

they would have become just as intimately acquainted with the foreign writers.

Can a man express himself more fluently, more clearly, or more concisely in English because he has learned French, German, or indeed any foreign language? Life is too limited now-a-days for a man to spend more time than is absolutely necessary in the acquisition of any knowledge; and if he can acquire a knowledge of foreign literature by means of a good translation, why should he spend laborious years in studying a foreign grammar? True, in translation, much of the author's beauty of expression may be lost, but the thoughts will remain; beautiful conceptions will still be beautiful in whatever language they are written. But surely there is in our own mother-tongue as pure and beautiful diction as in any other language. Certainly the more extensive a knowledge one has of literature, the more accurate his perceptions, the more true his appreciation. But why go to a foreign language when there is so much of what is good and beautiful in our own? Richard Mulcaster says: "I do not think that any language, be it whatsoever, is better able to utter all arguments, with more path or greater plainness than our English tongue is."

The statement to be found in many excellent works on education, and so often quoted by the grammarians of to-day, that the study of English grammar can be but imperfectly pursued unless by the synthesis and comparison of English with some other language, is, there can be no doubt, founded on sound philological principles. But it cannot be said that it has any material significance, except as regards the study of Latin. The writer cannot recall an instance in which a student through the study of French or German has acquired increased ability in English as a grammatical reasoner. So that it may safely be said, that the study of a foreign language has little or no influence in making our public school teachers better grammarians. And from a logical process of reasoning, however prejudiced we may be, we can only arrive at the conclusion that it but takes up valuable time that should be given to the study of the mother-tongue.

We trust that in the near future foreign languages will be struck off the curriculum for teachers' certificates, and their place filled by a grand extension of the English course. Then a new era will dawn for the public schools of Ontario. L. A. C.

VERSICULI.\*

In attempting to determine the value of poetry there is one question which must be asked before all others:—Is it inevitable? No wise suggestion of Boileau, nothing in the *Ars Poetica* itself, can take precedence of this all-important question. Is there spontaneity in the work? Does it spring from necessity?

We read these "Versiculi" hurriedly through and we were inclined to reply in the negative. There was something in the studied grace of phrase, the subtleties of alliteration, the carefully interwoven *cæsurae* which gave the impression of art, of taste, of reserve, but not of poetry in its true meaning. No! We said, the author is an artist, probably a scholar but a poet he is not and never can be. In this mood the fewness of the poems did not surprise us. These are merely the graceful ebullitions of a dilettante, we thought; he has nothing really to express, nothing which he is compelled to write. Certain phrases, however, seemed to introduce a new factor—something entirely beyond and apart from lightness of touch and taste—imagination. Such expressions as, for example, "The trees bent low with fear," in "Before Dawn," and "The laughter of leaves on the wind-tossed tree" in "Beauty." And as we read them

\* Versiculi. By Arnold Haultain. Toronto: 1893.

this second time the "Versiculi" appeared to us luminous with real significance. It seemed to us that, instead of expressing more than the author had felt or even thought, they in reality expressed only the passionate craving for expansion, for the power to express.

We are convinced that they are not the work of a dilettante, and we shall try to prove to others what, at any rate, is perfectly evident to ourselves. Mr. Haultain is eminently subjective in these poems of his and in them we cannot but see reflected his own personal impressions or limitations. What is the weakness of many is his strength. Each poem is a mood and only in their unity can the "Versiculi" possess deep meaning; for an isolated mood expresses nothing but its own transient emotion. We will take a glance at a few of them, it will be sufficient at all events for the purposes of an analysis necessarily limited in space. In the opening poem, "Before Dawn,"

"A little stranger ray, trembling and pale," comes down to the gloom of earth, a "dauntless little harbinger of cheer." Hope seems to be triumphing over doubt, for

"The sullen mist, slow-creeping up the dale," gives way, "shrinks back," we are told, before the approach of the little stranger—for how long, we are not told. In "True Worship," an ideal is hinted at rather than expressed:—

"That thou, my loved one, though so far above My utmost thought, art yet within my reach, Within my love. Alas! thou canst not see How utterly beyond all thought to me Thou seem'st."

"Utterly beyond all thought," and yet the desire to express this adoration haunts him; his love "exceeds all thought"—he repeats it, —he strives to make it articulate, only to admit that it is nameless, voiceless.

In "Beauty" we find the same ideal, intangible as ever. He is always "hearing the voice but not seeing thy countenance." It is: "Only in dreams she appears to me, In dreams of the earth, and the sky, and the sea."

In "Coney Island" the poet finds himself beside the sea.

"Sing on, great sea, sing on thy cosmic song, Which thou hast sung from all eternity, So solemn, slow, and most majestic, Thine own insistent, slow, susurrant song."

He is conscious of the mystery of the deep, he knows that its song is "cosmic," that it has gone on "from all eternity," and yet he asks:

"Is thy blackest night, rent by thy most Tempestuous hurricane, to be compared To storms that toss the heart and soul?"

He feels them both, the storms of the soul and that mystic song of the sea, perhaps too intensely for words, and the one remains inexpressible as the other. In these beautiful lines we observe one defect or semblance of such, of a nature quite unusual with Mr. Haultain. After the lines quoted above, he continues:

"Thou wastest England, sea; a link thou art Between sweet England and her lonely son.

Sing on; the earth these men may mar, the sea They cannot mar."

Without dwelling upon the antithesis of the *cis*, and *trans*-Atlantic, suggested in the first two lines, we feel sure that the author would admit that the modifying word "these" is out of place in the third. It is not "these men" in particular but Man in general who is impotent to "mar" the sea. But it is in "AAYNATON EIAENAI"—in our opinion

by far the strongest and most beautiful of the "Versiculi"—that we read the author self-declared.

"'Love's messenger,' cried I,  
'And canst thou really teach  
That there is tranquillity  
For me, for thee, for each?  
Nothing will I not try  
That will help me Love to reach.'

"Silently sank the sun;  
Vanished that cloud in gloom,  
'Is there no answer? None?'  
All was silent as the tomb.  
Silently sank the sun,  
Ah, God, what a hopeless doom!"

*ἀδύνατον εἰδέναί*—put the *ἀδύνατον* before what infinitives you will—it is unnecessary, they are all included in the broad meaning of the *εἰδέναί*.

Yes! but it is something to have looked the mystery in the face even with the word "impossible" trembling upon your lips. It is more to have expressed this very impossibility, to have voiced it, so to speak, and this Mr. Haultain has done, and this it is, we repeat, which makes these graceful verses worthy of serious reflection. Their modulated sweetness is secondary to this, their studied elegance altogether subordinate. Such an author does not write much. It is not because he does not see that he is silent but rather because he is overwhelmed by what he sees. But when he does write, haunted always by the fact that there is much that he can never express, necessarily subjective, writing seemingly rather from the head than from the heart, his work will none the less be his own best gift, spontaneous, inevitable. Such a work we consider he unpretentious volume entitled "Versiculi."

ART NOTES.

The "Art Amateur" for May thus criticises Mr. G. A. Reid's "Hod-Carrier": "If G. A. Reid had put something of the vitality of Mr. Eggleston's little figure into his life-size "Hod-Carrier," and had been a little more lucky in the arrangement, he would have produced a striking work; as it is he is to be praised for seeing there is something in the subject. It is one of the charms of this artist's work that his subjects are such as might be found in actual life in our own land, and his subjects are frequently taken from those whose lives are homely and simple. As some one has said, we are tired of the unceasing clang of the peasant's sabot sounding through our art galleries.

The designs accompanying "The Art Amateur" for May are exceedingly good, the effect of Miss Stumm's panes in water-colours is well produced. The articles on "Underglaze Decoration," by S. E. Prince, "Miniature Painting," by H. C. Standage, "Painting on Glass," by S. E. Prince, "Figure Painting," by Frank Fowler, are all of great value to the beginner and profitable reading to more advanced, as are also: "An Amateur's Kit" and "Summer Flowers." The criticisms on the exhibitions are interesting, but the editorials are especially so, with news from all lands and criticisms on current art events. The remarks on Mr. Herkomer's address are better understood on reference to the picture to which the artist is referring, "The Last Muster," which is reproduced in this number.

The Christian Union says: In the amount of wall space at the World's Fair assigned to its artists, the United States naturally leads with 36,000 square feet in the main Art Building. The juries throughout the country have clung to high standards, and the rejected pictures have greatly outnumbered those that have been accepted. Eight of these juries sat in judgment upon works of Amer-