

## Literature and Science.

### EXTRACTS FROM THE SPEECH

OF JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL, DELIVERED NOVEMBER 8TH, 1886, ON THE 250TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FOUNDATION OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

(Continued from last issue.)

ONE is sometimes tempted to think that all learning is as repulsive to ingenuous youth as the multiplication table to Scott's little friend Marjorie Fleming, though this is due in great part to mechanical methods of teaching. "I am now going to tell you," she writes, "the horrible and wretched plague that my multiplication table gives me: you can't conceive it; the most Devilish thing is 8 times 8 and 7 times 7; it is what nature itself can't endure." I know that I am approaching treacherous ashes which cover burning coals, but I must on. Is not Greek, nay, even Latin, yet more unendurable than poor Marjorie's task? How many boys have not sympathized with Heine in hating the Romans because they invented Latin Grammar? And they were quite right, for we begin the study of languages at the wrong end, at the end which nature does not offer us, and are thoroughly tired of them before we arrive at them, if you will pardon the bull. But is that any reason for not studying them in the right way? I am familiar with the arguments for making the study of Greek especially a matter of choice or chance. I admit their plausibility and the honesty of those who urge them. I should be willing also to admit that the study of the ancient languages without the hope or the prospect of going on to what they contain would be useful only as a form of intellectual gymnastics. Even so they would be as serviceable as the higher mathematics to most of us. But I think that a wise teacher should adapt his tasks to the highest, and not the lowest capacities of the taught. For those lower also they would not be wholly without profit. When there is a tedious sermon, says George Herbert,

God takes a text and teacheth patience,  
not the least pregnant of lessons. One of the arguments against the compulsory study of Greek, namely, that it is wiser to give our time to modern languages and modern history than to dead languages and ancient history, involves, I think, a verbal fallacy. Only those languages can properly be called dead in which nothing living has been written. If the classic languages are dead, they yet speak to us, and with a clearer voice than that of any living tongue.

Gralls ingenium, Gralls dedit ore rotundo  
Musa loqui, præter laudem nullius avaris.

If their language is dead, yet the literature it enshrines is rammed with life as perhaps no other writing, except Shake-

spere's, ever was or will be. It is as contemporary with to-day as the cars it first enraptured, for it appeals not to the man of then or now, but to the entire round of human nature itself. Men are ephemeral or evanescent, but whatever page the authentic soul of man has touched with her immortalizing finger, no matter how long ago, is still young and fair as it was to the world's gray fathers. Oblivion looks in the face of the Grecian Muse only to forget her errand. Even for the mastering of our own tongue, there is no expedient so fruitful as translation out of another; how much more when that other is a language at once so precise and so flexible as the Greek? Greek literature is also the most fruitful comment on our own. Coleridge has told us with what profit he was made to study Shakespeare and Milton in conjunction with the Greek dramatists. It is no sentimental argument for this study that the most justly balanced, the most serene, and the most fecundating minds since the revival of learning have been steeped in and saturated with Greek literature. We know not whither other studies will lead us, especially if dissociated from this; we do know to what summits, far above our lower region of turmoil, this has led, and what the many-sided outlook thence. Will such studies make anachronisms of us, unfit us for the duties and the business of to-day? I can recall no writer more truly modern than Montaigne, who was almost more at home in Athens and Rome than in Paris. Yet he was a thrifty manager of his estate and a most competent mayor of Bordeaux. I remember passing once in London where demolition for a new thoroughfare was going on. Many houses left standing in the rear of those cleared away bore signs of the inscription "Ancient Lights." This was the protest of their owners against being built out by the new improvements from such glimpse of heaven as their fathers had, without adequate equivalent. I laid the moral to heart.

I am speaking of the College as it has always existed and still exists. In so far as it may be driven to put on the forms of the university—I do not mean the four Faculties merely, but in the modern sense—we shall naturally find ourselves compelled to assume the method with the function. Some day we shall offer here a chance, at least, to acquire the *omne scibile*. I shall be glad, as shall we all, when the young American need no longer go abroad for any part of his training, though that may not be always a disadvantage, if Shakespeare was right in thinking that

Home-keeping youths have ever homely wits.

I should be still gladder if Harvard should be the place that offered the alternative. It

seems more than ever probable that this will happen, and happen in our day. And whenever it does happen, it will be due, more than to any and all others, to the able-energetic, single-minded, and yet fair-minded man who has presided over the College during the trying period of transition, and who will by a rare combination of eminent qualities carry that transition forward to its accomplishment without haste and without jar—*ohne Hast, ohne Rust*. He more than any of his distinguished predecessors has brought the university into closer and more telling relations with the national life in whatever that life has which is most distinctive and most hopeful.

But we still mainly occupy the position of a German Gymnasium. Under existing circumstances, therefore, and with the methods of teaching they enforce, I think that special and advanced courses should be pushed on, so far as possible, as the other professional courses are, into the post-graduate period. The opportunity would be greater because the number would be less, and the teaching not only more thorough, but more vivifying through the more intimate relation of teacher and pupil. Under those conditions the voluntary system will not only be possible, but will come of itself, for every student will know what he wants and where he may get it, and learning will be loved, as it should be, for its own sake as well as for what it gives. The friends of university training can do nothing that would forward it more than the founding of post-graduate fellowships and the building and endowing of a hall where the holders of them might be commensals, remembering that when Cardinal Wolsey built Christ Church at Oxford his first care was the kitchen. Nothing is so great a quickener of the faculties or so likely to prevent their being narrowed to a single groove as the frequent social commingling of men who are aiming at one goal by different paths. If you would have really great scholars, and our life offers no prizes for such, it would be well if the university could offer them. I have often been struck with the many-sided versatility of the Fellows of English colleges who have kept their wits in training by continual fence one with another.

(To be continued.)

THE meteorites in the Peabody Museum of Yale College now embrace 75 meteoric stones and 72 meteoric irons—a total of 147 specimens, weighing 1,956 pounds. The largest specimen is an iron found in Texas in 1814, which weighs 1,635 pounds. Other large meteorites are one in Stockholm weighing 25 tons, one in Copenhagen of 10 tons, one in the British Museum of 5 tons, and one in St. Petersburg weighing 1,680 pounds.