

VARSAITY

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THE VARSITY.

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Topics of the Hour.

It is not generally known that the famous scientist, Mr. G. J. Romanes, is a Canadian by birth and early training. He was born in Kingston, where he has a brother living at the present time. Mr. Romanes is best known by his psychological researches. His book, "Mind in Animals," has many readers. His recent appointment to the chair in Natural History in the University of Edinburgh, shows how highly he is esteemed in his adopted country. Kingston may well be proud of him and of her other no less distinguished son, Mr. Grant Allen. If Mr. W. D. Howells had known of Mr. Allen's Canadian origin, he would have saved himself some useless conjecture in the February number of *Harper's Monthly Magazine*. In reviewing a novel recently published by Mr. Allen, in England, he seems to be quite exercised as to

how the author picked up his knowledge of American language and character. And, of course, taking it for granted that the United States are America, the Yankee critic repudiates some of Mr. Allen's expressions. Yet Mr. Howells is not infallible, and it is quite probable that Mr. Allen knows what he is doing and saying.

Remarks and suggestions with regard to the curriculum, wear some and never-ending though they may seem, have, nevertheless, their use. Having said this, we would ask those of our readers, if there be any, "*quos curriculo pulverem collegisse juvat*,"—who have, that is to say, taken a certain pleasure in suffering the curriculum to gather dust in some out-of-the-way corner—to brush away the dust and look into its pages again. We wish to briefly indicate at least two ill-advised lines upon which the prescribed authors in English have been chosen. The English required at Junior Matriculation reaches farther back than the living interest of the classes which are being prepared for the University; and in prescribing the authors to be studied, the assumption should be that a book which is not of itself interesting and attractive to the youthful mind,—a book which a boy will not read with pleasure outside of school hours, will prove worse than useless as a means of culture. As to the English required after Matriculation, we do not understand the absence from the curriculum of the names of the great new-world writers. Lowell, speaking for Americans, says: "It might be questioned whether we could not establish a stronger title to the ownership of the English tongue than the mother islanders themselves. Here, past all question, is to be its great home and centre. And not only is it already spoken here by great numbers, but with a far higher popular average of correctness than in Britain. The great writers of it, too, we might claim as ours, were ownership to be settled by the number of readers and lovers." Of the great writers in whom America has absolute title, we need say nothing.

It used to be thought impossible for any one to receive a liberal education except in the study of philosophy, of classics, or of mathematics. For hundreds of years proficiency in one or more of these subjects was made the indispensable condition of the honors of the Universities. But slowly the modern languages and the natural sciences won their way into this recognition. In our own University a still further advance was made when a graduating department was created in physics a few years ago. And now we see it is proposed in the Senate to allow students to graduate in Greek and the Oriental languages. This proposition ought certainly to be carried out. There is every reason why the widest system of options should be adopted throughout our entire curriculum. Why should a metaphysical man be compelled to take civil polity rather than German if he preferred the latter subject, or why should a modern language man be compelled to carry the burden of all the languages (and history and ethnology as well!) if he would prefer to devote himself more earnestly to one or two of them only? This is not mere