

youth, to the discovery of truth, whatever might be the dominion in which they sought it; and they have the justice claim to our admiration, for they lived in times when the words of Scripture, "In the sweat of thy brow thou shalt eat thy bread," applied to mental labour as well as to bodily work. But nowadays the case is altered; the tables of knowledge are richly spread before us, and every body has but to stretch out his hand to take hold of the results of the researches of past ages. Hence arises the danger, that a young man, learning nothing but these results, should no longer trouble himself about the way that led to them, and should therefore fail in making them real acquisitions of his own. How much is there not swallowed down in a few minutes by our young students of divinity, without the least perception of all the trouble which the discovery of these truths cost the early writers. This very abuse is committed in our gymnasia; or else why should Herder have already found it necessary to warn young men against the luxury of knowledge; and why should the reproach be so often repeated, that instruction is carried on in them too much in the university style, so that it puffs up young people and turns them into gamblers and premature critics.

Whilst English schools adhere to positive knowledge, removed from any sort of critical controversy, and foster the sense of quick observation by due regard to reality; in Germany, reflection prevails to such an excess, that by dwelling merely upon generalities, the research into an object is always suffered to be impaired by disregard for the integrity of the facts. Many a professor at a university has been made angry, by seeing so many students coming to college with opinions and views already formed at their gymnasia; whilst, at the same time, they were so very deficient in simple and elementary knowledge, that they did not know half the facts on which they had already decided. For this reason, also, Godfried Hermann complained, "In schools they read the classics critically; whilst we shall soon be obliged to teach them the elements of grammar."

Dr. Arnold says that these efforts to gain knowledge are a thousand times more important to the scholar than the success which attends them; and that, in teaching, the *how* is of far more consequence than the *what*.

Through disregard to these rules, and on account of the encyclopedical character of the instructions given in our schools, the youth of Germany has lost its natural simplicity and sound perspicuity of its notions. It is at the same time so much engaged by different objects, that its ears are stunned and its attention perplexed. What application has gained in extent, it has lost in depth. English schools escape these disadvantages: they teach less, but their pupils know better *how they must learn*. They have riper powers of observation, and they know how to discover the proper point of view for everything; whereas too many of our young men know nothing more, for long afterwards, than what they have been taught and cannot free themselves from dependence on the learning they have received at school.—*English Journal of Education*.

## SHORT MEMOIRS OF EMINENT MEN.

### No. 4.

#### HERODOTUS—THE FATHER OF HISTORY.

"It is natural to believe," says Dr. Johnson, "that no writer has a more easy task than the historian. The philosopher has the works of Omniscience to examine; and is therefore engaged in disquisitions, to which finite intellects are utterly unequal. The poet trusts to his invention, and is not only in danger of those inconsistencies to which every one is exposed by departure from truth, but may be censured as well for deficiencies of matter, as for irregularity of disposition, or impropriety of ornament. But the happy historian has no other labour than of gathering what tradition pours down before him, or records treasure for his use. He has only the actions and designs of men like himself to conceive and to relate; he is not to form, but to copy characters, and therefore is not blamed for the inconsistency of statesmen, the injustice of tyrants, or the cowardice of commanders. The difficulty of making variety consistent, or uniting probability with surprise, need not to disturb him; the manners and actions of his personages are already fixed; his materials are provided, and put into his hands, and he is at leisure to employ all his powers in arranging and displaying them.

"Yet, even when these advantages, very few in any age have been able to raise themselves to reputation by writing histories; and among the innumerable authors, who fill every nation with accounts of their ancestors, or undertake to transmit to futurity the events of their own time, the greater part, when fashion and novelty have ceased to recommend them, are of no other use than chronological memorials, which necessity may sometimes require to be consulted, but which fright away curiosity, and disgust delicacy." We design to notice one who in ancient times, and even to the present day, is universally allowed to be eminently worthy of the name of the Historian.

Herodotus, styled by Cicero, the Father of History, was born at Halicarnassus, in Caria, a large town of Asia Minor. Strabo informs us, that his parents were affluent and of illustrious origin. He flourished about the memorable period in which Xerxes invaded Greece.

When arrived at maturity, he was compelled to leave his native place, on account of the tyranny of Lygdamis, who had put to death Panyasis, the uncle of the historian. During the time of his exile, he travelled through Greece, Egypt, Asia, Thrace and Macedonia. Whilst a resident at Samos, he collected the materials, and formed the plan of his history.

At length, having heard that a conspiracy had been formed by many of the citizens of Halicarnassus to expel the tyrant who had so long oppressed them, he hastened to lend them his aid. They were eminently successful in dethroning the despot; but a faction, adverse to Herodotus, having gained a possession of the government, he was obliged to take refuge from its violence in Greece.

In the thirty-ninth year of his age, he attended the Olympic games, and recited to the vast multitudes which were assembled, several portions of his history. These were rapturously applauded; and the nine books into which his work was divided, by unanimous consent, were distinguished by the names of the muses.

His narrative includes in it, the most remarkable events through a period of two hundred and forty years, from the reign of Cyrus, the first king of Persia, to that of Xerxes, in which he lived. Twelve years after he had visited Olympia, he went to Athens, and read part of his history to the people at one of their public feasts. They not only loaded him with their praises, but made a decree, that ten talents should be presented to him as an acknowledgment of his merit.

It is thought remarkable, that though a Dorian, he should have written so well in the Ionic dialect. Critics generally allow him the place among historians, which Homer fills among the poets, and Demosthenes among the orators. There is certainly much ease, sweetness and elegance in his style. Cicero compares it to the course of the waters of a still river. With all his faults, he has ever been regarded as one of the most pleasing writers of antiquity.

Quintilian, noticing the works of this historian, says, "Many have written well; but every body owns that there are two historians preferable to the rest, though extremely different from each other; Thucydides and Herodotus. Thucydides is close, concise, and even sometimes crowded in his sentences; Herodotus is sweet, copious, and exuberant. Thucydides is more agreeable to men of lively passions; Herodotus to those of a sedate turn. The former is more energetic, the latter is more pleasing."

He left Athens, in the fortieth year of his age, with the colony who went to Thurium, in the south of Italy, to form a settlement. Lysias, the celebrated orator, as we have seen, accompanied him.—It is highly probable, that Herodotus closed his days among these adventurers; though some have affirmed, that his tomb was to be seen at Athens, among the monuments of Cimon.

The account which this historian has given us of Babylon is most astonishing. The greatest cities of modern times can afford us but a very faint idea of its strength and grandeur. Indeed, the prophet Isaiah calls it, "the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency." It stood on a large plain: its walls were eighty-seven feet wide, three hundred and fifty in height, and in compass, four hundred and eighty furlongs, or about sixty miles. The walls formed an exact square, each side of which extended fifteen miles. The bricks which composed it were cemented together with bitumen, and thus they became one firm solid mass.—An immense moat, or ditch, full of water, surrounded this vast fortification.