

# THE 'VARSITY:

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF

EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY POLITICS AND EVENTS.

VOL. IV. No. 8.

Nov. 24, 1883.

Price 10 cents.

## THE LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY.

The most casual acquaintance with the attendance and proceedings of the Literary and Scientific Society will reveal the fact that, as compared with former years, a great want of interest is manifested. First, there has been a falling off in attendance, and next, among those who put in an appearance there is a 'plentiful lack' of energy, animation and self-assertion. That this lamentable state of things is in part due to the small turn-out at the meetings, no one will deny. It has become a trite saying that men speak better to large than to small audiences; unconsciously more energy is thrown into the speech, words flow more freely, and the speaker sees his way more clearly to the connected points of the discourse. The audience co-operate to produce this effect by larger sympathy and louder applause. Is it not rather strange that out of four hundred undergraduates a reasonable number cannot be found to take an active, living interest in the doings of the Debating Society. The prospect of empty benches is not a pleasant one for the intending debaters and essayists. Three weeks ago the number present from all the years was forty, a week later it was sixty; there being sixteen from the first, thirty-two from the second and third, and *twelve* from the fourth year!

But it is not alone on the poor attendance that the present stagnation of the Society is to be charged; its forms of procedure, and subjects of discussion are important elements. Unfortunately many of the best speakers in the College are not regular attendants of the Society, and thus partially have themselves to blame for a state of affairs they cannot but deplore. No matter how effete the present form of the Society, we are persuaded that there is sufficient talent among our men to reinvigorate it through sheer force.

As to the form of procedure and character of subjects of discussion, much has already been said. The proposal to break the deadening monotony of the meetings, by introducing politics, or by giving them the form of a mock parliament, was a good one, and the refusal of the Council to allow us to follow the example of the best English and American Colleges is certainly to be lamented. Contrast the animated and instructive debates of the Forum, the crossfire of questions and ready retorts, with the set and stereotyped manner in which the Literary Society drags slowly along. One of the most valuable acquisitions a would-be speaker can make, and one most difficult of attainment, is the ability to 'think on his legs.' For this purpose our Society makes no provision; and we cannot but think that the Forum, as at present constituted, performs that function admirably. That the success of this institution is not detrimental to our Society, is shown by the fact that those who take most interest in the Forum, are precisely those whose faces are seen most constantly in the latter. Why, then, if there be not something radically wrong, do the debaters who speak so vivaciously in the Forum fall into an intellectual coma when they come within the chilling precincts of Moss Hall? The reasons are not far to seek. One of the most palpable is that they are obliged to ignore a wide range of subjects in which young men usually take an intense interest. Then there is the formality, the monotony (we had almost said the complete stupidity) of the entire proceedings. Things have gone on in this same old time-honored way year after year. Enthusiasm there is none. Novelty (which everybody craves) there is none. Nobody feels that *he* is responsible for success. Had we a Govern-

ment with its ministers—an Opposition with its would-be ministers, we would incorporate all the elements of success—enthusiasm, novelty, responsibility,

There being, however, no immediate prospect of such a change, we ought to make the best of what we have. Much might be done, first by apt selections from our restricted range of subjects, next by exercise of care in selecting men likely to be acquainted with and interested in the particular questions they are asked to discuss; and last by additional care on the part of those chosen to provide the programme. It is surely time the undergraduates took the matter seriously in hand. A literary society is a most important adjunct to University College. We cannot let the one fall into disrepute without permanently injuring the other. A little organizing and some of the old-time enthusiasm would speedily bring the Society up to the standard of a few years ago. The material is there, without doubt, and, with such numbers and talent in the back-ground, the case is by no means desperate.

## Editorial Notes.

The 'VARSITY acknowledges with many thanks the courteous invitation extended to its Editor to be present at the Annual Banquet of Trinity Medical School, held on Thursday evening last, at the Queen's Hotel. This is the first time the 'VARSITY has been accorded a complimentary seat at the festive medical board, and we assure our Trinity friends that we duly appreciate not only the honor done us on this occasion, but the very generous reception accorded the 'VARSITY by the Trinity students, as evidenced by the number of names from that institution on our subscription list this year.

We publish in this issue a letter from Mr. Samuel Woods, M.A., of Ottawa, in reply to an editorial on the University endowment question which appeared recently in that paper. The thanks of the University are due to Mr. Woods for putting the matter so ably and so fairly before the people in the eastern section of the Province. We hope graduates in other parts of the country will follow the example of Mr. Woods, let no misrepresentation pass unchallenged, and omit no opportunity, through the medium of the papers, of their places of residence, of placing squarely and fairly before the people the question at issue.

We desire to draw attention to a notice in another column calling a meeting of graduates interested in the formation of an University Club. Considerable space has already been devoted to the subject in these pages, and the opinions expressed from several sources have been universally favorable. The feasibility of the project can only be decided by the numbers present, and the feeling manifested at the meeting this day week. Those who have already given the matter careful consideration and arrived at the conclusion that there is room for a Club and means to carry it on, have rested their calculations on the supposition that it will be taken up heartily by a large number of graduates, and it is therefore especially necessary that the initial meeting be largely attended. There will be little use in endeavoring to proceed further unless a widespread and deep inte-