

THE TECH

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Monday, February 11, 1907.

Realizing the narrowness of his outlook, a student should be very cautious in criticising the Faculty's choice of subjects in the various courses. Course III. However, since it is for the student's benefit that the school is run, and since it is the student's mind which is being trained, he is apt at times to try and do some thinking for himself. That he does not invariably arrive at the same conclusion as the Faculty is indeed unfortunate, and, without in any way questioning the correctness of that body's decisions, he sometimes wonders by what devious method they reached their conclusion. One question that comes up for undergraduate attention from time to time, and one which usually excites a passing interest, is why French is required in Course III.

This question is not put forward without premeditation. Certain members of the Faculty have been asked privately about it, and strange to say some of them are as much at a loss to know the reason as are the students themselves. The following are some of the reasons given for its retention, and a review of the light in which the students in general look upon them.

"General culture" is a favorite argument. Without entering into a discussion of French from the standpoint of its culture value, it can be said that the Institute is primarily an engineering school, and that questions should be considered from an engineering standpoint, leaving the decision as to whether a man wished to spend his time and money acquiring an engineering training or general culture largely to himself. As it is, a man who wants to get a degree is obliged to spend time which he would vastly prefer to give to professional work in the acquirement of a somewhat inefficient knowledge of a modern language which he probably will neither have the desire nor the opportunity to use.

It is to be granted that certain modern languages have a distinct

scientific value in some courses, such as German to the chemist, and French to the architect. The utility of French to a miner is a question, however. The mining industry in France is insignificant, and France has no province in which a mining engineer would be likely to feel the need of French. There are important mining journals written in German, but on the authority of a professor in the Geological Department none worthy of mention in French. The French do not, with a few notable exceptions, even stand high in that allied subject to mining engineering, namely chemistry.

The great plea, however, is not that French is useless, but that there is so much more that is of greater importance. The requirement of any foreign language is objected to by many, as is shown by the number of men who forego the honor of receiving a degree rather than conform with this and similar requirements, but if any language is to be required in Course III, it seems that it ought undoubtedly to be Spanish. In all of the important mining regions on the two American Continents where English is not spoken, Spanish is the universal tongue. Many of the graduates of the Institute go into these countries. The statistics of the distribution of graduates show that out of 143 graduates residing in foreign countries, 54 of them are in Spanish speaking countries. It is safe to say that a large percent of these foreign residing graduates are engaged in mining. Should not Spanish be substituted for French in the requirements of Course III?

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