

be eliminated from our system of education by introducing into it a thorough and comprehensive study of modern languages? This study will invite to it, from inherent taste and judicious culture, the man of letters who, with leisure at command and wealth at his disposal, has passed through the regular collegiate curriculum. But is it so with the other class we have referred to? We think not; and the few exceptions that might be urged only prove the rigorous certitude of the rule. Wherefore, in our judgment, it would be a boon of unmeasured value, if, to this class, the treasures of taste, critical art and elevated thought, crystallized in modern languages, could be opened at a period when the mind, quickening with the spirit that is to guide it, is preparing for an upward flight; and the heart, rich in its young emotions, is plastic and ready for the impressions of the good, the beautiful, and the true. The mind is stimulated to renewed exertions as it feels its accretions of thought and knowledge gathering and deepening around it. The study of modern languages opens up this consciousness and supplies this stimulant. Especially is this true of the Italian language; but it is also relatively true of the French, Spanish, and German languages. There are passages in Dante especially, which, for depth of thought, boldness of conception, melody of numbers and beauty of expression, have no examples to surpass them in Greek or Latin writers. The same is partially true of other modern languages. They constitute mines of richest ores whose value the American student is never, or rarely, invited to consider; whose constituents he is never taught to analyse, and fuse, and mould into absolute forms of beauty and excellence. Under the careful guidance of competent leaders the deepest intricacies of these mines would be laid bare to his curiosity in two or three years of judicious labor; and his toil would be rewarded in an improved taste, increased incentives to laudable ambition and a higher intellectual life, wherein the horizon of knowledge would enlarge and brighten, and the nobler aims and purposes of actual life receive a new impulsion and surer success.

But independent of the purely æsthetic side of the question, there is a practical side which addresses itself to the utilitarian sense of the age. Railroads, telegraphs, and other improvements of a kindred character are totally changing the social, industrial and commercial relations of the nations of the world. We are not certain that these changes, sudden, stupendous, startling as they are, will bring confirmed happiness to humanity, as many would have us believe. But the momentum they have imparted to the social forces of the world cannot now be impeded without imparting to the entire social system such a shock as would rend and convulse the whole system, as an earthquake rends and convulses the earth which it upheaves. We therefore take things as we find them, and leave the gestation of the future to Him who alone knows and foresees all things. These improvements are bringing nations into familiar intercourse with one another. The language of one is not the language of all; and hence, in order that this intercourse may have an unrestrained and kindly influence, it must have a common medium for the transmission of common wants, purposes and designs. In Europe the general knowledge of the French language supplied this medium—the French being the court language of many of the European nations. But this is destined to change with other important changes now being wrought out upon the European Continent. Russia and Bismark will strangle out the French language in more than the half of civilized Europe, and substitute for it the Slavonic and German tongues. As this purpose develops itself and grows into importance, the greater will become the need of studying

modern languages. Our national deficiency in this respect will render it more necessary for us to make greater exertions. It is really humiliating to observe how ignorant of foreign languages are our diplomats abroad and our statesmen at home. It is a reproach on the national character, as well as on the institutions in which our statesmen have been educated, in so far as they have received any education at all. In the national idea we are all born statesmen and orators; and culture and education belong only to the effete and crumbling nationalities of Europe! Of course our special concern lies with our Catholic colleges and schools. We see no reason why this order of things should continue; and we confidently hope that some one of our many excellent institutions will take the initiative in this work of reforming the curriculum of studies, so as to bring it within the measure of present needs, while supplying, in the higher regions of education, all that could be required for the rough culture both in literature and science.

We feel satisfied that the institution which shall first dare to undertake this work and prosecute it with judicious care and resolute persistence will achieve the desired success and secure from its patrons the character of gratitude which will be an earnest of more substantial benefactions.—[*Baltimore Mirror*.]

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