

### SOME RESULTS OF THE ABANDONMENT OF THE HUMANITIES.

The following thoughtful article signed "McR" appeared in a recent number of the *Dalhousie (University) Gazette*. The arguments advanced for the study of Latin and Greek will always remain sound. The true scientific spirit will be for their retention as studies for culture.

We read with much wonder in these intensely practical and commercial days that Lady Jane Grey was accomplished in the classics. But she was no exception. Many of her contemporaries of both sexes wrote and spoke Latin with ease and grace. Nor was this considered remarkable. The man of education in the days of Erasmus and the Reformation was in no sense a cultured gentleman, if he was not thoroughly versed in both Greek and Latin, while yet in his 'teens. All this is common knowledge to students.

When it became the fashion to write and read in the mother tongue, instead of the language of all scholars — Latin — the classic literature was still studied, still written, but within the Schools, the Universities, the Cloisters, it was no longer the means of communication between scholars of different nations — no longer the medium of conversation between statesmen, diplomats, churchmen in every centre of Europe.

To-day, despite the fierce opposition of many followers of natural and applied science, of most men of business, these superb languages of Greece and Rome are still in the curricula of many colleges and schools. The usual reason for the continuance of these studies is their culture-power, if one may so speak. It is claimed that they beget a style, a power of appreciation, a standard of excellence, a perspicuity, that is admirable. But how few, in these days, we are told, ever pass the stage of syntax, accident, and poor prose composition in these languages! How few can appreciate the beauties, the clear cut logic, the amazing perfection of Greek and Latin! And if students do not ascend to the level of proper appreciation, how much less can these studies beget a style! Appreciation precedes even proper imitation; how much more the many unconscious influences that re-appear in a student's thought and expression. While the average writer or thinker must admit this process of reasoning, the educationalist of prolonged experience may have some facts of observation that should command attention.

It was quite a general practice in Britain a couple of generations ago among educated people, to have their sons taught Latin and Greek at a very early age, as soon in many cases, as these boys began to learn to read and write their mother tongue. What were the unconscious influences and effects of such studies? At the age of ten or eleven, these lads were found to be devouring the novels of Sir Walter Scott with avidity. There seemed to be no question of understanding what they read. They scanned the pages with the eagerness and rapidity of the present day boy that sits down to a Henty story. But the boy of ten or eleven of this generation cannot read Scott's novels. He cannot read them because he cannot understand the words. He

has not the vocabulary. But worse than that, the boys of twelve, thirteen and fourteen years of age, cannot understand the language of Scott sufficiently well to intelligently read any one of his novels from cover to cover. Frequently we hear well read men of the day ask why it is our youths are reading stories so far below the level of the *Waverly Novels*.

Novelist and story-writers of the standard of Scott combine intense dramatic interest with the richness of historic reference, classic allusion, wealth of vocabulary. And it is just because the present day boy is ignorant of Latin and Greek, even the average Greek and Latin vocabularies of the first and second readers in these languages, that he finds such stories and novels uninteresting. Had he even a three years' acquaintance with the much abused classics, he would understand his own literature much more easily. Indeed he would save far more than the time of these years spent on classics — for he would be spared looking up the works in his own language he did not know, allusions he failed to appreciate, expression and phrases he could not understand. And most words the average man does not comprehend are from the classics. Indeed the major part of illustrations, examples, comparisons, are either from the Bible or the Humanities. If, then, the boys of to-day can bear the weight of Latin (if not Latin and Greek) without much interference with the three R's, they should do so. That they can do so, that they are doing so, in many schools and colleges, cannot be denied.

That such a procedure will save a vast time in later life is self-evident, though this is the smallest reason. If life is more than meat and drink, more than dollars and cents, if, in a word, it is the power of appreciation, then these elements that are embedded in our mother tongue are worth understanding. When a youth of seventeen asked the writer should he take an Arts course, ere he entered on the study of Law, the answer was given:—"It depends upon your standpoint. If you wish but money and success, and rapid advancement, go and study law now; if you wish development of the powers of appreciation (that can only be started on the path of development in youth), if you seek wealth of mind, if you desire to understand the history of your own times, to look into the meaning of existence, and, much more, the mystery, the awesome mystery of life, of God, the world and man, go to your Arts classes, study your classics, your philosophy, and you will in some degree better understand that religious thinker who wrote —

"Life is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit, (may we say, in the Life of the Spirit of the Whole?)."

McR.

### A 6 BY 9 RHYME.

A queer little boy who had been to school,  
And was up to all sorts of tricks,  
Discovered that 9 when upside down,  
Would pass for the figure 6.  
So when asked his age by a good old dame, the comical  
youngster said,  
I'm 9 when I stand on my feet like this, but 6 when I stand  
on my head.

RALPH.