the most effective means for "the infusion of patriotic feeling and the diffusion of national sentiment." No man has done more noble work in the encouragement of this potent influence than Mr. Adam himself. Many are the words of kindly appreciation and sympathy he has given to literary aspirants from all parts of the Province. *The Canadian Monthly* was ably conducted by him for many years in the face of obstacles which would have discouraged any one but an enthusiast. And it is much to be regretted in the behalf of Canadian literature that this magazine was starved to death by the public whose higher interests it was so well fitted to serve. We have nothing to fill its place. If *The Week* was projected for that purpose the execution has fallen far short of the intention. Critical articles in all variety and of all degrees of merit and demerit *The Week* gives us in more than abundance, but it is creation and not criticism that is necessary if we are ever to have a national literature. For the lighter and finer kinds of writing *The Week* cannot find room. Much of the alleged poetry which alone suits the taste of the editor appears in the main to be produced by the very simple process of chopping intolerable prose into irregular lengths. And even in its critical capacity it is sufficiently well known, in spite of all protestations to the contrary, that only a certain class of opinions can receive a fair expression through the columns of this journal. During the past year Canadian writers have furnished various excellent poetical and prose contributions to American magazines, which is sadly