

The Classical Review

DECEMBER 1906.

A VALEDICTORY LECTURE.

THE experience of twenty years, personal for eight of them to the present writer, should contain some lessons of utility both for the editor and the readers of the *Classical Review*. The former we reserve for home consumption: the latter we now offer to our public by way of a valediction.

Generosity is generally regarded as part of the natural character of the Englishman; but its exercise is so clogged by caprice and narrow-mindedness that a discreet parsimony would be preferable. Of the government and the people both Science and Learning have great and long-standing reason to complain—the former however somewhat less, because its tangible ‘results’ appeal more directly than those of culture to that material imagination whose vision is as limited now as in the olden days: ἴππον μὲν ὄρω ἱππότερα δ' οὐχ ὄρω. The stigma, which the foundation and the continuance first of the *Journal of Philology* and later of the *Classical Review* has removed for the present from the classical studies of Great Britain, may, or rather will, again be with us unless the recognised organs of these studies are accorded a constant and liberal support.

This support they ask from all who at school or college have imbibed the love of the ancient learning, and who, even if they have not the leisure to read or to contribute, have at least the means to subscribe. Their patriotic pride will feel the indignity of the apathy which provoked Spengel's wondering exclamation, when he learned from Chandler that England possessed no journal in which

the Oxford scholar could publish his Platonic researches: ‘Think, gentlemen! In the country of Bentley!’ To these then the new twin journals make their first appeal.

The class next to be addressed is not less accessible to the motives of pride and patriotism than the former; and in addition it should have special incentives of its own—the spurs of self-interest and of professional zest and zeal. And seeing that it is brought into daily contact with the humanities, one might presume that as a whole it would take a larger and more liberal view of its responsibilities. Unhappily this presumption stands still in need of proof. If the aversions, never too slow to find expression, of various advisers had been regarded in the past, the *Classical Review* would have been plucked as bare as the bird in the fable. A objects to disquisitions on syntax; B dislikes metrical and rhythmical investigations, C dissertations on manuscripts and their discoverers; D disapproves of the *Review's* short and infrequent incursions into the realms of pedagogics; E dislikes its etymology, F its textual criticism. But why prolong the painful list? These critics of details perhaps may be swayed by the consideration that journals which faithfully represent vast and widely ramifying subjects must of necessity contain much of no special interest to an individual, and they may be soothed by the assurance, tendered in all sincerity, that the *Classical Review* has but reflected the spirit and interests of the time. But what is to be said to those who reprobate research in

the mass, and insist that knowledge impairs enjoyment,

Good scholars who sit still in easy chairs
And damn the world for standing up,

to adapt words from *Aurora Leigh*? We shall not sit and wonder that these avowed enemies of learning are among its professed exponents in a land where the dangerous spirit of independent thought has so long been confined in the strait-jacket of examinations. But we shall point out that truth is the most powerful solvent, and its pursuit the most potent motive, that the world has known; that studies decay the moment that they cease to grow; and that there is a doom awaiting the intellectual as surely as the moral Sybaris.

Day by day we are drifting further from antiquity. Harder and harder does it become to learn the lessons which it alone can teach us. And of the current fallacies there is none more mischievous than that which insinuates that we can dispense with the motive, the practice, and the fruits of research in any department of its study.

Most mischievous of all is it when it is dangled before a class which circumstances have already predisposed to receive it. The suggestion to the hard-worked and ill-paid teachers of Classics in our schools, that their duties do not comprise the acqui-

sition of fresh knowledge, and that they may subsist upon their original capital, however scanty it may be, is one of the most noxious errors that complaisance has ever presented to its victims. If these will reflect why their experience and capacities should become unmarketable at an age which in other walks of life is held to be most ripe for preferment, they will see that, when the old fires, unfed by fresh interests, have burned to extinction, when the mind's agility has been crushed by drudgery and its keen edge dulled by routine, what is left is not a teacher but a teaching machine, which perhaps has a claim to be tolerated but which can have no hopes of promotion.

It is then, we conceive, no part of the functions of Classical journals to provide diversion for an unamused and unamusing generation. But those who desire that both for themselves and others the Classics shall remain a thing alive will, it is trusted, find in the new departure a satisfaction of real wants perhaps insufficiently regarded in the past, and that the *Classical Review*, in one or both of its branches, will be found worthy of encouragement by the new friends whom it seeks to attract and the old ones whom it desires to retain.

*Cras amet qui numquam amavit quique
amavit cras amet.*

J. P. POSTGATE.

ON PLANTS OF THE ODYSSEY.

I.—μῶλον.

THE attempt to identify the magic 'moly,' which Hermes once to wise Ulysses gave, has lately been responsible for two very elaborate and learned pieces of investigation. M. Bérard in *Les Phéniciens et l'Odyssee*, ii. 288 ff. discusses the plant at length and ends by identifying it with the *atriplex halimus*, for which he finds strong support in one of his favourite Semitic roots. More lately M. Champault, *Phéniciens et Grecs en Italie d'après l'Odyssee*, pp. 504 ff. discusses it at still greater length and decides positively for the *peganum harmala*. That the Homeric description

ρίζη μὲν μέλαν ἔσκε, γάλακτι δ' εἴκελον ἄνθος
(κ 304) is not of itself likely to carry one far on the road to deciding the question, most people will agree. The attempt to find a

third characteristic in the following line: χαλεπὸν δέ τ' ὀρίσσειν | ἀνδράσι γε θνητοῖσι has been shown by M. Champault to be a false scent. His quotation from Josephus (*Bell. Jud.* vii. 6, 3) on the difficulty of procuring the magic *baaras* is on the right track. The difficulty of pulling the plant is purely imaginary: it is a magic plant and, according to the magicians, dangerous to procure unless for some one who understands the proper ceremonies. It is strange that neither scholar seems to be aware of the light that is thrown upon the passage by the Magical Papyri. It may seem hazardous to illustrate Homer by a literature composed in Egypt during the Christian era. But to any one who understands the fanatical persistence of magical ideas and practices such a parallel will carry considerable weight. We can illustrate the magic of the pre-Christian era