



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

our athletes the manliness of thought; or as giving a field to the more bookish of our body to air themselves—such a society must raise the tone of the School where it exists. And when one adds this to the advantages already enumerated in the social changes it should effect, one is tempted to ask “Where then is the perfection of our School, if it is unable to support such an institution? Does not the absence of it imply a real want of literary power?” For the House Debating Societies do not really supply the need. In a house it is impossible to get enough members on the same footing, as regards age and position to ensure a real *bona fide* division. It is impossible but that meeting on the same ground, and under the same leadership as they have met during the week, they should occupy to one another the same relation. In other words, the “Swells” of the house are sure to have it all their own way, and though this may be all very well, and may ensure great success for didactic purposes, the maieutic which is the great point of a debate is sure to be banished. Otherwise, a house debating society is able to choose its own times considerably easier than one which must meet when all the School can be at large.

Finally, we would not be misunderstood as blaming house debating societies: they are excellent institutions, particularly during the long evenings of the winter term; they bind the smaller and bigger fellows in a house together; they interest and bring on the younger fellows. But they do not take the place of a school debating society; for instead of doing away with petty house feeling they are apt to increase it, and instead of educating the older fellows or swells of the house, they teach them to lay down the law on all points without any sufficient chance of well-considered contradiction.

THE RACQUET COURT.

A question of considerable importance has been started of late, and it is one which we cannot disregard, however it may cut into institutions which may hold their power mainly because the memory of man speaketh not to the contrary. Now and then we are compelled to do disagreeable things, but we must not flinch from doing them merely because they are disagreeable, if we have a good object in view. The matter to which we allude is simply this—a marker is almost a necessity at a Racquet Court like ours; it is usual that the marker has the monopoly

of articles in use at the Courts; and this monopoly is at present held by the cricket professional. It is, doubtless, a delicate matter for us to verge upon, and we trust that those whom it concerns will take it up, from a desire to improve the style and play of Racquet players in the School. As we have said, our cricket professional enjoys a monopoly of the sale of Racquets and balls. Now this is a monopoly which should never have been his, when we consider how men devote their lives to racquets, as well as cricket, in the expectation of getting an appointment as marker at a good court. As regards the advantages of a racquet professional, they must already have suggested themselves to the minds of all—improvement in style, which we fear is sadly wanted in School players,—knowledge of the game, without which no perfection can be attained. And who can deny the influence which the example of a really good player has upon youthful aspirants. At present there is no one who can at all give an example, except the honorary members and the best School players. Now suppose there were no one to teach us cricket except the Eleven, who are the very class who themselves require coaching to bring them to perfection: so, too, with Racquets; a little coaching would give a finish to our best players, and vastly improve the education of the more unlearned.

And here it may not be out of place to say a few words about the Racquet Club. Since its members have such a command of the Court, on the same principle that members of Big-Side pay more taxes than those of Little-Side, should not they, too, pay a small terminal subscription to pay the salary of a marker? We have heard that those honorary members who take advantage of their membership, are most cordial in their support of the proposal, and have signified their intention of promoting the *bonum publicum* to an extent far out of proportion to their use of the Court. Such being the case, it is our duty to take the matter in hand; and having met with such support, we should not be surprised to see a marker down before many weeks are over.

NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY.

A meeting of this Society was held on May 9th. A paper by G. B. Longstaff, on “Caterpillars,” was read by the Secretary. Footsteps from the New Red Sandstone