

86 Boul'd de Port Royal

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William

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My dear Father,

I have read your letter of April 7th carefully, & will attend to what you say. Part of it I have already complied with, as Mr^r Brown has secured my passage on the "Peruvian". I will try to have as little French money left as possible, & what does remain, it would be better to keep till my return rather than change it for English, as one would be likely to loose heavily in so doing at present. It will therefore, I think, be better to draw some in London immediately on my arrival, — enough for all contemplated expenses.

In regard to the summer, I quite

agree with what you say in regard to the advantage of visiting works in progress; but still even for this one ought to have sufficient time to study them in order to derive much benefit from them. One gets in that way ideas & hints almost impossible to obtain in any other. The actual work, however, that one does oneself is also of equal importance, & like the other requires time.

I do not feel particularly anxious about seeing the Philadelphia Ex. of this year, as there is to be one here in 1878 which I hope to have the opportunity of seeing. That too, will be at a time when I will be better able to appreciate it. There will also I hope be an opportunity of seeing the buildings erected, which will be more interesting than the exhibition itself.

I cannot refrain from writing a few lines about the subject of classics

to especially in regard to Frank's prospects.
I feel it to be a serious question whether
it is really worth while spending on them
such a large amount of invaluable &
irretrievable time, as is at present nec-
essary to obtain the B.A. degree. I will
not speak of my own regrets in this mat-
ter, as I feel too deeply on the subject
to venture to express what I really think
& dogma & prejudice should be excluded
from argument. All knowledge is un-
doubtedly useful; but it seems to me that
the main object of a liberal education is
to develop the mind & the powers of
thought, keeping the actual amount of
information imparted rather in a
secondary place. From this point of view
therefore, it would seem that Classics are
extremely unsuitable, as they are invariably
taught, in a dogmatical and artificial
manner, and one which is calculated rather
to burden the memory and cramp the
mental powers. This can be traced almost
directly to the same cause as that which

gives Classics their importance, namely that Latin has been adopted as the language of the Church. The only way in which the mind can really be developed, and a sound basis for the judgement afforded, is by the teaching of facts of the most necessary & important kinds in the most logical manner. This brings up the question of the relative importance of different subjects. In regard to Classics everyone will admit that a certain knowledge of Latin & Greek ~~are~~^{is} very useful if not essential for anyone who wishes to understand English; but let it be taught as derivation & philology. Why, too, should the other & more important ~~branch~~ source of our language be so entirely neglected? The Greeks & Romans are also very important nations & had a preponderating influence on the history of Europe; but this does not either necessitate or justify the large amount of time spent over their literature. It rather points to the ~~necessity~~ of more complete & careful study of their history & of the subsequent history of Europe.

There are several extremely important questions which force themselves upon ones attention in this connection, especially ~~so~~ in regard to Montreal & to Canada.

First of all, it seems to me that the amount of classical literature which is obligatory in the course for the B. A. degree is entirely disproportionate to the amount of time and attention given to other subjects. In these days nothing should be allowed to exist or continue which cannot depend its ground. This disproportion does not appear when the de: fill course is compared with that of other Universities; but it is a glorious truth that Canada is not Europe. The question is whether this time might not be more profitably employed, & the ^{answer} question is undoubtedly Yes. Here therefore rests a very serious & grave responsibility on ~~our~~ institutions, whether colleges or schools, which continue a practice which can so easily be shown to be prejudicial.

Secondly, Why should young men who intend entering business be excluded from the benefits of a college course, simply because they cannot afford to spend two-thirds of their school time in studying classics? If they could take modern languages instead it would be an additional incentive instead of an insuperable obstacle.

What a power the well-educated part of the community would have at a time like ~~this~~ the present, if they had had a thorough training in history either at school or at college. They would then ~~know the~~ be acquainted with the forces ~~and aspirations~~ which direct & influence men's minds; and instead of looking at the events which surround them as something novel & strange, they would appreciate their significance & know what to expect.

I think in regard to Franklin, that it is a matter for serious consideration whether it would not be better to spend his two remaining years in the most profitable kinds of study in exchange for the paltry pleasure of writing B. A. after his name.

I remain yours affectionately
William.