

THE VARSITY.

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OUR CLAIM ON THE GOVERNMENT.

Elsewhere in the present issue Mr. Hodgins has presented the case of the University against the Crown. In an admirable historical *resume* he establishes that the relation subsisting between the Crown, represented by the Provincial Government, and the Provincial University in respect of that part of the former endowment which has been expropriated for the Legislative buildings, is that of trustee and *cestui que trust*. The University has a good claim for an annual subsidy of six per cent. calculated upon the present value of that site. This would afford a present and welcome relief. University men have forgiven much of the delay, have extenuated much of the parsimony that has prevented the adequate equipment and support of the University, feeling assured that the cause was not the unwillingness but the difficult position of the Government. But they have a right to insist that the jealousy of sectarian institutions shall no longer hinder that which is not a matter of favour but a measure of strict justice. The whole duty of the Government is not performed merely by placing the Federation Act upon the Statute Book, and no more important question can come before the House this Session for consideration than that of properly assisting the Provincial University to perform its high functions. The more pressing needs of the University are well known to the Government, and should receive immediate attention. Mr. Hodgins should not have to appeal in vain to graduates to rally round their alma mater. A strong impetus in the right direction might result from a special meeting of Convocation, if summoned at once, and if active measures were adopted to secure the help of local alumni associations. We look to the senate to be foremost in the endeavour to free our University from its embarrassment.

LITERARY NOTES.

"A GATE OF FLOWERS," AND OTHER POEMS. (1.)

Mr. Thomas O'Hagan, M.A., Classical and Modern Language Master of the Mitchell High School, has issued a small volume of poems under the above title. There are, however, throughout the volume passages which show the author to be capable of writing, at least, smooth and melodious verses. He is seen at his best in such poems as the one giving the title to the book, "Tokens," "A Christmas Chant," "The Dawning of the Day," and "My Path." Rarely do verses written for special occasions rise to the level of true poetry, and it requires a master-hand to throw a poetical garb around the commonplace. Such poems are apt to be rhetorical rather than poetical. To this class belong "Memor et Fidelis" and the "Moore Centenary Ode," the former being entirely unworthy of a place in a volume of serious verse. Several poems attest Mr. O'Hagan's strong Irish sympathies. In one instance he is betrayed into what we cannot but regard as an unwise allusion to a vexed political question. In "A Dream of Erin" he pictures Ireland as a separate nationality in which

"Her patriot sons in union,
Drive the Saxon o'er the sea."

This little volume has received high commendation from those whose literary judgments are usually correct. We cannot unreservedly join in the general chorus of acclamation with which this production has been greeted by the Canadian press, believing it would

(2.) "A Gate of Flowers," by Thomas O'Hagan, M.A. Toronto: William Briggs, 78 80 King street East; 64 pp., cloth.

be unjust to Mr. O'Hagan to do so, if he desires a fair and candid criticism of his poems, as we suppose he does.

Mr. O'Hagan has chosen a very pretty title for his book of verses, and the poem which gives the name to the work is a graceful introduction to the volume. After entering through the "gate of flowers," the literary wayfarer can spend some moments of restful pleasure in the garden beyond. Though the music he listens to may be broken and wild at times, the sympathetic listener can catch, ever and anon, melodies wafted to him with the perfumes of—

"The breath of childhood's days which
Sweep through this gate of flowers."

The poem, "The Dawning of the Day," has a bright, hopeful ring about it—a feature apparently not characteristic of the author's general mood—the subjects chosen being in general retrospective, memorial and sad in tone. This piece is decidedly the best in the book. We quote a verse:

"Hope! Hope!
The hour is coming,
And the little star seeks rest,
As a child that, growing weary,
Nestles to its mother's breast;
All the glories of the night
Lose their soft enchanting light,
For the lord of day approaches
In his chariot from the east."

There are, moreover, many graceful sentiments and dainty conceits to be found scattered through the verses. For instance:

"Our tears are but rainbows of hope
Illuming each prayer that is given."

And, speaking of the death of a young girl:

"Dead—sweet emblem of grace—
Star in the rosary of heaven!"

As might be expected in the work of a young author, there are many things which the critic must take note of, and disapprove. If he speaks reprovingly he does not do so disparagingly, but rather that he may do his duty fairly and honestly to himself and to the author who asks for his opinion. There are many defects of metre and construction, notably in "A Song of Canadian Rivers," and "The Maple and Shamrock," where the accentuation of certain words is forced unnaturally. A very frequent and sometimes not very appropriate use of adjectives is another fault which is fatal to the artistic finish of certain verses. Numerous repetitions and mannerisms occur, as, for instance, the use of the word "sweet-lipp'd," which we find four times, in different poems, now descriptive of a Rose, now qualifying "Hours." We hardly think even the most generous poetic license will absolve this grammar:

"But, ah! the friends of other days—
Those are the gate of flowers
That bloom with tender memories
From buds of golden hours."

The mistakes we have noticed are largely attributable, in our opinion, to haste and inexperience. It is gratifying to find one who, engaged in the arduous and ill-requited profession to which Mr. O'Hagan belongs, has cultivated his literary talents to so much advantage. The duties incident to his profession have doubtless rendered it impossible for the author to revise his work as he should otherwise have done, and with that degree of care which the public taste and the character of his work demand. If his work suffers in consequence he must take the blame to himself. We have been candid in our criticism of Mr. O'Hagan's work, trusting that, at a future time, he may enlarge and revise his present volume, which gives promise of greater and better work in the region of pure literature.

Mr. W. W. Campbell, one of the most valued contributors to THE VARSITY, authorizes us to announce that he purposes issuing at once a volume of his poems. The book will be called "Lake Lyrics and Other Poems," and will contain, doubtless, many pieces familiar to our readers, and which Mr. Campbell did us the honour to publish first in our columns. The price of the volume will be one dollar, and will be sold by subscription only. We shall review the work more in detail in a future number.

Lippincott's Magazine has started in its February number a series of one hundred questions in literature and matters of current interest, for the best answers to which a prize of one hundred dollars is offered. The February number of Lippincott's Magazine is a Woman's number, and exhibits the better half of humanity in a number of the avocations which the present age throws open to women; as, translator, novelist, lawyer, poet, and literary critic. The contributors are Mrs. A. L. Wister, Belva A. Lockwood, Helen Gray Cone, Sarah M. B. Piatt, Amelie Rives, Edith M. Thomas, Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Agnes Repplier, etc. Max O'Rell will have an article in an early number of Lippincott's Magazine.