

MR. PRACHT ANSWERED.

The Study of Languages Not a Political Scheme.

PORTLAND, Jan. 23.—[To THE EDITOR.]—Mr. Pracht, in his letter of Saturday, makes the strange mistake of confounding the two totally different questions—whether, in a community largely settled by foreigners, a public school shall be maintained in which children shall be taught solely in their native tongue, and whether a public school course shall be liberal enough to include one or more foreign languages. I believe not long ago, in Wisconsin or northern Michigan, in a community of German immigrants who spoke only their mother tongue, a school was established at public expense in which the children were taught wholly in German, as they would be in their own country, so that they had no opportunity to learn the English language. This was, indeed, "forcing a foreign exotic on American soil," an "insult to the manner, methods and language of the land of their adoption." This was a malignant growth, which, if allowed to continue, would, in time, sap the life-blood of American institutions, an exorcism of the same class as the perversion of the public funds to the support of Catholic schools in Catholic communities.

But this is not to be confused with the teaching of one or more so-called dead or modern languages in a public school, and the latter is no more "pandering to the race prejudices of foreigners who seek an asylum here" than is the teaching of the history of other countries besides our own.

Mr. Pracht says that because of our "too tender regard for the feelings of the foreign-born citizen, German, French, Spanish, Greek and Latin are taught in such sections as furnish a palpable political contingent." How about Italian in sections where the organ-grinder and peanut-vender flourish? And for the taste of what political contingent does the teaching of Greek or Latin cater? I came from a small Eastern city in which the political contingent to be conciliated was Irish, and I am ashamed to say it was conciliated in every possible way, even to the maintenance of a separate Catholic school with the public school funds, but I never heard that it was proposed to add the study of the Celtic language, or even of the Irish brogue, to the high school curriculum. I never heard of a French family in the place, and there were very few Germans, yet both German and French, as well as Latin, were a part of the course.

The open letter signed "M" shows a woeful, if not willful, ignorance of the method employed in the high school in teaching German. If "M" will take the trouble to visit the high school he will find that the predicaments of Miss A. and Miss L. would be impossible in a child of ordinary ability who had pursued the German course even one year. The power to speak useful (not (Hendorffian) German gained by the high school pupil may be at the expense of some reading of classic German, but the ability to make practical use of the language will more than compensate for any such loss. The "French of Stratford atte Bowe," and its equivalent in German, is a thing of the past, and by the natural method now employed in the teaching of languages in all progressive schools, the results attained are practical and adequate to the time and effort experienced.

H. P. T.