

The Western School Journal

(AUTHORIZED BY POSTMASTER GENERAL, OTTAWA, AS SECOND CLASS MAIL)

VOL. XII

WINNIPEG, JANUARY, 1917

No. 1

Editorial

University Matriculation

In the University Council a discussion is under way touching the conditions of matriculation. There is a difference of opinion as to how many foreign languages should of necessity be studied by those entering upon a University course. The School Journal wishes to express itself in sympathy with those who advocate one language and that optional.

Among the arguments for a single language are these: 1. Not all pupils are linguistically inclined. 2. The study of two languages uses up too much of the student's time—probably over one-half of his time on the average. 3. There is a consequent lack of balance. 4. There is a neglect of the practical branches, so necessary in modern research, and so necessary to true culture.

Among the arguments for free choice are these: 1. Latin has no greater culture value than other languages. 2. It is not demanded by many other universities. 3. It is not of as great practical value as a study like French. 4. It is a dead language. 5. It usually leads nowhere—that is, a student studying French for two years in a university gets a working acquaintance with the language, but a student taking Latin usually has only enough knowledge to make a hazy guess at the meaning of a Latin sentence.

One cannot but feel that the reasons why Latin has been singled out by many for special distinction are: 1. Latin has been considered the badge of culture, e.g., clergy are distinguished

from most of their flock by the fact that they can utter Latin phrases and perhaps quote a Greek phrase or two. 2. Latin was always a University study and Universities are conservative.

Why should there be only one road to a University? There are twenty or more paths after one enters. The ideal matriculation test should be such as to permit entrance to the University students of widely varying culture. The fixed course is not fair to the student nor to society, nor is it to be defended on pedagogical grounds. The best course for a student is that which has best educational and highest practical value. Such a course may for some embrace the study of two or three languages, for more it would mean the study of only one foreign language, and that not necessarily Latin. It is not true that all the cultured men of today have a knowledge of even one foreign language. We should measure culture not by studies, but by actual attainment and power.

The day is coming when one can matriculate without knowing three branches of mathematics, or without a test in history (the test in geography is now omitted) or without a knowledge of some other branches. New studies will receive recognition. Option, within limits, must take the place of compulsion.

It is scarcely to be expected that, with the University Council constituted as it is, the course will be altered at the present time. It will, however, only be a few years until the alteration is made.