

this society which have given this so valued training, is that friendly rivalry which our debates afford. I cannot but feel that our debates too often receive less attention, in proportion to their importance, than anything else to which the undergraduate turns his mind. Too often the timid freshman is driven in his humility (if the seniors will allow me to call it by that name), to obliterate altogether his name from our posted programmes, and thereby, in all probability, provokes the existing committee into a dignified ignoring of his deep, but shrinking, genius for ever after; and too often the polymathic senior trusts to an inspiration that never comes, and takes the floor of our society with a confidence which nothing but an expectation of an instantaneous gift of many tongues can inspire, only to find that in one poor tongue he cannot find a word to express the deep thoughts which he knows he has within him. Let it not be forgotten that, while that reading which makes a full man can be elsewhere obtained, and while the correct man can be in no small degree developed in the essay-writing department which we encourage, though not sufficiently, yet the ready man, whom Bacon places at the summit of his climax, and whom we want in active life, can only be produced by that practice of public speaking to which we mainly devote our energies in this Society. And let not the members of the society forget that their motto, "*Omnium regina rerum oratio*," ought to be a continual reminder to them that eloquence always governed the world, and that its power is as great to-day as when Demosthenes and Cicero, by the silvery voice of oratory, swayed at their will the masses of Athens and of Rome.

But, turning from the recognized advantages which membership in our society affords, it behooves us to examine if there are not wants the supplying of which is necessary to the attaining of that measure of success which the Society deserves, I have spoken of our debates; let me add a word with regard to them. It is but a word of protest against that restriction upon the scope of our discussions which I cannot but characterize as at once absurd and unjust. I believe it to be little short of an insult to the intelligence and fair-mindedness of undergraduates to lay down a prohibition against the discussion among themselves of subjects of a political or quasi-political tendency, or of any tendency whatever. If any harm could come from the removal of that prohibition, I am sure that it would be less than is now done by the very existence of what is only an insult to dignity and self-respect. By the removal of this bar to our freedom, we would, in the field of politics, have opened up to us a range of objects such as we ought to be able to discuss and understand, if we are to be useful, intelligent citizens of our country. On the public questions of the day, University men should assist in leading, not submit to being led by, public opinion. We read in Tacitus that at the time when the spirit of freedom and patriotism had ceased to breathe at Rome, the schools of the Rhetoricians, which had once been the most valuable training of the Roman youth, had so far degenerated as to be ridiculous on account of the character of their teaching. The prime cause of this degeneracy was the change in the nature of the subjects of debate. "For," says Tacitus, "subjects remote from all reality are actually used for declamation; . . . and such subjects, but never, or very rarely, those of public importance, are dwelt upon in lofty language." We are blessed with no school; of rhetoric ours we must make for ourselves. Ought we not, then, to be free in our efforts to make it use to us? "Eloquence," says Cicero, "like fire, grows with its material." Let us be at liberty to use our own material, and our eloquence would burn the brighter. If we had freedom of choice in our subjects, that freedom would not be abused. Those who rule us in this respect would act fairly and reasonably if they could come to look upon our wishes in this direction rather as a rational demand than as a sort of standing annual joke directed against themselves.

But there is one want greater than all which this society labors under, which we ought to endeavor immediately to satisfy, and with a brief reference to which—much briefer than it deserves—I will cease wearying you now. I shall have done some good if I can impress upon you the absolute necessity of procuring, with as little delay as possible, a building for this society which will be appropri-

ate to our importance as an institution, and to our present membership. I believe the time has now come when such a consummation is possible. We have heard much of late of the establishment of an undergraduate social club, of the procuring of a gymnasium which will not be a disgrace to our College, and of an extended provision for the demands of social life among our hundreds of students. Why should not these objects be combined? And why should not the union of forces, which would thereby be obtained, be organized by this society, and made to work in the direction of providing a building which would answer all the needs to which I have referred, and which would at the same time give to this society all the accommodation it requires? Some steps have been taken towards the accomplishment of this end. To achieve success, there are necessary the combined energy and enthusiasm of the members of this society; but I think that is all that is necessary to its achievement. If the Senate of the University give us, as they have been asked to do, a suitable site, I believe the necessary funds can be found. The undergraduates must do much, but they will not be without assistance. The graduates of this University, and the past members of this Society, have not forgotten what they owe to both; and they can be trusted to do what is in their power to further a scheme which will recommend itself to them as heartily as if they were the undergraduate members benefiting by the improvements to be made. The suggestions involved in these remarks will be worked out by your committee more fully during the next few weeks; and on their behalf I ask your fullest co-operation in making this worthy scheme a success. If we can during the present year set on foot a scheme whereby something in this direction can be accomplished, our year will have been a useful one. And if, at the end of my own term of office, I can see this work in active progress, I shall look back upon my presidency with the proud thought that it was mine in a year marking the beginning of a new era of this Society's usefulness.

But while I look thus hopefully to the future, I cannot ignore the present, in which lies my duty to you. I hope it is not superfluous or impertinent in me to ask the members of this society to take a more active interest in its proceedings even than they have done in the past; to ask them to bear in mind that their membership involves duties no less than privileges; to remind them individually that the society does not exist as an abstract entity apart from themselves; and to warn them that, as "the mill will never grind with the water that is past," so the opportunities which they now have, once neglected, can never be recalled.

*Sapere aude,
Incipe. Vivendi recte qui prorogat horam,
Rusticus expectat dum defluat annis: at ille
Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.*

If the spirit which it may be inferred I desire to see among us, could this year be aroused and maintained, our members can confer mutual benefits upon one another to an incalculable degree. From the experience which we have alrery had, I believe that that spirit will be shown, and that those benefits will be enjoyed.

W. F. W. CREELMAN.

ASPIRATION.

Sayest thou thine heart aspires to something grand,
A glory past the thought of fellow men?
Yearns for divine ideal which nor pen
Can picture, nor thy soul quite understand?
Dost thou then agonize to stretch the hand,
And reach that peerless glory, and again,
Like as a little child of simple ken,
Lay all thy powers down for her command?

The world is not a friend to such as thou:
For demon disappointment lurks anear
To fright thy dream and void thy purpose high.
To meaner ends must thine ambition bow;
Not reconciled? 'Tis left, with bitter tear
Or mocking laugh, to curse the Fates and die.

J. J. FERGUSON.