MR. TROTTER ON UNIVERSITY REFORM
On Some Questions of University Reform. By Coutts Trotter, M.A., Senior Fellow and Tutor of Trinity College, Cambridge. (Cambridge, Deighton.)

DURING the short life of the Oxford and Cambridge Bills of last year, it was my lot to hear from many of my London friends many dismal, sometimes almost contemptuous, prophecies concerning the future of natural science at the old universities. For myself, in looking forward towards possible and probable changes, I always lay to heart the hackneyed consolation of the unsuccessful Liberal Orator, "Time is on our side." Whatever happens, science cannot lose much and may gain largely. How great a progress might with the least possible shock to conservative principles be effected by the help of men in whose minds a broad sympathetic love of learning is associated with a delicate appreciation of the present university feelings and habits, may be learnt by any one who will take the trouble to read Mr. Trotter's brief pamphlet.

There are men who in their so-called radical ways of thinking, exalt theoretical statements above practical suggestions, and thus are led to insist that all university reform is useless which is not based on the two abstract principles:—1. That the interests of education are essentially opposed to those of learning: 2. That the interests of the colleges are essentially opposed to those of the university. Such men argue with great vehemence that it is hopeless to expect learning to flourish in a place like Cambridge, for instance, where education, so far from being neglected, as Mr. Lowe seems to think, is pushed with yearly increasing energy (they speak of it as being "rampant," and assert that the students, who have been long over-examined, are now in danger of being over-taught), and where a poor university, like an almost penniless king whose only subjects are a few wealthy barons, contends in vain with colleges which not only are at the present moment far richer and stronger than it, but must always tend to be so, since the feeling which binds a student to his university is akin to the mild emotion of patriotism, while his affection for his college is more like the family love of home.

To this class of reformers Mr. Trotter does not belong. How far he would agree with these abstract principles cannot be learnt from his pamphlet. He, perhaps, is one of those who think that abstract principles are like the timbers of a ship, which, through the very making of the vessel, come to the surface only after shipwreck. At any rate, he adopts what to many will seem the wise course of confining himself to the practical consideration of how, with the least possible dissipation of energy, education may be converted into learning, and how the university, which ought to be the seat of the latter, may be fortified without injuring that "college life" which is the natural instrument of the former, and which, to all who know it, has charms too great to be neglected by any wise reformer.

On these matters, all his remarks, coming as they do from one who, having a true love of learning, has for several years been prominently engaged in college and university business, seem to me worthy of very serious attention. I can readily imagine that his views will be condemned by two opposing parties. Many academic

conservatives will call them "revolutionary." Many academic and other radicals will stigmatise them as a compromise. They do indeed favour that dreadfully commonplace "middle way"; but they possess this notable characteristic—they are tentative and progressive. They may not at first convert the university into a palace of learning; but if adopted, may, without fear of strain, be expanded in proportion to the demands of knowledge and the wealth of the united corporations.

In the first of the three divisions of his pamphlet, Mr. Trotter deals with the relations of education and knowledge; and his leading idea is the multiplication of what, in general terms, may be called professorships, the duties of which shall be so light as to afford leisure for research, and the promotion to which shall be at least largely dependent on fruitfulness in advancing learning. He would make learning and education, what the pious founders thought they had provided for their being, co-partners in the wealth of the colleges; and would sweeten and lighten teaching with the spirit of research. In this he will doubtless fail to please those who press for the endowment of research "untrammelled by teaching duties;" but is not, after all, the difference between him and them one of detail only, and not of "abstract principle?" Putting aside certain tasks of continued observation, all investigators, or at least all with comparatively few exceptions, would be assisted rather than hampered in their inquiries by having from time to time to give expositions of their particular studies to an audience of some kind or other. And that is all which is really included under the duties of professor. How much or how little teaching ought to be demanded of this or that man must depend on the particular circumstances of each case; and the few instances where absolute dumbness is an essential to successful research, might without difficulty be provided for by special arrangements.

These professorships Mr. Trotter would divide into three classes:—(1) Ordinary Professorships, such as now exist; (2) Lectureships, somewhat corresponding to the present College Lectureships; and (3), what, in the absence of any more suitable word, he proposes to call Extraordinary Professorships. The first class he proposes to limit in number and exalt in dignity so that each professor should be considered as at least the nominal head of the particular study to which he is devoted. Although he does not expressly state it, Mr. Trotter evidently intends that the men holding these offices should be eminently men of research; and hence while their incomes would be ample, their official duties would be light. The extraordinary professors would form a more numerous class and would be appointed either for fruitfulness in research or for great teaching talent, or (and it is hoped frequently) for both. The emoluments and status of an extraordinary professorship ought to be such that a man might look to it as a post for life and not merely as a stepping-stone to something else. The third class of lectureships would be still more numerous, and serve in part at least as feeders to the other professorships. Though, for them, as for the other two classes, research would be a qualification at least on a level with didactic ability, the teaching duties of a lecturer would naturally be heavier than those of a professor. It may be urged, as Mr. Trotter himself feels, that extraordinary

professor is a very awkward title. Professor adjunct, or assistant professor is distinctly objectionable. It seems to me that there is much to be said in favour of calling the new professors by the simple title of professor, and of inventing for the higher and more select posts some such style as professor director, or professor rector; indeed, the duties of a member of this class would probably in many cases consist largely in a general guidance and supervision of the studies carried on in his own particular science.

His plans also provide assistants both for teaching and research, demonstrators, &c., and include the establishment of what he proposes to call "senior scholarships," *i.e.*, posts to be filled by able young men at the close of their student career for the purpose of enabling them to devote themselves free from all trammels, for two, three, or more of their best years, to learning research. This is, indeed, at present, perhaps the most crying want of the university, a want most imperfectly met or not met at all by fellowships as now administered.

The scheme by which Mr. Trotter proposes to unite the university and the colleges in the function of appointing and regulating this professoriate requires development; but it has the great merit of strengthening the hands of the various "boards of studies," and if adopted would soon grow into a natural and healthy form of government under which the hiring, by candidates for university posts, of special trains for the conveyance of their outlying voters, would become a grim and a grotesque reminiscence of the past. It must be remembered, however, that no artificial scheme will secure purity of election, unless the electors be thoroughly leavened with the leaven of loyalty to learning; and that such loyalty will only be found where research, rather than teaching, is regarded as the great aim of university life, where Leah is woo'd chiefly in the hope that Rachel may be won.

All these proposed changes, to say nothing of university laboratories, museums, &c., require money; and in the second part of his pamphlet Mr. Trotter discusses the methods by which the wealth of the colleges may be rendered available for university purposes. Here two plans present themselves. There is, first, what may be called the "social" plan. In this the colleges are supposed to undertake the care and protection of certain university posts or institutions, this college, for instance, supplying the funds, in the shape of fellowships or otherwise, for this professorship, or taking the charge of that laboratory. It may be regretted that Mr. Trotter has not entered more fully into the discussion of this plan, which is sure to find ardent supporters in the colleges. It offers the college a *quid pro quo*, and promises to strengthen rather than weaken "college life." The difficulties of the plan lie in the question of election. If the university elects, the college may have to receive into its bosom a man whom it detests; if the college elects, it may not unlikely choose the very man the university would seek to avoid. Such a scheme cannot be made to work satisfactorily even with the help of elaborate checks and counter-checks, unless the actions of both colleges and university are directed by thorough loyalty to learning.

The second plan is that of "taxation," or as a small but prominent party prefers to call it, "confiscation," by which the colleges are called upon to contribute, in proportion to their wealth, to the common university funds. And on this point Mr. Trotter's suggestion that the contributions "should be variable within limits, and fixed from time to time, in accordance with the wants of the university, by some competent authority representing the colleges," is worthy of consideration as an improvement on the older scheme of a fixed contribution in the form of a definite percentage tax on the collegiate divisible revenues. At the same time it is difficult to overlook the possible occurrence of bitter and frequent discussions as to what, at any given time, are to be considered the actual needs of the university.

The money which the colleges are in the one way or another to be called upon to devote to the university must come from the pockets of the scholars, or the fellows, or the heads of houses; and the third part of the pamphlet is devoted to a consideration of these three classes.

Concerning the fellows, Mr. Trotter, with a boldness which will undoubtedly prevent many Conservatives from recognising at first how moderate a compromise his whole plan of reform really is, writes as follows:—"On the whole, I am disposed, mainly for the reasons put forward by Mr. Sidgwick in the *Contemporary Review* (April, 1876), to advocate the abolition, or at any rate the restriction within very narrow limits, of the class of fellowships held purely as prizes." Such a proposal will be opposed tooth and nail by many both within and outside the university who have never attempted to answer Mr. Sidgwick's arguments; and Mr. Trotter himself states that he imagines "public opinion" is not at present prepared to support so extreme a measure.

In the matter of the scholars Mr. Trotter proposes no marked innovation, though he seems to think changes of some kind are desirable. To his general approval of present practices he will find few demurrers either within or outside the university; and yet the evil influences which the system of scholarships is secretly exercising on both education and learning are well worth consideration; *mutatis mutandis*, many of the arguments against prize fellowships might be well applied to prize scholarships.

The heads of houses form the last topic on which Mr. Trotter dwells, and those who know university life, whatever their opinions, must award to him the praise of having brought forward into open and plain-speaking discussion a subject on which, for many reasons, it is difficult for any fellow of a college to say his mind. That he boldly advocates the abolition of heads of houses is perhaps less important than that the question should be thoroughly considered. At the same time his arguments seem irresistible; he says all that can be said in favour of maintaining these ancient offices, but concludes that all the advantages they offer might be secured by other arrangements which would bring to the university at the least an annual income of 15,000*l.*, and yet eventually be felt by no college as a burden—by some, possibly, as a relief.

M. FOSTER