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## MY TREES.

At evening, when the winds are still,  
And wide the yellowing landscape glows,  
My fir-woods on the lonely hill  
Are crowned with sun and loud with crows.  
Their flocks throng down the open sky  
From far, salt flats and sedgy seas.  
Then dusk and dew-fall quench the cry,—  
So calm a home is in my trees.

At morning, when the young wind swings  
The green, slim tops and branches high,  
Out-puffs a noisy whirl of wings,  
Dispersing up the empty sky.  
In this dear refuge no roof stops  
The skyward pinion winnowing through.  
My trees shut out the world,—their tops  
Are open to the infinite blue.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS.

## THE STUDY OF LANGUAGES.

Languages ancient and modern occupy a prominent place in the curricula of our high schools, colleges and universities, some think to the exclusion of other desirable subjects. For those intended for the learned professions, for journalism and other literary pursuits, the acquisition of languages is of no inconsiderable importance. It will help the physician and scientist in the knowledge of technical terms, which is so stringently essential in the study of medicine and science—of all sciences, indeed, and of all arts, each of which has perforce a distinct terminology of its own. A good knowledge of Latin and French is useful to the lawyer in acquiring legal terms. Hebrew and Greek are necessary to ministers of the Gospel for the thorough understanding of the Scriptures; and the latter language more than any other will aid a writer to attain purity of diction and grace of style. Peacock used to say that he owed everything to Greek. Perhaps this is the most difficult of all languages to acquire. We agree with De Quincy (who, when not blinded by prejudice, was an acute critic and a sensible thinker) that it takes a dash of genius to obtain a full knowledge of Greek,—that is, to be able to read, write, and speak it fluently. De Quincy himself was thus proficient,—could turn the English newspapers into classical Greek offhand,—and may be quoted as an authority. So different from those of our own are the ideas, idioms, and general structure of the language, that to master it one must think in it. Comparatively few men have been admirable Greek scholars: the two Scaligers, Salmatius, Dionysius Pet.

owine, Bentley, Porson, these are some of the names that suggest themselves; but whom have we at the present day who can rival the linguistic Titans of the past? Of elegant Latinists like Dr. Parr and De Pauw we dare say a somewhat lengthy list might be compiled, but Latin is a much less difficult language than Greek, though hard enough, perdy, for the average student. We doubt if William Worton and Elihu Burritt, who were acquainted with a score or more of languages, knew any, or at most one or two, thoroughly. These two men certainly had amazing linguistic ability, which is a natural faculty,—the possession of certain characteristics which render easy the acquirement of foreign tongues. We should say that the chief things required are the powers of observation and memory, intellectual grasp of idiom, and unswerving steadiness of application.

But, with all the advantages of linguistic attainments, there are some who maintain that it is not probable that they are of much use for the common purposes of life. All that is required, they say, in the shape of education our excellent public school system affords to all, and positions in all walks of life are ably filled by those who know no language but their own. Of what utility, they ask, is a knowledge of languages to a man engaged in mercantile pursuits, except, indeed, that it may contribute to his pleasure in his leisure hours? It will not, however, aid in the amassing of riches. It is true that a man with such knowledge may, if it be thorough, teach it to others, and thus make a living out of it, but how many who graduate from our universities have obtained a complete mastery over the tongues which they have studied? Suppose that one determine to gain a livelihood by teaching modern languages, such as French and German, it is certainly desirable that he should spend some time in the countries where they are spoken. This takes time and money. Teachers and tutors, too, are generally poorly paid. Could not the time spent in such pursuits be more profitably employed?

And much more of the same sort of argument is advanced, a great deal of which is fact, but fallaciously applied. The knowledge of languages, however, not only is of great value in especial cases, not only is a source of endless recreation and pleasure to its possessor, but the study for its attainment is pre-eminent among methods of intellectual training, its acquisition is one of the most excellent formative agencies of intellectual habits, and its possession is that which is best calculated to enable a man to adapt himself to his environment, and to endow him with versatility and comprehension. We do not, therefore, agree with Thomas Paine, who, in his "Age of Reason," underestimates the value of languages, but believe that their study bestows the general benefit of practical utility, in addition to that of scholarly satisfaction and that of specific application.

FREDERICK DAVIDSON.