

THE VARSITY.

THE VARSITY is published on Saturdays in the University of Toronto, by THE VARSITY Publishing Company, in 21 weekly numbers during the academic year. ♦

The Annual Subscription price is \$1.00 a year, payable before the end of January.

All literary contributions and items of College News should be addressed to THE EDITORS, University College, Toronto.

All communications of a business nature should be addressed to THE BUSINESS MANAGER.

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PRINCIPAL GRANT'S ADDRESS: MATRICULATION STANDARDS.

In his recent address before the University Council of Queen's College, Principal Grant singled out the University of Toronto for special attack on the subject of Matriculation standards in Ontario. It is somewhat curious that a usually acute observer such as Principal Grant should have failed to point out the real facts of the case, and that he should have attacked a sister institution for the continuance of a state of affairs for which she is not responsible, against which she has fought, and against which her whole policy for the past decade has been a silent but practical protest.

With the action of the Senate of the University in neglecting to fall in with the representations of the Senate of Queen's in 1886 we are not here concerned. THE VARSITY can only express its own individual regret that at that time, when circumstances seemed specially favourable, the initial steps were not taken to form what might ultimately have become a permanent University Commission for Ontario.

The questions with which we are here concerned, and which are raised in Principal Grant's address, are simply these: Is the matriculation standard in Ontario what it should be? and if not who is to blame? The answer to the first must, unquestionably, be made in the negative. To the second, Principal Grant says: The University of Toronto is to blame. We reply emphatically: No; the real culprit is the Education Department. In this and in succeeding articles we propose to make good this assertion, for which, we think, there are ample grounds.

To begin with, we must direct attention to this fact which underlies the whole question: That the educational system of our Province is presumably built upon a sound philosophical principle, viz.: it is a graduated system, each part being complete in itself, but each at the same time depending upon the other. The Kindergarten leads to the Public School, the Public Schools lead to the High Schools, the High Schools to the Universities. The point, therefore, at which the Public Schools stop is, in effect, the key-stone of the educational arch. If the Public School does not go far enough, the High School programme must be curtailed in the same proportion, and in like manner the Matriculation standard must be lowered to accommodate itself to the High School programme. That this is so, in theory, no reasonable critic can deny; that such a curtailment exists, practically, every reasonable observer must regretfully acknowledge.

THE VARSITY, two years ago, drew attention to this very state of things in definite and unmistakable language. The position which we assumed in 1887 we are prepared to take again to-day. Our quarrel is not with Queen's, or with Principal Grant, or with any individuals, but against the practice and policy of the Education Department alone. In January, 1887, THE VARSITY advocated the abolition of the present First Year course as laid down in the University Curriculum on the ground that it contained too much of "purely elementary work in many branches." As we then pointed out: "A large proportion of this [First Year] appears to us unnecessary, at least so far as the University is concerned. It should be done in the Secondary Schools." And again: "The work is not really University work at all; and also, that it would be done much more thoroughly and with better results in the High Schools and Collegiate Institutes, whose very existence presupposes the prosecution of such comparatively advanced studies." In regard to the elementary work prescribed in the Curriculum our position was this: That its retention was *prima facie* evidence that it was regarded by the University

authorities at least as having been indifferently taught in the High Schools and Institutes, and therefore had to be taught all over again in the University. This position we again unhesitatingly assume.

We shall reserve for a future occasion the statement of the evidence upon which we base our charges, and of the events which have brought about the present state of affairs, which, with Principal Grant, we must deplore, but for the continuance of which we cannot, as he does, hold the University of Toronto responsible.

COMMUNICATIONS.

THE Editors are not responsible for the opinions of correspondents. No notice will be taken of unsigned contributions.

THE LITERARY SOCIETY.

To the Editors of THE VARSITY.

SIRS,—Kindly allow me space in your columns to state a few facts and opinions concerning the Literary Society. After a tolerably regular attendance at the meetings of that society for the last four years I think I may say that it is as literary as it was four years ago, but neither more nor less so. It was in no ordinary meaning of the term literary then, and it is not literary now. Most of those who favour the continuation of the Literary Society on the old basis would probably admit this. They would say that although our society is not properly speaking literary, still it furnishes a large number of the undergraduates with opportunities for practice in public-speaking which they would obtain in no other way; and that it is our duty as members of the society and as undergraduates generally, to try and do what we can to make it more profitable. I shall have something to say about the feasibility of the establishment of a purely literary society later on, but in the meantime I would like to say that the society as present constituted, does not, as a matter of fact, give any large number of the students practice in public speaking. Practically all the speaking this year, with the exception of a little debating, which most of us regard as an unnecessary interruption in an evening's amusement, has been done by half-a-dozen men. I am not blaming those men; they may say, with a great deal of truth, that if they had not spoken nobody else would. They have profited by the society; and it is surely better that, if a society exist at all, six men should profit by its meetings than that they should be entirely profitless. What I am trying to show is that the Literary Society is at present of benefit to but a handful of members. If this be admitted the next question is, is there no way to diffuse its benefits? Some of us are not asking ourselves this question for the first time. We have been trying to answer it by our actions for some years, by speaking, by learning to speak, or at least by our regular attendance at the meetings. But all our efforts have been in vain. The society is sometimes better, and sometimes worse, but as Artemus Ward would say "chiefly worse," but there has been no steady improvement in it. The remedy for this has, I think, been indicated by a recent correspondent of your paper. Let us dissolve the Literary Society and let the Class Societies take up its work. Such a proposition has, I am aware, been greeted with much ridicule; let us see if it was justifiable. In a country as young as ours, it must be admitted that few of us came to college with any developed literary taste. This perhaps argues that more pains should be taken to develop it while here. But it none the less makes it more difficult for this to be done. I think that at present the establishment of a large, or in any way general, distinctively literary society is impracticable. It would soon die out from lack of interest. But our country is every day getting older; and I think that our work will not be in vain if we can gradually introduce into our societies a more distinctively literary influence. There are three classes of questions which might be dealt with at the literary societies which we have or may have amongst us:—(1) Literary questions; (2) Current political and social questions and others of general interest; (3) Amendments to our constitutions and other questions arising out of the business of the Society. At present we deal almost mainly with the third class. Some of the questions of the second class, which do not conflict with our constitution, come up, but no particular interest is manifested in them; with questions of the first class we have practically