

THE ' VARSITY:

A WEEKLY REVIEW OF

EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY POLITICS AND EVENTS.

VOL. IV. No. 4.

Oct. 27, 1883.

Price 10 cents.

THE PROFESSORSHIP OF MODERN LANGUAGES.

Ever since the days of Professor Forneri, that is, roughly speaking, since 1812 or perhaps earlier, the Professorship of Modern Languages in University College has been in Commission. None of the gentlemen who have since then acted as Modern Language Tutors have ever had a seat on the Council. They have all acted independently in their several spheres, and the consequence is that for many years a great injustice has been committed to a very important department. That any one of these languages has received fair play we deny. In the first place, there has been a want of dignity about the department, not due to the Tutors themselves, but due to the fact that they were Tutors and not Professors. In the next place, the subjects have not been fairly treated. There have been few or no attempts to develop the philosophy of the literature of France, Italy, Spain, or Portugal. No lessons have been drawn from the experience of these older countries, by which we in this new country can guide our path. The aim of the lectures has been assistance in translation—higher High School work. So little has been done in the more advanced branches of the subjects that the undergraduates, finding themselves confined to translation and verbal criticism, have been seduced into the idea that a conversation class is the beau ideal development of a lecture room.

It is most important that in a country like ours, with everything before us, with our future to shape, we should start well. All our educational institutions require therefore the closest scrutiny. They are not merely of local interest, but affect the whole community. Particularly is this the case with University College so long as it remains the Provincial College. If the country surrenders its control of the College the management becomes an affair of interest more especially to its supporters, but so long as the College is a Government institution the whole Province is vitally affected by its course. The general *consensus* of opinion will therefore be strongly in favor of any movement which will raise this important department to its proper sphere. The proposition to create a Professorship of Romance languages is equivalent to restoring the old Professorship of Modern Languages, with this difference, that the new Professor will not take German, which language the old one did take with the others. The name 'Romance' is more suggestive of the *langue d'oc* and the *langue d'oïl* than anything else. But it can probably be fairly held to mean French, Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. A good linguist can be found without much trouble who will be fairly conversant with all four. But the salary which is named—two thousand dollars—will not secure the services of a man who will restore the *prestige* of the department. The new comer should be exactly on the same footing as the other Professors. His department is in no way inferior or less important than theirs. The position of a gentleman who will have an opportunity of doing much towards instructing us how to improve our national taste and how to embellish our national literature should from the first be placed beyond ambiguity of any kind. We therefore cordially agree with the motion made in the Senate urging the Government to postpone the appointment until opportunity be given to find such a man, and when found to secure him and pay him well. We hope the best man will be chosen no matter where he comes from, *cæteris paribus*, let us have a Canadian—but let us have the best man. As for the make-shift system of employing Tutors, which has existed too long, we hope it will now receive its *quietus*. If it is a question of want of funds then let no permanent appointment be made

until the college has secured enough from the country to enable it to do its work thoroughly and efficiently.

SOME PROPOSED CHANGES.

The last meeting of the Senate of the University is remarkable for the large number of important changes proposed or adopted. Some of these are necessary, and others deserving of serious attention and discussion; some, we think, are on their very face unwise and deserving only of withdrawal or defeat.

It has long been recognized that our higher degrees are not what they should be: are no mark of superior merit or of additional work. To remedy this defect in our 'L.L.D.' Mr. Gibson proposes that that degree be henceforth an honorary one only. The grounds upon which its granting will be founded have not been formulated, nor has it been stated whether it is intended to be an honor confined to our own graduates. But it is safe to say, that any scheme by the adoption of which this degree, to which so great weight is always attached in the ages of the world, will be fairly granted without the necessity of a written examination, as at present, will be an improvement. The report of the Committee appointed to prepare the details of a scheme for the establishment of a new degree of Ph. D., will be anxiously looked for by many graduates. If the motive for this change is a desire to substitute something of value for our almost valueless M.A., that motive is a worthy one. That our best men are content with a degree which shows the result of four years of work, is a significant fact. And graduates ought to welcome any scheme that will afford them a goal to work for after graduation, and an incentive to, and encouragement of, such work, now sadly lacking.

Mr. Houston makes two very sensible propositions. The first of these is the abolition of age-limit in connection with Junior Matriculation scholarships. The danger lies rather in the youth than the age of matriculants. Were the standard of this examination raised and no discount demanded of advancing age, the University would be nearer to what a University should be: a higher not an intermediate education; a development of men, not boys. Mr. Houston still presses for the establishment of a new graduating department in English, Constitutional History, Constitutional Law, Civil Polity, Political Economy, and Jurisprudence. It is time that this department had a place here, and professors of its own; its establishment should be the first aim of those willing to listen to the demands of those most interested. While other courses, acknowledged less practical and necessary, are seeking and obtaining advantages, by more or less open methods, this important branch of study is quietly ignored. The demands made for its recognition here are enough to warrant its introduction. That introduction would immediately show it the most popular course on our curriculum. Perhaps jealousy is one cause of the opposition. Whether so or not, that opposition must soon be overcome.

In contradistinction, it might almost be said, to the last-mentioned proposition, PROF. LOUDON asks for the establishment of a chair of Romance Languages, with a salary of at least \$2,000 a year. Such a chair is very desirable in any University, and a very popular idea. Than the study of the Romance Languages there can be nothing more interesting. But with us, with all our present wants and our crippled financial condition, to talk seriously of Romance Languages seems, to say the least, a little premature. MR. BUCHAN has a much better idea on the subject of languages,—that of the continuation of French and German through our course, instead of the compulsory substi-