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OUR HONOR COURSES.

There exist to-day in the United States and Canada two classes of colleges. On the one hand, we have those institutions which profess to send out their graduates in possession of a good general education. They afford the student no particular opportunities for perfecting himself in any specialty, claiming that this should rather come after graduation. On the other hand, we have colleges with their curriculums divided into various Honor courses, to one or more of which students are permitted, for the last two or three years of their course, to devote almost exclusive attention. It is to the latter of these groups of course that the University of Toronto belongs.

The object of the present article is to set forth a few of what, to an undergraduate mind, appear serious defects in the plan at present pursued in our University; with the hope that some one, whose experience fits him for the duty, will be able to point out an efficient remedy. At first sight, it will probably appear self-evident that, at least for one who intends making the study of a specialty his life work, our Honor course system is the best. But we fear that not even this can be conceded. Many men come to college before they have quite decided what their life work is to be, and a curriculum which affords an imperfect opportunity for this most important matter of choice is surely sadly deficient. And here our institution is certainly at fault. At matriculation, a man is supposed to have some knowledge of Classics, Mathematics and English. Now he may at once select one of the first two or Modern Languages as his Honor course. But we must remember that he has had no opportunity of taking up Mental and Moral Philosophy or Natural Science; while even in regard to the other three, the student would be much the better of a more intimate acquaintance, before making this most important choice. It is therefore possible, that in devoting his attention to Classics, Mathematics or Moderns, he may miss something for which he would be much better adapted. In his chosen subject he may meet with failure or merely-moderate success, while in one of those on which he has never had a chance to enter he might have made for himself a lasting name. The student, however, may act otherwise. Having taken Classics, Mathematics or Modern Languages during his first year, he may change his course to Mental or Natural Science. But here the same difficulty meets us. If he takes one, he knows nothing of the other; and still lacks opportunity for an intelligent choice. It is still possible that he may unknowingly pass by the subject for which he is much the better suited, and in which his success would be much more pronounced.

Let us consider, now, the effect of what we may call the general education system. By the time a man has graduated in this course at any first-class college, he is in possession of at least a pretty fair knowledge of the subjects that go to make up a well-rounded liberal education. He has had a fair opportunity of testing his ability in each of these, and of forming an opinion as to which study he will be most likely to attain success in. Then, if he finds that he possesses decided talent for any particular subject, he may make that his specialty and devote his life to it.

We have so far proceeded on the assumption that the student intends making the study of some special branch his life work. When we take the more common case of a man who intends pursuing one of the more ordinary walks of life, one who intends to be a worker rather than a scholar, a man in business or in one of the learned professions, the aspect of the question changes somewhat. It then presents itself something like this: "Is a man better fitted for the duties and the enjoyment of life, by receiving a general or a special education, *i. e.* of course apart from his direct

professional training." And here we have met a question that wiser minds than ours have not yet settled. But we may at least take this much for granted—no one can in these days pretend to a liberal education or to the name of a cultivated person, who is not tolerably conversant with classical and modern literature, and who cannot converse intelligently on the leading scientific questions of the day. Now, under our system, unless an Honor man happens to be a genius and takes two or three departments, his acquiring such an education is a virtual impossibility. The small portion of pass work which is tacked on to an Honor subject, has as much time devoted to it as the student supposes will enable him to get a percentage of 34 or so in marks for the examination, and no more. Nor is this necessarily the result of laziness or indifference. Under the keen influence of competition for a scholarship or medal, it is natural and unavoidable that each competitor will put no more time than is absolutely necessary on any subject but his Honor one. The consequence is that the small portion of Classics or French or Science, as the case may be, that is attached to the Honor course in the first two or three years, is crammed up for examination in as short a time as possible, and forgotten before the completion of the course. An Honor man in Science may go forth with a B. A. from Toronto University with a knowledge of Classics insufficient to enable him to read even simple passages in those languages, except by the laborious process of grammar and lexicon, or with the aid of a translation. An Honor man in Classics or Mental Science may graduate knowing nothing, so far as his course has been concerned, of the great scientific problems that occupy the foremost place in the literature of the day and in the minds of some of our greatest men.

We condemn the Honor courses, then, from the fact that the education they give is a cramped, narrow and imperfect one.

But it may be said: For you who wish a general education, there exists the Pass course. This has not been forgotten. But the fact that it is a Pass course is just the objection to it. We, who favor the general education system, are as ambitious of honors as those who prefer a special department. Why should a man, who wishes his knowledge to be wider than he can make it by taking any of our Honor courses, be placed at a discount. "He is only a Pass man," said of an applicant for a situation, puts him at a disadvantage at once. So far as the outside world knows, A, who has taken almost full marks on his examination papers, is on a level in scholarship and ability with B, who has squeezed through on his percentage of 33½.

What we want is not a Pass course, intended as a sort of back stairway to a degree, along which those may go who have not the requisite ability or industry to take Honors; but a general course in which there will be as much work as there is in any Honor department, which will have as high a percentage necessary for promotion or graduation, in which there will be scholarships given, if they continue to be offered in the other Honor courses, and in which a man may acquire such an education as will best fit him for succeeding in professional work and enjoying literary leisure.

R. H.

OATHS AND AFFIRMATIONS.

II. VARIOUS FORMS OF OATHS.

'If you scratch a Turk you catch a Tartar.' This is an ethnological illustration of the fact that it is not necessary to go very deeply into the history of a race, a language, a political institution or a custom, before the evidence makes it more and more apparent that at no