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THE PRESIDENCY OF THE DEBATING SOCIETY.

The election for this office, which takes place towards the end of the present month, is already being preceded by the usual ferment. The actual storm of the election day should certainly be uproarious, seeing how the dead calm which comes before lasts without a squall from October to February. Now there is quite a refreshing breeze; the members of election committees and the nominees for 'minor offices' are to be met with in all the nooks of the College halls, intent on gauging the rises and falls of popular favor, and wearing on their countenances the expression which has been described as the 'weight of empire look.' The devices of the politician, the carefully-selected phrases of canvassers, and the discreet utterances of that mysterious being, the party organizer, indicate the anxieties and labors of the hour. To individuals of the bystanding type these labors must appear rather boyish, since out of three possible bases on which the election might proceed—(1) sectionalism, (2) personal sympathy, (3) attachment to well-defined principles—the last has not yet been introduced, the second is a small influence among a small minority, while the first holds undisturbed sway. The remedy which will bring about a rational and wholesome struggle has not been suggested, and there seems to be little prospect of a change towards giving to local undergraduate politics that character in miniature which belongs to the politics of the country at large. The opinion has been expressed, it is true, that to attain this object a reconstruction of party lines is necessary in the first place; but it requires little reflexion to perceive that such a reconstruction is more a matter of gradual growth than of arbitrary arrangement. The common plan of beginning at the top when an edifice is to be demolished is the more obvious course to follow, and accordingly the initial step of reform in this instance would be to alter the conditions of candidature for the Presidency. No prophetic faculty is needed to see that the alteration which would eventually meet with the widest satisfaction is the restriction of the office to the undergraduates. In the United States the university and college debating societies are presided over by undergraduates, as the belief is firmly held that men of the junior standing are capable of managing their own affairs. Speaking generally, a community makes a virtual confession of weakness by choosing its leader from outside itself or from a quarter where it possesses little or no control. The debating society, however, confesses itself in this manner every year, and goes on a begging mission among the Toronto graduates who have shown the interest they take in it by their absence at the meetings. As undergraduates, we protest against what practically amounts to a humiliating admission of incompetency to supply out of our ranks a fit occupant for the headship of what is really our own association. Such a proceeding is tantamount to an acknowledgment that, as regards governing capacity, we are inferior to the youth at American universities. The latter scorn to part with a tittle of their independence by allotting positions in their bestowal to any person other than one of themselves. But the Debating Society has no such scorn, and the idea it entertains of the capabilities of its active members (in other words, the undergraduates) may be conjectured from the fact that there has never been an instance of an undergraduate receiving even a nomination for the Presidential chair, save in some rare instances of members of the outgoing Year. The exception, however, is not a legitimate one, as such nominees, when successful, were graduates before entering on their term of office.

For the undergraduates an undergraduate President is wanted. The accomplishment of the political reform referred to above

would soon result from this new departure. The views of candidates in regard to the Constitution and other matters of interest to the Society could then be easily ascertained, and parties would form themselves in accordance with these views. Sectionalism would vanish, together with other elements which render the election to a great extent a contest of personal feeling instead of rival principles. A life and freedom would be communicated to the undergraduate body which it has hitherto been far from possessing, and the Debating Society would experience a resurrection from its long-prostrate and stiffened condition. There would be that animation exhibited in its proceedings which is alien to associations that are not self-governed; whilst the timorous attitude which is assumed in regard to questions that are supposed to depend for solution on the humor of the College Council would be abandoned.

From all reports it appears that Mr. Johnson is no longer a candidate for the Presidency, so Mr. Kingsford is the only nominee actually in the field at the present moment. An election by acclamation is an uncommonly-dull affair, and probably the supporters of the latter gentleman are as anxious for a contest as their opponents, whoever they may be. By all means let us have a fight, and if a graduate cannot be found to step into Mr. Johnson's place, there is no reason in the world why an undergraduate should not be started on this road to imperishable renown. The party which enters late in the race often betters its prospects by the adoption of novel tactics, and there always are some concurring influences which accompany an unprecedented policy. In this instance the cry of patriotism, of *esprit de corps*, would be warrantably raised, and might prove a very demoralizing cry indeed. What is worth considering is worth trying, and an opportunity which is not likely to happen soon again is now afforded for trying the experiment.

THOMAS CARLYLE.

"In the obituary of these days stands one article of quite peculiar import; the time, the place and particulars of which will have to be often repeated and re-written, and continue in remembrance many centuries."

It was thus that Carlyle wrote of the dead Goethe fifty years ago, in words which seem singularly expressive and, in a sense, prophetic of the feeling which the announcement of his own death was destined to awaken wherever the English language is spoken. It was to be expected, and the expectation has been fully justified, that the death of Carlyle would be the signal for the outpouring of an enormous quantity of obituary literature; newspapers and periodicals of all kinds and of every shade of opinion have given to the world their estimate of his character and influence, and weighed in the balances of their judgment the value of his work and the probable duration of his fame. It is with no purpose of rivalling these efforts of the secular and religious papers that we approach the subject, which they have ere this discussed in all its bearings, and settled to their own satisfaction, if not to that of their readers.

These criticisms, as a rule, have been generous and kindly in their tone, cordial in praise and temperate in censure. The most remarkable and deplorable exception to this rule that we have noticed is the Jupiter Optimus Maximus of Canadian journalism, who, emerging once a month from the Olympus where he 'lies beside his nectar,' condescends to merely human interests for a time under the humble guise of a *Bystander*, and taking for his domain, Art, Science, Literature, Politics, Religion and the Universe generally, unravels whatever tangled threads may have chanced therein during the preceding thirty days! From him we learn that Carlyle had long "ceased to take in or give out any new truth;" that his philosophy is "naught or worse than naught;" that "his cynicism became at last as bitter, as indiscriminating, and as barren as the east wind;" that his "preachings" are ruined by