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## ARTICLE IV.

## THE INFLUENCE AND METHOD OF ENGLISH STUDIES.

By William G. T. Shedd, Professor at Andover.

THAT the philological structure and history of the English language is a branch of investigation very greatly neglected by all to whom this tongue is vernacular, will hardly be questioned. If one examines the public or private libraries of this country, he finds them better supplied with works in almost every other department of knowledge, than with those that relate to the origin and early progress of the literature of the Englishman and Anglo-American. How little is known of the lexicographical labors of Junius, Lye, and Spelman; of the critical researches of Hearne, Ritson, Pinkerton, Tyrwhitt, Wright, and Price; and even of the histories of Warton, and Ellis. The publications of the Camden and Percy societies rarely make their way over the Atlantic. The small but increasing stock of Anglo-Saxon literature, well edited by scholars like Conybeare, Thorpe, Bosworth, Kemble, and Cardale, and still more, the Anglo-Norman literature brought to light by Michel and other French scholars, is a *terra incognita* to many whose explorations in classic and oriental regions have been extensive and accurate. Notwithstanding the genial and thorough criticism of Coleridge, Hazlitt, and Schlegel, it can hardly be affirmed that the literature of the Elizabethan era, has made that profound impression upon the thinking and composition of the present age, which its intrinsic merits entitle it to. That hearty and idiomatic, yet flowing and graceful, style of English, which is one result of the study of this portion of the language and literature, is confined to a comparatively small circle of writers. The common English diction of the day, has been formed more by the age of Queen Anne, than by that of Shakspeare and Bacon. The orator, reviewer, and paragraphist, puts on the "learned sock," not of Jonson the

dramatist, but of Johnson the moralist, and the pompous and measured diction of Gibbon, is preferred to the more natural and flexible, but not less finished and musical, phrase of Hooker.

The critical study of the English language and literature, as a special discipline in the general system of modern education, is consequently a topic that needs to be frequently and earnestly discussed, in order that a proper enthusiasm may exist in reference to it. The readers of this journal will bear testimony, that, from time to time, attention has been directed to this department of inquiry; and it is in the line of these preceding efforts that we would labor, and move forward.

The English language is the language into which we are born, and the English literature is the literature in which we are brought up. From the beginning of our existence, onward, through all the several ages of life, and through all the multiplied experiences of head and heart, we are continually receiving and propagating that fine and volatile influence which emanates from the national language and literature, upon every individual of the nation. A literature, therefore, in which we have an interest by virtue of our very birth and origin, and which penetrates so pervasively our daily life, has claims upon our best powers, in order that we may come to apprehend, with a distinct consciousness, its *peculiar* character and worth, and thereby experience more and more of its *specific* influences and impressions. For the objection that meets us, whenever we recommend the analytic study of a vernacular tongue, viz. that we are recommending a superfluity, inasmuch as the mother tongue is imbibed with the mother's milk, vanishes the moment we remember that the purpose of study, in nearly all instances, is to substitute a clear knowledge for an obscure one. There is meaning and truth in the Platonic dictum, that learning is reminding. One of the principal processes in mental cultivation consists in acquiring a distinct perception of that by which we are spontaneously, and therefore unreflectingly, influenced or actuated. What the common mind sees as in a

glass darkly, the educated mind sees face to face. The most of men are the creatures of the moulding and shaping ideas that are mercifully inlaid in their mental constitution, and of those institutions and permanent circumstances amidst which they live; and, inasmuch as these ideas are ideas of reason, and these institutions and permanent circumstances are arrangements of divine providence, no practical injury results to the individual, even when he surrenders himself to their influence and actuation, without philosophic reflection upon their nature and qualities. The citizen, for example, will suffer no injury, who yields himself up most implicitly and obediently, to the moral or the civil law, without analyzing the contents of this idea, or becoming metaphysically aware of its vast implication. Let him allow the principle and spirit of law to take possession of his whole being, and suffer all his faculties and energies to be absorbed in this august and beneficent power, and he will experience no detriment, intellectually or morally, even though he reflects but little upon the nature of the agencies by which he is moulded. In like manner, the individual may surrender himself to the influence of the literature and civilization of the nation to which he belongs, and, if these be truthful and sound, his comparative unacquaintance with what is constantly pressing upon him, and shaping and forming him, on all sides, will not prevent his being rightly shaped and formed. He is under and within a divine constitution, and whether consciously or unconsciously, must feel its power, and receive its influence. But while this is said, it must not be inferred that *philosophic reflection*, upon that which exerts an influence upon us whether we will or not, is of no worth; that *analytical study* into the nature and qualities of that which actuates us whether we think or not, is superfluous and unnecessary. Powerful as ideas, principles, and institutions are, even in relation to the unthinking man; and at times, for instance in political revolutions, they are as powerful as fire in gunpowder, and accompanied with nearly as little distinct knowledge; they yet receive a vast accession of power, when their operancy is accompanied with the

clear intuitions of reason, and the lucid perceptions of self-consciousness.

These remarks upon the general relation of analytic study and philosophic reflection to that which is innate in our mental constitution, or intrinsic to those permanent circumstances which exert a constant and unperceived influence upon us, independent of our reflection, apply with full force to subjects so close to us, and influences so spontaneous and irresistible, as those of our own mother tongue and our own native literature. For although none can help speaking their vernacular, and feeling more or less of the influence of the literature embodied in it, yet only those few feel its selectest influence and drink in its most essential spirit, who pass beyond the every-day use of the language to the critical and philological study of it. It is indeed true, that, whether the Englishman or the Anglo-American has studied his national language and literature, or not, he has, nevertheless, been so moulded and affected by it, that, if those elements in his culture which have come in from this source, should be withdrawn, it would lose its most vital if not its finest constituent; still he cannot feel, and he has not felt, the freshest, heartiest, healthiest, and most effective influence from this source, unless, by study and reflection, he has made himself unusually conscious of the intense power of the English language, and the vast wealth of the English literature. But in order to this intimate acquaintance, something more is needed than that easy and passive perusal of the current literature of the present period, which, in the case of one's native language and literature, so often passes for study. The full power of the English language cannot be adequately apprehended short of an acquaintance with it in *all* the periods of its history. The life of a language, like the soul of a body, is all in every part; and its highest intensity must therefore be sought for by a laborious and patient study of the language, back, through all its change and growth, to the lowest root.

There is a special reason for this close and minute study of our vernacular, founded on the fact that, speaking it, and

writing it, and thinking in it, as we do continually, we unavoidably acquire a moderate knowledge of it, which we are too willing to regard as philological and thorough. In the case of a foreign tongue, we are compelled to the lexicon and the grammar, because we cannot *understand* it without such study; and hence we inevitably acquire, in a greater or less degree, a critical knowledge of it. But it is not so in the case of our own language. The majority of words we have some acquaintance with, without any study on our part. It is true that this acquaintance is not close and accurate, like that which springs from etymological and careful analysis; but it is sufficient for all the purposes of practical life, and of an easy, passive perusal of books.

The only remedy for this superficial knowledge is to be found in the study of the language in all its periods, and especially in those elder forms which have passed out of use, and which, consequently, sustain something of the relation of a foreign tongue to the modern Englishman. Not that these earlier forms are really alien to us, like the French or the Latin tongues, for they still have an existence in the heart and pith of the English of the present day; but they require, in order to their being understood by the modern reader, a minute philological study, like that expended upon the Greek and Latin, which brings the mind into close and invigorating contact with them. For, to carefully trace a word, through its whole history, up to the root from which its true force and significance are, in the majority of instances, derived, is the only sure way of imbuing the mind with the spirit of a language. By this slow analysis, the power of the word is brought out and felt.

The same remarks hold true respecting the scope and riches of our national literature. He who is conversant with it in only one or two of its periods, can have but a meagre conception of its opulence. The national mind finds a full expression only in the totality of the national literature. Like the individual mind, it passes through great varieties of being; through a great multiplicity of moods; through various stages of development; and therefore its complete

expression and manifestation must be sought for in the *whole* literature to which it has given origin. It often happens that the earlier literature of a people contains elements not to be met with in any of the after periods of its history. The national mind often shows a phase in some one particular period, which centuries of existence would not bring round again. Should the English nation, for example, continue in existence, and the English mind continue to undergo change and development until the end of time, it is not probable that another period would occur in its history, in which the drama would reach such a height of life and power, and such a breadth and depth of passion, as characterize the Elizabethan drama. And can we ever expect the re-appearance of the fresh, hale, and lifesome spirit of "merrie England," as it appears in Chaucer? The beautiful vanishes and returns not again in the same form. Each age has its own excellences; and not until we have passed all the ages in review, can we know and feel the endless variety and opulence of a national mind.

With these general remarks upon the neglect and the importance of the philological study of the English language and literature, we proceed to consider the quality of the influence which flows from this particular branch of discipline, and to indicate the best method of pursuing it.

I. The first effect of a thorough acquaintance with English literature, is the *vivification* of the culture that flows into the modern mind from the classic world, and the prevention, thereby, of an ungenial and artificial classicism. This undoubtedly was the purpose aimed at, by those who constructed the modern system of education. A department of instruction in this language and literature, is established in all those institutions which propose to impart a symmetrical and complete discipline, in order that the youthful student, while in the flexile process of education, may be in communication with the modern mind and the modern world, as well as with the ancient mind and the classic world. Those who planned that system of liberal instruction,

by which the modern scholar is trained up, selected the vernacular tongue of the pupil himself, as one of the concurrent branches of knowledge to be pursued in order to a harmonious mental development, because it furnishes an element needed in modern culture, and derivable from no other source. They "yoked," as has been said of the education of Leibnitz, "all the sciences abreast," that the mind might be subjected to the widest possible intellectual influence, and, by binding the ancient and the modern world together, threw in upon the modern scholar the combined influence of both.

The difference between the ancient and the modern mind, is exhibited in the following extract from Coleridge, with remarkable comprehensiveness and conciseness. "The Greeks," he says, "idolized the finite, and therefore were the masters of all grace, elegance, proportion, fancy, dignity, majesty; of whatever in short, is capable of being definitely conveyed by defined forms or thoughts; the moderns revere the infinite, and affect the indefinite as a vehicle of the infinite; hence their passions, their obscure hopes and fears, their wandering through the unknown, their grander moral feelings, their more august conception of man as man, their future rather than their past, in a word, their sublimity."<sup>1</sup> But this native difference has been still more increased by the influence which Christianity has exerted upon the modern world, and the new species of development that has been introduced thereby. Consequently it is only a particular and peculiar element of culture, and not the entire culture itself, which the modern is to derive from the cultivated pagan. It is the form only, and not the matter, of literature, that is to be furnished by the Greek and Roman. The Christian world cannot go back to the pagan for ideas and thoughts. The humblest modern mind that lives within the pale of revelation, moves in a sphere of thought and feeling, infinitely transcending that of the loftiest heathen sage. It is not, therefore, for information and for living force, that the

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<sup>1</sup> Works, Vol. IV. p. 29.

modern devotes himself, as he has ever since the revival of classical learning, to the study of the beautiful models of Greece and Rome. The function of classical discipline is æsthetic.

On the other hand, the modern mind is full of matter, and overfull of force. It is not naturally master of itself or its materials. Its vitality and energy require direction and a serene flow. The Goth needs to become an artist. Hence the coöperation of the Pagan with the Christian in the process of modern education; a coöperation that will be beneficial, only so long as the former is confined to its proper function of refinement, and justifiable, only in proportion as the latter does not permit its vigor and vitality to be killed out by the seductive grace of the former. *Upon the due proportion and the right mingling of the æsthetic element derived from classical literature, with the philosophical and theological elements derived from the world of modern Christian thought, depend the harmony and perfection of modern education.* For if the form and the grace become predominant to the neglect of the idea and the thought, the vitality and the force, culture becomes formal, artificial, and spiritless. It will not even make the impression of the model itself, to which it has been so servile. It will exhibit the symmetry, and finish, and elegance of the works of the Grecian and Roman mind, in the manner of a mere copyist, and with none of the genuine classic feeling and spirit. The peculiar vigor and energy which characterize modern literature, and which must characterize it, in order that it may produce a permanent impression upon the modern mind, will be wanting in the productions of such an unvivified classicity, and they will be out of place in the midst of all the motion and energy of the modern world.

For proof of this, we need only look at those periods in the history of literature, which were marked by an exclusive devotion to classical studies, to the neglect of modern thought. The eighteenth century was a period in English literary history, characterized by excessive classicism. The elder literature of England was greatly neglected and under-

valued, by the literary men of this period.<sup>1</sup> The English mind during this century having almost no communication with the modern European mind, contented itself with a by no means genial and reproductive, but servile and mechanical, study of Greek and Roman models. Much is said of the influence of French models, and canons of criticism, upon this period in English literary history; but what were the French models themselves, but cold copies of the classic age, with no modern new-born life in them; and what were the canons of criticism but the substantially correct rules of ancient art *mechanically* applied, and that too under totally different circumstances, and amidst entirely foreign relations? For as Schiller truly remarks: "the French, wholly misapprehending the *spirit* of the ancients, introduced upon the stage a unity of place and time, according to the common empirical sense of the terms, as if in the drama, there could be any other place than mere ideal space, and any other time, than the mere steady progress and sequence of the action."<sup>2</sup>

The truth is, the literary men of such periods started from the wrong point of departure. Instead of generating within themselves the stuff and material of literature, and employing classical culture as a formal or instrumental agency, in order to the symmetrical and finished presentment of it, they isolated themselves from the great process and movement of modern thought, violently threw themselves back into the ante-Christian world, and sought the matter, where they should have sought only the form, of literature. The result ought not to surprise us. For a genuine literature, one that

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<sup>1</sup> The estimate in which Shakspeare was held by a mind like David Hume, is an example in point. The criticisms of Johnson, meritorious as his services in other respects were in regard to the earlier English literature, display little profound sympathy with the elder English spirit, as one feels on passing from them to the English and German criticism of the present century. The endeavor of Addison, in the *Spectator*, to awaken an interest in Milton and the Old Ballads, though more appreciative and genial than that of any other critic of the eighteenth century, was on the whole a failure, so far as the popular mind of that day is concerned.

<sup>2</sup> Ueber den Gebrauch des Chors in der Tragödie.

is destined to live in other ages, and to impress other nations, can originate only in the midst of present, actual, realities; only in the stir and throng of daily interests and feelings; only in the most intense and concentrated nationality. The training, the elaboration, the stimulation, may be brought from foreign climes, and from all ages, but the central root must grow up out of native soil.<sup>1</sup>

The proper method of counteracting the tendency to Formalism, which seems to be as natural in literature as it is in morals, is, not to give up the study of the great ancient masters and models of Form, but, along with this study, and coincident with it, to pursue with equal thoroughness and diligence, the study of modern literature. And inasmuch as, in most instances, a selection must be made from the several literatures that are comprised within this denomination, there are strong reasons for the selection of that of England.

(1) In the first place, the English literature is the most universal and generic in its character of the literatures of modern Europe. It may be regarded as the one, among them all, in which the distinctive peculiarities of the modern mind have found the most full and forcible expression. For the English race itself is the most comprehensive of any. It is a mixture and cross of all the best of the modern stocks. At the bottom of it lies the Celtic, a portion of that great Scythian people which was the first to move westward from Central Asia, the cradle and birthplace of the human family. Judging from the relics of it, still to be found among the mountains of Wales, the highlands of Scotland, the bleak

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<sup>1</sup> All the modern endeavors to revive the Pagan culture have failed, because they were attempts to find the *principle* and *substance* of literature in a stage of human history that has had its day, and which cannot, therefore, furnish anything beyond the artistic and the formal. A return to the culture and poetic Polytheism of the classic world, such as Shelley strove for, and Schiller yearns after in his poem entitled: *Die Götter Griechenlands*, would be as impossible and irrational, as would be the attempt to reconstruct the Fauna, or reanimate the Flora, of the primitive geological periods. The history of the efforts of the New Platonics to revive Paganism in its religious aspects, is equally instructive with these attempts to revive it in its literary phase, and ought to be pondered by that small circle of religionists, of the present day, who seem to be repeating that futile endeavor.

and sterile district of Brittany in France, and in the eloquent and impetuous Irishman, it was a race eminently fitted to constitute the ground-work of a national character. Bold, fearless, and possessing an indomitable love of freedom, as the Commentaries of Cæsar evidence, the Briton still lives in the modern Englishman ; and, by a singular yet natural coincidence, gives his name to England itself, whenever the elements of power and empire are sought to be made prominent. For they are "*Britons* who never will be slaves;" and it is *Britannia* who

\* \* \* \* needs no bulwark,  
 No tower along the steep,  
 Whose march is o'er the mountain-wave,  
 Whose home is on the deep.

Into this living and solid root was then grafted one of the very finest shoots of the great Germanic race—the Anglo-Saxon. The second wave of Asiatic emigration, thus rolled over upon the first, and mingled with it. Widely-differing national characteristics, originating in the same centre of the world, but separated by centuries of rude and savage, yet real and thorough, development during the various fortunes of emigration and warfare, of conflict with man and with material nature, were thus commingled in the Saxonized Briton. And, lastly, into the nation and character thus formed, an infusion of the Roman nature was introduced by the invasion and armed occupancy of the land by the Normans.

Constituted in this manner, the English mind became an exceedingly comprehensive one. Containing the qualities and characteristics of all the principal races that have made Europe their home, with the exception of the Slavonic, a race which, perhaps, is to play an important part in the future history of the world, but which, as yet, has had no development, and, until recently, has been a mere cipher in European history—containing, we say, such widely-different and yet substantial characteristics, the English mind is the most adequate representative of the Universal-European or Modern Mind.

(2) But, in the second place, besides this peculiar conformation of the English race and mind, there is still another feature in its history which contributes to render the study of it, and its productions, of more worth than that of any other of the literatures of modern Europe. We allude to the peculiar and powerful influence which the Christian religion has had upon its formation and development. We have already alluded to the fact that one great cause of the difference between Ancient and Modern culture, civilization, and literature is to be traced to the influence of divine revelation. Christianity imparted a depth and spirituality to the thought and feeling of the Modern world, which could not arise under the predominantly sensualizing tendency of Paganism, and those literatures which imbibed its spirit most deeply and purely, other things being equal, are most worthy of attention. For they harmonize best with the tone and spirit of the Modern world; they best prepare the scholar to enter vividly and with a vital consciousness into the career and movement of modern society; they afford more that awakens and strengthens and nurtures the individual mind; they are less liable to be exhausted of their contents and to be outgrown and left behind in the progressive development of human nature. But of all the literatures of modern Europe, the English felt the influence of Christianity in its purest form. The literatures of Southern Europe grew up under the influence of a nominal Christianity, which had in it far more of the sensualism of Paganism than the spirituality of the gospel. The effects of it are to be seen, this day, in the nerveless, emasculated national character, and the feeble, decaying, dying literature. The English mind and heart, on the contrary, have, in the main, been exposed, age after age, to the spiritualizing influences and discipline of the Christian religion. Even those periods in English history when a false Christianity prevailed, only served to make the recoil more violent, and to subject the nation to a still purer and still more spiritual form of truth. The rich, healthy genius and strong sense of England have, for a longer and less interrupted period than has been the case with any other peo-

ple, been slowly, and from the centre, unfolding themselves under the cultivating, elevating, humanizing influences of the Christian religion.

In the English literature, then, by virtue of the comprehensive representative character of the English mind, and the strength, depth, and purity of the influence exerted upon it by the Christian religion, is the modern student to find the most effectual preservative against that literary Formalism which an unbalanced, and in reality ungenial, study of classical literature is sure to produce. The modern scholar ought to be a man of power and of impression. He ought also to be a man of well-proportioned, symmetrical, elegant cultivation. But he is more likely to be the latter, if he is already the former, than he is to be the former, if he is, first, the latter. For, wherever there is matter and power to start with, there *may* be beauty, and grace, and elegance. The same degree of careful effort devoted to the artistic and formal finish of a work *after*, instead of before, the proper diligence and care have been devoted to its material origination within the mind, will elaborate it into a high beauty and an exquisite grace, that are absolutely beyond the power of one who has not thus begun at the beginning; who has not first gendered the work in his own soul.

In the thoughtful opulence and the throbbing life of the English literature, the modern student should, then, seek for mental wealth and power; for that vigorous and masculine principle that will vivify all his other culture from whatever source it come. In so doing, he is going to Ophir for gold, to the gorgeous East for barbaric pearl, to the very heart of nature for the forces of life. For let him bring before his mind, for a moment, the series of productions in the several departments of literature, which the English mind has been originating and throwing off with freedom, and force, and wonderful variety, during the last half millennium; let him remember the wisdom of Bacon, and Hooker, and Burke; the satire of Hall, of Butler, of Swift; the humor of Chaucer, of Goldsmith, of Sterne, of Lamb; the brilliancy and art of Pope; the magnificence and architecture of Milton;

the sweetness, and fluency, and flushed beauty, of Spenser ; the meditateness of Wordsworth, and the intensity of Byron ; let him think, lastly, of that wonderful being in whom all these qualities existed in their prime and purity, and found their full expression in the immense range and expanse of the Shakspearean drama, in the portraiture of the whole human being in its myriad minds and moods ; let the modern student recall all this, and feel its full impression, and believe that, in pursuing the close and thorough study of English literature, he is pursuing the study of the richest, and the most thoughtful, the most vigorous, and the most vivifying, literature of the modern world.

II. The second principal effect of English studies is seen in the *excellence of the style of thought and expression*, that results from their prosecution.

The mode of thinking induced into a mind by a course of education, is a matter of the highest importance. If it cannot be said that it is of as great moment *how* the mind thinks, as *what* it thinks, it can be asserted with positiveness, that the *matter* of its thoughts is very closely connected with the *manner* of them, and, in this respect, the style of thinking becomes worthy of attention and cultivation.

By the *style of thinking*, is meant the particular and peculiar manner in which thought is produced in the mind, when left to its spontaneous, unwatched workings. This peculiar manner undoubtedly has its lowest foundation in the peculiar structure of the individual mind ; but it is also modified, and, to a certain extent determined, by the class of minds and kinds of thought, in other words, by the species of literature with which it is familiar. Besides, so far as the style of thinking is founded upon, and determined by, the structure of the human mind itself, it is a correct one, and all deviations therefore, in the wrong direction, must be traced to external influences. For the mind itself is well made, and when its laws and constitution are perfectly obeyed, nothing, either in its mode of action, or in its products, requires emendation or correction.

When, however, a mind is exposed to the influence of other minds, whose way of thought is unnatural, affected,

artificial, extravagant, or whatever the bad quality may be, it is very liable to be drawn into the same false manner. Especially is this true, in case there be in the individual mind a bent of the same general character. In this case, the student, while in the plastic process, and before he has reached "the years that bring the philosophic mind," is extremely liable to attach himself to some school in letters, in which the false mode of thought has embodied itself in all probability in dazzling glare, and with a species of imposing power difficult to be resisted. Falling in, as it does, with his own particular tendency, it is no wonder that his whole intellect is taken captive by it, and he acquires a fixed style of thinking, in which the most glaring faults of his model appear.

But the age, as well as the single individual, always has a style of thinking which is peculiar to itself, and this also exerts a controlling influence upon the individual. For that must be an extremely intense and determined individuality that can keep itself out of the great main current and tendency of the age in which it lives, and, in strong contrast, exhibit a style of thinking purely sui-generic. Such individualities, when genuinely original, become the creators of new schools in literature, and of new eras in art. The great mass of men, however, naturally share in the general intellectual characteristics of the age in which they live, and no one can rid himself of the faults of his age, unless he carefully study and imbibe some of the better characteristics of other periods. If he contents himself with the literature of the present, and suffers himself to be the mere creature and copy of its good and bad qualities alike, he will not attain the best development of his own mind, and will help to perpetuate what is defective in the existing type of thought and culture.

The influence of English studies, and especially of the study of the earlier English, in reference to the point under consideration, is most excellent. For, if we were called upon to mention the distinguishing characteristic of these elder writers, we should mention the sincerity and thoroughness

of their mental processes. They never write for merely momentary effect, but absorb themselves, with great self-forgetfulness, in the subject of their reflections. They had, it is true, one advantage over writers of the present day: they composed before criticism (either as theory or practice) became a constituent part of the national literature, and hence wrote without restraint. But, aside from this, the elder English mind was a singularly thoughtful and even-tempered one. When stirred deeply, it proved itself to be a mind full of powers and energies, as the political history of England shows. But this force was under the control of strong English sense, and of that more profound faculty which is the parent of ideas and the discoverer of laws. This temperance of intellect, this moderation of soul, invariably accompanies depth and richness of thought, and manifests itself in a grave and commanding style of reflection and expression. Turn, for example, to the poetry of Spenser and Milton, to the philosophy of Bacon, to the history of Raleigh, and notice the entire absence of that quality so much strained after by the modern *Belle Lettrist*, the striking and the startling. The charm lies not in individual passages; and hence no compositions suffer more when judged of by "elegant extracts" from them; but in the continuous and continual flow of the main current of thought, which pours onward in gentleness, in quietness, and in broad, deep strength. This same characteristic is seen in every department of literary composition. Even in auto-biography, where the writer would be specially tempted to throw a brilliant hue over his own personal history, the same sedateness and balance of judgment is exhibited. The *Memoirs of Lord Herbert of Cherbury*, for example, contain the history of one of the most rare and accomplished gentlemen, as well as one of the most learned and thoughtful students, of the age in which he lived. They also contain an account of chivalrous adventures—

"of most disastrous chances,  
Of moving accidents, by flood and field;  
Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly breach."

And yet the narrative is equable and tranquil, the language

mild, melodious, and flowing; and the coloring over the whole, not glaring and showy, but sober, suffused, and rich. Indeed, what Heminge and Condell, the editors of the first edition of Shakapere, say of this author, applies to the early English writers generally: "As he was a happy imitator of nature, so he was a *most gentle expresser* of it. His mind and hand went together; and what he thought, he uttered with that easiness, that we have scarce received from him a blot in his papers."

These characteristics in the mode of thought and expression, arose from the singular sincerity and gravity of the English character and mind, in these earlier stages of its history. By sincerity we mean the pure outgoing or *issue* of the mind, unmodified by any outward references. As has been already remarked, the Englishman of this period had not the fear of the Critic before his eyes. English literature, therefore, though it suffered undoubtedly for the want of a sound philosophic criticism, and was somewhat lacking in those excellent qualities, conciseness and perspicuity, which the sharp analysis of a later day has superinduced upon it, did, nevertheless, attain to a sweet fluency, and rich copiousness, and sober gravity, and wise thoughtfulness, which have never been surpassed. Again, the author of these periods did not write for all grades and capacities of intellect. He was not a society for the diffusion of useful knowledge among all classes of men, but he was a retiring, studious person, who thought as he listed, and wrote without much regard to an immediate sensation, for a "fit audience though few." Far be it from us to speak disparagingly of the useful knowledge diffused so widely at the present day, or of that body of sound and useful literature which has been called into existence by the wants of the people. In reference to all the solid characteristics and qualities of literature, it is more worthy of the name than much of the so-called polite literature and belles lettres of the times. Like the elder literature of which we have been speaking, it is an honest and sound production. It came into being owing to a felt want, and it meets a felt want of an intelligent, sound-hearted body of men, and

therefore it is to be respected by every one who respects the human mind. Still the somewhat insulated position of the earlier English writers, by freeing them from all side influences and by-aims, gave them an opportunity to free their minds as slowly, as lengthily, as copiously, as thoroughly as they pleased. They were at liberty, in the retirement of their closets, and addressing a limited public of similar cultivation with themselves, to pay no attention to time, place, or circumstances, in the development of a subject. That short method, rapid movement, and striking statement in which we of the present excel them, and which is a necessary quality in oratory, is not to be found in them. We must look to modern English literature for the best specimens of oratorical composition.

The whole influence of such a thoughtful and sincere literature upon the mind, is educating in the highest degree. The reader is not violently excited by a rapid series of single striking thoughts and images, which, in the phrase of De Quincey, "can hardly have time to glance, like the lamps of a mail coach, before his hurried and bewildered understanding," but he is gradually penetrated and permeated by warm currents of rich and genial reflection. He acquires, insensibly, the same temperate and composed style of thinking; learns to *commune*, long and patiently, with the subjects that come before his mind; and, like these his teachers and models, finds all themes wonderfully fertile. For, along with this simplicity, there is a remarkable copiousness in the literature of which we are speaking. Instead of being made poor by this freedom and prodigality, these minds, like a living fountain, only became more ebullient the more they were drawn from. Call to mind, for example, the wonderful fertility of the English mind in the Elizabethan age! What an immense amount of rich and weighty thought, that was rich and weighty enough to come down to our day, and which will have a permanent interest for the human mind in all time, was originated during the fifty years between 1575 and 1625! During this short fifty years, English literature was enriched by the productions of Spenser, Sidney, Raleigh,

Bacon, Hooker, Shakspeare, Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, Chapman, Marlowe, Webster, Middleton, and Ford. The catalogue reminds one of the dazzling treasure vault of Marlowe's rich Jew of Malta :

Infinite riches in a little room,  
Bags of fiery opals, sapphires, amethysts,  
Jacinths, hard topaz, grass-green emeralds,  
Beauteous rubies, sparkling diamonds  
And seld-seen costly stones of so great price,  
As one of them, indifferently rated,  
And of a caract of this quality,  
May serve in peril of calamity  
To ransome great kings from captivity.

This fertility of the English mind was, at once, the cause and effect of the prevailing style of thinking at that period. The striking, startling, brilliant mode, which has reached its acme in the modern Novel, not drawing upon the meditateness and *reserve* of the intellectual character, is utterly incompatible with such a *union of quantity with high quality*, as appears in this Elizabethan literature. On the contrary, that calm and composed method which characterized these men, and which is worth toiling after, is most conformed to the nature of the human mind, to that "*large discourse of reason which looks before and after*," and consequently may be presumed to be, more than any other one, the mode in and through which the contents of the mind may be discharged in richest abundance and with least self-exhaustion.

In this connection it is worthy of notice that the principle here advanced holds good in other departments besides that of letters. The highest and most productive genius in Fine Art, is also the calmest and gravest. Raphael died at the early age of thirty-seven, yet he filled all Europe with masterpieces before he died. And into each one of these works, if we are correctly informed, he threw, with all the prodigality of nature herself, a world of life, motion, and expression. Many of his pieces are groups, and groups within groups ; and yet each individual in them is itself a study. His creative talent finds no parallel but in Shakspeare himself ; and there is certainly no distant similarity between

that universality and wealth of artistic power which projected itself in the paintings of Raphael and that which embodied itself in the vastness of the Shakspearian drama. But Raphael's genius was mild and serene. His temperament bordered upon the feminine; and his activity as an artist was deliberate, equable, and sustained. Indeed, the history of literature generally, shows that ages of great productive power have not been marked by violent and spasmodic action. The intellects of that wonderful age, the age of Pericles, were grave and tranquil in their nature and actings. So equable and calm was their intellectual manner, that the Greek Prose of this period, especially that of Plato, is rhythmic and sweetly musical, and their thought is so utterly destitute of everything startling or glaring, that the modern student, brought up, as he has been, amid the animation, and brilliancy, and sensation, of the present age, must school himself, and acquire a classic taste, a taste for *Platonic* beauty, before he can feel its hidden charm.

But while this feature in the elder English mind and literature is brought out, it is necessary to guard against the notion that this calmness was accompanied with dulness, that the body of thought thus originated is destitute of vitality and energy. The life and the power run very deep, and they are felt with tremendous force, by that mind, and only that mind, which by a genial and somewhat reproductive study, has adopted the same style of thinking. For when the student has once sunk down into the element and the depth, where these minds think, and can repeat their processes, he knows of a vitality and an energy not to be found nearer the surface. The literature of which we are speaking, is in no sense languid or lifeless. The minds that produced it were deeply earnest, inspired with a serious purpose, and at no rare intervals glowing with enthusiasm. Nay, they seem to have found their most congenial sphere in the drama; the department of all most aloof from coldness, tameness, and lifelessness. The subject-matter in which they seem to have taken the liveliest pleasure, was human passion; and that this most vivid part of human na-

ture found a powerful painter in them, the Elizabethan drama is a proof. For if we look through universal literature, we cannot find anything more passionate than this drama. Saying nothing of its immense range and expanse, it being nothing less than the whole human consciousness, an infinite canvas which would seem to require an infinite rather than a finite power to fill up; saying nothing of its vast extent, nowhere do we find such an intensity of life, breath, and motion; and this too at every point, and in every part and particle. Take the play of Hamlet, for example. We do not find the violent, volcanic, energy of a modern melo-drama, or of a modern French novel; but he must be stone-dead in the depths of his being, who does not find beating throughout this *organism* the deep life of nature and reality, and beating with a stronger pulse the more he knows of it. Take again, a play like the "White Devil," of Webster, and see with what terrible strength the fundamental passions of human nature are shown working. Notice the rousing effect of the play upon the mind. This production of this same reserved and thoughtful period is intensely passionate. It has a most profound affinity with the human imagination, and raises storms of feeling and passion in the mind of the reader.

The truth is, the literature of this period is alive *all through*, and hence the depth and calmness of its life. The more that is known of it, the more will it be felt to be a powerfully educating instrument. No literature imparts a more distinctive and highly determined character to the culture of one who studies it; and this not for one stage of the intellectual life, but for all stages. It is characteristic of a less reserved and more striking mode of thinking, that it seizes with violence upon the mind at a particular period, and takes possession of it altogether during this period. It exerts a greater influence than it has a right to, because no one style is absolute and perfect enough to justify this monopolizing of all the powers and capacities of the human soul, to the exclusion of all other forms of literature, or modes of thought. Even in the case of the higher and more

perfect species of literature of which we are speaking, the influence exerted, is not to the exclusion or at the expense of that of other excellent species, such as the classic, for example, but in coincidence and harmony with it. It is therefore an unfavorable sign in relation to the character of a mode of thought, or a school in letters, if the mind, during one particular period in its history, and especially if it is an unripe one, become so absorbed in it as to be dead to all other forms. A reaction must come eventually, and the favorite author will become as intensely repulsive, as he was once intensely attractive.

But the influence of the literature under consideration, is eminently catholic and liberalizing. The mental tendency produced by the study of it, does not in the least unfit the student for a genial appreciation of other forms. Nay, we affirm that it is one of the very best preservatives against narrowness in criticism, and bigotry in literary feeling. The calm, self-possessed, thoughtful spirit, which reigns in English literature, taken as a whole, tends to extirpate all exclusive sympathies, and to render the intellectual affinities more comprehensive and far-reaching. Whenever we meet a mind, one of the deep bases of whose culture has been laid in a thorough apprehension and genial admiration of *English thought* in its best forms, we meet one of enlarged and catholic views of literature generally. Such an one is far better qualified to sit in judgment upon a false and exaggerated mode of thinking, than he who is fully involved in it can be. The admiration which he feels towards a dazzling school or author, is far more correct, because it is far more moderate and intelligent, than that of a servile disciple. He is not blind to its faults, and therefore best knows the actual worth of its excellences.

And more than all, and better than all, the style of thinking produced by the study of the literature in question, is essentially permanent in its character. By this, is not meant, that it is a stiff and rigidly fixed style, incompatible with mental freedom; a style that is a mechanical, rather than a vital process, and keeps the thinker constantly

running in his old ruts. The style is permanent, in the sense of being broad enough, and calm enough, to make room for all the modifications that may be introduced into it by the growing culture of the student, *without changing or deranging the ground-work*. The mind has not been committed, so to speak, to intensity of any sort, to any violent manner, but is impartial, grave, and judicial, in its tone and temper. Hence it is not compelled, in order to change at all in its style of thought or expression, to change altogether, and take on some entirely new form of intensity or mental violence, thus going through a round of particular and transient manners, or rather *mannerisms*, but never acquiring any one permanent and standard style. For it is noticeable, that a constant hankering after the most intense and striking form is destructive of all true form. An intellectual restlessness is produced in this way, that keeps the mind in a ceaseless chase after the novel and the startling, in neither of which can it ever find permanent satisfaction and rest.

The truth of these remarks may be seen by a reference to the style of the modern journalism. The journal must be striking and brilliant, or it is nothing. That repose and reserve of manner, which appears in the treatise, in the methodical, organized product that makes a positive addition to the sum of human knowledge, is death to the journal. Hence the journalist must be ever on the alert for forms of expression, and turns of periods, and peculiarities of manner, that will make a sensation in distinction from an impression. He is compelled to lead an intense, excited, unnatural intellectual existence, and to find ever new, and ever changing forms for it. But how little of standard style, of finished, noble form, is there in the current journal literature! There is not mental repose long enough to allow the mind to settle into one permanent manner. The production of fixed form, the crystallization, is prevented by the perpetual jar and agitation.

Such then, we conceive, is the influence of English studies upon the style of thinking. They induce a calm, grave, sin-

cere, profound, exhaustive, and commanding manner of mind. And inasmuch as it is the great end of education to enable the mind to think its very best thought, and to express it in its very best manner, the great worth of this literature for educational purposes becomes apparent. It is a powerful organ and instrument of culture. It is to be recommended to the modern student, as an extremely influential means of bringing out into full action his best capacity. If there be any literature that can stir, and stimulate, and educe, while at the same time it nurtures and enriches, it is the English. And it is, whatever may be our theory on the matter, the literature to which we betake ourselves when we wish to feed our mind with sweet and wholesome food; when we wish to have its best powers roused; when we wish to think for our own satisfaction, or to give out thought for others. If we are scholarly now, we keep Milton, and Shakspeare, and Chaucer, and Bacon, and Hooker, by us; and if we shall continue to be scholars, these minds will continue to mould and educate our minds. For this literature is home-bred, and, apart from its intrinsic excellence, speaks in our own tongue, and addresses our own nationality, and our own individuality. To feel its influence, we need only to keep a healthy English spirit, and a sound English heart within us; we have but to open our mouths and draw in the fresh bracing element and atmosphere we were born for.

III. In our discussion thus far, we have devoted almost exclusive attention to the elder English writers; and it might, perhaps, be inferred that we would discard the productions of the later authors, and do them injustice. This would be a mistaken inference; for, although we believe that, if a line were drawn between the literature preceding, and that succeeding, Milton, the weightier and more precious portion would lie on the further side of it, we would not say one word that could possibly lead to the neglect of any portion of a literature that we desire to have studied as a sum-total. From his contemporaneous position, and immediate relation to it, however, the modern will not be likely to un-

dervalue modern English authorship ; while, on the other hand, there is much need of effort and urgency to prevent him from remaining as ignorant of Chaucer, and Gower, and even of Spenser, as if, instead of being the "wells of English undefiled," they belonged to a foreign literature. The purpose, therefore, of the remainder of this Article will be, to give some practical directions respecting the best method of pursuing English Studies philologically and critically.

(1) One principal reason why the language and literature of England, which really forms the connecting link between the student and the great modern world into which he is soon to enter and become a constituent part, has exerted so little comparative influence in the system of public instruction, and in connection with the classical, mathematical, and philosophical discipline, lies in the fact that it has not been made the subject of etymological study and philological analysis. No language, no literature, as we remarked in the outset, can exert a thoroughly educating power, unless the mind works its way into it by the study of its individual words and radicals ; unless its force and life are felt through the slow process of decomposing and recombining its rudimental elements. The first practical recommendation therefore is this : Select an old English author, from a period so remote that his language and style shall be so strange and unknown, as to require close glossarial and grammatical study in order to a bare understanding of him. The common error is, to select a writer, Milton or Shakspeare, for example, so near to our own age as to require but little study of this sort in order to reach his general meaning. But in reality, such authors as these should be *studied*, only after a preparatory discipline of the sort we are recommending. The wonders of their English style can be appreciated only by one who has analyzed the language in its roots, and has acquired a knowledge of its history ; only by one who has traced words up to their origin, and down again, through all their changes and uses ; only by one who has studied the various styles of thinking to be found in the literature as a

whole, and knows, in some good degree, all the various types and manners the national mind has taken on. For these great masters are highly national in their literary character, and their productions contain the concentrated essence of the general English mind and heart, and the general English culture. In order to their profound apprehension, a very extensive knowledge of English literature is required; and the truly philosophic study of them cannot be commenced even, without much previous preparation. The student must, then, select Chaucer to start with. He must go back of the prolific and somewhat familiar sixteenth century, across the almost totally sterile and barren fifteenth century, and plant himself in the very heart of the fourteenth. In this way he will have put a gulf between his present knowledge of English and that knowledge which he proposes to acquire, over which he cannot pass without some more earnest and thorough study than is implied in an easy and passive perusal of a form of English like that of Shakspeare or Spenser. He will be made aware that the Englishman of 1350 used a form of English that is, to a great extent, unintelligible to the Englishman of 1850; and yet a form which thorough philological study will show is not so wholly different from that employed by himself, as he might imagine in his present ignorance of it. Increasing acquaintance with it will evince that, after all, it is genuine, hearty, idiomatic English, and has a most close and vital affinity with the best portion of his own vocabulary, and with the raciest, heartiest trains of thought in his own mind.

An additional reason for selecting Chaucer is found in the fact that, in his works, the English language first appears in a tolerably fixed form. Previous to Chaucer it had been passing through those intermediate stages which marked the transition from the pure Saxon to the English proper. Hence the literature of the nation may be said to have sprung into existence with him. For Layamon's translation of Wace, the metrical Chronicles of Robert of Gloucester and Robert Mannyng, and the Vision of Piers Plowman,—the principal productions that mark the progress of the language

and literature of England during the two centuries between 1150 and 1350—all bear evident marks of immaturity and instability. While the range of thought is trivial and mean,<sup>1</sup> the form of the language, and the character of the style, indicate that the national mind, during this period, was uncultivated and unformed. It was feeling the effects of the Norman conquest. For, although the Norman was more cultivated than the Saxon whom he conquered, still the Saxon *serf* could derive to himself but little of the culture of his Norman lord. The relation existing between the two parties precluded any civilizing and cultivating influence of one upon the other. Only in proportion as the Saxon recovered his rights and political freedom, did he profit by the culture which his conquerors possessed. During the two centuries of which we are speaking, the English nation was slowly recovering its freedom, and the English mind was slowly emerging from the ignorance and barbarism of a servile condition. The literary productions of the period, although they must receive, sooner or later, the careful study of every one who wishes to obtain a complete knowledge of the English language and literature, are crude in their matter, inelegant and even barbarous in their form. There is the same objection, therefore, to commencing with them that there is to commencing with the Saxon, in order to a complete knowledge of English. They are too naked and bald for the mere beginner. They are not thoughtful and attractive enough to waken the interest of the student, in the first period of his English studies. They need to be examined in the light thrown back upon them from a succeeding age, and under the interest excited by their seen relation to forms of English that have already been studied and mastered. For it is plain that the natural method for the Englishman to pursue, in the study of his mother tongue, is retrogressive. He should work his way back, from the present form of the language, step by step, until he reaches its heart and root. Instead, therefore, of leaping from the last and newest form to

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<sup>1</sup> This remark is only partially true of the *Vision of Piers Plowman*, which is a vigorous and lively picture of life and manners.

the first and oldest ; from the present English to the Saxon of *Beowulf* or *Caedmon* ; he should study, one by one, the intermediate forms, until, by a natural and imperceptible progress, he arrives at the beginning. All that is needed is, that he study the subject by distinctly-marked periods ; that he investigate authors, who are sufficiently far apart to enable him to see and realize that the language has undergone a great change.

As one of the first steps, then, in English study, let Chaucer be taken up as an author to be studied critically and for years to come. This is a better method than merely to peruse a history of the language and literature, like those of Warton and Ellis, and there stop. It is true, that such histories afford a selection of extracts from the principal writers of each period, from which some general notions and views may be formed ; but they are the last works to be put into the hands of a beginner. He who has already mastered the few leading authors of the different periods, may make use of them as an aid in epitomizing and generalizing his knowledge. For, by this independent and accurate study of individual authors, he has obtained a clue that will lead him through the maze and perplexity of a historical series, and leave him in possession of distinct and well-methodized information. But without this clue and previous preparation, the vast amount of material contained in such a history as that of Warton, will only confuse and overwhelm the mind, leaving it full of obscurity and vagueness. In selecting a particular author, and devoting the whole attention to him for the time being, the student has only a single end in view. He is busied with one individual mind, and in endeavoring to penetrate into its nature and spirit, his own mind moves in one straight line, and all his acquisitions are simple and homogeneous in their character. And if the author whom he selects be worthy of such an undivided attention ; especially if he be one in whom the general culture and spirit of his age found expression ; the knowledge acquired is not only thorough, but extensive. For such minds are very broad as well as deep, and there need be no fear of becoming nar-

rowed by such exclusive study of one writer. That close and undivided attention which the Greeks, in all ages of their history, devoted to their Homer, contributed, as much as any one thing, to the liberal and expanded feeling so characteristic of Greek literature. The Greek, unlike the Englishman, did not allow the dialect or the poetry of the father of his national literature to become strange or obsolete. His works were, alike, familiar to the educated Greek of the Attic and Alexandrine periods. In the words of Heeren: "The dialect of Homer remained the principal one for epic poetry, and had an important influence on Grecian literature. Amidst all the changes and improvements in the language, it prevented the ancient from becoming antiquated, and secured it a place among the later modes of expression."<sup>1</sup> And had the Englishman been as careful to prevent the language and works of the English Homer from becoming obsolete and unknown, the English language and literature would have been different from what it now is, by a very important modification. If that stream of sweet, fresh, and hearty thought had been kept running, for four centuries past, into the great main volume of English thought, there would be more of nature and less of art in it. If that simple, expressive, nervous, and (notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary by critics who had not *imbued* themselves with Chaucer) that melodious diction had come along down as a familiar form of the language, the English of the present day would be a higher type of the language than it is.

Another reason for selecting Chaucer, and making him the subject of exclusive and close study for a long time, is found in the fact, that in this way alone can he be understood and appreciated. To read a few extracts from his works in a compendium, in connection with a few extracts from all the other leading writers of England, is not the way to a worthy and fruitful knowledge of him. Indeed the first effect of Chaucer upon the modern, is to repel; and it is only the first effect that is experienced upon the perusal of extracts. The immediate impression of an old writer upon an uncul-

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<sup>1</sup> Ancient Greece. Chapter Sixth. Bancroft's Translation.

tivated mind, generally, is that of disappointment. The unschooled reader finds nothing but strangeness of diction, excessive simplicity of sentiment bordering upon triviality, pathos that is bathos, and a verse from which no ingenuity can extract either melody or harmony. All this is true in its full extent of Chaucer. Even such clear heads and sensible minds as Dean Swift and Alexander Pope, saw no poetry or charm in him; if their burlesques and travesties of him afford, as they unquestionably do, any index of their real opinion. But it is the effect of the critical and prolonged study of Chaucer, to so *imbue* the mind with his matter and manner, that his truthfulness, and charm, and power, as a poet, are felt vividly and fully. Perhaps the point upon which the sceptic would hold out longest in relation to him, would be his verse; it being an unquestioned assertion, in some very respectable schools of criticism, that it is destitute of both melody and harmony. But we do not hesitate to affirm, that when the student has by long continued intercourse become *familiar* with him; when his antique strangeness has worn off, and the ear has become accustomed to certain variations from the modern custom in pronunciation; when, in short, he has so cultivated himself, that Chaucer is to him what he was to the ear and the poetic feeling, of his own age, we affirm that more melodious and harmonious verse is not to be found in the literature. It can be read longer, and not weary the ear, than the verse of Scott or Moore can be; because the melody is ever subordinate to the harmony; because the sentiment is natural, and the measure undulates with the sentiment. But such a genial and truthful appreciation of Chaucer is not the work of a day. The scholar must gradually grow into it, and grow up to it. Time alone imparts the sense and vernacular feeling of his excellence.

When this author has been completely mastered, the student is prepared for those still earlier and ruder forms of English, of which we have spoken. Once at home in the English of Chaucer, the passage to that of the metrical chronicles is easy and natural; and when these have been studied, the few

remains of Saxon that are left, furnish the matter for the final study in this direction.<sup>1</sup>

(2) The second practical recommendation respecting the best manner of pursuing the study of the English language and literature is this: select from leading periods in the history of the literature, those productions in which the power of the great minds found its fullest expression, and regard them as models to be studied. As examples, may be cited such productions as Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*, the first book of Hooker's *Ecclesiastical Polity*, Milton's *Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*, Locke's *Conduct of the Understanding*, Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*.

Productions like these are eminently English. They are eminently characterized by the solid sense, the strong understanding, and the thoughtful spirit of England. These qualities, it is true, are characteristic of all genuine products of the English mind, but they are found in their greatest energy, only in the productions of leading minds. With these, therefore, the student should imbue himself. He may peruse the second-rate writers without being greatly affected by these characteristics, but he cannot meditate upon such treatises as the above mentioned, without becoming more thoroughly English in the process. The importance of a national spirit in culture cannot be overestimated, and to this point we would direct attention for a moment. The individual mind is not individual merely; it is also national in its structure. It partakes of the peculiarities of the par-

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<sup>1</sup> An English Chrestomathy is a great desideratum. Commencing with selections from Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (1415), followed by most of the *Canterbury Tales* (1390), then with extracts from Langland's *Piers Plowman* (1360), from Lawrence Minot (1340), from the hybrid form of the language in Robert de Brunne's *Chronicle* (1339), and Robert of Gloucester's (1280), from Layamon's translation of *Wace* (1165), and ending with specimens of the Saxon in all its periods; such a reading book, provided with a full glossary, and a brief Anglo-Saxon Grammar, would do great service towards imparting an etymological and critical knowledge of English. For the study of Saxon alone, the life of Alfred, by Pauli, in Bohn's *Antiquarian Library*, which is supplemented by a very correct edition of the text of Alfred's *Orosius*, together with a glossary and a concise Anglo-Saxon Grammar, furnishes a very convenient apparatus.

ticular race of mankind to which it belongs. As the State is in the individual, as really as the individual is in the State, so the nation is in the individual, as really as the individual is in the nation. By virtue of a political nature and element in his constitution, the individual contains the groundwork and inward reality of the commonwealth of which he is outwardly a member; and by virtue of a national and idiomatic element in his mind, the individual contains the groundwork and inward reality of the nation of which he is outwardly a member. In neither case could any conceivable heightening of the *merely and strictly individual*, possibly produce the *national*. No degree, however intense, of private and individual feeling could possibly produce patriotism. Private interest and private feeling spring out of the individual in the man, and public interest and public feeling spring out of the State in the man. Both natures co-exist in one subject, in harmony when human nature is in a normal condition, and in antagonism when it is not; but each has its distinct characteristics, and forms the basis of a distinct activity.

These remarks hold true in relation to literature, as well as politics. In respect, therefore, to culture and to authorship, the national is, or should be, in the individual. While the individual opens his mind and heart to all that is true and genial in the productions of foreign minds, he should retain his own nationality in its most independent and determined form. The Englishman should think like an Englishman, and compose like an Englishman.

Now the thoughtful and ever repeated perusal of such products of the great English minds as have been specified above, contributes to strengthen and develop that which is national and idiomatic in the individual intellect. And in the present influx of foreign literature, of foreign modes of thought and expression, the conservative influence of these great English masters and models should be felt more than ever. It is only by a more profound acquaintance with these, that the good elements in other literatures and other national minds can be assimilated, and the bad rejected. An

ardent attention to French literature, for example, would induce an excessive materialism, and an ardent attention to German literature a hyper-spiritualism, in the English mind and literature, if each were not counteracted by the sober sense and calm reason of our own thinkers.

The influence of German literature upon the student, in this connection, merits a moment's consideration. At this late day, no respectable scholar will deny that this literature ranks among the very first, as a source of knowledge and an instrument of culture. Probably none exerts a more profound influence upon the stuff and substance of literature, upon thought itself, than this. Eminently speculative and thoughtful, it seizes with a strong grasp upon the laws of thought, and habits of thought, and style of thought, and exerts a wonderfully modifying, moulding, and internally revolutionizing power. But it cannot safely be made the principal instrument of education. It must be kept in check and subordination by others. Its strong spiritualizing tendency must be counteracted by opposite tendencies; and this in order that this very spiritualizing tendency itself may do its best work. For this bias, if left to run on indefinitely, results, as the history of some of the most interesting schools of philosophy and literature shows, in the sheerest and merest materialism. Any tendency if excessive, annihilates itself by turning into its own contrary. And the Englishman, especially, is liable to this result. If his large round-about sense and sober reason, are once over-mastered by the tendency and influence in question, he becomes the most ultra of spiritualists. The wines and luxury of the south of Europe entering into the strong and coarse nature of the northern tribes, generated an intoxication and a debauch, at which the Southron himself stood aghast. When Caliban feels the fumes, the drunkenness is absolute.

In furnishing a proper counteraction to this tendency, and to all other foreign tendencies, and thus preserving the true nationality of the scholar, the works in question are invaluable and indispensable. They are by no means destitute of

speculation, but they are remarkable for their sobriety and sense. Even when they verge strongly in the direction of materialism, they are valuable aids; especially in the reference now under consideration. Take, for example, the treatise of Locke on the Conduct of the Understanding, the best tract yet written upon education. It is less a model product of the English mind, than some others in the list, because it sprang from a root that had too strong a tang of earth; because it grew out of an extravagantly sensuous system of philosophy, and a culture corresponding thereto. But it furnishes a most excellent and efficacious corrective to a wan and bloodless hyper-spirituality. If the Englishman or Anglo-American has weakened himself by too much dreaming over such interesting, but, after all, essentially feeble products, as those of the German Novalis, or the French Chateaubriand and Lamartine, or the English Tennyson, let him transfuse into his veins the blood of John Locke. If he has become thin and pale in the process, let him feed upon the pulp and brawn of as masculine a mind as ever lived.

The preservation of nationality, in all respects and relations, is of the highest importance in this age of the world, when the ease, and frequency, and intimacy, of intercommunication, are erasing some lines that ought to be scored still more deeply rather than obliterated. The extinction of nationality, like the extinction of individuality, would be the death of all the great interests of the human race. The confusion of tongues, and the origination of many languages, though primarily a curse, yet like the curse of labor, brings many blessings in its train. The formation of nations and of languages has unquestionably contributed to a more profound and exhaustive development of the *fallen* human soul, than could have been attained without it. And the further progress of the race in art, in science, in literature, in philosophy, and in religion, is dependent upon the preservation, and the quickening collision, of this variety in unity. The moment a mind loses its nationality, it loses its charm and power for other minds; even for that other mind in which it has servilely sunk its own nationality.

By this thoughtful and prolonged perusal of the products of the master-minds of the literature, the student will preserve and strengthen what is national and idiomatic in his mental structure, while at the same time he will more genially appreciate, and heartily relish, what is national and idiomatic in other literatures. And, what is not less important, he will be storing his mind with the best sense and reason of the nation to which he belongs; he will be planting the seeds and germs of all noble and ennobling truths, thereby preparing himself to be an original and influential thinker and author in his own day and generation. For the words of Chaucer are as true now as ever:

Out of the olde fieldes, as men saithe,  
Cometh all this newe corn fro yere to yere;  
And out of olde bookes, in good faith,  
Cometh all this newe science, that men lere.<sup>1</sup>

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## ARTICLE V.

### THE HISTORICAL AND LEGAL JUDGMENT OF THE OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES AGAINST SLAVERY.

By George B. Cheever, D. D., New York.

[Continued from p. 48.]

#### *Statute for the Protection of Oppressed Fugitives.*

THE Mosaic legislation, the more it is examined, is seen to be a system of supernatural, divine wisdom. Amidst a congeries of particulars, sometimes seemingly disconnected, great underlying and controlling principles break out. The principle revealed in the statute against man-stealing, is the same developed in the next statute which we are to consider, in the order of the logical and historical argument from the

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<sup>1</sup> Assembly of Fowles. Stanza IV.