

A SCHOOL OF LAW.

The fact that a deputation of students waited on the Benchers of the Law Society last month and presented a memorial urging them to take action in the matter of organizing a school of law; that the students, themselves, feeling the want of training outside of what might strictly be called legal, have induced Professor Young, of this college, to deliver them a course of lectures on logic; and that at the same meeting of the Benchers, Hon. Adam Crooks introduced a measure which proposes to reduce the time of those qualifying for the bar who have taken the L.L.B. course of this university—these facts all indicate that considerable interest is being manifested in the question of legal education in this province.

That there is need for a school of law seems to be admitted by everyone. There is a good law school in Montreal, and in many of the States similar institutions flourish, either in connection with colleges or as separate organizations. Why then has not Ontario, with all her boasted educational advantages, a school of law? It cannot be for lack of students, for the number of young men entering the profession is very large. It cannot be for want of funds, for the province has a surplus, and, besides, it has been urged that the school might be so conducted as to be self-supporting. Neither can it be for the reason that our law-students are already well enough trained in the go-as-you-please manner in which they now pursue their studies: for as a matter of fact the majority of our lawyers would be none the worse if the preparation for their work was systematically conducted. There are plenty of lawyers being turned out every year, but really good men are scarce enough.

We do not know whether the students submitted any scheme or not to the Benchers; what we wish here to do is to suggest a plan whereby a law school might, at little expense, be established in connection with University College, and in affiliation with the University of Toronto. This suggestion includes the following propositions:

(1) The re-casting of the curriculum in the faculty of law of the University of Toronto, making it more in harmony with the requirements of the Law Society. As far as this goes there might be mutual concessions.

(2) The establishment of a teaching faculty of law in connection with University College, beginning with at least one professor of Jurisprudence and two or three lecturers on law selected from leading members of the bar, who could still retain their practice. Being in connection with University College many of the lectures now given in the arts course could with equal advantage be taken by students in law. For instance, those on logic, history, English, political economy (whenever a professor in this latter department shall be a fact) and kindred subjects could be thus utilized.

(3) A discrimination on the part of the Benchers (such as that contained in Mr. Crooks' resolution published in another column) in favour of those who had passed through such a school and who had taken the degree of L.L.B. of the University of Toronto.

Were some scheme like this adopted we might soon have two hundred instead of twenty students proceeding to the degree of L.L.B., and what would be of still more importance, a better trained bar.

UNJUST DISCRIMINATION AGAIN.

I am one of the 'gentle readers' for whose benefit 'Prodicus' has written in a late number of this paper. I am sorry to think, that during the whole evening that he says he spent in looking for facts, he did not find more. But with his facts 'Prodicus' worked in the following startling assertions: that there are five pages of metaphysics to two of any other course; and that there is more brainwork in ten lines of metaphysics than in fifty of classics. Now if the work in a course is to be estimated by the number of pages (which is certainly a very elementary way), then modern languages is by far the heaviest course. As to his second assertion, the majority must admit that the contrary would rather be the true one in most cases. The article, however, though containing some exaggerations, is a step in the right direction. It is time that the undue prominence given to classics and mathematics in the University of Toronto should be modified, and that all five departments should be put on the same level. Why should such a marked distinction be made between the two departments of classics and mathematics and the other three, as is made by the present arrangement of scholarships? Why should not modern languages, metaphysics and natural sciences have two scholarships each? and why should they not be of equal value with those in classics and mathematics?

The only possible reasons, I think, are that classics and mathematics are thought more difficult, more useful, or more generally studied than the other departments. Now as to the amount of work, modern languages is fully as difficult as classics, if not more so, while the fact of its being divided into several sub-departments makes it much less easy to obtain first-class honors than in classics. As to number, everyone knows that the average number of those taking modern languages, metaphysics and natural sciences is at least equal to the average number of those taking classics and mathematics; indeed, in the latter there is often just a man for each scholarship.

The only argument left is that classics and mathematics are considered the most useful departments. In discussing the merits of a course we must consider not only the advantages of the training, but also of the knowledge derived from that course. As to that very mysterious training supposed to be derived from the study of the classics, I fail to see where it is superior to that of modern languages. That there is much more memorizing in the Latin and Greek grammars than in the French and German, I admit, but what is the use of dry memorizing? It is at the same time the hardest work and the poorest training for the memory. There is, no doubt, considerable training for the mind in translating into a foreign language; but why into Latin rather than German? A great amount of brain work is said to be necessary to catch the exact meaning of a sentence in classics, but is there not an equal amount required to catch the meaning of a French idiom, and to understand how the words have come to get that peculiar signification? or to fully understand a long and inverted German sentence? There is a training in translating from a foreign language into English; but why should this training be confined solely to Latin and Greek?

Perhaps it is because our idea of the meaning conveyed in a Greek sentence is generally somewhat vague, and so requires a great deal of ingenuity to preserve this vagueness in the English. The training in mathematics, too, is no doubt very good, but, as Madame de Staël says, it is apt to make the mind too stiff, too uniform, too much expectant of certainty in results: 'Problems in life,' she says, 'are very different from problems in mathematics.'

When we consider the advantages, other than mere training of the mind, derived from the different courses, classics and mathematics, I think, not only sink to the level of the other departments, but even below them. The Greek literature, no doubt, is splendid; but what men come out of Toronto University sufficiently well up in classics to derive as much benefit from the study of Æschylus, as he would from the same time spent on Shakespeare? We have no scholars if we adopt Macaulay's definition of a scholar, 'a man who reads Plato with his feet on the fender.' But it is quite possible for a man to acquire while at the University such a knowledge of French, German, and Italian as to read those languages with ease and pleasure; and but little can be obtained from the classics that cannot be got with a far less expense of time and trouble from modern authors, although the works of the latter may not contain that admirable haziness of meaning that gives such a peculiar charm to the classics. But this century is the most wonderful period of the world's history; discoveries and investigations are going on that lead to the most startling results. A knowledge of French and German, especially the latter, enables us the better to keep up with contemporary thought; a knowledge of metaphysics and natural sciences enables us the better to understand and sympathize with the great questions of the day. There is only an appearance of truth in the assertion that all modern thought is derived from the classics. True, every thing must have a beginning, and it has taken ages to thoroughly sift many questions; but if we cannot trace them throughout, is it not better to have the mature fruit than the imperfect germ, which in itself is useless?

One great aim of university education is to give men broad ideas. The greatest course of ignorance is the narrow mind that invariably attends it. Now, which of the five departments is the broadest? Not surely classics that deals only with the remote past, and a very small part of that. Not surely mathematics, that is almost proverbially narrowing, some even say stupefying, when taken alone. Moderns it is, I think, that must be generally admitted to give the most in knowledge, training and culture. It opens the door to three foreign languages and their literatures. It gives a good knowledge of history, and a desirable insight into ethnology and comparative philology, and, what above all is important to Englishmen, an understanding and command of their mother tongue, and an acquaintance with many of the best works of the greatest English minds. This then being the case, why should there be that discrimination (as shown by the figures of 'Prodicus') against the department of modern languages (and metaphysics and natural sciences as well) that now characterizes the division of the honors of the College and of the University?