

## THE VARSITY.

THE VARSITY is published on Saturdays in the University of Toronto, by THE VARSITY Publishing Company, in 21 weekly numbers during the academic year.

The Annual Subscription price is \$1.00 a year, payable before the end of January.

All literary contributions and items of College News should be addressed to THE EDITORS, University College, Toronto.

All communications of a business nature should be addressed to THE BUSINESS MANAGER.

The Office of THE VARSITY is at No. 4, King Street East, Room 10 (up-stairs).

## THE NEW PROFESSOR.

The Ontario Government has at length settled the much vexed question as to who is to occupy the new Chair in English in Toronto University, by passing an Order-in-Council appointing Dr. W. J. Alexander, Professor of English Literature in Dalhousie College, Halifax, to the position.

Judging by the testimonials presented and by the records of the various applicants for the place, and at present we have little else to judge by, we must acknowledge that in choosing Dr. Alexander the Government have in our opinion chosen the best man available.

Dr. Alexander is still a young man, having been born in 1855. In 1877 he matriculated in the University of Toronto, taking scholarships in Modern Languages and in General Proficiency. In the following year he won the Canadian Gilchrist Scholarship at the matriculation examination of the University of London. During the years 1874-7 he continued his studies at University College, London, at the end of that time taking his degree of Bachelor of Arts in the University of London, with first-class honours in English. On his return to Canada, he discharged the duties of first master in the Prince of Wales College, Charlottetown, P.E.I. During this period he formed the resolution to devote himself to the study of English Literature, and this decision has guided his movements ever since.

In order to increase his knowledge of other literatures, especially of the Classics, he entered the Johns Hopkins University, where during four years he took courses in Comparative Philology, Latin and Greek. He won a graduate scholarship a year after entering, and was appointed to a fellowship in Greek in the following year, 1881. After holding the fellowship for two years he graduated as Doctor of Philosophy in June, 1883. His graduation thesis appeared in the *American Journal of Philology* for October, 1883.

Dr. Alexander then went to Berlin, and passed a year at the University of that place in the study of the German Language and Literature. While at Berlin he received the appointment at Dalhousie University which he has since held.

Among Dr. Alexander's testimonials, perhaps the most remarkable is that from Dr. Gildersleeve, Professor of Greek at Johns Hopkins, who says: "In my long career as a teacher I have never had a more sympathetic pupil in all that pertains to the æsthetic part of my work, and when he returned to his favourite province of study, as he did shortly after leaving the Johns Hopkins, he has shown in his chosen field the same insight, the same enthusiasm, that made me hope so much for his future as a classical scholar."

It augurs well for the breadth of Dr. Alexander's culture that, although he made English his specialty, he did not grudge giving three years of his life to the study of Classics, and one year to that of German, in the belief that a proper treatment of English must be based on a thorough and sympathetic knowledge of what the Germans call "World-Literature."

## THE NEW ENGLISH COURSE.

Now that a new Professor in English has been appointed, it may be expected that the whole course of study in that department will undergo a thorough revision, and when this is done, it behoves the University and the public generally to see that it is well and carefully done. Consideration of the branch of Philology, may be omitted here, and as to Composition, as

we believe, it can only be learned by practice. What the present article aims at is to make some practical suggestions as to the system to be pursued in selecting the list of authors for critical reading in the various years.

If we look at the present curriculum we find prescribed, for Junior Matriculation, for Pass, various works of Coleridge, Thompson, Scott, etc., and for Honours, one of Shakespeare's plays. Passing to the First Year, we find Shakespeare figuring in the Pass course, while Chaucer and Milton are linked together in strange fellowship on the Honour course. The Second Year stands by itself, in that English is only studied by Honour men, who again attack Shakespeare. In the Third Year we find poor Milton, again in doubtful company, descended in his turn to the Pass course, while Shakespeare and Spenser monopolize the Honour department. In the Fourth Year, however, the two latter authors once more admit Milton, with whom comes Pope, to the attention of Honour men, while Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley fall to the lot of the Pass men.

When we read this list, the question immediately arises, what principle has decided its selection? The only apparent excuse for Chaucer's presence in the First Year is that Chaucer comes first chronologically. But even this superficial classification, involving as it does a commencement at the most difficult end of the subject, is not adhered to. As to the other authors, they seem chosen entirely by chance, which, though it is sometimes said to rule the universe, should certainly not govern a curriculum. Lest, however, our criticism shall seem, not constructive, but wholly destructive, we shall proceed at once to the statement of what we take to be a plain rational basis for the new course.

Let us be guided by chronology. But instead of commencing with Anglo-Saxon and working down to the present day, let us start with some such man as Browning, and go gradually back to Chaucer and, if desirable, back to Brut's Layamon.

Moreover, while we are thus gradually taking up the old authors, let us continue our study of the new, thus making the course resemble an arithmetical progression, commencing at Junior Matriculation from the base of Modern Literature and gradually increasing, till the Fourth Year becomes a synopsis of the sum total of English Literature. Thus the interest would be made continuous and unbroken, and the subject would be presented in a form most adapted for a large and comprehensive view.

The Pass course, in our opinion, should follow the main lines of the Honour course, differing only in being less copious in the list of authors read, and in being more general in their treatment.

THE VARSITY would also wish to offer the following proposition for consideration, viz., that the plan, lately adopted in the Law course, of obtaining outside lecturers on different branches be extended to the English course, which would still be under the supervision and control of the Professor, but would by this means become much more popular and useful than is possible under the scanty staff which will be at its disposal.

There are many men in Canada, who could be prevailed upon to deliver lectures or courses of lectures on various authors of whose works they had made a special study, and who would be able to deal with the writings of these authors both more sympathetically and more fully than a Professor who found himself obliged to lecture, perhaps on the same day, to four different years and on four different authors.

## ENLARGEMENT OF RESIDENCE.

In some quarters there is an inclination toward total abolition of residence in college as an institution, and Dame Rumour whispers that not a thousand miles from Toronto there are those who would be glad to see our University Residence become a thing of the past.

To this desire we are diametrically opposed. Rather would we see the place enlarged and improved so that its advantages might become more numerous and more apparent, and more accessible to all students than at present. It is a fact that there are reasons not a few on the side of those who look with disapprobation on the present state of affairs with regard to Residence. Among the points in the present régime to which