

a pretentious and exclusive bearing that repels even the capable reader. The complicated torture and linguistic anomaly of making Latin the vehicle for instruction in Greek is rapidly passing away from our schools, as well as the practice of illustrating the classic writers by annotations and dissertations of doubtful classicity; and in the study and processes of law, which had appropriated to itself, in the lapse of time, a special and corrupt, but in its application throughout Europe a general and recognised, Latin diction, nothing remains, as far as British jurisprudence is concerned, beyond a few isolated and mispronounced expressions.

It has been reserved for an enthusiastic French Phil-Hellène (M. Gustave d'Eichthal) to propose that Greek should now become the Universal Language; but even this is not more hopeless than the rehabilitation of the Latin, and there is no more reason in the teaching of the one than of the other, as far as relates to any intercourse or communication with the actual world and living men.

It will answer no purpose of argument to depreciate the effect and worth of classical scholarship. Let us have as much of it as possible. There is no danger in this time and country of the existence of a class of *Gelehrten*, who should distract the energies of the nation from the broad highways of civic life and lead them into the by-paths of abstract study, so that, while thought and speculation might be busy and free, political action might be inert and shackled. The critic and the searcher, the man to whom the records and productions of these two wondrous peoples is an inexhaustible mine of intellectual treasure,—before whom these languages, in the unalterable passiveness of their structure, lie like the dead subject under the knife of the anatomist,—who combines the curiosity of the antiquary with the induction of the philosopher,—can owe little, if anything, to the present formal routine of classical discipline. It is doubtful, indeed, whether, if he had first come to that study at the age of sixteen, with faculties already strengthened and regulated by any sound system of education, without any ungrateful associations of the daily recurrent task and the natural resistance of boyish distraction to lessons that have no connexion with its instincts or its observation, some four or five years of conscientious and willing labour, with all the stimulus of enjoyment in progress, would not effect at least all that is required within the modest range of an University curriculum, and leave him well armed and equipped for the campaigns and efforts of a further erudition. At any rate, it must be supremely indifferent to a man thus engaged, whether an infinite number of boys are learning one grammar or another, or construing one or other book, which it is clearly understood that they are to lay by and forget, as soon as they confront the businesses or even the pleasures of mature life.

For to the social phenomenon of all this elaborate study, which cannot be applied to any practical purpose, must be added this other peculiarity of the system, that, when once the ordinary British youth has bidden farewell to school or college, any attempt to prosecute, or even keep up, his classical attainments and interests would make him an object of curiosity, if not of censure and alarm, to all who might be solicitous for his future welfare. It is accepted that, whatever other advantages he may have derived from his public education—and they may be many—the knowledge of the ancient languages, which formed so large and indispensable a portion of it, may be at once abandoned without compunction or reproach. He has repeatedly learnt the Odes of Horace by heart, but at the age of thirty he will not be able to repeat one of them; he could once write a sort of Latin verse or prose, but that accomplishment soon utterly disappears, perhaps at no great loss to himself or others. There must be, however, some positive gain in even such a limited command of ancient literature as has been drilled into him, and if we were not case-hardened by custom, it would seem to us a scandal that it should be thus altogether thrown aside. The exceptions to this rule, of course, are numerous, and examples of men of too much mental vigour, and memories too well exercised, to

abandon easily what they have acquired with much intelligent labour, will suggest themselves to all of us. Yet follow that young lawyer who has won high honours at his University, and whose talents and industry are undeniable. He throws himself with zeal into his new profession, he sets himself to master the knowledge that may, when properly used, gain him wealth and position; he would willingly pursue his former classical studies, but he finds no time for them, even in his hours of intellectual relaxation. For these he has his French or German—which perhaps he once learnt from his sister's governess, but lost at school.—or the elements of physical science, of which he now feels himself shamefully ignorant—or it may be some art—music or drawing—for which he is conscious that he possesses a true natural gift, and to which he sometimes regretfully thinks that the supple fingers or eager eyes of his boyhood might have been profitably directed. So that he must content himself with the superior enjoyment which his classical remembrances and associations may give him, if he chances to visit the scenes of ancient history; or, if he becomes the father of a family, with the means of imparting to his children the rudiments of the same education which absorbed all his early life, but to which he has so rarely reverted in his later years.

With the clergy, whose occupations are for the most part *sedentary and unambitious*, the results might be expected to be different, but it is not so. Outside the Universities it is rare to find a clergyman, not engaged in tuition, whose intimacy with his previous studies goes much beyond his Greek Testament, and indeed it would hardly tend to his professional credit if it was known that he spent any considerable portion of his time in company with a literature not akin in thought and principle to his present duties. The old-fashioned conventional standard, which not only permitted, but encouraged, among ecclesiastics the familiar intercourse with heathen writers, and by which subjects indecorous or even sacrilegious when expressed in the vulgar tongue, became harmless and becoming when conveyed in Greek or Latin diction, is now obsolete.

If, then, the exclusive classical education, so prolonged, so elaborate, so costly, is acknowledged to be inoperative, as regards the retention of the languages and the interest in their literature, among all classes of society, except those, whose business it is to continue and propagate the study, and a few scholastic amateurs,—can it be maintained that the mental discipline which it enforces is of so peculiar and unique a character as, in itself, to justify this sacrifice of human intelligence and parental expenditure? Admit all that can be adduced as to the superiority of these tongues in the regularity of their structure, the logical accuracy of their expression, the ease with which their etymology is traced and reduced to general laws, and the precision of their canons of taste and style, (1) can it be affirmed that these peculiar excellences are appreciable by the mass of schoolboys, and that these processes of thought cannot be evoked by any other instrumentality? Is the difference between these and other forms of speech such, that grammar cannot be taught efficiently in any living tongue, or that so refined a perception of style and taste in composition can be conveyed to the generality of young minds by these and by no other means? Now no decisive answer can be given to these questions till the test of experience has been fairly applied, and this can only be done when all the other separate and collateral circumstances that affect and distinguish the education of our public schools can be combined with other than exclusive classical teaching. When boys, in all other respects under the same intellectual and moral training, are submitted to different courses of instruction, when the grammar of living tongues is taught as accurately and scientifically as that of the dead, when the sense of beauty and fitness in diction is excited and directed by judicious exercise in the masterpieces of native and foreign literature, when diligence and aptitude in the one study or the other are equally considered and rewarded, then,

(1) See Dr. Temple's evidence before the Royal Commission.