

# THE NEBRASKAN

VOL. II.

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA, FRIDAY, MARCH 9, 1894.

No. 15.

## Inter-Collegiate Debate.

Professor Adams has been corresponding with the English Department of the University of Kansas as to the advisability of attempting an inter-collegiate debate between the two schools. The idea seems to have been very favorably received in Kansas, as the last letter from there, given below, will show. The benefits of the debate are undoubted and the popularity would make it a success financially. It will doubtless be as acceptable to the students of Nebraska as to those of Kansas. Debates are taking the place of oratorical contests to a great extent in all parts of the country, and as a rule prove more satisfactory. Methods of choosing the debaters will of course have to be decided on, though each school will probably choose them in its own way as the conditions are somewhat different. The short time left between now and commencement will not give as much time for preparation as might have been desired, but we would be equal on that score.

Professor Adams desired an opinion on the subject. A mass meeting may possibly be called to consider it as soon as the matter is in definite enough shape to be handled in such a meeting. The letter given below is from the professor of English of the K. S. U.:

LAWRENCE, Kas., Feb. 24, '94.

Prof. James W. Adams—Dear Sir: I have your reply to my first letter, and it seems very evident that so far as the instruction in elocution and oratory is concerned, we are on equal terms; we also have a lady instructor recently appointed. You have the advantage of us in that your literary societies are flourishing while our one is barely able to keep alive; but I regard as on the whole a favorable thing, as I think the establishment of a joint debate would put new life into the society we now have, and perhaps be the means of organizing another.

Chancellor Snow regards the suggestion with favor, and so do the students to whom I have mentioned it. There is now manifest a feeling of extreme disgust in regard to the interstate oratorical business, arising not from our lack of success in

the contests, but from the charges of plagiarism now being brought against everything and everybody. The students seem to feel that they would like to withdraw from the Oratorical Association and concentrate their energies in this new line of work.

Finding this sentiment to exist, I have taken steps to bring the matter before the University as a whole, in the journals, and possibly at a mass meeting to be held tomorrow to consider another matter. I will report to you whatever may develop, and shall be glad to learn the state of opinion among your students.

I am not fully informed as to the system of managing the debates of Yale-Princeton, and Northwestern-Michigan. I know how Princeton chooses its men, but the first inter-collegiate debate was held after I left Princeton. Perhaps you can give me a point or two.

Very truly yours,

EDWIN M. HOPINS.

## LITERARY.

Some of our American authors, and some whom we have been wont to regard as especially talented, or at any rate especially entertaining, seem to be degenerating. Either they have done some one great work beside which all later ones seem insignificant, or they are losing their old time vigor of style, or they are simply running out of material. Whatever may be the explanation, it is much to be deplored though perhaps not to be wondered at. Perhaps it is because we have become attached to these writers and their works that we think no one can take their place and that our literature will suffer an irreparable loss as they disappear from the field. Perhaps we are more or less prejudiced against much recent literature simply because it is new, and will some day appreciate it all the more for this. Probably it is taking a very narrow and unscientific view of the matter to say that we cannot expect anything better in the future than we have had in the past. If literary production moves in cycles as evolutionary theories teach that many social phenomena have been observed to do, it may be that we are now in an

unfruitful interval between two cycles. Then we might expect a period of increased productivity in the not very distant future. It is inconsistent with the great American ideal of progress to suppose that we will not advance in literary pursuits just as far and just as fast as in any other. After all the deterioration may be merely apparent and not real, and some years hence what we widely ignore may be widely read.

There is one class of fiction, if it can be called a class, which has not only undergone a metamorphosis, but has taken a much more prominent place in our literature than it has ever held before, and that is short stories and sketches. We have some admirable writers of this class, and they have shown that there is as much room for artistic effect in a short story or a brief article as in a novel of many characters and complicated incident. To be sure this sort of writing depends on word painting and skillful touches for its effect, but it is just as much a legitimate branch of art as is miniature-painting. This might almost be called an age of short stories.

## Sketch of Mrs. Menzendorf.

Ermina D. Cochrane Menzendorf was born at Paterson, N. J. Her father, Samuel Cochrane, was a Methodist minister and his daughter accompanied him in his various changes of work. While at Grinnell, Iowa, she took the ladies' course at Grinnell college. After she had completed this her father founded a school at Kidder, Mo. In this school she did efficient work for a year as instructor in Latin and mathematics. She then returned to Grinnell and completed the regular course, taking the degree of Bachelor of Arts in 1873.

The next two years she spent in Boston studying voice, piano and harmony under the best teachers of the time. She also took a course of instruction on the pipe organ under the greatest American master, Clarence Eddy, of Chicago. This finished her musical education which was thorough, and fitted her well for the good teaching which she was to do.

Her alma mater granted her the masters degree after she returned from the east. Her real

life work was begun at Cameron, Mo. She taught then a short time afterwards at Breckenridge and Lathrop, in the same state. She moved to Bloomington, Ill., in 1880. There she remained five years. In that time she built up a school of music which was favorably known throughout the west. In deed it was with reluctance that she left it to accept the offer made her by the University of Nebraska. She did so, however, and in the nine years since that time has made the music department of the State University what it is. It practically did not exist at all until her arrival. In the summer of 1890 she was married to Professor D. C. Menzendorf, instructor in violin music in the University. He, together with Mr. Cochrane, are the only near relatives to mourn for the faithful wife and daughter. The sorrow of the hosts of friends Mrs. Menzendorf had made in the University and in Lincoln is, however, only less deep and no less sincere theirs.

## Writers Club.

A Writers club has recently been formed in the University to be composed of those members of the faculty and students who have done literary or newspaper work or who are greatly interested in such work. The object of the club is to discuss informally the work of the members or other topics of interest, and to help each other by suggestions. Its meetings will be entirely informal and will be made as pleasant as possible. Professor Adams is at the head of the scheme, but he wishes it understood that it is in no way connected with the English department, and is open to any members of the University who are interested in such things. It will give to a great extent the benefits which would be gained by publication of works and besides will afford an opportunity for criticism more friendly and informal than that given to published works. The meetings of the club will be held every two weeks in the English consultation room as long as that will accommodate the number present, and somewhere else if won't.

Read THE NEBRASKAN to get the news.