

University Gazette,

MONTREAL, 12TH JANUARY, 1878.

Editors for 1877-78.

J. N. GREENSHIELDS.

J. MCKINLEY.

F. W. SHAW

A. B. CHAFFEE, Jr.

J. C. McCORKILL,

Secretary.

B. C. MACLEAN.

H. B. SMALL.

T. A. O'CALLAGHAN.

F. WEIR,

Treasurer.

In the faculty of law a practice which, we must say, we think is rather an anomaly, has for some time past been in vogue. We refer to the method of selecting valedictorians. In both the other faculties, and in every university we have heard of, the invariable custom has been, and is, to allow the members of the graduating class to choose their own valedictorian. In the McGill faculty of law it is otherwise. The graduating classes are required to write an essay or thesis of limited length on some professional subject, and the student who has, in the estimation of the examiners, written the best thesis, is appointed valedictorian. Now, it seems to us that there are very serious objections to this system. In the first place, a man who may be a very good writer, and who may have taken pains enough with his composition to produce a fair essay, may be a very unfit person to perform the duties of a valedictorian. The qualifications for the two things are essentially and radically different and distinct. A man may be a capital writer and an excrable speaker; he may be a close student and a miserable elocutionist; he may be an energetic worker and still may mingle so little with his fellow students as to be utterly unable to fairly represent them at Convocation. We do not propose to define the functions of a valedictorian, nor do we intend to express our opinion as to what a valedictory ought to be; but we are sure that the justice of what we have said will be apparent to anyone who has heard the valedictory addresses at the faculty of law for the past few years. We make no personal allusions when we say that without exception these have shown an utter misconception of the idea of such an address, and they have generally partaken of the character of high-flown eulogiums of the profession of law, and of legal things

in general; and the object has generally been, not to express in grateful terms, the *vale*, but to prove to the world that law was supreme, and that beyond law there was no good thing.

The cause of this is to be found simply in the system of appointment, in nothing else.

Another objection to the present custom is that the result of the examinations of the essays is seldom announced more than a day or two before Convocation, and consequently some unlucky graduate is called upon to write or compose an address on a few hours' notice. We question very much whether any man can do himself or the class he is appointed to represent justice under circumstances such as these.

The case would be much ameliorated if the system which obtains in the other faculties were introduced into the Law School. The best man would in nine cases out of ten be chosen, and if he made a failure the class would be responsible for its choice, and it would not have the mortification of having perhaps the most unlikely person for such an office imposed upon it. We would suggest to the law students that a meeting be called and the matter taken into consideration. In our opinion the graduating class has the *right* to select its valedictorian, and we would like to see this right asserted, being convinced that there is no comparison whatever between the merits of the respective customs.

—:O:—

Laval University has at last, we learn, opened a branch in Montreal. The opening ceremonies, if opening ceremonies they were, were very imposing. There will, we suppose, be a great many of these imposing ceremonies connected with the course. Nor do we object to them. They break the monotony of a college course. They give *ecolat* to a college life. They give the weary mind a rest, and distract its attention from subjects whose continual pressure has a depressing influence upon the mind. The professorial staff of the Law Faculty has been appointed. Mr. Chapleau, we notice, fills the chair in criminal law. Judge Monk is also among the elected, of whom we forget the remainder. Laval University holds a high rank among Canadian universities, and some of her graduates are among the brightest ornaments of the Montreal Bar. It is not a spirit of hostility that we propose to cherish towards her. McGill University must feel that in Laval University she has a "foeman worthy of her steel," and Laval University will learn that if she proposes to supplant McGill University, her strength will require to be more than hercu-