

## THE OREGON WEEKLY

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MONDAY, APRIL 13, 1903

### OUR OWN POSITION

The University of Oregon has always been backward about participating in any bootless after-discussions of oratorical contests and reckonings of judges. Though it was known the day after the contest that the McMinnville orator had borrowed quite freely from Vance's "Scattered Nation," we are not like some in our readiness to boast of making the discovery and preferring the charge of plagiarism. The institution is to be complimented for its hesitation in such matters so long as it remains in the league. One of the chief excuses for the existence of the inter-collegiate association is to "increase the fellowship among the higher institutions of learning in the state." These after-controversies, these charges and counter-charges, these accusations, and arraignments, these trials and attempted convictions, started by some mortified contestant, are not over fruitful of kindly affection. The colleges must learn that they must cooperate in order to compete and that the more harmonious their cooperation the more beneficial their competition. The decision of the judges has never been authoritatively changed and we believe that on the whole less-positive harm would result if any "startling discoveries" were kept from the papers and the public. A flagrant error might as well lay hidden from mortal ken unless its exposure teach some remedial lesson and in some way "replace the wrong by something nearer right." These constantly recurring charges of plagiarism and of irresponsible markings of judges tend only to undermine the faith of

the public in oratorical contests, increase the reluctance of judges to serve and will sooner or later result in the disintegration of the league.

When, however, the executive committee of the association have felt called upon to hold a post-mortem examination and see if those disconnected members which some call the "Homeless Nation" could be identified as the "Scattered Nation," we feel at liberty to make a few comments on the case.

It may be remarked first of all that McMinnville College is to be pitied for her misfortune and commended for the stand the faculty take in the case. It is evident that they, at least, are even more ready than anyone else to give Smith his due share of censure. The instructors are no less firm in their attitude against such malconduct on the part of their own representative than they were against the crime of the doughty Minchin. It is to be regretted that the college must suffer the penalty of exclusion to expiate the wrong for which the institution is in no wise responsible. Perhaps the only effective way to punish the wrong of a representative is through the association to which he belongs. All Israel was made to suffer because a single greedy member coveted a Babylonish garment and a wedge of gold and tucked them out of sight in his tent. McMinnville seems willing to undergo the hardship if thereby the enormity of the crime may be made plainer.

These frequent exposures of secret theft should serve to emphasize the worth of independent thinking and the danger, to say nothing of the downright iniquity, of borrowing whole paragraphs from another and attempting to palm them off for one's own. The thousands, before whom the winning oration comes, taken together constitute a universal special sense. Someone is sure to be familiar with the production thus mutilated by the removal of a few choice extracts here and there. He readily recognizes the peculiar flavor and detects the theft. True there is little new in thought; but there is plenty of room for originality in method of treatment, rhetorical statement, illustration and application. Like Lord Bacon the orator may "light his torch at every man's candle" but should be extremely reluctant to carry off another man's taper and call it his own.

Locomotive Smith will make a satisfactory coach. The students are to be congratulated on their success in securing a player of experience, a coach of undoubted ability and a man universally liked. If the expectations of the football men are not fully realized next season the fault will not be with the coach.

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