

The Varsity

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BY

THE LITERARY AND SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY.

The office of THE VARSITY is at the corner of Spadina Avenue and College Street, Rooms 2 and 3, in the third storey, where the EDITOR and the BUSINESS MANAGER will be found every evening from 7 to 8 p.m.

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JANUARY 25, 1893.

LITERARY SOCIETY.



At the point of attendance the first Literary Society meeting this term was a noble and remarkable success. Not the coldness of the weather, not the alluring inducements of theatre and concert, not the stupendous attractions of the great political meeting in the Auditorium, addressed as it was by the illustrious Premier and his docile family, could stifle the patriotic desire of the members to honor the meeting with their presence. They turned out to the number of twenty-five, and huddling over the register discussed the menu before them. Mr. McDougall, acting for the absent secretary, kindly consented to decipher the latter's hieroglyphics. Satisfied with the truth of his translation, the well-nigh frozen society suffered Mr. Moss to delight its soul with a cheering committee report giving reasons against a conversat, recommendations for an afternoon at home instead, and asking for the appointment of a committee next meeting to make arrangements for the same. Mr. Moss, whose vital energies, despite his cosy surroundings, seemed now on the point of exhaustion, received a reviving reminder from the President, and gasping out that speakers for the Queen's debate would be elected next meeting, peacefully expired. The sorrowful meditations of the company were now interrupted by the announcement that the literary course was about to be served. Mr. Laschinger read an able and elegant essay on "What is commonly called science," prefacing his effort by the encouraging declaration that he had done his very best to elevate his subject to the level of the cream of Canada's culture. This over and applauded, Mr. Island, leading for the affirmative, attempted to prove that the system of trial by jury should be abolished. The speaker bore his position with ability, displaying a capacity for original thought, little to be expected from any fourth year student. The society's thermometer now being at zero, the President suggested an exodus to the sunnier realms of the ladies' parlour. No sooner had this been accomplished than the secret, but mighty influences left in the room by its usual occupants commenced to work. A thoroughly masculine air began to be visible in the conduct and bearing of the members, an intense and grasping ambition to

obtain and maintain their rights showed itself in the contending speakers. A remarkable disposition to settle things prematurely, but decisively, was seen in the chairman. The influence exerted by the absent upon the present even extended to matters of apparel, and the awe-struck audience looked on in terror while the successive speakers, striving to drape themselves, found it almost impossible to penetrate the labyrinthic mysteries of the gown's sleeves, which had been suddenly mesmerised out of all understanding by the influence of a lady's pocket. Mr. O'Connor, rising to lead the negative, struggled hard for a time against the pervading feminine atmosphere. He tried to talk to the question, he tried to be logical, he tried to stifle the indignation naturally aroused by the senseless opposition of the affirmative, but all in vain, the power of woman conquered; the inevitable explosion came, and the society rolled in tremendous laughter, while the speaker, involuntarily throwing argument and fact to the winds, furiously denounced the idiots who had the presumption to cry down what he had the honor to uphold. Despite the odds against him, his speech was singularly able, and Mr. J. L. McDougall had no light task in rising to reply. He showed, at first, a spirit of conciliation and no small skill of refutation. But he also became a victim to the ghostly sisters, and if any one doubts the influence of surroundings let him bear in mind forever that under the influence of surroundings the traditionally unassertive Lorne actually was guilty of asserting by inuendo that a man who possessed no mathematics possessed no common sense. Mr. Wilson answered for the negative. Mr. Island summed up for the affirmative, and Alfred the Greatest rose to pronounce his decision concerning the time-honored institution said to have been established by Alfred the Great. Any one acquainted with the characteristics of the lawful owners of that fatal room, any one aware of the awful power those characteristics can exert on others, needs not to be told what that decision was. The spiritual influence of those who hope by their personal influence to change and abolish the earth, it is superfluous to relate, was quite sufficient to change and abolish trial by jury. In conclusion, the hypnotised members struggled home to dream "of thee," and the great mock parliament of Friday next.

AS WE LIST : AND YE LIST.

"There is a pillar," it has been remarked, "in the nave of Strasburg Cathedral, nearly opposite the pulpit, whose capital represents a donkey celebrating the mass while other beasts assist."

The curious gargoyles, and grotesque carvings in the churches of the thirteenth century, indicate that same spirit of satire which found vent in the *Renart* stories, which flooded the literature of Western Europe at this period, forming in France alone a collection of more than eighty thousand verses. These strange and fanciful devices had then an inner meaning: they typified the wonder-seeking minds, the blind researches, the magic lovers, the mystic dreamers of the middle ages. In nineteenth century structures we still discover in wood and stone designs, the weird images of man and bird and beast, but their national force was lost: they are merely architectural ornaments. For instance, you may recall the sturdy and unprepossessing form, whose stooping shoulders bear the ambitious stories of the Canada Life building on King Street. It means but little more to us than, perhaps, a chimney. With the builders of the cathedral in the olden days, the psalming donkey meant sly laughter in cynical hearts.

What man could ever epithetize like Carlyle? Here is a sentence from "Past and Present," Chap. xiv. He has been lauding Cromwell as a governor, after which, turning to the "Modern Worker," he says: "And now do but contrast this Oliver with my right honourable friend, Sir