

fountain-head. All that the lecturer can do is to teach us to read, and he can teach only those who are willing to learn, in which business the work must be done by the pupil, while the master teaches and points out the way. This is true University work, for, as Carlyle says, "If we think of it, all that a University or final highest school can do for us is still but what the first school began doing,—teach us to read."

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A hopeful sign of the present time is the awakening interest which is shown in the historic times and conditions of our own province. A very considerable number of historical and pioneer societies have been formed in various cities, towns and counties of Ontario. These societies have already gathered a considerable amount of interesting material, much of which is of more than local interest. Naturally enough the old idea of the paramount importance of military matters still prevails, but, with further experience and insight, the much greater importance of social, economic, religious and educational matters will be recognized.

It is strange that the citizens of Kingston, which of all the historic spots in Ontario has had the longest and most varied existence, should hitherto have shown so little interest in the records of its past. Individual citizens have always maintained a general interest in her past, but no organized attempt was ever made to collect and preserve what records of an historic nature were to be found, and thus much valuable matter of that kind must already have perished. Now, however, mainly through the exertions of Mr. R. M. Horsey, who has long recognized this want, the Kingston Historical Society has been formed. Its chief function will be to collect and preserve historic material of a local or general interest. It is to be hoped that the citizens generally will lend it their effective assistance in bringing to light, for the benefit of the present and future generations, such letters, papers, documents, books or other records which may aid in setting forth or explaining any phase of our past political, social, commercial, religious, educational, or military conditions. Private letters are often more important than any public documents in showing the real feeling and condition of the people when a sufficient number can be compared. Many of these must everywhere be passing into oblivion and it is one of the special objects of an historical society such as the Kingston one to preserve them for future reference.

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In accordance with motions passed in the Alma Mater Society last term, a Mock Parliament has been organized and arrangements made for inter-year debates. With the exception of those who

oppose debates on the ground that due preparation for them interferes with study, there are but few students who do not approve of them. But how many of us have carefully investigated the results?

We have no desire to throw cold water on the efforts of the Executive to provide interesting entertainment for the A. M. S. meetings. Their efforts in this direction are commendable rather than blameworthy. Neither are we persuaded that the statement "To everything there is a season" does not apply to debates. But if they do good in some lines—as we think they do—they also have a tendency toward most undesirable results in at least one direction. They tend to develop the habit of making facts conform to theories rather than of adapting theories to facts. That this is an evil and one that is too prevalent at the present time none can doubt. As one scans the variety of theories which is advanced in almost every line of inquiry, and the plausible arrangement of facts upon which each is based, he is forced to see that it is easier to read one's own meaning into facts than to interpret them correctly. He who is to get right views on any subject, must study but that one purpose, *viz.*, a desire to know the truth. He must approach the subject with no preconceived ideas, he must have the establishment of no pet theory in view, but with an unbiased mind he must gather together all information that relates to the questions at issue and then decide accordingly.

Now this is the very opposite of the preparation necessary for a debate. It is true the keenest debaters prepare themselves by studying the subject in all its phases and are as familiar with their opponent's side as with their own. But for what purpose do they thus study? Not to find a right solution to the problem, but to prove that a certain given solution is right and that all others are wrong. They study one side to pick holes in it, the other to establish it. Those who have debated and made any adequate preparation, know what the effect has been upon themselves. The invariable testimony, where the subject of debate has been at all fair, is that they have ultimately believed what they argued and felt that their's was the strong side of the case.

This is the evil, but over against it stands the good to be derived from debating. It develops freedom in public speaking and makes one quick to recognize weak points and to detect wrong conclusions in the arguments of others. We hope that from our inter-year debates such benefits will be derived, but that no one will learn the habit of always looking through colored glasses. On the contrary may the debates serve as object lessons to teach that almost any theory may be apparently established and fully believed by a man of ability who looks at everything in the light of his theory, but that truth is found only by unprejudiced inquiry.