

Correspondence.

THE STUDY OF HEBREW.

To the Editor of the Knox College Monthly.

DEAR SIR,—I was pleased to see your editorial on the above subject in the last number of the Monthly, as it opens up a matter that seems to need discussion very badly. I agree heartily with your remarks as to the importance of Hebrew study, and am willing to admit the truth of your statement, that the blame for its present unsatisfactory state in Knox College lies largely with the students themselves.

But I contend, Sir, that the blame is not altogether with the students. Of course the great deficiency is in the elementary part of the work—the grammar and principles of the language. For none of us will admit that better instruction in the criticism and exegesis of the text is to be found in any college on the continent than in Knox College.

Now, it is expected that this elementary training will be obtained by our students during their University course; and it is contended that if they do not obtain it then, and are not prepared to enter on the critical study of the Hebrew text immediately on their entering this college, they have only themselves to blame. This conclusion is hardly just, as the following considerations will show. In the University curriculum, Hebrew is allowed as a substitute for French or German. Now many men look at the matter in this way. They want to obtain the culture of one or both of these modern languages; they are anxious to have access to the magnificent literature (theological included) of the German; very likely they are looking forward to a year's travel after

the completion of their course, and they see that their time at the University is the only opportunity they will have for getting any knowledge of these modern languages, whereas Hebrew *may* be got up during the course in Theology. So they take the modern language, and meanwhile let the Hebrew go. In doing this, under the circumstances we have mentioned, they are certainly not acting altogether unreasonably.

A stronger reason than this exists against your proposal to enforce strictly the rule that students shall take at least one year in Hebrew, *before entering Theology*. Many good men do not fully make up their minds as to what their profession is to be until after graduation; or at least, until near the close of their course in Arts. To any one who is not looking forward definitely to the ministry, the study of Hebrew presents no particular attraction; and by the strict enforcement of this rule, most of the class of which we have just spoken would be shut out from entering Knox, and would be forced to go to one of the American seminaries, where Hebrew is taught in the theological course.

In view of these facts, we venture to ask, if it would be impossible to have a tutor in Hebrew appointed, who, during the first term at least, might give those who wished it a thorough and systematic drill in the grammar. If this were done, we might hope that when the second term begins, more than half of the class would be able at least to look for a word in the lexicon and tell one part of speech from another.

Yours, etc.,

ROBERT HADDOW.