

The result of a prolonged course of diet of such literature—if it can be dignified by that name—must surely result in mental dyspepsia. And not only are all the canons of literary taste set aside, but even reputation, character and the private life of public men and women are not sacred from the scalpel of these literary hyenas. And this is the most deplorable part of the business. For while one might pardon literary Philistinism, as a sort of temporary insanity, or midsummer madness, one cannot forgive attacks upon character and reputation. Even the questionable excuse that the exigencies of political warfare render it necessary to fight "the enemy" with fire, or with its own weapons, cannot be accepted as an *amende* for the publication of so-called political scandals which the party journals blazon forth with all the accessories of display type and double leads. The leader-writers of the party press have become so reckless and extravagant that ordinary language and calm argument are no longer serviceable, and the use of such weapons is, in fact, considered an admission of weakness, and stamps the writer as an "independent," or a "fence straddler." Another vicious result of the present tendency of these party writers is seen in the coinage of words and phrases which gain currency at a time of political excitement, and which remain in use long after they have served whatever purpose may have called them into circulation. Flippancy, slang, and an unlimited use of abusive adjectives are the stock-in-trade of the average party editor. Public and national questions are discussed by these writers with an appearance of authority which even the ease and fluency of the literary style in which they are discussed cannot carry off successfully. Character the result of a life-long endeavour, and the most precious heritage of public, as well as of public citizens, is assailed and blackened in a paragraph, perhaps the work of a reporter, whose responsibility in the case is assumed with an indifference to results comparable only with his colossal ignorance and impertinence. Surely this state of affairs is rendering existence intolerable, and threatens to debase not only our national life, but must inevitably seriously affect literature and the profession of journalism. The time has come when a halt must be called, or else we shall drift into a provincialism and *sans-culottism*, the results of which we do not care to predict

COMMUNICATIONS.

The Editors are not responsible for the opinions of correspondents.
No notice will be taken of unsigned contributions.

"THE DR. WILSON MEDAL."

To the Editors of THE VARSITY.

SIRS:—In your issue of the 2nd inst. appeared a letter on the "Dr. Wilson Medal," which is characterized mainly by strong language, sweeping assertions and unfairness.

Injustice is a harsh-sounding word. The reason for its use is that the work prescribed for the medal does not include Italian Ethnology, Old French and Old German. The writer might as reasonably have added Spanish, which, though not recognized as a college subject, is nevertheless taught by a college lecturer.

How far is the omission of these an injustice? An option is allowed between Spanish and Italian. Suppose a student wishes to take Spanish only, would it be fair to debar him from competing for the medal by requiring a test in Italian, or compel him to take Italian against his will? Such a requirement would be unjust, as would be one necessitating a student taking Italian, but not Spanish, to give evidence of proficiency in Spanish prose.

As for Ethnology, Mr. Logie should have remembered that he with other Modern Language men petitioned the Senate for an option between Ethnology on the one hand, and Italian on the other. Now, he finds fault with the college authorities for excluding the former from the programme of studies for the medal. Is not this inconsistent? And is not inconsistency absurd? With regard to texts, I am glad that no mention is made of them. They were put on the curriculum for the purpose of forming an introduction to the study of philology after graduation. If philology, or phonetics, a mere part of it, is to be made the principal feature of Modern Language study in University College, as in several colleges in the States, the sooner the tendency is corrected the better. This the medal programme will help to do, inasmuch as it looks only towards the literary side.

In the communication referred to we have a method of study

mapped out which if followed might, or might not, gain the medal. But let us suppose that it did; I cannot see that the man who should win the medal would be less deserving or more dishonest than many a medallist or scholarship man of former years. Is it not already a very common thing for men to read translations, commentaries and the like? It is a practice strongly to be condemned, but it prevails nevertheless. If this method of reading helped to win the medal it would be as likely to place a candidate in first-class honours. A man would not do any worse in French or German prose at the university examination because of his practice for the medal.

It seems to have escaped Mr. Logie's notice that the work for the medal lies along the line of the curriculum and goes beyond it. Candidates for the medal and for examination have alike to be acquainted with the historical writings of Hugo and Goethe, and one historical play of Shakespeare. Besides these, the medal work includes Schiller and all of Shakespeare's historical plays. The real ground for complaint, though not clearly stated, seems to be that the medal is not to be given upon the results of the May or other examinations. All that needs to be said is that the gentlemen who choose the subject are all medallists, and know how far examinations are a test of a candidate's knowledge and ability. Indisposition, lack of time to cram, miscalculation of time in answering a paper, or difference of opinion between candidate and examiner, may prevent a man who is really the best in his class from gaining the highest place in the lists. A man, on the other hand, who reads in the way described by Mr. Logie, and who has plenty of time to cram up facts which have no value at all, as far as liberal education is concerned, may impose just as much on the public with his first-class honors as any ignorant, illiberal, dishonest and dishonorable medallist.

There is, however, one objection that has some force, and only one. It is that the announcement was made too late in the term. November may not seem late, but by that time a man has his plans so arranged that it is almost impossible to change them.

I shall close with a suggestion that the time for receiving theses be extended till September. If it is not, I fear that no essays will be forthcoming. This will be due not to lack of appreciation of the medal on the part of those interested, but to lack of time.

A. H. YOUNG.

THE DEBATE AT KINGSTON.

To the Editors of THE VARSITY.

SIRS,—Permit me to say a few words on the Intercollegiate Debate, of which I was one of the judges. The decision was of course not on the merits of the subject, but on its treatment by the debaters, and this decision, as against Toronto, was promptly unanimous.

A presumably inadvertent admission by their leader made the position of the negative from the first logically indefensible; and against this unfortunate blunder they struggled handsomely but vainly throughout the evening. When it was allowed by the leader of the negative that while hostile to any form of Federation, he was yet opposed to disintegration of the empire and loyal to present British connection, he was taking needlessly difficult ground; and even this ground he and his colleague then rapidly demolished by arguing the temporary character of present connection, and the certainty and desirability of speedy disintegration. An excellent argument had evidently been prepared for Independence or Annexation, when through some magic contagion of this loyal city, the above unpremeditated admission was made.

Very truly,

R. BALMER.

AN EXPLANATION.

To the Editors of THE VARSITY.

SIRS:—Kindly allow me space in your columns to correct an error which occurs in your account of the Literary Society's meeting of the 4th inst. You said that, in an essay which I read on that occasion, "Mr. Blake was styled the 'leading Prohibitionist' of Canada." Such an appellation as applied to Mr. Blake is manifestly absurd. The only two places in which he was referred to read as follows: "It was only a few weeks ago that the leader of the Reform Party declared himself a Prohibitionist, not an advanced one, but still a Prohibitionist." And the second passage: "In that I will endeavour to deal with what has been the greatest stumbling-block to temperance legislation in Canada, namely, the plea that the country is not ripe for it. This is becoming rather hackneyed. Many people say it because they have heard others say it. But let us take it as coming from its ablest advocate, the Hon. Edward Blake, and examine how true it is." You will thus see that it is as the leading exponent of the views of only the unripe branch of the Prohibition party that Mr. Blake is referred to.

T. C. DESBARRES.