

THE VARSITY

A Weekly Journal of Literature, University Thought and Events.

VOL. XII.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, NOVEMBER 30, 1892.

No. 8.

Editorial Comments.



If one were inclined to take for his text, Toronto University Athletic Supremacy, and the various contributory events as the heads of his discourse, he might pass from firstly to fifteenthly, and "finally, brethren," and leave his subject only half exhausted. If he were, likewise, in an optimistic and thanksgiving

mood, he might, without having recourse to the consolatory doctrine of adversity being but blessing in disguise, discover only matter of congratulation. He might refer to the prowess of our athletes, to their successes at home and abroad, to the healthy sporting spirit that is extending its power over the undergraduate mass, and to the brilliant prospect that the establishment of a well-equipped gymnasium and the extension of the foot-ball area open for the future.

We have been very successful—almost unprecedentedly so—within the last two years, and THE VARSITY shares most heartily in the general satisfaction. Trinity came from the west and McGill from the east; the former anxious, the latter sanguine. One determined to wrest from fate the victory so long accorded to the blue and white; the other, flushed with past successes, marched proudly to the scene of strife and victory—strife for all, and victory, but not for Trinity or McGill. But to dwell on, or even enumerate, our victories in Rugby, Association, lacrosse and base-ball; the achievements of our athletes in competition with sister universities; the remarkable success of our own fair-haired boy against the competition of a continent, would take us too far afield.

Not the least subject of congratulation is the fact that those who have won honor for their alma mater thus are in a great measure those most likely to bring her credit in the nobler and wider field of intellectual eminence. The champion mile runner of America is a first-class honor man in the department of moderns in the class of '93. Of the forty-five men of the present senior year, who, at their last examination, secured first-class honors in any department, no less than twenty-three are men who, to the writer's personal knowledge, are devotees of sport; and we doubt not that succeeding classes will show an equal or greater proportion. So has athleticism been the handmaid of learning; so may she ever continue. Let the fact be recognized—as it is an undoubted fact—that between physical and mental development, when considered separately, there is a difference, not of degree, but of kind—a difference that precludes the possibility of comparison between their respective values to humanity; that the highest physical development in itself is a thing immeasurably inferior to the very least development of man's spiritual, moral or even intellectual nature; let this be recognized, we say, but let it be remembered that they never are so

separate that they have a relation to one another which we may ignore, but do not thereby destroy; that this relation is one of mutual reaction, that, as a diseased mind hastens the dissolution of physical life, so does the diseased body hasten, by prevention, mental decadence. With this fact firmly in view one may easily make clear to his own mind the proper position of athletics in a theory of education. Not superior in its importance—not even co-ordinate with learning—but her useful and necessary slave.

That athletics may be relegated to this position in our universities is a matter of import to all who have enough national spirit to be interested in the welfare of the nation, and wisdom sufficient to see on what basis the true welfare of a nation rests. Nor is it of less importance that, having been so relegated, athletics may within her proper sphere perform her proper functions so as best to effect the desired result.

This brings us to the consideration of what means are necessary. And, first, let me state definitely what I conceive to be the end to be aimed at. It is neither more nor less than this, that each student of Toronto University should have placed within his reach such facilities as will enable him with least waste of time to have that amount of physical exercise and recreation which will be conducive to his best interests, as being neither physical nor intellectual, but both. If this be once admitted (and we think denial impossible), it is evident that what we require is a broadening, not a deepening, of the athletic influence. Not any man a professional, but every man an amateur, should be our aim.

The tendency has been of late, perhaps, more in the direction of the former; but several things have contributed to widen the interest, although much remains to be done in this direction. Lack of opportunity has, no doubt, prevented many from taking part in the lawn sports. The freshman feels that the upper years have a sort of proprietary right to the grounds, that he is there on sufferance only, and thus he is prevented from participation at the time when such participation would be most to the advantage of his college. Much dissatisfaction has been expressed and much more felt by men of the higher years, who have not the good fortune to be amongst the few who are slated for regular practice. These are condemned to forego foot-ball entirely, or to practise when the field is in possession of an unruly, unorganized mob of aimless and unscientific kickers. It would be a very easy matter, if it were anybody's particular business, to remedy this; but the evil has run unchecked, and promises to continue so unless some general action is taken. Hitherto the men who might have been expected to take a hand in remedying the matter have, unfortunately, been men whose immediate interests were rather in favor of its continuance, and who have failed to show that true sporting spirit which loves sport for sport's own sake, and who can find pleasure