



The Meteor.

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WE wish to say a few words on a School Debating Society, and herein to look at it in two lights—first, as a new element in our social organization, secondly, as a means of education. The one evil, which all correspondents of the *Meteor* agree in condemning, is the exclusiveness of house feeling, which, fostered as it is by every interest, must often insensibly cut us off from many friendships, the advantage of which we have a right to expect from so large a society as that of our School. How often do we hear Old Rugbeians regretting that they did not find out the virtues of this man or that, before he was a “man”? Now this is an evil which is sure to be more or less corrected by a School Debating Society. Fresh interests, fresh subjects of difference will break us up into fresh sections, at a period of our School lives when we ought to be so broken up. The five members of the Sixth, who decide over the same teapot to think alike on the subject whether you may take up a ball when it is rolling, or whether the Bath or the gate is the better place to run from for taking ground are not bound to the same platform, on the question whether Oxford or Cambridge is the best starting point for the woolsack. Nay, more; the very closeness of their union on the former points will make them the more willing to differ on the latter. Mr. Disraeli, politician, has very different friends from Mr. Disraeli, literateur; in Homer’s Elysian Fields Mr. Gladstone doubtless lies down with Lord Derby. So too with us: it is well to pace the cloisters of the quad with one set of friends, and arrange our campaign in a debate, before ascending the steps

of the VIth School; well also to do the same with another set before streaming into the Vth School; and the orator of the Hillmorton Road will be the less ready to brand him of the Barby with charges of dimness of vision or ignorance, when he reflects that the day before he was applauding with hands and feet some well-tuned period of his beginning. “It is obvious to every man of sense or feeling.” It is said that to our first Debating Society, established in 1832, we owe the dignity and decorum, which always strike the freshly promoted members of the VIth when first they attend that august assemblage—a VIth Levée. No doubt a Debating Society teaches its members to listen with deference to reason, and to respect the force of argument, and without doing honour to a Thersites, encourages us to apply the epithet “manly” to other qualities besides those purely athletic. As far then as creating a new bond of society and one more likely to survive the assumption of a coloured tie and to flourish under the shade of a pot hat, a Debating Society is an unmixed good; it overrides house feeling; it furnishes fresh topics of conversation; and is in all this so far better than a magazine, as it leaves no trace behind of premature prejudice or priggish precocity.

And this is really the only light in which it comes under our province to regard it. If we were a literary magazine, it would be our business to go into greater length to show its advantages as an education. But, after all, they are sufficiently obvious. For whether as a means of bridging over School and play hours; or as a means of teaching