

THE STUDY OF GREEK.*

BY THE REV. PROFESSOR M'NAUGHTON.

I HAVE to thank you for the honour you have now conferred upon me. You have appointed and solemnly installed me as the first Professor of Greek in Queen's College. I look upon this appointment and installation as a very great honour indeed, I assure you, and, what is the other side of the same thing, as involving a grave responsibility. To be almost the only Professor of Greek in a vast region like this magnificent Dominion, which, considering its natural resources and the vigorous character of its people with the great traditions they inherit, has the assurance of a great destiny before it in every department of action and thought, is to have signal opportunity for good service or else for the conspicuous manifestation of sad incompetence. For the greatness of Canada in the future will depend upon its culture and, if we can argue from the past to the present, its culture will largely depend on the extent to which it succeeds in imbibing the Greek spirit. And that again will largely depend on what the leaders of thought take out of the Greek class. By the leaders of thought I mean you, gentlemen, and the like of you, the future clergymen, lawyers, doctors, journalists and literary men of the country. You will be centres of light or darkness wherever you go; looked up to by the mass of toiling men around you as the representatives and models of a liberal education. You will be the leaven destined to leaven the lump whether for good or evil; for all that is inspiring and pure and lovely and of good report, or else for what is ungenerous, stupid and narrow-minded.

And, just as in the past the subject which has been entrusted to me here has contributed such mighty impulses to the upward and onward movement of mankind, I judge that its force is no way abated yet; that it can do almost as much for us now as it did for Italy, Germany and England in those wonderful days of the renaissance, when the introduction of Greek letters into Western Europe changed the face of the world and brought in the modern age. It is no light thing to be entrusted even in the humblest capacity with the workings of so powerful an engine as this has proved itself, to be made custodian of the sacred Greek fire. I know well from my own experience that however rich the subject is, a great deal depends upon the teacher. It is possible for him to take all life and colour and motion out of what ought to be most rich and vivid. On the other hand he may infuse the light of large principles, the warm breath of human interest into the driest details. In the student's mind the subject and teacher are indissolubly associated, and he is apt to credit the one with the tiresomeness or the brightness of the other. Our students come to us generally at the age of maximum receptiveness, when their minds take on impressions as easily as wax and keep them like carved marble. They rapidly draw conclusions and, what is more, as a rule abide by them all their lives. And then so many successive sets of them come up—a new set every year; so that a professor has really a large power of inspiring widespread interest in his subject or else widespread disgust. There are many things then in the present situation calculated to inspire a new Professor of Greek

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