

A History of Classical Greek Literature.

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The progress of archæology during the past thirty-five years, in its effect on Greek literature, can be strikingly seen by comparing the well-known work of Dr. K. O. Müller with these volumes of Professor Mahaffy. In our day the pickaxe and shovel have become tools of refined research. At one time literary conjecture threatened to crush out of life all positive knowledge. Was the subject the topography of Troy? Presently the heap of literary guess-work rivalled the mounds of the Trojan plain; but Dr. Schliemann's pickaxe has revealed how slightly related the contents of the literary mound were to the contents of the other. So at Mycenæ; and when Schliemann gets to work at Sardes and Orchomenos there will be rare fun in store for godless scoffers. Even at an earlier date some ludicrous mishap befel the critics. The position in its trilogy of the Æschylean drama, *The Seven against Thebes*, was a favourite subject of lucubration among the Germans: the discovery of the Medicean didascaliæ revealed the fact that of all the guesses only one was correct; but this particular guess had long ago been abandoned by Hermann, its author! On the other hand, some far-sighted prophecies of the earlier scholars have been verified in a most interesting, and indeed remarkable, manner. The inscriptions lately disinterred by Curtius at Olympia prove the lost Greek letter *digamma* (representing our *w*) to have been commonly used in Elis; while Cesnola's excavations at Cyprus exhibit it in the Cypriote syllabary as late as the fourth century B. C. The Cypriote syllabary also carries forward to the same date the letter *yod* or *y*, which, at a much earlier era, had become quite lost to the Hellenic alphabet.

In archæology, the most trivial 'find' often involves far-reaching issues. An iron nail, or even a rust-stain, implies an epoch in civilization. The wall-scribbles and etchings of ancient loafers at Pompeii have thrown new light on old Roman life; and thus these idle *graffiti* on the crumbling stucco have come to rank with solemn treatises on bronze or marble. About the middle of the 7th century B. C., Greek soldiers were serv-

ing under the king of Upper Egypt, Psammetichus, or Psamatichus, as they spell him oft. Once they beguiled an idle hour by scrawling five or six lines of Greek on the leg of a colossal figure that stands near the modern Abu-Simbel. This ancient *graffito* exhibits by no means the oldest alphabetical forms, and the really archaic Greek writing may have long preceded. Modern opinion had generally settled down to the belief that Homer's poem must have been preserved by professional reciters who handed down these treasures from one generation to another for between two and three centuries. By the discovery of this inscription the entire controversy has been re-opened, and many other disturbing facts have followed in quick succession. The student will thank Professor Mahaffy for his artistic *coup d'œil* of the general Homeric question, and for his *résumé* of the great discussion that has now in various phases lasted for more than twenty-three centuries. German criticism, from Wolf's famous *Prolegomena* down to the present, has for the most part been consistently destructive, but sometimes mutually destructive: it has, of course, denied the unity of authorship in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* conjointly, or even singly: it has even challenged the poetic merit of Homer's most admired passages. The parting scene of Hector and Andromache—the most famous passage in any literature—has in all ages touched the heart and excited admiration; but, in our day, a German critic declares it the interpolation of an inferior hand! Mr. F. A. Paley has in some points outrun even German scepticism; but English criticism has sometimes been too conservative. Colonel Mure contended for the unity in authorship of the whole of each poem, while Mr. Gladstone stoutly affirms the personality of Homer, his historical reality, and his authorship of both poems. Dr. Schliemann's realism laughingly offsets the prevailing German scepticism: on the one hand, the very existence of the Homeric cities is disputed; but Dr. Schliemann would show us now actual Troy and Mycenæ; he can scarcely refrain from identifying the very necklace of fair Helen and the sceptre of lordly Agamemnon. Our present author adopts Grote's Homeric theory, but with important modifications. Thus viewed, the *Iliad* known to us incloses much of the original Achilleis, but seve-