

# THE 'VARSITY:

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF

EDUCATION UNIVERSITY POLITICS AND EVENTS.

Vol. IV. No. 22.

Mar. 22, 1884.

Price 10 cents.

## CO-EDUCATION: AN ANSWER.

We publish this week two letters written in criticism of our editorial of last issue on co-education, one by Mr. Wm. Houston, who first intimated his views on this subject in our pages some four years ago, and the other by a gentleman who has given us of late every opportunity to know his views clearly and unambiguously. We will refer to these letters in order. Mr. Houston slightly misrepresents the position we attempted to make plain in the article referred to. We do not think we have ever said a word that could by the strictest adverse interpretation, be understood as in opposition to the claims of women to higher education. If we have appeared to confuse the two questions of higher education and co-education, it was unconsciously done. We have recognized, and endeavored to insist upon, the radical distinction between them, and are as much in favor of one as we are in opposition to the other. Our article of last week was intended to show that the recent resolution in favor of co-education in University College was grounded on exaggerated argument unopposed; that that resolution was recognized as only a makeshift provision to meet present demands, and was not adopted as founded on conviction in favor of co-education, and that even in the argument necessary for this change, positions were taken which were false and unintelligible. That we are wrong on our opinion, we think our critics do not show. The possibility of any satisfactory substitute for the proposed innovation was never seriously suggested; that, if such had been the case, it would have been at any rate fairly received, Mr. Houston seems to admit. His letter, though obviously meant to be a criticism of our views expressed last week, is not directed against us. We object to being saddled with any possible argument based on the small number of women likely to take advantage of the training of University College. This point has been insisted upon, but not by us. We have spoken of systems and principles, and we recognize no difference between the position and claims of five women and of five hundred, so far as the question under consideration is concerned. With the rest of Mr. Houston's letter we in the main agree. It is an apologetic explanation of the reasons for an innovation founded more on policy than on popularity.

Mr. Stevenson's letter is of a different style. We recommend its perusal, as showing the mode of argument in which many of his way of thinking have of late indulged. It is an attack upon us with a peculiar weapon, whose force is derived from a venomous mixture of insolent sarcasm and bad taste. Some of his insinuations, however roughly expressed, are worthy of refutation.

Attention is mildly called to our indulging in 'our usual inconsistency and more than our usual exaggeration.' We are triumphantly fronted with former statements of the 'VARSITY in favor of co-education pure and simple. We are sorry for this, —sorry for all past errors of the 'VARSITY. But we do not feel ourselves haunted by the ghosts of neglected and forgotten opinions, as we probably should. We acknowledge that the 'VARSITY was once a convert to the co-educationist view. We could show this, if necessary, from stronger statements even than Mr. Stevenson recalls; and that without indulging in the tempting sin of misquotation, which he deliberately goes out of his way to do. But to accuse us of an inconsistency and change of opinion on the ground of departure from the standpoint of the 'VARSITY of former years, is to show a narrow and unusual

view of the ethics of journalism. The 'VARSITY does not assume to be an oracle of infallible and unchangeable authority; it attempts to mirror faithfully the opinions of University men on University questions. Much less do we consider the object of our existence to be the upholding of co-educationist views. If we differ from those who have occupied the editorial chair before us, we are not responsible for their opinions, nor bound to their policy. The value and usefulness of the University press depends, not upon its past history, but upon its adaptability to the present. And whatever the opinions of past editors of the 'VARSITY may have been, we think our own opinion has for some time been clearly understood. We are accused of the 'grossest inconsistency' in saying that we long ago stated our position in regard to the question of Co-Education. We would call Mr. Stevenson's attention to several articles which appeared at different times during last year, were it not that we are assured that he can supply our 'shortness of memory' by reference to our back files. We did 'long ago state our position in this regard,' and to this position we now more firmly adhere.

We said that 'Co-educationists have to a large extent abandoned abstraction and taken to statistics.' And we repeat that this is the case—and that in their appeal to statistics they have been unfortunate. Mr. Stevenson seems to labor under the illusion that co-education is the normal character of University and College life. We hold it to be an innovation requiring proof of its advisability. That proof we are offered in the form of the results of experiments—logical verification! The alleged verifications we have given our reasons for rejecting, as incomplete and unsatisfactory. Mr. Stevenson puts himself in the position of Galileo. Dr. Wilson, ourselves, and others, are the ignorant opponents of natural law. In one respect our positions are reversed. Galileo overcame his opponents, the 'learned doctors,' by philosophic argument, not by vulgar abuse.

'With our usual inconsistency and more than our usual exaggeration,' we referred to the practical financial difficulty. Mr. Stevenson says we indulge in 'buncombe,' and that the sum of four hundred dollars will be ample to cover the cost of necessary changes. We do not know by whom he was 'deluded' into the adoption of these figures. Our information was obtained from a source we considered comparatively reliable—from those who will have to pay the bills; and we believe there is a practical difficulty to be got rid of, at considerable expense.

Our readers are appealed to in opposition to our 'gratuitous assertions.' For a consideration and comparison of our views and those we oppose, we are only too pleased to submit to the judgment of our subscribers and supporters.

We turn with relief to Dr. Wilson's calm and, we believe, sound statement of the case, in an open letter addressed to the Minister of Education. In one short sentence quoted from another high authority, is summed up an arraignment of the weakness of the co-education position:—'For the Collegiate education of the two sexes together there is but one respectable argument, namely, Poverty!' This has been the all-prevailing argument with our Legislature. There is a deep and rational earnestness and foresight in these remarks of Dr. Wilson:—'After so much has been accomplished (in our educational system) in all other respects as the results of wise liberality and with the hearty approval of the people, it will be a just cause of regret if the still unaccomplished object of the higher education of women is attempted to be carried out on a system of compromise and acknowledged inefficiency, from a reluctance to