

has harped like a dotard ever since, without caring to know exactly what it meant. It is, in fact, truth or nonsense, according to the way we explain it. Horace long ago said all that was to be said, when he told us that for good poetry two things were needed—native talent and literary training. Native talent may, indeed, produce some genuine poetry (such, *e. g.*, as the songs of Burns) without literary training; but most of our best poetry—Milton's, *e. g.*, and Tennyson's—has needed long toil at the art of versification. If, then, this proverb means that the writer in metre cannot be a poet without native genius, the words are perhaps obscure, but sensible. If, on the other hand they are taken to mean that in poetry natural talent is everything, literary training nothing, the words are simple nonsense.

But the public, having found this phrase so very useful, is naturally anxious to enlarge its area. So we now have the parrot cry, "The teacher, like the poet, is born, not made." And this axiom is quoted directly any attempt is made to procure training for teachers. But I would venture to suggest that the cases of the poet and the teacher are not in all respects parallel. The proverb, "The poet is born, not made," may really be useful in discouraging people from writing badly in metre. There is not the least necessity for their writing in metre at all. But the practical value of the saying, "The teacher, like the poet, is born, not made," is hardly so obvious. In point of fact, a very great number of persons must teach; and I do not know what the public expects to gain by saying to these persons, "The teacher is born, not made. If you are a born teacher, you will teach well; if you are not, you will teach badly. Don't trouble yourself about training, it will make no difference to you." The effect is, of course, that training is neglected; for young teachers who fear the trouble, and still more the expense, of training, are not likely, to seek qualifications which every one seems to think useless, or at least unnecessary for a certain number of persons to write in metre, the public would say, "Let these persons make the most of such aptitudes as they have. Let them get a practical acquaintance with different kinds of metre. Let them study the best models. Let them practise metrical composition by exercises not intended for the public eye, and let them submit these exercises to judicious critics, and profit by their remarks." This, I suppose, would be the advice given to persons fated to write in metre. No one would think of saying to them: Everything depends on nature: if you are a born poet, you can't write badly; if you are not, you can't write well. Never mind learning your art; it will make no difference to you." And yet folly like this is often contained, or at least implied, in what the public says about the art of teaching.

I hope I shall not seem to have wasted your time, and to have been thrusting at a man of straw. I have so frequently heard this need of training disputed, even in high quarters, that I know this delusion to be no man of straw, but a foeman worthy of all the steel we can manage to put into him.

There is another foe, a sort of twin giant to the last, who also stops the way to improvement. It is often said that, if we train teachers, there will be a great danger of making them theoretical; and theoretical with the British public means unpractical. There is a piquancy about paradox that always commends itself to public opinion. The public is the genuine believer, who delights to believe because the thing is impossible. And so this same public opinion is inclined to maintain that a man is, on the whole, the less likely to do a thing well from his having learnt all about it. This peculiar

antithesis between knowing and doing was not invented in this country, though it seems most at home here. We know the old story of the two architects at Athens. They were rival candidates for employment, and the Athenian populace had to appoint one or the other to build a temple. The first architect made a great speech, in which he proved that he knew all about architecture, and gave reasons why one particular kind of building was best for the site; then he went into details, and described the proposed edifice. His speech made a great impression, and the audience were anxious to know how his rival would cap such eloquence. But the rival was equal to the occasion. When his turn came, he rose and delivered a very short speech in these words: "What the last speaker has said, I will do," and he was immediately appointed architect by acclamation. He had proved himself a shrewd man, no doubt; but he might, after all, have been very ignorant of architecture, and the Athenians may have blundered in their choice, as they did in the antithesis implied in it.

Perhaps this assumed antithesis between knowledge and practical ability is best stated by Iago, in his account of "a great arithmetician, one Michael Cassio, a Florentine." This preferred rival of his was a theorist: he

" never set a squadron in the field,
Nor the division of a battle knows
More than a spinster; unless the bookish theorick
Wherein the fogged Consuls can propose
As masterly as he; mere prattle without practice,
Is all his soldiership."

But Othello was, perhaps not less discerning than Iago in this matter. Iago himself had no turn for theory. He had seen service, had probably shown personal bravery, and had acquired the art of performing by rule of thumb all the ordinary duties of a soldier. But the humdrum soldier—blunt, honest fellow, as Othello thought him—was not held worthy of a high command. He *might* have mastered the theory of his craft, and had neglected it. Cassio had shown that his heart was in his soldiering; he had made the most of such opportunities as he had had, and he had acquired a capacity for improving which put him altogether above the Iagos. The highest qualities of the commander—foresight, coolness in peril, fertility of resource in emergencies—were not indeed to be acquired from the study of books; but, on the other hand, they were not in any way to be injured by the study of books. And, whatever the Iagos may say, the "bookish theorick" is every year proving more and more valuable. Moltke poring over his books, and maps, and papers, is more than a match for the most dashing *beau sabreur* in the French army. This truth is at length forcing itself even on us in the War Department; and, in spite of the Iagos, we have made the study of theory imperative, and insist on our officers acquiring the bookish theorick at colleges such as Greenwich and Sandhurst.

That the practical men should be annoyed by this attention to theory, is but natural. Knowledge of this kind is apt to puff up, and youngsters sometimes, "make the lesson," as the French say, in an unbecoming and irritating fashion to experienced persons. Hence the hard name hurled at theory, and the common cry, "This may be all very well in theory, but it won't do in practice." Let us consider this a moment. What is theory? Theory is, properly speaking, truth in its general or abstract form; and if a thing is right in theory, it must be right in practice also.

This may seem a bold assertion. Let me explain myself. "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." Yes, if we are led to presume on it. We can imagine a