

## Contributed.

### A CLASS-TIME AT EDINBURGH.

Once, lonely and extra-mural, the Kirk o' Field, where Darnley lodged to Bothwell; now, in the very midst of the turmoil of the streets, a pile of high stone buildings, massive, rectangular,—the City's University! Of grey sandstone, venerable and austere, a veritable John Knox in architecture, its visage a perpetual gloom! Noisy thoroughfares flank it familiarly about; it commands nothing of situation; yet its presence is always singular, impressive, academic. The silence of three hundred years dwells within the spacious quadrangle; only the plash of rain from the gargoyles, or the twitter of building sparrows. The common clamor of traffic forever assails it,—the ebb and flow of the growing times; yet its dominion remains silent, impassive, strong—an old Quaker fallen among thieves.

But the "Old Building," as it is called, has a life and a tumult of its own. A many-legged, noisy-lunged being, that unhesitatingly invades the very sanctity of its presence, clatters about the quadrangle, pounds down the long corridors, or carves its name on the back forms of the sepulchral class-rooms. A noisy, restless, ever-shifting care to the scrupulous and exacting old "Master;" an offspring that numbers some five thousand strong; her "boys," that only Time shall sodden and subdue!

The winter morning breaks slowly over the old "Grey City,"—the relentless rain, the feeble gas-jets. East winds ravage the naked streets. The cold of the North Sea is raw about one's ears.

Dark, formidable and forbidding stands the old "University," its huge gateways adrip with the driving rain. The quadrangle is wet, empty and cheerless, as it buffets, forward and back, the invading elements. Dejected janitors scuttle aslant rainswept spaces, or lurk in sheltered corners, Scottish and taciturn. Slowly the gilded hands of the mindful clock reach round near the hour of nine,—that scholastic starting-post. And now in through the gateways labor sundry sorry and rubber-clad figures, here singly, and there in groups; these shiver quickly along the stone balconies, and disappear, within the dark portals of the Leclerc Theatre, beyond. As the minutes

lessen, the throng thickens; its speed increases; till, at the stroke of nine is there nearly a ten-second burst of flying Mackintosh and Glengarry.

Within, the amphitheatre rapidly fills; tier rising upon tier, face added to face, higher and higher, in the gas-light. Verily a motley assemblage of Jew and Gentile, gathered from the earth's four corners; First year's men they are, and their spirits exuberant. The clamor they raise is tremendous. Head-gears fallen awry, twisted round or tilted back for greater freedom, lends something of the picturesque to the confusion. The perfect ease of the "performers" is refreshing!

Of "chaffing" there is little; the true Scot never "chaffs." His jokes are sparse; hungry and funereal things. His one aim and ambition is to make a row. This he does in a serious, solid, so-much-by-the-yard sort of way, his face as long as Leith Walk. Each man, on his arrival, grasps by the nether end his faithful stick, and proceeds in systematic fashion to belabor his share of the floor or form just in front. These sticks are the special pride of the first year's men; and their size would put to shame any Gaspareaux cord-wood.

The noise soon waxes hideous. Those whose arms have grown weak in the service use their feet. The result is quite the same. Soon, from a far corner, some enthusiast essays a solo. "Clementine" and "Old Hundred" are the prime favorites. According as the fancy takes, the singer is either promptly *hors de combat*, or his effort is approved and gets emphasis, grows multifarious, horrible. Often, however, the "favorites" are started together; odds even. Then the pandemonium gets divided. Oh, division! Oh, strength! for the turmoil is simply redoubled. The respective partisans lock in a deafening struggle! now the chances favor "Old Hundred;" again "Clementine" pulls to the front. At exactly five minutes after the stroke of the hour the Professor makes his appearance; the regulation frock coat and skull cap. His entrance marks an armistice in proceedings, and is invariably greeted with a rival, wind-broken cheer. Further achievement is reluctantly relinquished. Off come the hats; out come the pens and note-books. Gradually is heard the flutter of note-books and stationery, disturbed only by volleyed cries of "Hat!" aimed at some luckless wight who has forgotten to uncover. The little, conventional cough; then, "Gentlemen, we resume this morning;" the Lecture has begun.