

son indeed to do the latter; but it requires a quite uncommon one to do the former. To create is certainly as conclusive evidence of ability as to imitate. And when all these creations must conform to certain well known canons of good literature, such a literary product is quite as good proof of hard work as passing an examination which is the result oftentimes of either cramming or cribbing—or both.

* * *

FOR these, and other reasons which might be urged, we hope that the time is near when there will be in Queen's an option between Junior Mathematics and original literary work; and when such a step is taken, and not till then, will this University, in the opinion of many of those who love her best, exercise the highest function of a University—act as a nursery for the national literature in the days to be.

* * *

WHILE we extend to Professor Cappon our congratulations upon the gallant following of young ladies and gentlemen which he already has, and while we hail every accession to the ranks of students of literature as an omen of good for the future of our University, it must not be forgotten that attendance upon a course of lectures, however excellent, will not create a literary spirit; nor will it give one literary culture. Nothing can do this save study of the works which make up our literature.

* * *

“STRIKE—but hear me!” said the Athenian to the Spartan; and if we offend the prejudices of any of our readers by the views we hold, to them we say the same. One of the greatest curses in the systems of education of our century is their superficiality. We meet on every hand and every day of our existence, people of both sexes who are, as far as literary knowledge goes, infants in swaddling clothes, who can yet write you out a critique of Browning, Shelley, or Shakespeare *a la mode*; who can sum up their beauties and defects in a single sentence—caught at first or second hand from some modern authority in *belles lettres*—while at the same time they know no more of the works of these men than they do of the Zendavesta.

* * *

COLERIDGE, for example, has given us an analysis of Shakespeare. “How much better he knew Shakespeare than we can ever know him! The wisest of men tell us that they are seeing every day beauties in him which they had never before known. How worse than foolish of us, then, to attempt to study him by ourselves!” And so the farce goes on; and, as a result, instead of the virile independence of mind which gave our fathers the literary supremacy of the earth, we bid fair to present to after times the spectacle of a generation which not only lacked the genius to create anything of its own, but even the ability to read intelligently what other ages had created for it.

THE cause of this is not far to seek. Lectures, oral and written, have taken the place largely of individual effort. “Of making many books there is no end.” If this was true in Solomon's time, how much more in ours. All great authors of the past, and some of the present, have commentators *ad infinitum*; and men to-day, instead of studying the poet or novelist himself, study—what other men think of him.

* * *

WHAT a contrast to all this hypocritical humility, or mental bankruptcy, is the brusque language of Dr. Johnson! “When should we commence to study Shakespeare? In boyhood. Take him up then and read him *through*. If the boy does not sound all the depths of the great bard at first, neither does he at once fathom all of life.” This is the sum of the whole matter. Every day's practical experience of life increases his knowledge, and therefore his appreciation and understanding, of Shakespeare. And conversely every day's study of Shakespeare increases his understanding and appreciation of the responsibilities and duties of life. There is a mutual interaction between them.

* * *

IF this be true of the greatest of our poets, how is it less so of the less? So that lectures in English literature are of advantage to two classes of people, and in two ways. They point the ignorant to the authors whence they may derive knowledge; and they tend to render more definite and accurate the knowledge which they already possess who have studied these works beforehand. But as for those who attend and get up the lectures and nothing more, they are apt to come forth from the classroom with a conceit of knowledge quite out of proportion to that which they actually possess, and with a superficiality of culture which, while satisfying to the individual, is more than hurtful to the community. We are aware that it is out of the fashion to quote Pope in these times, but we care as little for fashion as we do for the modern educational methods, and he serves here to clinch a truth as well as anyone we know:—

“A little learning is a dangerous thing;

Drink deep—or taste not the Pierian spring!”

* * *

“HEAR the conclusion of the whole matter.” If the above argument is of force to the students, and we hold that it is, it is of no less importance to the Faculty itself. The University which shall have the widest influence in our new country is not of necessity that which has the largest equipment or the most extensive endowment. But it is that one which shall do most to the encouragement and development of the literary spirit. We cannot hope to compete, with any measure of success, against the laboratories of Toronto and some American Universities. But in literature we can, and should, hold our own against the world.