

to the advisability of the Literary Society's accepting the proposal if it is made. Those who have hitherto taken an active interest in the English meetings of the Modern Language Club would transfer it to the Literary Society. The Literary discussions might be held one week, and the ordinary debate the next, and so the two objects of the Society might be fulfilled. The programme might be drawn out (as last year for the Modern Language Society) before the end of March, so that the work might be prepared during the vacation. Let us try the plan, if agreeable to all parties, at least next Michaelmas term, and then perhaps we shall have a "Literary Society" which will indeed justify its existence.

## Leading Article.

### THE ENGLISH CURRICULUM.

For *Matriculation*, two or three works of one of the easier and more attractive writers of our own generation, or in any case of this century, might be prescribed; and these should be understood to afford material, not for grammatical and rhetorical drudgery, as has been the case with texts in the past, but for the cultivation of a healthy appetite for wholesome literature and for the development of correctness, taste and independence in the expression of thought and feeling. Careful reading of these texts and constant practice in composition on themes drawn from them, would be the student's work of preparation, and the test of his strength at examinations would be his ability to deal with themes selected from the same texts by the examiner. Grammar and rhetoric should be required only in a most general way. Both are strictly formal studies and can have value only when they systematize knowledge already possessed. Instead of studying grammar and rhetoric in order to speak and write our mother-tongue correctly, we must be able to understand and use our English well before we can understand its grammar and rhetoric. Prosody, for similar reasons, should be prescribed only in its broadest outlines.

For the *First Year* the literary work should centre in two authors representative of the best simple prose and poetical literature of to-day in England and America. Each work of these authors, carefully read, would furnish themes for an infinite variety of oral and written discussions, so that every opportunity would be afforded for improvement on the practical side.

These authors, too, with whom the student can be in perfect sympathy, should be made the basis for early studies in prosody, in classes of literary composition, and in the subtleties of style. For the first year's study on the scientific side there are many questions which might be discussed by way of clearing the ground for future study; what language is; change and persistence of its forms; what constitutes grammar; grammatical terms and divisions broadly considered; presentive and symbolic words; nature and value of dialects; principles of modern scientific etymology; elementary study of sounds, etc.

In the first half of the *Second Year* the chief literary work might centre in a leading author of the 18th or 17th century, and in the second half-year in Shakespeare's easier plays, while one or two authors of the 19th century, more difficult than those of the first year, could be carried as minor literary work for purposes of comparison, linguistic and literary, with the older works. An attempt might now also be made to trace great literary influences from Shakespeare's time to the present. As in the first year, there would be unbounded opportunities for composition and criticism. For the scientific work there might be a further discussion of some of the topics mentioned for the first year, together with similar ones, while at the same time a practical acquaintance might be made with one or two English dialects by a study of Burns and

other less noted dialect writers—from a purely linguistic point of view.

In the first half of the *Third Year*, Shakespeare should be continued for the main literary study, and at the same time Chaucer might be introduced, to be continued along with "Piers Plowman" as the chief literary work of the second half-year, during which a beginning should also be made in Anglo-Saxon. Throughout the year half a dozen authors, representative of periods from Chaucer to the present, could be taken as minor literary work for purposes of comparison, as in the second year. In the third year, too, literary influences, foreign as well as domestic, might be traced somewhat carefully. For scientific purposes, Chaucer, "Piers Plowman," and the first lessons in Anglo-Saxon would furnish a great deal of interesting material in new word and phrase forms. Books, too, like those of Whitney, Sayce, Max Muller and Schleicher, might be discussed in lectures and conferences, while a practical acquaintance might be made with additional English dialects.

For the *Fourth Year* the main literary work should centre in English prior to Chaucer—the Ormulum, Brut and Anglo-Saxon prose and poetry—while a broader and more critical treatment of great representative works of all the later literary periods (forgetting by no means those of our own century and continent) might be expected of the student. Each candidate for degree might also be required to hand in at the close of the year a well-written essay of reasonable length on some serious literary topic. In this year, too, might be traced minutely the development of English literature from the earliest times to the present—all kinds of literary influence being noticed; and now for the first time would it be possible to enter upon the systematic study of English philology. Philological study is strictly comparative, and necessarily implies a first-hand acquaintance with several cognate languages—the more the better—and hence the first work of the student must be to obtain a knowledge of such languages, in the study of which, however, many interesting and important principles may be introduced incidentally, but only in so far as they bear upon the languages in question or others already known by the student. In this way only can philological study be anything but a drudgery. Now, according to the plan outlined above, a student of the fourth year would have a more or less thorough acquaintance with English in all its stages, as well as with three or four of its more important modern dialects. By this time, also, in the department of German he would have a pretty thorough knowledge of the modern language and literature, together with some practical acquaintance with Old and Middle High German and Gothic. Latin, and possibly Greek, would also be within his reach. Here, then, is a tolerably satisfactory basis for the systematic study of English philology, for the student is prepared to trace out intelligently many of the general and special laws of linguistic growth.

The fourth year, again, when the student fully realizes the continuity of the language, would be the proper time for a special course of lectures on historical English grammar, not necessarily embodying anything new to the student after his extended course of reading, but simply for the purpose of systematizing his knowledge.

This, then, roughly expressed, would be my plan for the detailed distribution of work for an undergraduate course in English. In scope and general principles, as stated in the introduction, it agrees with Mr. Houston's scheme. The results aimed at are the same, but the way chosen to reach these results is in many respects very different.

From first to last the student's interest in the work would be regarded as of prime importance; and because the student does not see things through Chaucer's or Shakespeare's or Milton's spectacles, but in the light of the 19th century, he would be introduced to the serious study of literature and language through contempor-