

*Special Papers.*

## \*THE INFLUENCE OF THE SCANDINAVIAN LANGUAGES UPON ENGLISH.

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(Concluded from last number.)

FROM the thirteenth to the nineteenth century is a long cry, and yet there is little trace in the interim of any Scandinavian influence upon our thought. The English had thoroughly incorporated both Danes and Normans, and the great Northern Peninsulas, which, by their geographical position—one hanging down from the mysterious north, the other jutting forth from Central Europe—are emblematic of their two-fold historic interest, these two peninsulas, exhausted apparently by the emission of so many warriors, had little part in European affairs till the days of Gustavus Vasa, Gustavus Adolphus, and Charles the XII recalled the early conquests of the Northmen. Even in this interval, however, we are not without evidence of the artificial character connecting English with Scandinavian literature. The greatest of our writers in the greatest of his plays chose a Danish subject, and did so doubtless with artistic appreciation of the fitting background afforded by the misty and mysterious Northern land, for this most marvellous and impenetrable of his characters.

The friendship existing between Milton and the great Queen, Christina, of Sweden, might be considered another link in the chain. But however great may have been the influence of England upon Scandinavia, during the eighteenth century, when a single writer, Dalin, imitates Addison in his Swedish Argus, Pope in his Thoughts about Critics, and Swift in his Tale of a Horse, England herself was looking to the South and not to the North for her models, and only in the present century do we again recognize a Scandinavian flavor in our literature. To this renewal of influence two causes have contributed. First, the growth of a really great Northern literature and second, the cosmopolitan spirit of our time, which, under the general influence of modern civilization, and particularly owing to the increase of travel, has brought all Christendom into closer communion and made Goethe's idea of a world literature a living fact. These two causes may be seen working together in this sentence of Gosse. "There can be no reasonable question that Ibsen and Bjornson are the two most original figures of their generation in the Teutonic world of imagination." This grouping of the Teutonic nations together illustrates the cosmopolitan spirit in which our great living critics approach literature, and though there is a lack of sobriety in the estimate put upon these writers, there is enough truth in it to prove my other point that a really great northern literature has arisen. And the establishment of chairs of Scandinavian literature, which was recognized as a necessity by President Howard Crosby, of New York, has been effective in more than one of the American Universities in increasing the attention paid to this new literature.

But before the appointment of Longfellow to the Modern Language Professorship of Bowdoin College, with three years leave of absence to study abroad, had enabled that poet to study the Northern literatures, a great impulse had been given to that study by the revival of Antiquarian studies in Great Britain, due to the example of Bishop Percy and Sir W. Scott.

It is of peculiar interest to us Canadians that the link between this British antiquarian and the similar activity in Scandinavian lands should have been the distinguished secretary of the Scotch Antiquarian Society, who afterwards became President of University College, and is now Honorary President of the Modern Language Teachers' Association. This fact has been of some service to me in preparing the present paper and I may here be permitted to thank Sir Daniel Wilson for his kind readiness to loan me books that have the special interest of presentation copies.

The influence of this Scandinavian spirit was confined at first to the world of scholars, but one of

the greatest scholars of the time, who was also a prose poet, may serve as the transition to the more modern poetic influence. Thomas Carlyle, another cosmopolitan spirit, one who, as Max Muller has recently said, helped more than any man to carry out Goethe's theory of a world literature, was always fond of everything Norse. Froude tells us that Carlyle at one time thought of trying the subject which Freeman had not then exhausted, William the Conqueror and the Norsemen. "This seemed more feasible [than that of the Cid] continues Froude, and his own sympathies—his own heart itself was Scandinavian; all the virtues he possessed he believed to have come to us out of our Norse ancestry."

The revival of scholarship at the University of Oxford awakened an interest in linguistic study to which we owe the labors of Vigfusson Cleasby and others, already mentioned, and so it came about that in one of the leading poets of our time, William Morris, there is so much of the Scandinavian influence that he introduces the old *Kenningar* into his translation of Homer's *Odyssey*, a procedure which has brought down the ire of an English critic in *Longman's Magazine* (also quoted, by the way, in yesterday's *Mail*) but which might be defended on the ground that it represents the old national epic style of our race. Morris has done more than anyone else to popularise the old Northern literature by such translations and adaptations as *Northern Love Stories*, *Grettir the Strong*, *Volsungs*, and *Niblungs and Segurd the Volsung*, the last moulding the Scandinavian and the high German material into a form of rare rhythmic grace.

But Morris is not the only one of our poets who has restored to us "the gods of our fathers" to use the happy phrase of Mr. Sykes. Matthew Arnold has told us the story of the beautiful god Balder, in whose character some antiquarians think they have discovered a prophetic vision of the Messiah. For Balder is to come again from Hell and usher in a new era of peace. "This new earth or Midgard was to be peopled by the descendants of a pair of men who had escaped the final conflagration in the wood called Hodmimir's Holt. But the poet who has brought this life of the North home to most of us is the American, Longfellow, who, as already mentioned, passed several years in Europe after his election to the professorship of Modern Languages. His genius was essentially imitative, what was once considered the most original of his poems is now known to be an imitation of the Finnic epic the *Kalevala*. It is a curious coincidence that as Morris's *Earthly Paradise* shows the influence of Chaucer in its form, and of Norse literature in a part of its subject matter, so Longfellow's *Tale of a Wayside Inn* are likewise an imitation of Chaucer's poem and introduce the Scandinavian subjects. Another of Longfellow's poems brings up a story that parallels the one just told about the *Ruthwell Cross*. The *Skeleton in Armor*, that stock piece of the deep-voiced tragedian, tells the tale of the famous Round Tower of Newport. This tower, it has now been established was built by one of the provincial governors about 200 years ago and so the romantic connection with the Viking chief is destroyed. None the less however does it illustrate our theme.

In addition to Longfellow's great work in popularising these Northern subjects we are indebted to a native Norwegian, Prof. Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, of Columbia College, formerly and now of Cornell, and to a native Dane, Prof. Sinding, of the University of New York, for giving us a better idea of Scandinavian history and literature. My own interest in the subject was first awakened by reading the papers of that genial and light-hearted Kentuckian, John Ross Brown, whose Californian in Iceland was published in Harper's Monthly thirty years ago, and who afterwards wrote the *Land of Thor*. Prof. Carpenter, of Columbia College, my fellow student at Leipzig, has recently published in another American magazine the account of a trip to Iceland. But the spell by which Iceland held her people is no longer irresistible. Some of you remember that a few years ago we had an Icelandic student in University College. This gentleman is now editing an Icelandic paper in Winnipeg, so that we in Canada are going to have a new infusion of Norse blood, and may expect to find trace of that influence in our Canadian literature that is to be.

And this leads me to an interesting parallel. Many of you will not accept the qualifying phrase

that closed my last paragraph. Some of you may be hopeless of ever seeing a Canadian literature. Certainly while native talent is treated as at present there is not much to be hoped for. But, as Mr. Sykes has told us, there are signs of a change, and in the light of these dawning rays a comparison may be instituted which was suggested to me by some passages in Gosse's *Northern Studies*. Perhaps the mere reading of these passages will be enough. I shall allow you to make the application for yourselves.

I have promised to bring you evidence from our latest Canadian book of poetry that here too the Scandinavian spirit is working. Is it again only a coincidence that this author should also show many of Morris's mannerisms in his poetry?

With the wish that we may all live to see the day when our poets will be shedding a Canadian influence on other less happy climes, and with thanks for your kind attention, I close my paper.

*Book Reviews, Notices, Etc.*

*Voices of Children.* By W. H. Leib. Boston: Ginn & Company. Cloth. Introduction and teachers' price, 40 cents.

This is a theoretical and practical guide for the training, protection and preservation of children's voices in speaking, reading and singing. The work claims to be the outgrowth of many years' experience in private tuition and schools of various kinds, and will be found full of practical suggestions, as well as based on the soundest philosophy of vocal culture.

*Xenophon, Hellenica, Books I.-IV.* Edited on the Basis of Büchschütz's Edition. By Irving J. Manott, Chancellor of the University of Nebraska. Boston: Ginn & Company.

This edition constitutes one of the "College Series of Greek Authors" in course of publication by Ginn & Company. The notes are full and give evidence of careful and scholarly preparation, though placing them beneath the text will be thought objectionable by many teachers. Typography and binding are good, and size convenient. The Introduction is full and contains much useful historical and critical matter.

*A Primer of Memory Gems.* Designed especially for Schools. By George Washington Hoss, A.M., LL.D. C. A. Bardun, Syracuse, N.Y.

The title of this useful little pamphlet will commend it to the notice of teachers who appreciate the importance of fixing wise and noble precepts in the child-memory.

*Allen and Greenough's Latin Grammar for Schools and Colleges.* Revised and Enlarged by James Bradstreet Greenough, assisted by George L. Kittredge.

This work, extended now to nearly 500 pages, is, no doubt, one of the best Latin Grammars published. We do not know that it is much used in Canadian schools, but for purposes of comparison, at least, teachers will find it valuable. Great pains and labor seem to have been expended in the revision, and much new matter has been added.

*Mother Truth's Melodies: Common sense for children. A Kindergarten.* By Mrs. E. P. Miller. 450 illustrations. 352 pp. Chicago: Fairbanks & Palmer Publishing Co., \$1.50.

Here is a book which will rejoice the heart of every parent and teacher who wants reason, as well as rhyme, in the jingles which the children learn. The author believes that "facts may be presented pleasingly and melodiously, and in such a way that they will be easily impressed upon the minds of children." This book teaches temperance, hygiene, arithmetic, grammar, natural history, geography, and astronomy, besides love to animals, and the various virtues which adorn the characters of children and of older people too.

*The Song Century.* C. W. Bardeen, Syracuse, N. Y. 15c. Contains a varied selection of old favourites, and new songs likely to become so.

*An Introduction to German at Sight.* By Eugène H. Babbitt, Instructor in German in Harvard University. Boston: D. C. Heath & Co.

\*Paper read before the Modern Language Association of Ontario.