

T H E
H A R V A R D M O N T H L Y.

VOL. X.

JULY, 1890.

No. 5.

A NEGLECTED STUDY.

WE students of philosophy have an old fashion of pointing out defects in other men's knowledge, and of assigning tasks for our fellows to perform. The fashion is old, I say; for it was set by our master, Socrates, whose wisdom lay in his well-known confession of ignorance, and the equally well-known cross-questioning whereby he made plain to his opponents in dialogue their own unwisdom and their need of sound doctrine. Ever since, philosophical students, not always indeed with the Socratic modesty of self-confession, have loved to point out this or that gap in human knowledge, this or that needed and unaccomplished task, which the presumably wider outlook of their own professional studies, has, as they pretend, enabled them to see in the province of some special pursuit. If in this little paper I venture afresh on such a thankless task as this, I can only plead the time-honored privilege of my trade. It is a privilege not at all free, of course, from its off-setting disadvantages. The philosophical student, when he accuses any of his fellows in some sister art of having left a ripe harvest of truth here or there ungarnered, stands himself at the mercy of whosoever chooses to retort that philosophy, with all its disorganized multitude of opinions and of researches, has so far dishearteningly few sheaves of ripe grain to show for its toil. A doctrine that consists, so to speak, mainly of unaccomplished tasks, may thus appear in an evil light when it pretends to criticize the omissions of its fellows. But, after all, not recrimination but mutual exhortation is the true purpose of students when they discourse about the needs and the defects of their various branches of research; and it is the privilege of philosophy to have acquired, in its long

experience of unfulfilled hopes, a peculiarly keen sense of what constitutes unfulfilment in human intellectual efforts.

The unfulfilled task, the neglected branch of study, which this paper wants to point out for the benefit of young students who may be wondering what to do with their wits, lies at a certain place in the wide field of modern Literary Research. In our own language, namely, as we shall find, the books that endeavor to deal with just this task, in any well-equipped fashion, are still surprisingly few. The young students who understand the importance of the matter are very hard to find. A curious popular prejudice concerning the nature and the possibilities of literary research stands meanwhile stubbornly in the way of the prosperity of the branch of investigation to which I refer. But because in any case the study that I mean can be more easily defined by its spirit and by its purpose than through the naming of any list of books, I may as well begin with a suggestion, by analogy, of the region of Literary Research where our neglected study lies. Many scholars, indeed, know of this study; some scholars even in our midst are lovers of it, and a few may rank as masters in its service; but these are indeed few. The multitude pass it by without any real comprehension.

Yet analogy, as I have just said, will suggest at once our needed study. Classical Philology, in the time from the Renaissance to the beginning of our present century, used to consist, as everybody knows, of two main branches: one the literary study of classical masterpieces for the sake of their beauty and of their wisdom; the other, grammatical research into the structure of the classical languages as such. Each of these main branches of erudition had its subordinate branches. Text-criticism, of the older school, served for instance as handmaid to the grammarian. The infant science, Archæology, supplemented in a measure the work of the student of pure literature. But such subordinate branches of study were not only imperfectly developed; their very significance and their true aim was not yet understood. Only when, at the close of the last century and at the beginning of this, the modern historical method began that wonderful development which in our day has at last borne fruit in the doctrine of evolution,—only then was it possible for Philology to get the definition

which, for scholars like Boeckh, ere long became characteristic. Philology, for such men, meant the study of the whole life, of the entire thought and civilization of classical antiquity. How fruitful this idea of the philologist's task has become for classical study in modern times I may leave for wiser men to describe. It is enough for me at present to suggest how much the value of those older branches of learning themselves, namely, the purely linguistic study of Greek and Latin, and the purely æsthetic appreciation of the literary masterpieces of antiquity, has in fact gained, in recent times, through this high ideal of philological scholarship to which our century has given birth. The grammarian used to be a person whose learned devotion to details only his fellows could prize. He seemed to have some mysterious passion for particles, for moods and tenses, and the rest, purely for their own abstract sakes. This passion was his life. It was an end in itself to him.

“So with the throttling hands of Death at strife,
Ground he at grammar;
Still thro' the rattle parts of speech were rife.
While he could stammer
He settled *Hoti's* business — let it be!
Properly based *Oun* —
Gave us the doctrine of the enclitic *De*,
Dead from the waist down.”

Thus his learning, as Browning's well-known lines suggest, was throughout a determined separation of himself from life.

“‘Time to taste life,’ another would have said
‘Up with the curtain!’
This man said rather, ‘Actual life comes next?
Patience a moment!
Grant I have mastered learning's crabbed text,
Still there's the comment.’”

Well, the modern classical scholar, on the contrary, when he is true to the spirit of his age, seems, as far as I have had any chance to observe him, to love no less his enclitics, but to love their living meaning more. His linguistic study is not an end in itself, so much as a contribution towards

the fair appreciation of that wonderful live thing called the Greek mind—that most remarkable of the spontaneous variations to which the human type has given birth. The modern classical scholar is in fact a biologist, who is studying the variety of man called ancient Greek, and the other variety called Roman. His interests are essentially the biological, and in particular the psychological interests. When he studies grammar, he is simply learning about the habits of thought which characterized the men whose life he tries to read. And when he examines literary masterpieces, his scientific aim is still the same. He does not abstract the æsthetic from the other vitally significant aspects of literature. Such abstraction would in his eyes be an absurdity. And yet the men who in former centuries enjoyed the “elegance” of their Horace, and the “nobility” of their Sophocles (as of course they had every right to do), used too often to make just such an absurd abstraction. They used to conceive that you read Horace or Sophocles *either* for “polite” enjoyment, or *else* for grammatical exercise. The two thus narrowly defined aims hindered each other. That true literary enjoyment is heightened, not hindered, by a deeper comprehension of the temperament whose products you are enjoying; and that grammatical rules are merely a means of getting at the habits of the language-using animal to whom belonged this temperament—all this the older scholars, so far as I understand their point of view, used too often to forget. In short, then, the ideal of modern classical philology is, I apprehend, something of this kind:—The remarkable variety of the *homo sapiens* whose habits of doing and of thinking were embodied in the monuments of classical antiquity, needs to be comprehended, just as any other animal needs to be comprehended, by studying his temperament and his peculiar vital processes. Only, just this variety of live creature chances to have been peculiarly thoughtful, significant, productive. So fine a tone of brain-cortex functioning has never elsewhere appeared on our planet. Therefore it is that all the characteristic habits of the Greek are worthy of so much study. Therefore it is that his *oun's* and his *de's*, and his *an's*, his optatives, his subjunctives, and his composite words, deserve such elaborate scrutiny. Linguistic study is justified by its place among the biological sciences. The reflexes of the Hellenic speech centres are very

highly noteworthy phenomena in human psychology. And, even so, the products of Greek literary art, the wonderful masterpieces themselves, must be examined with a truly scholarly seriousness and minuteness. The genuine literary student is no man of "polite" leisure, who merely glances about him and gracefully estimates this or that. He too is a psychologist. His calling is one with that of the true grammarian. They are both equally philologists, because they are both equally engaged in a psychological study of the life of antiquity. Literary enjoyment is, or ought to be *res severa*. You enjoy only what you comprehend. You comprehend only what you grasp in its relations, see as a symptom of the life whereof it formed part, loving and minutely scrutinize, patiently follow into all its windings and its intricacies. To be sure, where the task is so vast there has to be division of labor. One philologist gets his revelations concerning ancient life rather from *an* and the optative; another is devoted to choral metres and to verse translations; a third is an archæologist; a fourth drinks in his literary knowledge in long draughts of continuous reading, and seems fitted to be rather the general historian than the linguist. But all know that their "division" must not mean real separation, that each depends on his fellows, that they are at work upon a common task, and that this common task is the one called Philological Research.

Our analogy is thus before us. I must apologize to the classical philologists, should any of them glance at this paper, for my layman's effort to describe their spirit. I aim only to cite their very instructive example. And now for our neglected study. What I miss in recent scholarship in this country, as well as in England, is a sufficiently serious and thorough-going effort to study modern literature, and, above all, English Literature itself, in this truly philological spirit. Ask a young student of today what is meant by English Philology, and he too often answers, "Anglo-Saxon and Early English, studied in a purely linguistic fashion." Now I am far from venturing, or from even faintly wishing, to make light of two such important branches of philological study as Anglo-Saxon and Early English. Only if I asked any one to point out to me a horse, and he insisted upon showing me the horse's hind legs, and upon assuring me that they were the only true animal, I should be puzzled.

And to my mind it is not any disparagement of the hind legs to insist that a knowledge of their anatomy is but a small part of the composition of the true horse, necessary part though it be. English Philology, I apprehend, is an organic science, whose purpose is the study of the English mind in its wholeness. Like Classical Philology, this is one of the biological sciences, and in particular it is a branch of psychology. Its task, like that of any other biological science, is one of endless wealth and variety, demands therefore endless division of labor, and specialization of studious functions. But complete separation of studies is never the aim of science. Differentiation must not mean isolation. And what I complain of in many of our younger students of English "Philology" is not that their linguistic work is unimportant, but that they themselves fail to realize its importance, because they have so little comprehension of the unity of philology as a whole. These young linguists sometimes (I speak now of the youth only) pride themselves upon their entire separation from the superficial persons who are "only literary students," or who are "light literary critics" — to use a phrase that a certain linguistic specialist in England once, in an unhappy moment of wrath and chagrin, applied to Mr. Lowell himself. Ah, this idea of the "lightness" of literary criticism — what mischief has it not caused! Is life so very "light" an affair? And whose task is weightier than is that of the man who undertakes to gauge the very issues of life themselves, and the works that embody these issues? In any case, however, nothing is more degrading to the true dignity of the linguist's task than this self-imposed separation of his interests from the "purely literary" interests. As if, I repeat, the laws of language were anything but a record of the habits of the speaking animal, and as if such records were anything but one means more of comprehending that very humanity whose vital passions produce literature, and give to it its worth. Meanwhile, of course, the "purely literary students" often suffer equally from their acceptance of this separation. They fancy that scholarship in these matters means only crabbed linguistic study. Their own pursuits become fragmentary, inorganic, unworthy of serious men. If the young linguists confine themselves to the anatomy of the horse's hind legs, after he is dead, the "purely literary students" content themselves with admiring his

contour, and betting on his wind and his speed, so long as he is alive. This constitutes their "literary criticism." Meanwhile nobody amongst them all, young "linguists" or young "critics" really loves the horse well enough to desire to study his whole structure, his vital processes, his reflexes, his instincts, his habits, his ancestry, and his evolution, with anything of the biologist's comprehensiveness and devotion. And so our horse remains essentially an unknown creature.

"But surely," one may retort to all this, "it does not need an article like the present one to point out, even to young men, the importance of a true study of the English mind in its wholeness. All our greater critics, all our more ambitious historians in recent times, have they not pointed out to us in a hundred ways that history deals with human evolution, that literary history is a part of this general study of evolution, and that English literature, if only any one man could learn the whole truth about it, ought to be capable of furnishing important contributions to such a study? Who, indeed, that lives in the great Age of Evolution, should fail to appreciate this fact?" The trouble, it will be said, lies then, in the complexity of the subject itself. A man must specialize; and one man loves his Anglo-Saxon, another his Lake Poets. Nobody can contribute very much to so vast a task. Let each do what he can.

I answer, what I am pleading for is a spirit of study, not the learning of any one group of facts. And what I point out is that, despite frequent and varied and authoritative insistence upon just the truths upon which I here insist, the particular spirit which I advocate still remains unknown to a great part of our studious American public. How much is yet to be done in the way of a genuine history of the life and thought of the English people! How little does a student who, like myself, occasionally needs for professional purposes special instruction as to the history of the great English Moral Ideas and Ideals, find to aid him in our libraries! Essays of fragmentary and capricious literary criticism, ambitious failures like the magnificently planned and hopelessly unsuccessful book of Taine, numberless biographical sketches, of every degree of power and skill, large collections of raw material, and finally elaborate parasitical growths such as the mass of literary industry that has grown up at Shakespeare's expense:

such are the treasures of wisdom that offer themselves to whoever seeks for light as to the evolution of English Literature in its wholeness. I do not want to speak ill of this colossal mass of material. But what I do often want to find in it is guidance—guidance as to the meaning, the causation, the relationships of English thought and passion. And such guidance I in great measure miss, because so few even of our best literary critics, and even of our wisest scholars, have clearly conceived of such a thing as Modern Philology, whose ideal should be formed after the analogy of the ideal of Classical Philology whereof I spoke above. I do not demand the impossible. I do not hope that anybody can as yet succeed in accomplishing the task which Taine set himself, the task of writing a Philosophy of the History of English Literature. For the conquest of so vast a field the time is not yet come, nor can it soon come. But what I wish is that the true spirit of modern philological research should prosper amongst a large body of our young students, and that this false and lamentable and absurd opposition which nowadays keeps asunder the men who are devoted to what they call English Philology, and the men who are “purely literary students,” should give place to a cordial coöperation in the one task of comprehending the English mind as it has existed in all its successive periods.

That I long to see similar methods applied to the whole study of modern literature, I have already suggested. I think that a failure to understand the one duty of the philologist, which, is, through *both* “linguistic” and “literary” study, to come nearer to a comprehension of Mind, is responsible in large part for the condition of public opinion which, in our day and country, encourages the “light literary critic” to accept the supposed limitations of his calling, and to become rather a *doctrinaire* than a sincere and laborious student of human nature. The literary critic is, forsooth, not to be a “scholar.” A “scholar” is a grammarian who knows about Greek particles, or about Anglo-Saxon, or about Ulfilas. As of course there can be nothing thus “scholarly” about novel-reading or about a knowledge of Browning or of Shelley, the “purely literary man” must needs do something else than be learned. He must rather be “authoritative,” *i. e.*, self-confident, dogmatic. He must “lead a move-

ment," or at any rate follow one. Hence the public wants to know to what "school" he belongs. Is he a pessimist, or a follower of Tolstoi, or a believer in Ibsen, or a hater of the realistic novel-writers? Best of all, if he is a "literary man" and still wants to seem a very serious person, a "leader" in the imposing sense, — best of all is it for him nowadays to concern himself with some burning "social question." He must be a socialist, or organize a reform society of some sort, or write on the New South. Anything will do, if so be only that it is *not* an effort to comprehend the life of man through studious literary research (for there is no studious literary research but that of the linguist!). The "purely literary man" must inflict his whims, his prejudices, on the world, unless indeed he is able to get the world to read his poems, when he will become a productive artist and pass to a higher plane. So long as he remains a "critic" he has nothing to do but to be either "light," or "prophetic," and in any and every case to be whimsical rather than scholarly. In consequence he too often sees little, because he is so anxious to become independently luminous on his own account. His office is not to be one of discernment, but of a sort of phosphorescent literary glowing whereby attention shall be attracted to himself.

It is this glow-worm life, to which, in the absence of scholarly ideals, many, especially of our younger literary critics, are nowadays condemned, that is responsible for the "crazes" which at the moment are the curse of our American literary life. The "craze" that makes Browning or Ibsen or any other literary man a solitary idol, is a symptom of a condition of intelligence for which literature in its true sense is so good as non-existent. For the solitary idol is no organic part of literature; nor is he studied with any truly psychological concern. To your "Browningite," Browning is not a live creature, splendid in vigor, and with all the finely stubborn and obvious defects of a very manly and original temperament—a live creature, to be first studied with all a naturalist's devotion and *then* criticized, precisely as he used to criticize others, with a healthy man's freedom of reaction. No, Browning is a sublime sort of person, called a seer, and this, in the minds of the average Browningites, who have no idea of psychological types, and who would not know a live seer from a handsaw

if they met one — this means that Browning stands for a creed, a doctrine, an elaborate system, a revelation. This creed you first accept with awe. Then you proceed to find out what it is. Browning's mysteries dawn upon you slowly. The actual behaviour in verse of the man Browning, passionate, whimsical, romantic, humane, capricious, wise, and exasperating, as he was — this you are not concerned to study, as he studied his *Men and Women*, namely with a loving eye for their very crudities and narrowness as well as for their heroic qualities. For the true philologist would indeed look upon Browning much as Browning looked upon his fellow-men; namely with a keen scrutiny and an unsparing but humane estimate of faults. As for Browning himself, few men have, as it were, more frankly confessed their literary faults to the world, have more pressed them upon the reader's notice. Browning's greatest fault was his capriciousness; and this he is constantly confessing. His creed meanwhile is an extremely short and simple one, which needs no clubs to expound it. Few men have had a more child-like depth and clearness of faith. His verse is obscure mainly because he chose to amuse himself by making it so. Nobody could write simpler and warmer lyrics than he; nobody of his rank has ever chosen to torment his readers with as many caprices. This capricious temperament of Browning's is however, for this very reason, so much the more fascinating in its paradoxes to the lover of original types. Would that we had more such lovers amongst us. As it is, the question: "How do you view Browning?" means to most minds: "Do you or do you not accept the mysterious, profound, and obscure thing called the Teaching of Browning?" What the question ought to mean would be "Have you yet found time to become acquainted with the type called Browning?" — a splendid, manly, modern type, whereof God found room for only one example; while nobody need wish, in a world full of fascinating types and of exasperating puzzles, for more than one.

But of the literary "crazes" I had no wish to speak at length. What I wish to insist upon is this crying need for a scholarly study of modern, and especially of English Literature, in the spirit in which Boeckh studied Classical Philology. The history of politics, of ethics, of morals, of society, of all civilization, is dependent for its progress upon the true and philo-

logical comprehension of the history of language and of literature. There is not *one* scholarly task called linguistic science, and *another*, but an *unscholarly* task, giving rise to endless creeds, dogmas and "crazes" and called "merely literary study," or "light literary criticism." There is in fact but *One* Philology, and its purpose is the comprehension of human life as recorded in the monuments of language. To this task linguists and literary critics can alike contribute. The neglect of such study it is that gives especial impetus to those "crazes" wherein a vague sense of the greatness of literature joins itself with a Philistine dogmatism and an indolent unwillingness to study life as it actually is in the living creatures. The true philologist studies his authors as living souls, and tries to comprehend their place in a national life. He does not merely speculate; nor does he merely study grammar. He is essentially a naturalist in his concerns and methods. And his is the study that, as I think, is nowadays too much neglected.

Josiah Royce.

THE SAILING OF FRITHIOF.

"FRITHIOF," she said. The last time, hand in hand
 They stood beside the sea. Her head was bowed:
 The day's last light lay golden on her hair
 That mingled with his tawnier locks as he
 Drew her face closer to his breast, and framed
 Its beauty with his hand. She raised her eyes
 And saw, beneath the splendor of his helm,
 His eyes, sad with the passion of strong love
 That choked his speech to silence. So they stood
 A moment. Then he spoke:

"Love, love of mine,
 Queen of all hours, from the first day when we,
 With childish lips, here by the same sea's strand,
 Promised a love unpassing,—is all past;