DALHOUSIE GAZETTE.

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PRESENT AND PAST.

Swiftly our pleasures glide away,
Our hearts recall the distant day.—*Longfellow.*

This is the college primeval; the jolly old songs of the students,
Echo and ring with sonorous sound, merrily ring in the hallways.
Anon the music grows fainter, and merges almost into silence,
Whilst singing alone the words of the song, is heard the voice of the leader.
Anon on the listening sense, with reverberations redoubled,
Bursts and surges the wave of song, replete with rythmical cadence.

This is the college primeval; from chimney-top down to foundation,
The venerable fabric, within and without, is clustered with fond recollections;
Memories of those who have passed from view, scattered the wide world over,
Kindly remembrance of comrades in learning, in every place and profession.
Sorrowful memories of those hence departed, gone the way of all human,
Had the stones tongues what tales they could tell of heroes and times far remote now!

SILENUS.

CONCERNING WOMEN AND NOVELS.

THE history of woman's place in the literary world is, I think, curious and instructive. In the early times of Greece we find some four or five women who were poets, but besides these, and a Christian canto of Homer by one of the Byzantine empresses, which Gibbon honors with a sneer, I know not where to look for a trace of a woman's pen till within two, or at the most, three centuries of our own time. At all events, we have a long literary period, in which were produced a large portion of the masterpieces that we at present possess, and in which all the works are by male hands. This fact would not perhaps be worth noting, save for the sake of showing the great change which has taken place since that time, and chiefly within a century. Counting by page and line, I suppose that, excluding newspapers, half, or very nearly half the literature of the present day is written by women.* Not only so, but the undoubted "lion" of the literary world at the present time—I infer it not so much from what the reviewers say of her as from the manner in which they say it, from their unwitting obeisance—is a woman, and that lionism is mainly a tribute to sheer intellectual power, in which there is nothing whatever that is distinctly feminine. Who again among the critics of the day is more keen-edged and brilliant than Gail Hamilton? She it is who on the remark of Neander, "How many things there are one must not say for fear of offending the stupid good people!"—after some spicy remarks which I have forgotten, asks: "Were guides given to the blind, that they might conduct them, with some difficulty, perhaps, along the path of safety; or that, for the sake of peace and quietness, they might all settle down comfortably together into the ditch?" Her sarcasm is terrible.

Now, although it may be very true, that taking a general view of the whole field of literature, woman still remains in the second place; yet these things indicate a mighty change in the lapse of the centuries. Perhaps no patent fact of history is more significant of the change in the condition and manners, in the very innermost lives of men, than this literary item. It indicates that sinking into comparative insignificance of brute force, which enables the weaker vessel to enter into a more equal competition with her lord. Joseph Cook states that the average physical strength of woman is to that of man as 16 to 26. Nevertheless, we must remember here that women have fought with credit on the field of battle, and that women have ruled, and ruled

* "Harper's Library of Select Novels," comprising above six hundred, about four out of seven are by male novelists, and three by female. The number of authors is very nearly equal, so that the male writers are more prolific. In the older catalogues of the Citizen's Free Library of Halifax, showing nearly 2,000 novels, the male writers have outwritten the female two to one. But in the Supplementary Catalogue of new books, showing about 200 novels, the scale is turned, the proportion being two to three, instead of two to one.

well, great kingdoms—as "mighty Bess"—even before they had done anything in literature. Among the statesmen of the middle ages, is there any except Hildebrand who can be ranked before Margaret of Norway? It also indicates that greater self-knowledge and deeper subjectivity of thought which marks the age, and which is one great cause of the sudden and awful rise into importance of novel-writing and novel-reading, as a branch of human industry and research. Thus, as Darwin would put it, the condition of literary existence being changed, a new variety of the species author has entered the field and begun a struggle—by natural selection and survival of the fittest—with the old, and already has attained footing of equality.

She has reached this position not by a bound, but by a gradual advance. This is not what we would have expected, or at least—not to smuggle my opinions, as often people who are very firmly convinced of their own honesty, do—they would think it egoism to say anything on their own responsibility—it is not what I would have expected. I would have expected to find their long silence unbroken, till sheer power of genius in some woman whom nature had prodigally endowed, compelled her to utter herself. Minerva, you know, sprang from the head of Jove in panoply. It was thus that literature began in Homer. It was thus that sacred literature began in Job, if, as is commonly believed, that is the oldest of the books of the Bible. It may be that the conditions of this reasoning are sufficiently complied with in Sappho. When once it is understood that literature brings eminence, there arise other motives for writing than mere power of genius. Homer did not write for fame; he probably had no conception of it apart from warlike prowess. But when he grew famous, then came the *scriptor cyclicus*, sounding his trumpet very loud before him, for prelude to a very small performance—as probably the Pharisees very often did, in this fashion:—

"Fortunam Priami cantabo et nobile bellum," instead of beginning (Quanto rectius,) as Homer does, by proposing, like truthful James, "to tell in simple language what he [or the goddess] knows about the *row*," &c. Be it as it may, no such outburst marks the coming of woman to the front in modern times.

For purposes of criticism, literary labor may be divided into the four departments of Scientific Investigation, Thought, Poetry, Dramatic Fiction. In the first of these departments women are few. We can name only Mrs. Sommerville, and one or two others. In the second, Margaret Fuller d'Ossoli, the gifted woman who said that she knew all the principal people in Europe and America, and she knew of no intellect at all equal to her own. Whoso will may dilate upon her self-esteem, but I would like to notice an error which lies deeper, a hallucination to which literary pedants and dilettanti are peculiarly subject, namely, that all the great intellects are to be found among the "principal people." There are great intellects in all grades of society, intellects that see farther through the difficult problems of life and round its fallacies, than the so-called leaders of thought, men with a seeing eye and a listening ear, who understand "nature and human nature" in a way that is not dreamed of in philosophy. Many brave men lived before Agamemnon, and many wise men have lived besides Shakspeare, whom the world knew not. The heaviest brain on record is said to be that of a a London bricklayer, who could neither read nor write, and it is not impossible that he was the greatest intellect of the age. I conceive that the best test of intellect is the power of fully understanding the circumstances of any event, whether of history or fiction, or social life—we can best judge of the power in the latter case—for the principles which govern these are the governing principles of all the great branches of human learning; and tried by this test by far the greatest intellect of my acquaintance, is that of a plain working man, with the merest common school education.

In the "Thousand and One Gems of Poetry" selected by Mackay, there are pieces from one hundred and eighty-seven different authors, of whom thirteen are female poets. Easily chief of these is Mrs. Hemans, and really Mrs. Hemans is a much greater poet than students at college, who have just discovered the glories of Byron, generally think. She has not a tithe of Byron's intellect, but she has great poetic genius. In rhythm and in artistic management of her subject, she has rarely been equalled. The writer of "Swells" too, we should note, is a woman.

But the seat of woman's literary power is the novel. I suppose that the essentials of greatness in a writer of dramatic fiction are these:—First, sympathy with men, and not merely with mankind in general—that is an imaginary sympathy—but with particular men in particular circumstances, a sympathetic delight in all their sayings and doings; and second, knowledge of men. Of these the first is much the more important, though it must be remembered that the value of each is enhanced tenfold by the presence of the other. It is this quality which gives to Homer and Shakspeare and Bunyan their everlasting wholesomeness, so that we read them with a delight that is perennial and never wearied. Transcendent as is Shakspeare's knowledge of men, he owes yet more of his greatness to his love for men, to his delight in all their deeds and words, like a mother's in those of her child. We have high authority for saying that in this one word is summed up all the law and the prophets, a fact which those critics who find no moral element in Shakspeare would do well to take into careful consideration. It is the union of these two qualities in a novel which makes it a valuable, and in the highest sense an educating book.

When we come to consider what novels possess these qualities in the highest degree, we can, I think, have little difficulty in assigning the highest place to the works of George Eliot, and the second to those of Mrs. H. B. Stowe. Without doubt the grandest of novels is Middlemarch. This, however, has been sufficiently said of late. The author's masculine *nom de plume*, we may notice, is a curious enough illustration of our present subject. Few books repay a careful reading better than Mrs. Stowe's "Minister's Wooing." It is the very type of a historical novel. The sketch of Aaron Burr is admirable and most interesting, and that of Dr. Hopkins is almost equally fine. I take it to be her best work. It is less exciting than Uncle Tom's Cabin, but much more instructive. Macaulay pronounced Mansfield Park to be the best novel ever written by the female sex, and certainly it is one of the best ever written by any sex. If you love sound common sense and plain honest people, read Miss Austen. Scott's novels are more remarkable for power of plot than for knowledge of men, a quality which belongs entirely to a lower order of genius. He is considered a historical novelist, yet one cannot but wonder what his method is when he makes Sir Walter Raleigh recite to Queen Elizabeth the complimentary passage in "Midsummer Night's Dream," in 1575, when Shakspeare was eleven years old. My favorite passage in Scott is that most delightful description, in Ivanhoe, of the solitary midnight revel of Cœur de Lion and the Holy Clerk of Copmanhurst, even Friar Tuck. Nor has Dickens much of these higher qualities of a novelist. Of Thackeray I cannot speak, having failed in my attempts to read him. But a male novelist who certainly possesses the high quality of sympathy with men to a remarkable degree, is William Black. His characters are limited in range and capacity, they are small according to the world they move in, but he loves and delights in them all, and makes us love them. He is, I think, superior to Scott in this respect. I would esteem him first of male novelists but for his one great fault, his irrational and bloodthirsty butchery of all his principal characters at the close of every tale. He is said to claim in excuse that it is necessary in order to make people take an interest in them. Did he never read the closing chapters of the Vicar of Wakefield? But the reader is tired, and so am I. Therefore, I will conclude by saying that whatever he may think of my judgments—and it is no great matter—he will at least agree with me in this, that the qualities in which these lady writers excel, are not the qualities which we should naturally look for in a woman, but the strong and massive qualities of intellectual grasp and systematising power.

Not till I had half finished this article did it occur to me that I might add a moral on collegiate education. But I never add morals. Those who can read the moral for themselves will do so better than I can for them. Those who cannot are not worth bothering with.

McD.

NECESSARY LIMITS TO THE SCEPTICAL CRITIQUE.

THE scepticism of which I speak is of philosophy, not in religion. Philosophical scepticism is based fundamentally upon the principle that things in themselves are not the objects of cognition. All that we can have is at best a phenomenal knowledge, or a regulative knowledge, or a relative knowledge: things as they are we cannot see. It is but one step further in logical development to ask: Granted that we have certain convictions or subjective ideas; how do we know that their testimony is correct, and that there really exists the correspondent objective reality, which they seem to imply? To come down to concrete considerations: No doubt we think so and so to be the case, but how do we know that therefore it *is* the case? In a word, we are not scientifically justified in being sure about anything, however comforting it would be if we could arrive at some certainty.

This is "agnosticism," the popular form just now of philosophic scepticism. Agnosticism is telling heavily upon the convictions of cultured society. It undermines one belief after another

in a man's breast, with the subtle assurance that after all he cannot be sure of the truth of that which he believes. It gives no creed, it only pulls creeds to pieces.

But obviously this style of thought is not itself beyond the pale of criticism. If it would justify its intellectual uncertainty to the universe, it must at least be self-consistent throughout. If at all self-contradictory, it is sufficiently discredited by the laws of logic, and what of it is sound, must be established on a more positive basis.

Let us look at this philosophy of negations fairly in the face. Let us see it in practice. Out of its denials all round, can we not extract some definite confessions, which it may acknowledge as its laws and limits?

Observe, then, what philosophic scepticism of the pronounced sort is trying to make us believe. It is saying, either (1.) There is no such thing as absolute Truth; or (2.) The human intellect is such, and the conditions of enquiry are such, that absolute truth is unattainable for us. We shall try to find out whether this system of negations is in practice consistent with its own principles

Take the proposition that there is no such thing as absolute truth. There is reason for surmising that scepticism itself is very far from really believing *that*. When a sceptic sits down and writes a book to prove that there is no such thing as real truth, or knowledge of things in themselves, what is he doing? Somewhat amusingly he is asserting that the truth is, there is no such thing as truth; the fact is, there is no such thing as fact. Let us be clear if we can. What are the laws and conditions which inhere in all mental activity? We get a glimpse of these if it is made apparent that the mind acts always and necessarily, that is, in virtue of its organization, along one track and in one direction, and in these only. What now if it is demonstrable that the track and the direction which the mind alike in scepticism and in dogmatism takes are infallibly those dictated by the desire for truth? It is replied that it does not follow that the correlate to the desire exists. But what if truth is not only the thing desired by, but also the preliminary condition of, all thought? If there is anything upon which reasoning turns as on a pivot, and which gives it its start into activity, that surely is such a condition. But now it may be easily shown that all reasoning, however clear it may be, or however confused, turns, turns only, and turns ever, upon the supposition of the existence of absolute truth. All thought implies a basis and justification in actual fact, revolves unmistakably around truth as its pivot. If the sceptic doubts that, he is convicted by his very doubt. *What* does he doubt? He doubts as to whether that statement is or is not—a statement of actual fact! Why, what is the meaning of doubt itself but this: an undeterminedness as to whether *this* or *that* is—the TRUTH! In the most thorough-going scepticism, therefore, read magnificent, although involuntary and oftimes reluctant homage to truth. Remember in moments of unrest that all enquiry, all criticism, all thought, all mental darkness and uncertainty even, imply that there is truth, and that it is absolute and positive. Remember that every statement, every proposition, every finding of intellectual energy, claims to be "the case,"—*i. e.*, to have its basis and place in the harmonies of the universe, its justification in the nature of things. As there is but one nature of things, whatever is true is true eternally, and absolutely, and irreversibly. Say if you like that these deductions are incorrect: so saying, you are but asserting along with me that truth exists, and your accusation is that I have deviated from it. Here let me draw my first conclusion: *Scepticism confesses that there is such a thing as absolute truth in every department of enquiry.*

Go back now to that other proposition of philosophical scepticism, that the human intellect and the conditions of enquiry are such, that truth or absolute certainty on any subject of investigation, is unattainable by us.

Every negation is in one sense an affirmation. If a man says he does not believe that the whole is greater than its part, what is this but a declaration of a conviction—the conviction, namely, that the whole is *not* greater than its part? Now what is agnosticism? Agnostics we might define as "men who are determined to know nothing." No creed, therefore, have they not? Their creed is, that they are sure of nothing: that is to say, in slightly altered phraseology, that they *are* sure of one thing after all, viz., that they have not arrived, and cannot arrive, at any certitude. But is it quite consistent in a system, to be professedly sure of nothing, and yet confessedly sure of one thing, viz., that it is sure of nothing? If, with all his faculties in full play, one cannot know; by what set of faculties is he authorized and enabled to know that he cannot know, to ascertain that he cannot ascertain, to be sure that he cannot be sure? Darkly from the mists loom up here heights of agreement between negative and positive systems in philosophy. The negative

teach implicitly, as do the positive explicitly, these things concerning truth: that we may miss finding it, or that we may deny it when found; but notwithstanding that, it exists and is attainable. Unconsciously, inconsistently no doubt, but inevitably, the most radical free-thinker equally with the most decided dogmatical, takes for granted in every promulgation of his views at least this much: that he has discovered the truth in the matter under consideration, and that the truth in question is not true for him only, but true for all, and at all times, in itself, in the nature of things. If he does not believe that the truth which he claims to have found out is absolute, and can be apprehended as truth by you and by me, as well as by himself, what in all the world does the man mean by writing a book and sending it to us to convince us? Here, then we have a second conclusion: *Scepticism confesses that absolute truth is the legitimate object of all enquiry, and is of course in definite cases and in divers degrees, attainable by human intellect.*

But we can set further limits, perhaps, to the sweep of scepticism into the darkness. Some men profess to be under no restraint and no authority whatever. Hoary creeds, traditional beliefs, common convictions of humanity, are nothing to them. But let us see how far they can carry through their systems the assertion that they yield to no authority. It is not so easy as it seems at first sight, to doubt and deny all round—at least to do it logically and without self-consistencies.

In some important respects the school of dogmatism and the whole of scepticism are not so far apart. A student in philosophy, of either school, sits down to study out a subject. On his table lie some of the masterpieces of intellect. He is full of reverence for them, for all men reverence culture, acumen, and mental illumination. As you watch him, keeping well in mind what J. S. Mill calls the "enormous influence of authority on the human mind"—the student rises, and—tells you that he is compelled deliberately to differ from all his masters. Why? Does he pretend to be as great of thought as these giants of philosophy and research? By no means. Not for a moment, if he is a humble man, does he think of matching himself with them. Only one principle explaint how he dares disregard the voice of philosophic authority. It is because there is an authority greater still, and from it he dares not dissent. Here is something which his masters and he are both striving after, and if he has discovered it in any given case, he cares nothing, by comparison, for them. But we all act in that way. We all turn our backs now and then upon conclusions of past philosophies, and this we do while recognizing to the full our fragmentariness, compared with the Platos and Aristotles, from whom we feel constrained to differ.

It would be intolerable arrogance in me, to criticise the views of this or that prince in philosophy, did I not know implicitly that the aim of every view, and of every view alike, is after the truth. Just here is the explanation of the whole matter. Even masters can be measured, when the infallible measure of truth lies to one's hand.

Who will deny this duty of dissent from antecedent authority? Not sceptics, at any rate, for it is their daily procedure. The results of historic philosophy weigh little with them. But who, further, can deny the principle that underlies the duty of dissent, viz., adherence to the truth? Not sceptics, unless they wish to be suicides, for their one objection to the articles of philosphic faith which they seek to overthrow, is that these things are "not proved," that is, are scientifically established as facts, and so do not vindicate themselves to be in systematic accord with the truth. All disputations are disputations about the truth; all disputants profess to reject everything that seems to them inconsistent with fact. All thinkers imply, in every instance of intellectual enquiry, that there is one thing to which, if they can only find it out, their utter and devoutest loyalty is due. They may reject all authority,—bnt one authority there is to which they bow the knee, and by which they are willing to have themselves and their systems judged. Third conclusion: *Scepticism confesses that, wherever we can find it, we must reverence the truth supremely.*

These three conclusions form necessary limits to all sceptical thought. No small results these. Given these in the realm of intellect, we can construct a positive, and not merely a Positivist, philosophy; given these in morals, and we could construct an Ethics which would ground morality in something higher than expediency; given these in religion, and we should construct a Theology, whore object of supreme reverence would not be unknowable or unknown. These are no negations, though they are the ultimate confession of the philosophy of negations.

J. C. H.

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AT length we may begin to hope that winter, like the icicles which hang weeping and sick from the eves, is almost gone. There are many charms about this season, its bracing air, its slippery pleasures, even its storms; and yet in enjoying winter, we seem only to be putting the best face on the unavoidable. Like a man who has walked briskly home on a cold night, imagining it was all very jolly, until he draws his chair near the blazing fire, places his feet on the fender, gets the old "T. D." going, and shrugs his shoulders at any thoughts of the outside; so we are ever ready to exclaim when we feel ourselves on the safe side, welcome spring! Our poetical moments may produce verses to the snow, songs to the sleigh bells, &c., and yet there is a truer poetry in dry, comfortable walking, without danger of breaking a hole in the sidewalk with the back of one's head, or, if you will, in green leaves and warbling birds.

It is easy enough to feel out of sorts in winter, when hard times pass into the comparative and superlative degrees, but very few can resist the spell of a spring morning, with its distinct, even if distant promise of warmth and plenty. But we connot forget that one big storm far worse than hail, or snow, frowns ahead. Oh ye happy outsiders, you know nothing of this however. Only faint echoes of the thunder, which groans through the examination halls of Dalhousie can reach your ears. But like every other storm, it too will pass leaving the sky clearer for its coming. Seniors will then lovingly smile on the mysterious B. A., juniors will have bloomed into seniors, sophs will have ripened into juniors, freshies will have swelled into sophs, and the scattered plumage of the plucked—we stop here; "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." To those who have worked we would say keep on and all is well, to the idlers we would whisper, cram! a long pull, a strong pull, a pull all together may yet pull you through. *Nil desperandum.*

AS examination time is drawing near we feel that it might not be out of place to say a few words on the subject of cribbing. This is an accomplishment against which all the dread powers of professorship are exerted, and yet we assert confidently are frequently exerted in vain. Cribbing may be placed under two heads. First, that for the sake of passing. Second, that for the purpose of gaining high marks, or prizes. Of number one, we will say nothing, not because we approve of it, but because it is a question affecting the individual only, and resting between each man and his own conscience. Respecting number two we might say much, for this reason. Every prize or honour gained by such means is an injustice, perpetrated on the man who by honest labour stands next on the list; an injustice as distinct as if it were his purse which had been taken. Now we feel that this is putting facts in a very plain light, and yet no words can be too strong when they are used to denounce a crime of such enormity. What encouragement, we would ask, is there for a student striving for some longed-for prize, when he knows that another competitor will, should the opportunity offer, stoop to means which his honour forbids him to utilize. We believe in moderation, we think that any object will be best gained by going to work in a calm manner, and yet we confess that it is with difficulty our indignation is kept down when dealing with a subject such as the present.

It is needless for us to point out the folly of this practice. The old saying, "honesty is the best policy," has but to be applied here and its proof stands out before us. The world will never ask a man what was your college standing? but to use the words of Professor DeMill in his opening address, "It will put the vulgar question, what can you do?" Against the practice of cribbing we might take higher ground and urge the universal precept, "do unto others, &c.," but we feel that this would be throwing pearls before swine, for the men (?) whom an address of this kind is expected to reach in every college, are dead to any appeal of this nature.

THE guns have boomed and the drums have banged; the military have made their usual mid-winter display in Hollis Street, and the Local Legislature has been duly opened.

Since we last witnessed such an imposing spectacle, a parliament and an administration have been numbered among the things of the past. The gentlemen who lately occupied the treasury benches are now either on the Speaker's left, or have turned their backs on the popular assembly—some to enjoy quieter and more dignified positions in the upper Chamber, others to ruminate on the comforting proverb: *tempora mutantur, et nos* &c.

Mr. Holmes and his fellows in the Executive, if they would do justice to the people whom they have been elected to serve, must put their shoulders to the wheel. Lifted far above the turmoil of party strife, we are able, from our lofty intellectual perch, to see that reforms are needful.

We shall confine our valuable advice to the new Government to the question which more especially belongs to us and our brothers of Acadia and King's, the question of education.

The common schools of Nova Scotia are not what they should be. The character of the teaching profession has declined, and it is absolutely necessary that some scheme be devised to remedy this evil. The modifications which the Council of Public Instruction has lately introduced in the syllabus of qualification, are steps in the right direction, but do not go far enough. The standard by which teaching ability is guaged must be raised and rigorously adhered to. Our educational authorities should know by this time that men who can score the required average of points in answering examination papers are not always qualified to act as teachers. We are aware that some men are gifted with a faculty for instruction, just as others have a genius for shoe-making; but we are sure there is as much need for a course of training for teachers as there is for the apprenticeship of artisans. Some regulation is necessary to compel would-be pedagogues to go through a course at the Provincial Normal School. This suggests another necessary improvement.

Without taking any side in the Christie affair, we can say that the Normal School is not in a satisfactory state. It should receive the immediate and careful attention of the powers that be. Until we have a first-class training institution we can have few good teachers.

Perhaps no part of the educational machine needs repair so much as our County Academies. With few exceptions they are below par. We understand that Superintendent Allison has decided opinions of their inefficiency. As 'Paulus' has already suggested in our columns, some of these so-called Academies should be weeded out, and others, planted in convenient positions, should be carefully nursed.

We expect Mr. Holmes' action in regard to higher education will be as bold and just as were his opinions when he led the opposition. We all remember his able vindication of the claims of Dalhousie College to Provincial support, and we hope that when the University question comes before the House, his Government will be prepared to make better provision for collegiate education than is afforded under the existing University Act.

ONCE again is the Reading Room, a thing of the past! After its revival last year, and the healthy manner in which it was conducted, we hoped that we should never again have to chronicle its demise. We hoped to see it beginning a long era of prosperity, and at that time we had grounds for hope. But such it seemed was not to be. Through adverse circumstances and, we sincerely believe, through no negligence on the part of the committee, the reading room has fallen away from its original glories. The table has as yet withstood the attacks of time and the students arm, and remains with its honourable wounds the sole survivor of its companion furniture. The students are doubtless answerable for this, but who will blame them? For we know that students will have larks—we would be sorry to see the man who would not at college. The unfortunate part of it is that the reading room is the only place where we can lark, the only place which we feel is our own, and in which we are not afraid to make a noise. As classes are going on all the time, we cannot make use of the halls, and get rid of some of our animal spirits, without disturbing some of the professors, who we must say are very lenient, when such things do happen. Another of the "adverse circumstances" is that the room is degraded into a cloak room, which is decidedly bad for the papers on a snowy morning. And this too we can understand. When a man comes in on a cold day he naturally finds his way to the first place where there is a fire—and that is the reading room. With us too at Dalhousie who do not board at the college, there is naturally a wish to have a bit of a chat before the day's work begins. Were it not for the reading room, those of us who do not board together would only me et in classes.

We would then ask the Governors to spare us if possible another room, where there will not be any noise or disturbance. We will then have our so-called reading room as a sort of parlour, where we can talk to our hearts content, and keep the other for its proper use. It is probably too late to attend to this matter for the present session; but relying upon the good will of the Governors, which has been always shown when our wants are reasonable (as in the present instance) we confidently expect to see next session "a new despensation of things."

MACAULAY AS A BALLAD WRITER.

THOMAS BABINGTON, Lord Macaulay, is chiefly remembered as one of the ablest of British essayists, and writer of that remarkable History of England which bears his name and was the subject of a paper, not long since published in these columns. The adjective which most fitly describes these works is that expressive word 'great.' But in our admiration of the more substantial fruits of his literary labours, we must not forget the equally admirable productions of his lighter hours. While others remember the great Whig by the scorching sarcasm of his criticsm of Montgomery's poems, or the vastness and variety of learning exhibited in his greatest work, I shall cherish his memory as the author of the Lays of Ancient Rome. The sentiment which they inspire always seems soul-stirring. His rendition of the doings

'In the brave days of old,'

fills me for the time with noble feelings. The reason for this appreciation may be that I have not yet advanced beyond that stage of civilization whose poetry naturally takes the ballad form. With all due deference to the opinions of modern poets and critics, I would suggest that more ballad and less *fine* sentiment would improve our literature. The spirit of the ballad is especially suited to the genius of the Northern peoples, who are, as a rule, excitable in temperament. It is able to breathe the fire of fiercest passion, and at the same time to be the embodiment of the most thrilling tenderness and deepest pathos.

In his choice of subject matter Lord Macaulay is singularly happy. He has taken for the warp of his fabric those heroic tales which, whether authentic or not, will ever linger in our minds as the early history of Rome. No matter how conclusive the evidence that may be adduced to prove the non-existence of Horatius, no matter how wild the fancy that the twin gods won the battle of Lake Regillus for the Romans, they still haunt us as beautiful realities, and are dear to us as the legends of Arthur and the tales of Wallace and Bruce. In spite of the sneer so often thrown, *laudator temporis acti*, we all have a disposition to look back to the olden time as a source of heroism, and romance, and poetry. Indeed, it has often been remarked that the early age of every nation is its most poetical age! In this prosy age of factories, washing machines, and strikes, it may be well for us to remember the days which are best recalled in such strains as we find in the Lays. Thinking of their simplicity we will be tempted to shake off some of the all pervading worldliness of these later times. When we think of the patriotism then displayed, and look at the spirit that is now spreading havoc in every land,—the contention of the artisan class against the hardfisted selfishness of capitalists,—we cannot help regretting that it is not as it was,

'Then the great man helped the poor man,
And the poor man loved the great.'

Doubtless Macaulay intended that the decline of principle which he makes Romans deprecate, should be vividly impressed upon his own countrymen. Both in Horatius and Virginia we find striking reference to plebeian grievances. The latter gives us a glimpse of life in Rome at a period subsequent to that in which the brave deeds of the three heroes were done, when the haughty patrician sought to tread down his less favoured brother.

Exquisitely adapted to the material is the mechanism which the historian-poet has employed. Sturdy feats are sung in sturdy English words. Touching scenes are portrayed in the most effective language, the language of the heart,—simple, expressive Saxon. The figures are perfect. The descriptions all that can be desired. The metre is most appropriate. The 'swinging melody' of the ballad fitly mingles with the warlike spirit of the tales. The rhythm perfectly harmonizes with the action indicated. In the account of the fight around old Tarquin, the words seem to rush through the lines, just as did the knights of whose deeds they tell. The hurry and excitement of the enraged people, running to the Forum at the shrieks of Virginia, has breathed itself into the verses of the description.

Horatius has always been the favourite, and is best known. Having been an experiment, it probably received more thought and care than the others. The first part, which is occupied with an account of the declaration of hostility, the preparatian for resistance, the desertion of the surrounding fields, the provisioning of the city and the ravages of the enemy, is quieter in tone than that which follows, the chief event of the ballad, the defence of the bridge. A brave defence! and bravely sung! The battle of Lake Regillus is of the same nature, in so far as it is a battle-piece, but a mythological element is introduced which finds but little place in the first lay. The same excellencies characterize both, but critics are inclined to give Horatius the secocd place The fight is perhaps more grandly described, but not more vividly; and the *tout ensemble* does not possess, for me at least, the same charm.

Virginia strikes a different chord in our hearts. It rouses our indignation at the dastardly spirit that would blight the purity of private life, the sacrednsss of female honour. As we have already noticed, it also introduces the story of plebeian wrongs and patrician oppression, and the consequences that attended an outbreak of the hot rage which a down-trodden populace can only keep smothered for a time. There is perhaps nothing finer in any part of these Lays than the last three stanzas of Horatius, which contain the most pleasing picture conceivable,—the simple, tonching scenes of an evening in one of the cottage homes where the story is supposed to be told to eager listeners.

SCOTUS.

ON the Thermo-electric Properties of Charcoal and certain alloys, with a supplementary Thermo-electric Diagram. By C. C. Knott, B. Sc. and J. G. McGregor, D. Sc. Such is the title of a quarto pamphlet of twenty-four pages, which we have lately received; and is an extract from the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburg (Vol. XXVIII., pp. 321--343.) The pamphlet is a record of experiments conducted by the authors during the summer of 1877 in the Physical Laboratory of the Edinburgh University. Even with our limited knowledge of the subjects treated, and the cursory nature of our examination of the treatise, we can see that no pains have been spared to arrive at exact results. Of silver-palladium, two kinds were investigated; of platinum-iridium, four; of iron-gold, one; of platinum-silver, one; of magnesium-thallium, one.—Fifteen tables of observations are given, and a diagram representing the thermo-electric changes of various substances,—from 0°—400° Cent.

ALAS, POOR YORICK!

METHOUGHT I was at the Academy. Not in the usual way as one of the audience, but upon the boards. Around me in seemingly inextricable confusion rose a forest of ropes and rafters; scattered about were the thousand and one properties appertaining to the "behind scenes," while amidst all these paraphernalia, hurried and scuffled the sups and carpenters preparing the scene. Amidst the actors I stood supreme. Hamlet was the play and my role the melancholy Danish prince. In princely robes and sombre, I awaited the tinkle of the manager's bell. Before the curtain the orchestra discoursed sweet, inspiriting music. Like muttering thunder arising up above in the dimness, echoed the regular tramp, tramp, tramp of "the gods." At length all was ready. The orchestra was turned off, the gas was turned on, the bell rung, the green veil arose and disclosed me, striking a striking attitude, in all my glory. The house was full. In the *boxes* were all the elite and fashion of Halifax. Politicians, officers, merchants, bankers, ladies, old and young, mingled in the parquette and first gallery, while up in the dimness of the second gallery a dark mass of humanity met my princely gaze. And there were there the drama-loving portion of Dalhousie's sons *en masse;* African missionaries, Freshies, "Parabolas" Chawleses, Sophs, Medicals, Juniors; and as a restraining and guiding influence over all, the whole senior class, except myself. As for me, I felt every inch a prince and as I proceeded in my role every breath was hushed, and all hung with rapt attention on the burning words and sentiments which the king of dramatists has put into the mouth of the prince of Denmark. Prolonged applause followed the fall of the curtain and twice was I called to the front to receive the plaudits of the house.

Thus the play went on and I succeeded as none but a star could. At length the scene of Hamlet's soliloquy over the skull came round, when lo! A change came o'er the spirit of my vision. I was up there among the "gods," among the familiar forms and faces of all my old comrades. But in spirit only. Invisible to those around me, I watched the stage. There on the dais was another "ego;" myself in form, in features and in mein. In fact in all but spirit. Musingly he watched the gravediggers at their work turning up the remains of by-gone generations. At length with a dull thud, there fell from one of the delvers' spades—not a skull, but a note book. Ah! well I knew it. Begrimed and soiled it lay upon the ground, open. Rigid parabolic curves and circles stared from it up into my face, as I meditatively raised it from its lowly place, and with saddening thoughts soliloquised upon it. Clearly I hear those words still.

> To pass or to be plucked, that is the question.
> Whether 'tis better passively to suffer
> The ills and sorrows of outrageous Euclid
> Or turn my back upon this grimy note-book
> And leaving; thus to end it. To try—to pass—
> No more. And by our pass to say we end
> The headache and the thousand other woes
> That Soph is heir to—'tis a consummation
> Devoutly to be wished. To try—to pass—
> To pass!—perchance to fail—ay, there's the rub,
> For in that fearful "try" what fate may fall
> Must give me pause. There's the respect
> That makes calamity of student life;
> For who would bear the stern rebuke of Profs,
> The Junior's wrong, the Senior's contumely
> The pangs of despised worth, the Xams *mêlee*
> The Janitorial wrathfulness, and spurns
> Which patient worth from the unworthy takes
> When he himself might end the direful strife
> Only by quietly leaving? * * * * * * * *
> Thus Sessionals make cowards of us all
> And thus our native hue of resolution
> Is sicklied o'er with fearful thoughts and dire,
> And Student tyros of great pith and moment
> With this respect from College turn aside
> And lose the fame of Hopewells.

The curtain fell and I fell with it—out of my chair prone upon the hearth rug. There I lay before the blazing fire and thought of my dream, with a glorious mixture of stars and suns and moons, shining from the note-book which still remained in my hand. I arose, shut the book and then——bade the world good-night.

SILENUS.

THEATRE-GOING.—Illi Sodales Clarissimi were to have discussed and finally settled the vexed question of the right and wrong of play-going. But they did not. However, on Wednesday evening a large number of Students gave their countenance and support to Mr. Nannary in an attempt to put the classic drama before the citizens of Halifax. We are glad to say that his part was as well done—or nearly so—as we might expect. We are sorry to say that Haligonians have exhibited the littleness of their appreciation of true dramatic worth, by giving Hamlet a beggarly account of empty benches, and sticking up the placard, "Standing Room Only" when some tenth-rate sensation and senseless farce disgraced the stage.

PHOTOGRAPHS.—We have already heard sufficiently often that the end is fast approaching. Before it is quite here, let us remember our annual custom of exchanging photographs. To quote from the advertisements of story-papers, now is the time to get up clubs. Notman has the sun engaged to perform his part of the work, and will guarantee that it will be well done. C. S. Cameron will take the names of any who may wish to join the club of '79.

EXCHANGES.

WE again turn to our Exchange column, after a brief holiday, if a respite for one issue can be called a holiday. Having forgotten our exchanges till the last moment, we must say that we were not altogether sorry to find that there was no room for them. But—*à nos moutons.*

First comes, though rather late, the opening of the *College Herald* for 1879. As the exponent of student news, the *Herald* is a decided success. In fact the items, locals and personals, almost take up too much room, leaving the literary department rather bare. The articles, however, of which it is composed, are well worth our attention—especially "Overwork." The writer in effect says, and says truly, that the trite plea of overwork is very often a humbug, or may be translated by "improper work," and we feel the truth of his remarks.

The *Collegian and Neoterian*, on the other hand, while not at all neglecting college news, is yet able to devote a goodly portion to literary contributions, and the paper is correspondingly interesting. In two editorials, the one on "Sociables," the other questioning the benefit of too great attention to study, there are views expressed which are worthy of all our attention. We must recognize the necessity of resting the brain; for it cannot go on for ever working without sustaining a loss in vigour. The *Collegian* rightly says, "It is not hard study which kills a man, but it is a lack of rest and recreation."

The *Queen's College Journal* is certainly in the last issue very successful in the editorial department. None of the editorials are long, and all deal with important subjects. We quite agree with regard to its opinion on taking down lectures by dictation. We always considered this system a horrible bore. We were glad to find the continuation of "Summer Reminiscences," and notes from the "Far West." We think, perhaps, that the *Journal* would be benefited by an extension of its literary department.

Among other good articles in the *Beacon*, we were especially interested in an editorial on "Originality in Writing," and in a contributed article on "The True Conversationalist." A few typographical errors seem to have crept in this issue, as kneeded for kneaded.

We notice that the *Bates Student* has innocently credited an exchange with the poem beginning "Maid of Adams ere we part," &c., but which it can lay no claim to. The only thing in it is the substitution of "Adams" for "Clapham," (in the original) and the changing to ordinary type the last line, which when first published stood in Greek characters.

On looking at the exchange column of the *Niagara Index*, we were greeted with a sweeping condemnation of a previous issue of our own, and consequently fell into the depths of despair. Fortunately we continued to read on, and found that the whole column consisted of "sweeping condemnations," when we concluded that it was only the result of indigestion. Mr. Editor, allow us to offer our condolences!

PERSONALS.

REV. DR. MCGREGOR has kindly handed us the following note:—

WALTER M. THORBURN, B. A., '70, ("Young" Essayist) Madras Presidency, British India, has been promoted to the position of "Head Assistant;" and has charge of a district containing 350,000 inhabitants.

WALTER S. DOULL, B. A., '74, sprained his knee in the gymnasium some time ago and has suffered considerably from the injury. It will be remembered that several years ago Mr. Doull had his knee hurt in a game of cricket and subsequently at foot-ball. We are glad to know that he is able to move about again.

JOHN L. BETHUNE, M. D., C. M., '75, is settled at Baddeck, C. B., where he is building up a good practice.

B MCKITTRICK, B. A, '77, (Dufferin Silver Medallist and Graduates' Prizeman, '77) continues to occupy the position of Principal of the Academy at Sydney. We understand that he has been very successful and has won good opinions for himself and his *alma mater*. We have at least one of his pupils with us already, Mr. McLellan of the present freshman class.

MESSRS. H. P. CLAY, W. TYLER and D. F. MARSHALL, who were students at the University of the City of New York during the past six months, graduated there a few weeks ago as Doctors of Medicine, and have returned to their native Province.

We regret to learn that R. MACLAREN, a fellow student of the gentlemen mentioned above, is detained in New York by an attack of heart disease, which prevented him from presenting himself before the examiners of the University. We hope shortly to hear of his return with restored health.

IVES, before reported at home in Pictou, unwell, was in town for a day or two last week. His health has been much improved and, we understand, he intends to make it as perfect as possible by resting for a time.

HUMPHREY and BREMNER, students of this college in '76-'77, and Lieutenants in the 66th H. V. B. I., officiated in the guard of honour at the opening of the Local Parliament on Thursday. If we knew our Horace well enough we would quote a line or two.

INNER DALHOUSIE.

Now beginneth the last month.

JULIUS! Julius!!

'Tis amusing to watch the evolutions of the "*rubber man* at the gym.

THAT incorrigible Senior has been at it again, taking a plurality of sweet nymphs to lectures and all that sort of thing. *Beware, L———.*

SCENE. The street. Prospective missionary to 'Afric's sunny fountains,' (loquitur) "Well, Mr. C———, have you made up your mind to sacrifice yourself to the poor heathen?" Depressed Soph, (savagely) "To the devil with the heathen." *Exeunt omnes.*

HE had just changed his place of residence from North to South. Musing on the rooms, or on the girls or something else, 'tis not known what, he meandered off one afternoon to the old home. And now he's riled because two students he met laughed at him. Oh! Bob.

N. B.—He belongs to the Reform Club.

'How are the mighty fallen' when our hope of Africa wastes time and money. 'Under the Gaslight' and up among the *gods* at Nannary's. He even says that the play was sensational, "and the acting? well I flatter myself I could do as well, if not better." Please don't Chawles. We're not accustomed to associate with such great minds, and possibly we could not long sustain the pressure on our admiration and awe. And Nannary; poor doomed Nannary! You had better leave.

WHEN a married man gallantly chaperones an unmarried maiden about the gay city, the Freshies may well exclaim in accents of despair, "*Ne plus ultra, D——n.*"

SCENE. A City Church. Time, five minutes after the beginning of the sermon. Enter majestically, with giant stride and at intervals of thirty-five seconds, an assortment of five students who all take their places in one pew. Finally enter proprietor thereof and roosts on the back.

SENIOR (reciting). *Ambitiosa morte*—by an ambitious death.

Prof. (plaintively) "And what do you mean by an ambitious death, sir?"

Senior, "Please, sir, I don't know, sir!!!!"

AND now the irrepressible man of many aliases has come out in another character and has astonished the community by becoming a "body snatcher." *Vive l'Alfred.*

SCENE. Ethics class room. Enter messenger from Mr. Nannary. Thus audaciously accosts the Prof., "Please, sir, could you lend Mr. Nannary a skull?" Prof. inquires if any of the class have a superabundance of skull. *Deinde.*

There was silence still as death
And the boldest held his breath,

while Nannary's messenger walked.

IN a city church, not unfrequented by some of our fellows, there was a novel entertainment on Tuesday evening. A Rev. gentleman delivered a lecture on the late Paris Exposition and afterward displayed, by the aid of a magic lantern, some very fine views of the exhibits and the beauties of the city. Of course the gas was turned off and even a dim religious light was excluded. It is rumored that several sibilant whispers were heard, and that, when some rash person turned on the illuminator, there was a great deal of rectifying of posture, etc., etc. We do not vouch for the truth of the above. Our readers will understand we only know of it from hearsay.

Two gallant meds and a Senior—still more gallant, of caurse—cruising about town the other afternoon, fell in with three *petites demoiselles*, pretty, smiling, blushing. Extracting his pocket-handkerchief *he* was gracefully waving it to the retreating fair, when a martial tread before him caused a sudden return to his former position—and innocent looks. There's but a step between the sublime and ridiculous, and truly that med felt the force of the aphorism, as a six-foot—or rather all foot—darkey female accosted him thus:—"Please sir, give me a cent!" *Samivel, Samivel, bevare!*

In re Senior *vs* Soph: "*Parabola*" was seen the other night with a Senior's girl. To what soaring heights can sophomeric ambition ascend! Verily *Jimmy*, if thou dost not restrain thy youthful exubuance, the cry will soon ascend to heaven: "Pistols for two, coffins for one." *S'cat!*

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