

The Varsity

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TORONTO, November 22nd, 1899.

OUR LIBRARY.

IN directing attention to our University Library, VARSITY has no desire whatever to make any criticism or express any disapproval of the accommodation provided for the students. On the contrary, we would express our appreciation of the excellence and efficiency of the service in all departments; yet, at the same time, it is quite possible that an expression of the further needs of some of our students may meet with the favorable consideration of the authorities, and thus add not only to the advantage of the students, but to the usefulness of the library in meeting the end for which it is adapted; and it is only by means of such expression that the authorities can become aware of any strong desires on the part of the students. In the first place we should like to say something about the books.

There are now somewhere in the neighborhood of fifty thousand volumes in our library; accessions are made annually to the value of several thousand dollars, and yet the advantage to the student, we believe, does not increase in proportion to the capacity of the library, for the number of the volumes used by the students remains practically the same, namely, something less than one-fifth of the total number. Now, we are fully aware that probably more than half of the books not now used have little or no interest to the general student, but there is undoubtedly a great quantity of valuable material lying unused simply because it is unknown. However, there would be some opportunity of one becoming acquainted, in part at least, with the material bearing on his own department, were it not that, as we have indicated, vast quantities of fresh material are regularly added to our library without any further indication to the student than the placing of the cards in the catalogue, and the discovery of which, it is needless to say, is reduced to a minimum. An appreciation of this difficulty led VARSITY some months ago to see if some arrangements could not be made for the publication of an eclectic list, but the task of preparation alone

would occupy time beyond our limit, to say nothing of space. There are many students here who wish to become familiar with the literature bearing on their particular department, and under the present arrangement this, we believe, is not possible.

Two remedies suggest themselves to us. One is that some intimation should be given to the students of the accessions made to the library. This would be considerable work, but not, we think, disproportionate to the benefit to be derived. In the second place we think that admission by ticket to the stack room should be granted to the students in honor work in the third and fourth years at least. It is true that books are readily to be had by consulting the catalogue and asking at the desk, but anyone who has made the attempt of finding out the character of various works knows the limits to this arrangement. Furthermore, lovers of books are never made by consulting catalogues, but they *are* made by handling books. What cannot be learned in an hour from a catalogue can be learned in five minutes from a shelf of books. Of course there is a possibility of the loss of some few volumes where students have access to the library shelves, but the gain to the larger number is surely of more importance than any slight loss that may be sustained by the library. In any case any movement by the authorities that will serve to help the students in keeping in touch with the books in the various departments would be much appreciated.

Another matter is that of our Magazine room. This is a veritable mine of wealth and one almost entirely overlooked or neglected by the students. These magazines are kept in the west room, but as this room is required for other purposes, the magazines, which may be had on the four-day system, are almost entirely neglected by the students. A list of the magazines regularly received would be most helpful, but we should much prefer to have these in a room where students would be free to resort and read at their leisure. The conversation room might be adapted to this purpose, since it is scarcely ever used by the students, and the key kept at the desk as in the case of the departmental study rooms. Our Literary Society provides all the popular magazines of the day in their own reading room, but the magazines in the library have to do almost exclusively with educational affairs and cannot but be of interest to all those pursuing any special course of study.

We have already made reference to the interruption caused by the telephone, and there are some few other minor items that we should like to refer to, such as the desirability of having the signs "Silence is Requested" removed from the library, but these are of no immediate disadvantage even if they are useless, and so we leave the matter, with the suggestions of some of our more pressing needs, in the hope that these will not seem to indicate anything beyond a desire to gain advantages which the library authorities have always shown a willingness to provide whenever they are made known and could be seen to harmonize with the best interests of all concerned.