

which I do not feel myself competent to deal. As you know, I have not had the advantage of what is termed a classical education. My limited school time scarcely allowed me to think of Greek, and I should now make but slow steps in Latin, even with the help of a dictionary. From this it will be clear that my knowledge of, or any success I may have attained in, my own language owes nothing to instruction derived from the great authors of antiquity. I have read some of their works in English translations; only recently I have read Mr. Jowett's translation of the Dialogues of Plato, and have been more astonished at the wonderful capacity and industry of the Master of Balliol than at the wisdom of the great Philosopher of Greece.

"I suppose the youth of ancient Greece read the best authors of their own country, and the Roman youth the best authors of Rome. To have read Greek among the Romans would not have done so much to create and continue a classic Latin as to read and study the best books of Roman writers. So now, and with us, what can Greece and Rome do for English students more than can be done for them by the best writers of their own tongue? Is there anything in the writings of the ancients that can compare in value for the youth of England with our translation of the Bible, especially of many of the Psalms and some of the Prophets, or with the unsurpassable grandeur and beauty of Milton? If all existing Greek and Latin books were destroyed, is there not in our English classics sufficient material whereon to build a future of which our future need not be ashamed! The learned men who were recently employed to revise the translation of the New Testament were, I presume, especially learned in the tongue of ancient Greece. No one has complained of their ignorance of Greek, but many have been surprised at and have complained of their failure in regard to English. They may have been profound in their knowledge of the ancient classics, but in English equal to the translation they were engaged to revise, they seem to me to have shown more of feebleness than of strength.

"You ask me if I believe that the classics of the modern world are an equivalent, from an educational point of view, for the Greek and Roman classics? I answer that, as probably all the facts of history, or of biography, or of science, and all the reasoning to be found in ancient books, are to be found in modern translations, it follows that the study of the ancient languages is not now essential to education so far as the acquisition of knowledge is concerned; and that as the study of the best writers of English must be more effective in creating and sustaining what we may term classic English than the study of any foreign or dead language can be, it seems to follow that the classics of the modern world are, from an educational point of view, an equivalent for the Greek and Roman classics. The knowledge of the ancient languages is mainly a luxury. It is useful from the fact that science has enlisted it in its service, and it is pleasant to possess, and because it is pleasant it is a possession of value, with those who wander among ancient books and whose association is chiefly with the limited class who are enabled by leisure and temperament to give

themselves up to studies which are not open to the multitude."

Yours faithfully,

W. H. TURNER.

To the Editors University Gazette:—

DEAR SIRS:—Last week I sent you the opinion of the greatest master of English oratory on the study of Greek and Latin. This week I enclose the dictum of Grant Allen, the most fascinating of English prose writers. The following is the opinion in question.—"It appears to me that nothing could be more prejudicial to the interests of culture in England than the establishment of a real school of English Literature at the Universities. If you wish to kill a study, make it the subject of academical teaching. At the present day, most educated Englishmen know and love the literature of their own country. Many of them also know and love the literatures of Germany, France, and modern Italy. But by far the larger part of them cordially hate and dislike the literature of ancient Greece and Rome; and the reason is clear; because it was made to them in childhood and youth a symbol of drudgery and an instrument of torture in the horrid form of licensed vivisection known as public examinations. If I may venture to obtrude, by way of illustration, a personal experience, I would say briefly that I was a classical man at Oxford myself; took my classical scholarship and honours in due course; and finished enough Greek and Latin verse by the way to be made composition master for some years to the sixth form at two or three big public schools. But from the day when fate first happily released me from that intolerable servitude to a false system of so-called education to the present moment, I have never dreamt of glancing at Plato or Æschylus, at Tacitus or Virgil, except for a purely historical or scientific purpose. The bare idea of taking them down and reading them for amusement or culture, as we read Shakspeare and Victor Hugo and Goethe, or as we read true poetry of the present day, like Andrew Lang's or Gosse's or Austin Dobson's (you see, I have the courage of my opinions) would scarcely even so much as occur to the mind of the average classically educated Englishman. He regards all these things as mere 'scholarship'; something that he got over, like chickenpox and measles, once for all, early in life, and need never again trouble his head with. If a school of English Literature were established at Oxford the men who "took it up for Finals" would come to look upon Keats's "Night-ingale" as a straight tip for examination; they would discuss the text of Shelley's "Skylark" from the point of view of Mr. Forman's conjectural emendations; they would canvass with great deliberation the nice question why Richard Feveril did not return to Lucy; and they would appraise the place of the "Earthly Paradise" by a comparison of the critical opinions held by Mr. Stopford Brooke and by the author of the selected literature crambook. Dr. Craik and Professor Henry Morley would gain thousands; and English education would lose the one vivifying element it still possesses outside science—the personal study, for pure love, of our great poets, romance writers, essayists and thinkers.