

the thoughtless. Such displays have been forbidden in a number of Roman Catholic dioceses, and the churches generally are opposed to them. No interdict has as yet, however, been pronounced on the giving of prizes for ugliness, and an enterprising journalist thought he might without offence start a competition in which not the fairest, but the plainest, should be the winner. In such a rivalry ladies could hardly be expected to engage. Indeed, the plan adopted made the competition involuntary, for it was the subscribers to the organizer's journal (*Le Tourbillon*) who were to adjudge the prizes. The winner of the first prize, Mr. Oscar Browning, would not accept it. Personal spite, political prejudice, love of fun and mystification were the chief motives in the plebiscite. Mr. Gladstone and the Lord Mayor of London figured in the list of claimants.

### SIR WILLIAM DAWSON ON THE CLASSICS.

A discussion arose at the recent meeting of the Protestant teachers of this Province concerning specialism in education, which has been continued in the daily press. In the course of a letter to the *Montreal Gazette*, Dr. A. Aspinwall Howe, the venerable Rector of the High School, in explaining the difference between specialism that is profitable—specialism that is based on a broad knowledge of principles—and that which, being superficial, is to be distrusted, refers incidentally to certain remarks on ancient classical literature made by Sir William Dawson in his inaugural address, delivered thirty-five years ago as Principal of McGill College. *Aliquis latet error*. In the address in question, as printed, Sir William Dawson does not use the words attributed to him by Dr. Howe, does not characterize "ancient classical literature as fit only to be relegated to museums of chain armour and panoplies of the knight-errant of the middle ages." On the contrary, Sir William speaks of "the noble literature and language of the Hellenic races," races "gifted with a vividness of imagination, a delicacy of taste and acuteness of intellect, that have enabled them to transmit to us models in literature, art and abstract science that cannot be excelled. Certain grand prominent points in this literature (continues the Principal) are landmarks in the progress of the human mind. The greatest of epic poems, breathing at once the air of the east and west, bursts on us at the very threshold of Greek literature." Then he alludes to "the fathers of European history," to "a crowd of imitable poets, dramatists and orators, many of whom still live as powers in the world of mind," to the "mathematicians, physicists, naturalists and metaphysicians, whose influence is still strongly stamped on our modern science." Of the Latin language and literature the Principal speaks in equally worthy terms as "connecting forms of thought and civilization which have altogether passed away with those which under various modifications still subsist, and linking the language, the politics and the jurisprudence of the present inseparably with those of the past. Its study (continues the author of the address) thus becomes, without taking into account the merely literary merits and beauties of the Latin authors, an object of undeniable importance to the professional man, the man of science and the English scholar. The large obligations that we owe to the literature of classical antiquity, as well as its present value, are thus sufficient to retain it as an important element in the higher education." But the new Principal of McGill (whose address is well worth reading in its integrity) thought it necessary to add to his praise of the classics these words of warning: "The only danger is that the time of students may be so occupied and their minds so filled with such studies that they may go from our colleges armed with an antique panoply more fitted for the cases of a museum than to appear in the walks of actual life." The metaphor is somewhat confusing in its rapid transit from the ideal to the real. But we know what it means and its sense is very different from what Dr. Howe's remembrance of it would imply. The Principal then goes on to say that "such results of the too exclusive devotion to ancient literature have undoubtedly given rise to

just complaint," but, while voicing that side of the controversy, he deprecates neglect of classical studies, emphasizing their value even as purely practical branches of learning. "No one," he proceeds, "who weighs aright their influence on his own mental growth can doubt this. Even those of us who have been prevented by the pressure of other duties and the attractions of other tastes from following out these studies into a matured scholarship, have to thank them for much of our command over our own language; for much breadth of view and cultivation of taste; for much insight into the springs of human thought and action, and even for some portion of our appreciation of that highest light which we enjoy, as compared with those ancient nations which with all their wisdom knew not the true God, and in consequence of that deficiency, appear in our more enlarged views, even in their highest philosophy, but as children 'playing with the golden sands of truth.'" Those who read the whole of the passage that we have quoted or indicated will not, we are assured, accuse Sir William Dawson of that cheap contempt of the classics which, as the learned professor of Greek in Queen's College has more than hinted, is usually associated with ignorance both of them and of other things. The address of the young principal of McGill is, to our mind, admirable throughout, and has no trace of that narrow specialism of which Dr. Howe bids us beware.

### SOME SIGNIFICANT CONTRASTS.

In his famous article, "Kin beyond Sea," contributed to the *North American Review* in 1878, Mr. Gladstone brings out very clearly the points of difference between the British constitution and the United States system of government. Like all compromises the monarchy of Great Britain has, he concedes, its flaws— anomalies, and apparent self-contradictions. But as a whole, it has grown to fit the people fairly well and, compared with the professedly more logical republican régime of our neighbours, it is much more in consonance with popular aspirations. In fact, in many ways, the nation is more fully and honestly represented in London than in Washington. Dr. Bourinot, who has devoted many years to the study of the history and practice of our Canadian constitution, shows still more explicitly that in some important particulars where our neighbours diverged from, and we have adhered to, traditional usage, the advantage is with the British system. He acknowledges that upper houses appointed by the Crown may be less effective as co-ordinate authorities in the legislature than the federal and state senates. But in the relations of the executive to the legislature, the Canadian plan is decidedly more in accord with the principle of popular self-government and equal justice to all the functions of administration. The executive in the United States has no direct control over the legislature, in which it has no place—the clumsy expedient of the veto indicating its only power of intervention. On the other hand, there is nothing in the United States answering to our ministerial responsibility. The members of the cabinet have no seat in Congress, as our ministers have in Parliament, which, in its legislation, has the benefit of their lead and counsel. This distinction is of the utmost importance both from the standpoint of popular liberty and from that of the cabinet's many-sidedness. It is the regulator of the relations between the sovereign (represented by the Governor-General), the Senate and the Commons, "exercising functionally the powers of the first, and incorporated, in the persons of its members, with the second and third." Under our system, that which happens not seldom at Washington, a state of variance between the executive and the legislative authorities, is practically impossible. The President and his secretary may be in favour of a certain policy, while the majority in the popular house may be opposed to it. Such a deadlock occurred, in fact, quite recently when Mr. Blaine and Major McKinley (both Republicans) held different views on the subject of duties on sugar. Thus the Secretary of State (whose position corresponds with that of Prime Minister in Canada), having no seat in Congress, finds him-

self thwarted by his nominal ally, the leader of the Republican majority in the House. Now, if the Canadian rule, that ministers must be members of either legislative body, prevailed in the Republic, such an anomalous and unseemly conflict of opinion could not arise. The presence in the United States of delegates from Central and South America, with whom Mr. Blaine naturally wished to deal without restrictions on his freedom of action, made such opposition to his views peculiarly inopportune. In his excellent papers on "The Pan-American Conference," to which we have already referred, Senor Romero dwells almost pathetically on Mr. Blaine's position as that of a minister rendered powerless by his own party and forced to confess that he could not fulfil his promises.

Another point in which American differs *toto celo* from British and Canadian usage is that which concerns the Speakership. It may seem to us almost incredible that, as Dr. Bourinot informs us, "the Speaker himself is the leader of the party so far as he has influence on the composition of the committees." Yet how true this statement is may be disclosed to any seeker of evidence whenever the House is in session. Prof. James Bryce, author of "The American Commonwealth," was asked by the editor of the *North American* (*more suo*) to give his opinion on the recent action of the Speaker in counting members who were present but did not vote as present for the purposes of a quorum. Mr. Bryce preferred not to meddle with American party questions, but he volunteered to give his views on the Speaker's office, and, in doing so, he contrasts the strict impartiality of the British, with the avowed and open partisanship of the American, presiding officer. "In Congress," he writes, "the Speaker is for many purposes the leader of the majority. The majority is often advised by him and usually reckons on him to help it to carry out its will. The hare might as well hope that the huntsman would call off the hounds as the minority expect the Speaker to restrain an impatient majority." Such is the deliberate judgment pronounced by an Englishman, whom our neighbours accept as the fairest and most thoughtful authority on the theory and working of their constitution, as to the American view of the Speaker's functions. How different is the record of the British Speakership. Prof. Bryce assures us that "in Parliament the Speaker and the chairman of committees are, and have always been, non-partisan officials." Whatever he may have been before, "the Speaker is deemed, once he has assumed the wig and gown of office, to have so distinctly renounced and divested himself of all party trappings that, if he is willing to go on serving in a new Parliament in which the party to which he belongs is in a minority, the majority is nevertheless, expected to elect him anew. Thus Speaker Brand, although he had once been whip of the Liberal party, was re-elected Speaker in 1874 by the Tory party, which had then gained a majority, and served on till 1883. The Speaker is not permitted, so long as he holds office, to deliver any party speech outside Parliament, or even express his opinion on any party question, and in the chair itself he must be scrupulously fair to both parties, equally accessible to all members, bound to give his advice on points of order without distinction between those who ask it. It is to this impartiality which has never been wanting to any Speaker within living memory, that the Speakership owes a great part of the authority and the respect it inspires." And what Prof. Bryce says of the English Speakership is equally applicable to the position of the Speaker in Canada. These points of admitted superiority in the theory and operation of our Canadian constitution bear witness to the folly of those who would exalt an alien system at the expense of their own and show that neither in freedom nor in order would we gain by exchanging our own mode of government for the rule of the Republic.

The Christmas number of the DOMINION ILLUSTRATED, which will be ready early in December, will be the finest publication of its kind both in letter-press and illustrations that Canada has ever produced.