

Acadia Athenæum.

WOLFVILLE, N. S., NOVEMBER, 1875.

EDITORS:

D. H. SIMPSON, SR., J. GOODWIN, JR.,
F. D. CRAWLEY, SR., B. W. LOCKHART,
Sophr.

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The "Acadia Athenæum" is sent to subscribers at the exceedingly low price of Fifty Cents per year IN ADVANCE, postage pre-paid.

A CONSIDERABLE amount of scepticism is prevalent at the present day, respecting the utility of spending much time in the study of the so-called *dead languages*.

The idea is frequently advanced that such studies are not calculated to produce *practical men*, and that, therefore, in this *practical age*, they should be discontinued. Students when away from College are frequently met with the inquiry, Why spend so much time in acquiring a knowledge of Latin or Greek, they will not help you in any way in business, at the bar or in the pulpit? These, we think are erroneous ideas and should be shown to be so, for two important reasons. First, because wrong views on this point necessarily produce corresponding prejudices against the higher education in general, and that, too, among those to whom we look for pecuniary support, for our institutions of learning; and secondly, because such erroneous ideas, if not exposed, are calculated to hinder our young men from availing themselves of the present opportunities to secure a good sound education, which will eminently fit them to fill with credit to themselves, their sphere of life. The subject how-

ever, being one on which volumes have been written, can merely be glanced at here.

It may not be out of place to remark in the outset, that the very fact, that classical studies retain such an important position in the curricula of all colleges of any note, is an important point in favor of their utility. That the ablest educators in all civilized countries can find no adequate substitute to introduce in their place, none by which they can so effectually educate in the true etymological sense of the term, the pupils entrusted to their care, should convince all of the importance of the classics as disciplinary studies. Nor is this all. It is a patent fact, that those colleges in whose curricula the classics form the largest part, are the ones which have produced the greatest minds, and most accomplished scholars. Take for example, the old English Universities and examine the records of their students. See the mighty legacy of intellectual giants that those institutions have supplied for centuries back, to all the various departments of literature, science and art! And how have they done this? How have they succeeded in accomplishing this grand result? The true answer to these questions is found in the fact that the classics form so large a part of the course in those institutions.

The great end achieved in the study of the ancient languages is the development of the thinking powers in the mind—the culture of those powers of thought, which enable one to grapple successfully with any subject he undertakes—to dive into it, and bring to the surface pearls of thought, which shall be of lasting benefit. Were classics more studied than they are to-day, there would not be so many volumes of ephemeral literature coming forth from the press every year to find their way, through the impertinence of mercenary agents, into the libraries of the unwary, and then pass out of print.

But although the cultivation of the intellect, the developing of those latent powers, which in different degrees exist in the mind of every one, is the chief point sought in the study of classics; and would indeed, in view of its great importance, prove an abundant reason for prosecuting that study, yet it is by no means the only reason for it. An

acquaintance with the languages of the Greeks and Romans gives us access to all the rich and varied literature of antiquity. Such knowledge is indeed the key which opens to us the immortal treasures of ancient literature. Discontinue this branch of study, and we are cut off from all ancient poetry, eloquence and history, at once the admiration of and the models for all succeeding men of genius, and an impenetrable veil hides the past, with all its lessons of human experience from our view, leaving us but the last fifteen hundred years to look back over and draw lessons from.

Again, it may be doubted if any other branch of study is so much calculated to give the student a complete mastery over his own English tongue, as the one under consideration. Very many of our words are of classic origin, either merely transfers of entire words, or more commonly compounds of verbs with prepositions. These words to be properly understood, must be traced back to the original. But this is not the most important. In translating from the inverted styles, and peculiar idioms of these languages into English, the art of constructing terse sentences, and also a command of language is acquired which cannot, we think, be acquired in any other way.

But we must not weary our readers with this subject. We have as yet only entered upon its threshold. A vast field of inquiry opens up before us, which at some future time we hope to enter upon again. The more we think of this subject, the more we value its importance. We cannot dispense with the Latin and Greek languages, no one who aspires to hold a prominent position among men of thought, can afford to neglect this most efficient means of culture. Science and literature cannot part with them, they are their foundation. The groundwork of science was laid by the ancient philosophers, and the result of their researches has been handed down to us in their writings.

The classics then, present before us an inviting, and at the same time a highly profitable field of study. They are, we think, erroneously styled *dead languages*. True they are not the vernacular of any people now, at least in their ancient purity. The ancient nationalities of Greece and Rome have passed away.