

problem to determine which is the greatest. None of them is always great, and they are all very great when at their best. Moreover, in matters of taste there is no absolute standard. The best that any one can do is to say *whether* he likes or dislikes, and *why* he likes or dislikes; but in all humbleness, confessing that he cannot like, not from any imperfection in what is strange to him, but from his own littleness and incapacity.

It is often asserted that French literature is incapable of affording any valuable culture. Now, to prove this position it would be necessary to show that there are no great French authors, or that they are so much like English that no effort of the intellect and imagination is necessary to comprehend and enjoy them, and manifestly both of these positions would be absurd. The French have a splendid literature, second to no other in dignity, richness and variety; and it is so different from English that the acquisition of the power of enjoying it affords a training of no mean order. Is there no widening of the mental horizon in the study of those rugged epics of heroic mediaevalism, like the "Song of Roland," which stand like strong granite hills in the background of French literature? Or of those sweeter epics of chivalry, like the "Story of the Holy Grail," which show us the strivings of the great heart of the Middle Ages for higher things? Is there no instruction for us in the comparison of that stately and dignified tragedy of the age of Louis XIV. with the tragedy of our own great poet? How different they are, and yet how perfect each in its own kind! Do we learn nothing from the study of Molière, the greatest of all comedy writers? Is it of no value to study the literature of the eighteenth century in France, in which we find the beginnings of the modern romance in all its rich variety? Has

the study of that grand galaxy of nineteenth century writers, at whose head stands the giant Hugo, no power to awaken thought and imagination? And what shall we say of that school of naturalists or realists now so active, who, along with the great Russian writers, are leading the van in the army of European romance writers? Narrow bigotry or ignorance may tell us there is nothing in French literature, those who have tasted know better. There is much, there is a vast mass, the mine is so rich that we are dazed and bewildered. Our only difficulty is to know what to leave out. So with the other modern languages studied in our University. They are all so rich that the study of any one is a life's work, and lack of time forbids all but the slightest reference here.

In the history of the modern languages a large field of enquiry opens up before us, and one of the very greatest importance. Max Müller, in his "Science of Thought" (Vol. I., p. 81), says: "The true archives in which alone the historical development of the human mind can be studied are the archives of language. . . . These mental products in their earliest form are always embodied in language, and it is in language, therefore, that we must study the problem of the origin, and of the successive stages in the growth of mind. The formation of general terms, of abstract notions, of propositions and syllogisms, in fact all that we call the work of reason, must in future be studied in language, if in the science of thought we hope for the same results which have rewarded the labours of Darwin and of other careful students of the authentic records of nature. Every one of the numberless languages which cover the earth is a stratum in the growth of thought that has to be explored. Every word is a specimen, a record