

On the study of ancient classics, Mr. Duff may be thought by some rather heretical, but after all, may there not be a good deal of reasonableness found in his remarks and suggestions, the more especially as not one boy or lad in ten, either in our Grammar Schools or Universities ever so far masters either Greek or Latin, as to be able to read the "classics," of which so much is said, in any other way than as a task. While with the vast majority of those supposed to be "fagging" at what some suppose to be the key of all knowledge, the time and money so spent are really worse than thrown away! Let any one go into any High School in Ontario, aye, or even into our Provincial University, and note a good deal of what is going on there under the painfully absurd name of education, and he will feel that the following words of Mr. Duff are appropriate on this as well as on the other side of the Atlantic:

"I hinted a little ago that I did not consider the old-fashioned English classical education a good classical education. On the contrary, I consider it a very bad classical education, altogether one-sided, failing to give anything like the cultivation that a classical education ought to give, while it occupies a most unreasonable amount of time. I believe that you could with ease, in very much less than half the time usually occupied in classical studies, familiarize the mind with everything that has come down from classical antiquity that ought to form any part of general education. I would produce these results in the following ways:—1st, By teaching Greek as, what it is mainly, a living, not a dead language. 2nd, By considering that the only object worth keeping in view with regard to Latin and Greek, considered as a part of general education, is to enable your youth to read whatever exists in Latin and Greek that you cannot read as well in English, French, or German. To that end, I would immensely curtail the amount that is read, and even of the authors which must be read I would read in translations as much as could be with propriety read in that way. I would strike my pen remorselessly through everything that was uncharacteristic in a first rate author; but, on the other hand, I would include in my list of books a good deal that is usually, but most unreasonably, omitted. I would wholly banish from general education all Latin and Greek composition whatever, except in prose. On the other hand, I would consider it just as necessary that the persons who were to go through a classical education should have their eye familiarized with whatever is most beautiful in Greek coins, statues, gems, and buildings, as that the ear should be familiarized with the finest passages in the language. When I was at school it was the fashion to learn by heart thousands and thousands of lines of Latin and Greek. To all that I would put an utter end, and never encourage a line to be learnt that was not sufficiently good to be treasured through life as a possession for ever.

"The time is surely come for some scholar of commanding reputation, or better still, for some committee of scholars, to put forth an answer to this question—considering that Latin and Greek studies do bring the mind into contact with ideas with which it is not otherwise brought into contact, and considering that there are a vast number of the studies which it is absurd and disgraceful to neglect—what is there that you insist upon as specially worthy of attention? I am persuaded that the list of books or part of books which would be written down in answer to such a question as this by scholars, who, in addition to having read widely in the classics and having made themselves acquainted with the chief treasures of classical art, have a wide knowledge of modern literature, would not be of unwieldy length. I yield to no one in the desire to keep classical study a part of education, but you must remember that the place which classical studies now hold in this country is a mere accidental result of their having been introduced when there was hardly any modern literature. Of late they have been studied from a fantastic notion that they are a peculiarly good discipline for the mind, that they are in some mysterious sense educative. They were not introduced, however, for any such silly reason. Latin and Greek were in the days of the Renaissance the keys of almost all knowledge worth having. They were studied, not as being educative, but being instructive. What I advocate is, that we should go back, to the practices and principles of our ancestors in this matter, and act as they would have acted if the languages which it was necessary to learn for the ordinary purposes of an intelligent life had been then, as English, French, and German are now, full of books which introduced the reader to the knowledge best worth having. If that had been so in their day, they would, I trust, have used the classics to do for them what other literature could not do—they would not, I trust, have used the classics to do what other literature could do better. There is another question which a committee of scholars might usefully answer. What are the best translations of the classics in English, French, or German, and what is there that must be read in the original? If those two questions were satisfactorily answered, if it became once understood that a classical education must include a familiarity with the best produc-

tions of classical art, as represented at least by casts, electrotypes, drawings, and other copies where the originals are not accessible, and ought if possible to include a visit to the principal classical sites, I believe that the amount of classical culture in this country would be enormously increased, and give time for more valuable studies.

"I want carefully to guard myself against saying a word against these studies—classical or any of their adjuncts *per se*. The least useful of these adjuncts is probably Latin and Greek verse composition, but I would utterly banish it from general education, I would endeavour to keep up the traditions of English success in what I admit to be, like fencing, an excessively pretty accomplishment, by giving large rewards for it both at our schools and Universities. The best and most legitimate use to which you can put endowments is to encourage studies which will not, so to speak, encourage themselves, and I should be sorry if there were ever a time when a few persons in this country could not write Latin verse as well, say, as the late Professor Conington, or Greek lambics as well as the late Mr. James Riddell, not to mention the names of living people. It is a common thing to represent those who are opposed to the present system of teaching the classics as enemies to the classics themselves, but nothing could, in my case, be more unjust. I wish, as you have seen, that the classics should still occupy a considerable place in the education of any one who has any aptitude for literature, and who can carry on his studies to the age at which young men usually leave Oxford and Cambridge. Further, I should like to see such a rearrangement in the application of our University funds as to encourage a small number of specialists to give their attention to every one of the adjuncts of classical study. I cannot possibly make it too clear that what I want is, not to diminish the amount of classical knowledge in the world or of classical culture in general education, but by a wiser ordering of classical studies to get time for other studies even more important, without overtaking the strength of fairly intelligent and fairly healthy young persons. I believe that English boys lose at least five clear years of life between seven years old and three-and-twenty, thanks to the unwisdom of our present system, in addition to what they may lose by their own idleness."

To the study of mathematics Mr. D. does not assign a high place except as a necessary introduction to physics. Physiology, study of the laws of England, political economy, politics, etc., were all dwelt upon as parts of a general system of education which could easily be got through by the time the student was 21. Here is the conclusion at which Mr. D. arrives as he summarizes what he had said:—

"Such a general education as I have sketched in rough outline would not occupy quite so long a time as the far inferior education through which the young man who takes honours at Oxford or Cambridge now passes. It will be seen to have some points of resemblance to the education which is tested by the matriculation examination of the London University—the most sensible examination meant to test general education which is, so far as I am aware, now held in these islands, if we allow for the fact that that examination is one which may take place at sixteen, while the examination which we should contemplate would take place at or after one-and-twenty. Such a general education would ensure the acquisition of a far larger number of facts, and the formation of a far larger number of correct ideas, than is now customary. It would train the judgment far more effectually, and it would lay a far better foundation for that continuous self-education which should go on in every intelligent human being to his last hour. It would store the mind with the most important truths that man has discovered about his environments, and with the most remarkable things he has said, while it would prepare the mind to receive the intensest pleasure of which it is capable from perpetual additions of these two kinds of knowledge, as well as from the direct influence of beauty, natural or artificial. It would, in other words, give the key of the treasure-house of science, the key of the treasure-house of literature, the key of the treasure-house of natural beauty, and the key of the treasure-house of art, while it taught the mind to work easily and powerfully, without ever overtaking the body, or falling into the foolish mistake of treating its ally and instrument as if it were a slave."—B. A. Presbyterian.

THE GAELIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE.

DEAR SIR,—The following circular was received by last mail from Professor Blackie, of Edinburgh, with the request that I would invite attention to it in this country. This, I presume, can best be done by reprinting it in a journal so extensively read by Scotsmen and their descendants as yours. I have no doubt there are many Highlanders in this country who would gladly aid in the preservation and extension of the study of their venerable ancestral-