

A freshman, whose sole desire is to stand up for the right, naturally resents—as he has a perfect right to do—the bull-doing and cowardice of these self-constituted authorities. His conduct is styled “fresh” and “cheeky” by these competent judges of such things, and he is at once a marked man, although perhaps his culture, deportment and feelings would never have led him into collision with any but the base and “whatever loathes a law” had he not first been the subject of attack. * It must be remembered, to their honour, that up to this point many of the senior students join in for pure fun’s sake and here stop.

It is needless to say that those who do not stop here, but go on and constitute themselves a “hazing party,” do not embrace the morals, intellect, or culture of the university. Some thirty or forty organize and others follow in their wake. We cannot allow that these men represent the university or college either before or after graduation, for in the past we have observed that the professions and literature do not draw largely from this list, as the habits and tastes formed whilst at college are not calculated to elevate or refine.

It is said in extenuation that leaders of the Y. M. C. A. make themselves prominent at these meetings. If this be so, we must say that their conduct is open to severe criticism. It is certainly indiscreet, and they cannot blame freshmen who refuse to be charmed into their meetings, charm they never so wisely, and who fail to recognize them as dignitaries when the sign posts of consistency, polite bearing and refined courtesy are not visible. It is said that the idea is to teach freshmen better things. The class referred to are not qualified to instruct in the departments of morals, manners, or ideas, and the sooner we wake up to the fact the better.

Let us make the word student a synonym for gentleman. Let us aim at making all students feel that right is right, since God is God, and that they should go on in college “with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right,” remembering the motto, “Freedom for the right means suppression of the wrong.”

VIGILANTIBUS.

IS COMPETITION CHOICE OR NECESSITY?

To the Editor of THE VARSITY :

SIR :—One of your correspondents in last week’s VARSITY has done me the favour to reproduce a paragraph from a communication of mine to you, replying to some objections advanced in your editorial columns, on the giving of scholarships in the University of Toronto, and University College. Of course I feel somewhat gratified that my feeble words have been thought worth of reappearing in your paper, a feeling, however, which is somewhat modified by the fact that these opinions, when weighed in the balance of a maturer judgment, have seemed so light and at the same time so utterly at variance with those of your correspondent as to impel him to couple with the paragraph in question the epithet of “childish.” I am quite ready to appropriate to my opinions anything of frankness and honesty which may be implied in the word, and to credit him freely with all the advantage, which by the use of so comprehensive and graphic an epithet so ingeniously applied naturally accrues to his efforts in demolishing what I have so naively advanced. I assure you I have read with much interest and pleasure his exceedingly brilliant and well-worded communication, which at times approaches eloquence. We can hardly too much admire the nobility of the spirit which inspires the writer of it. His ideals are lofty and his aims are no doubt the very best.

It seems, however, that you and I and the rest of us who, like “plain blunt men, only speak right on,” with no eloquence and very little logic, have failed to grasp the real question. We have been pruning at the branches of a great upas tree, when we should have been seeking its root. We have at least got somewhat nearer to the question than those who discuss it solely as a matter of dollars and cents. I leave your editorial mind to imagine how far those are out of the way, who with what our correspondent would

call “ghastly incongruity” are ready to teach and encourage young men to compete “like swine scrambling for food,” and who sees the question only in its practical aspect of whether or not the University has funds to spare for this unholy business.

Your correspondent has shown us how to resolve the question into its elements and to deal with it in a way which will probably set it at rest for ever. He has transferred it to the domain of speculation, and there, singled out and at bay, he gives it the *coup de grace*. What now becomes our trivial little dispute about scholarships is intimately connected with, is indeed only an offshoot of great speculative question of competition in general in the plan of nature and society. Of course the question is vast, and it would be inaccurate to call it a new one. Competition at any rate is not a new thing in the universe. for the great fact which stands out in relief in our observation of the whole natural world is that of competition. If we traverse the animal, vegetable and mineral kingdoms, we find everywhere competition sharp and definite, with the one exception, that the fossil remains have retired from it—their fighting days are over. In the animal kingdom, from the protozoa up to man, the race is, and has been to the swift, and the battle to the strong. In primitive mankind doubtless, competition was as vigorous as it is now, when it is so forced upon every individual of us by circumstances that, so long as we remain in the world and are members of human society, it is utterly and absolutely impossible to escape it. To use the commonest sort of illustration. A cannot successfully apply against B for the privilege of sawing my wood without being guilty, indirectly, of taking the bread out of B’s mouth ; and on the other hand, if A does not successfully apply against B, he takes the bread out of his own mouth. The stern force of a necessity not laid on him by himself compels him to choose. There are, I believe, some persons blasphemers of the newer creed, who, applying to university matters, the conclusions drawn from the observations of this phenomenon, would go so far as to say that the friendly emulation and generous competitions of college days even fit men better for what is their inevitable destiny outside of college walls. However, that may be, I have often thought upon this general problem in my humble way, and I have done so hitherto without finding a satisfactory solution. It is indeed a question which has vexed many minds. The fact is there. Some have contended that competition is a salutary principle, without which nature and society would be impossible, an invigorating principle which by its reflex action produces strength.

Your correspondent admits the fact of competition, and I think he would willingly admit its universality, but he finds a new and satisfactory explanation for that part of it which affects us, most satisfactory indeed the explanation should be, if the authority of this hierophant of nature is at all in proportion to the positiveness of the explanation and to the decision with which he deals with a question which has puzzled generations. The perspicuity with which he brings it to the level of our capacity is specially grateful. The invisible hand which guides the universe has erred, something has gone wrong in the plan, “to struggle with one another, we were not made so.” The competition is everywhere, it has crept in somehow, and it must be admitted that men have succeeded marvelously well in doing what they were not made or fitted to do. Those who believe in the infallibility of nature’s methods, or in the designer of them, take the competition with the rest as a part of the great plan, a part which may have its dark side, but which is in the main good, and working for good. But we are assured that “we were not made so,” and there is an end of it.

Now, sir, how can you or I or any one else have a word more to say on the scholarship question ? We have reached the root of the matter, and nothing is left now, seeing that we have been set right, but to accept the assurance of the gentleman who so eloquently interprets to us nature’s intentions, and to subside into a dignified and respectful silence.

W. H. FRASER.

Toronto, Dec. 9th, 1885.