

I have saved Dr H.'s University life two or three times. That is to say your predecessor instead of promoting him would have kept him on a pittance (which of course he doesn't need) hoping perhaps that he might withdraw, or go to some other place. The first time was soon after Taylor and I came to the University. We were told that H. would do "experimental psychology." He did not want to, feeling crowded out of the logic and theory of knowledge work that were given to Taylor. He thought of resigning, but for some reasons stayed on and was allowed to stay on in the position of a lecturer. The second time was in 1908 I think when Taylor left. Your predecessor was nearly bringing down Professor Watson from Queen's which would have again put out Hickson's work. I told the Principal that ~~he~~ had been kept on so long that it might be well for many reasons to retain him in the University. Although a man of culture in Montreal ~~he~~ went to London, or Vienna or Oxford or Aberdeen, nobody would know him. He has never written a "review" of a philosophical book or magazine. He has written critically to the papers now and then against men like Sir Oliver Lodge and for the University Magazine where of course the writing of no McGill could ever be refused. If he thinks that I bluff him and that the outlook is dark from his point of view, he ought to know that his going renders it to some extent less dark for several reasons, unpleasant though it may be to refer to these. He is unfortunately not popular as a man with the students. He is not popular as a teacher, his work is thought of as negative and critical, and the theological colleges have again and again complained to the authorities about some of his tendencies, as they have also about the denial of the freedom of the will (or the determinism) that is said to be taught by Dr Tait. I was told by the way by one of the Principals that if T. went on teaching Psychology, they would start a separate class of their own. Of course one can never consider any criticism against the freedom of a university teacher to teach what he thinks he can prove. But to return to Dr H. his going away from McGill no doubt clears the air from many things. And I frankly wonder that he didn't years ago prefer a free life to the restricted and half kind of life that for different reasons he has had in McGill. I try always as I am speaking to think of the fine side of the devotion of a man who is "well off" to theory and to scientific philosophy in a mercantile city and a business age. I repeat that again and again when he and I have had to take combination courses, I have been asked by the men, if it were really necessary to take Dr H.'s half of the work to get my half.

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As for Dr T. I have just referred to one criticism of his teaching that however unjustifiable from the dogmatic point of view has no doubt been disadvantageous to the department. I think that Dr Tait has yet to work his way to a full, free apprehension of the mental and moral and spiritual life of man.