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UNIVERSITY REFORM.

Our whole system of school instruction has been recently passed in review by the Legislature, and the occasion appears opportune for a revisal of our University curriculum. To state that the curriculum of the Provincial University,—in so far as it has not been retrogressive,—is essentially the same as it was nearly a quarter of a century ago, is to state what is at once an undeniable fact, and a serious indictment on our University administration. It is this inertia that really necessitated the High School Act, and it is this inertia that threatens to neutralize that salutary measure. Had the matriculation of Toronto University been wisely adapted to the exigencies of modern life, the reaction on the Grammar Schools would have been immediate and decisive. But, regarding only the subjects prescribed, and not the date of the programme, there is no internal evidence in the matriculation that we are living towards the close of the nineteenth century; and if we omit a single line defining the period of English History, and one other unimportant anachronism, there would then be no evidence that we were not subjects of Good Queen Bess, rather than of Victoria. Now that the University Senate has forfeited the prestige and advantage of the initiative, we must possibly wait for the reaction of the High Schools on our University system. For, unless the matriculation be harmonized with the new requirements of the High School Act, that statute, in so far as it proves effective, must in precisely the same measure prove injurious to the University by cutting off the supply of students.

We hold that a University matriculation ought, so far as it goes, to represent valuable educational results, so that if, as really happens with us in ninety-five cases out of one hundred, a youth should not proceed to the University at all, he may still possess some mastery of the English language, and some skill in applying the sciences of observation and experiment. We heartily sympathize with the general wish of the Province, that English dictation be substituted, without delay, for that antique absurdity, Latin verse; and that the firm, manly tread of Anglo-Saxon prose be at once and finally

substituted for broken-winged flights of Latin poesy. As respects scientific culture, we believe that, whenever due encouragement is offered by the University, the High School boy will be found quite as competent to distinguish our seven principal metals and their combinations, as to memorize seven or more derivations for Homer's name, or to bear a spear with the Seven against Thebes, or to perform afresh the twelve labours of Hercules. We confess to thinking that a popular knowledge of Newtonian Astronomy might prove equally serviceable with a critical knowledge of the science as it stood in the days of Horace, and a century and a half before the days of Ptolemy. We acknowledge also to thinking that for some of the faded garlands of the gay revellers of old, may gracefully be substituted some Canadian wild-flowers, still fresh with the morning dew.

To no one do we yield in esteem for the ancient classics; and, if studied with a legitimate object and in a legitimate manner, we regard their influence as inestimable. But in our time the typical student appears to recognize in his study of the classics no higher motive than the successful passing of an examination, or than the acquisition of some academical honour. To this low motive of action is added the strong temptation arising from excessive work, and then it becomes an object to get at the meaning of his author by the most direct way, and to express that meaning in the most easily-remembered form. Thus the sale of translations has expanded to an incredible magnitude. This rapid skimming of authors effectually prevents the keeping of passages of the greatest beauty sufficient, long before the mind to take in the harmony of colour and the justness of proportion, or to appreciate the marvellous energy of expression. Whatever argument can be adduced for the study of Homer in the original tongue, becomes mere sophistry when it turns out that the student has all the while been lending his ear, not to the voice of the glorious old minstrel, but to the drowsy monotone of some weary interpreter.

We sincerely trust that the new University curriculum will include large concessions to modern educational views, and will devise additional safeguards for the legitimate study of the ancient classics.