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## Emersonian Nonsense.

A little paragraph is going the rounds of the newspapers to the effect that Emerson says a man is a fool who bothers himself to study Latin and Greek, when he can get hold of translations of the ancient classical writers.

Emerson in his time has said some good things, and also as many foolish things as almost any other man living. This remark of his about classical study, is to be put down as among his silliest. For see: if it is not worth while to study the ancient languages in order to master the ancient literature, it cannot be worth the trouble to learn the modern languages in order to master modern literature. Tolerable translations can be had of almost all good foreign books, so that no one is any longer forced to acquire other languages than his own, except for commercial purposes. But commerce is of the earth earthy. It is not necessarily carried on by persons of cultivation; and the study of modern languages for the sake of pecuniary gain, is a thing so utterly mechanical, that it is to be rated with blacksmithing and carpentry. One reason why I have always felt contempt for the study of German by so Americans is, that it is done not for the sake of the German literature, but for the sole purpose of helping to get a living;—with no other end in view than German trade and German votes. This, of course, is not noble; is not a lofty aim; but is a bread and butter expedient. It is just a trap to catch flies; and that is all.

But to be of permanent value, language must be studied as a science and for the discipline of the human spirit. The thought derived to modern cultivation by examination of the roots of Greek and Latin words, surpasses that derived from all other sources. Translations develop very little deep, close thinking; nor do they give the real flavor of an author's personality.

Let us push the Emersonian proposition a step further. Why study the mathematics any more than the classics, if good keys can be had? Why bother over knotty and troublesome problems in Algebra, Calculus, or Natural Philosophy, if somebody else can be found to do our work for us, and put down their processes in figures and demonstrations that we can easily comprehend? Some will say because mathematics are practical, and have to be applied in the strain of life. But this is a bread and butter argument. It has nothing to do with that cultivation which goes with a well-trained and beautiful spirit through this world and away on among all the eternities beyond. Besides, very few of those who make mathematics a specialty ever find occasion for any practical use of their knowledge, beyond measuring cord-wood, and estimating the monthly amount to be paid the grocer and the hired help. A few become Engineers, but how very few! There is good discipline in the mathematics and the sciences, and no one is less inclined

to disparage them than I. But the study and attainment of the practical will not supply the need of the spiritual and the æsthetic. Of this, no one is a better illustration than Emerson himself. He would be a nobody to-day but for his long familiarity with Plato and the philosophers. He derived his transcendentalism in part from them. He has been a careful student of the treasures in language all his life. For such a man to decry the classics and proclaim the ripe equality of translations is bald-faced and shabby. He knows better. He knows that he is doing violence to the habit of his own life. We should be amazed at his antagonism to the classics if the reason was far to seek. But his purpose is patent.

Emerson belongs to the numerically increasing school of free-thinkers. He dislikes orthodox faith and reverence of the past, and therefore would discard from the scheme of modern education whatever best promotes those qualities. The classics have been found to induce love of ancient authors, love of ancient models, reverence of the great names and great deeds of other days, and a habit of conservatism in thought that has borne the faith of the church of God along the crests of time even to this hour. But, on the other hand, the sciences being subject of experiment and sometimes of demonstration, render the mind more open to doubt, and to religious, social and political empiricism. The war of science against the classics is a part of the conflict of science with faith; of the earth with the spirit; of the practical and temporary with the permanent and supernal. It belongs to a scheme to elevate reason to the throne of worship; to make science God instead of the Crucified One. It is at the base of a philosophy that seeks to discredit whatever it cannot see and analyze; that would throw off allegiance to all that contains the doctrine and reverence of the past. And so it would race over the classics and the lofty morality of the ancient time as fast as it can; would take them at a jump in translations, and discourage any long abiding in venerable historic halls.

The advocates of this scheme are cruelly indifferent to the narrowness and coarseness to which they would condemn the human mind. Dirty facts—facts about coal, and iron, and the mud of the earth, and the manure that excites the energies of vegetation—these they would constitute into an entire collegiate curriculum. Or, if they would add anything to ascertained facts, it would be only their own wild theories about monkeys that change to men by slipping off their tails, and about bones found in Swiss caves that they assert to be more ancient than the present race of men. (There can be little doubt that those bones are no older than the return of the homelcs Helvetii who were driven back by Julius Cæsar.)

Heretofore a ripe classical scholar has always been esteemed "learned." The

parlance of the world of letters has never yet called a person "learned" who was not familiar with the Greek and Latin languages and their priceless literature, however much he might know about practical sciences and inventions. For the mere scientist need be a person of cultivation only in specialties. He may be cunning to contrive mechanical tools, and to detect resemblance or lack of resemblance in soils and stones, and yet lack all deep, elaborate and elegant cultivation. It will be a sorry day for civilization if the educational experience of two thousand years shall ever be discarded as "a thing outworn," and cheap and easy methods—a little German, a little French, a little book-keeping, and a little music—be substituted for the noble processes that have fashioned all that mankind have thus far been much accustomed to reverence.

I can add interest to this brief article in no better way than by quoting a passage from Dean Stanley's life of Thomas Arnold, of Rugby. If any one man above all others is entitled to speak authoritatively about the best modes of education, it is Dr. Arnold. His very great ability, his long experience, his most abundant success, give weight to all he utters; and Arnold was a Liberal of amazing stomach.

His biographer says "That classical studies should be the basis of intellectual teaching, he maintained from the first. 'The study of language,' he said, 'seems to me as if it was given for the very purpose of forming the human mind in youth; and the Greek and Latin languages, in themselves so perfect, and at the same time freed from the insuperable difficulty which must attend any attempt to teach boys philology through the medium of their own spoken language, seem the very instruments by which this is to be effected.' He became as he grew older "more and more a convert" to the necessity of training boys to write Latin verse. "It was not knowledge," he said, but the means of gaining knowledge, that he had to teach;" that is, not the ultimate, or even the relative facts of science, but the best methods of appreciating and weighing truth, beauty, and goodness. Of such an opinion, too, was Coleridge.

For myself, I have no patience with the modern attempt to deify science. It began in the fiery day of the French Revolution, and probably will continue to the end of the world. It was inaugurated to deprive the spirit of man of its faith, its conviction of sin, its sense of the need of our Lord's atonement, and of that cheerful hope that has consoled so many a bed of death. Its aims are malicious; its means paltry and degrading. Wherefore, as classical study has moulded the best and greatest men in the world's history so far, (and even fashioned the men of science who decry it,) it seems to me unwise to abandon it for systems of which all that can be said is, they are easier, less disciplinary, partially uncertain, and wholly material. O. C. D.

## The Chapel.

Since the opening of the University, a little more than a year ago, there has been much said by the students and others concerning its advantages and opportunities.

But there is one branch, or rather mode, of instruction in general affairs, which seems to have received but little attention, though I think it is not from a want of appreciation. I refer to the short talk or lecture or call-it-what-you-please, which the Chancellor gives us every morning in chapel.

From these lectures, which are on various subjects, may be derived a great amount of useful and interesting knowledge. In fact, by a proper contemplation of the principles held up before us at these times, a course of life may be laid out, which if strictly adhered to, would fit a man for almost any desired position. Let us notice for a moment some of the things spoken of at different times.—In the first place, in starting out in life we should have some definite and high purpose in view; we should aim at the very highest and strive earnestly and faithfully to reach it. But if we are contented with small things and are willing to indulge small thoughts and contemptible ideas, we are more than likely to become small and contemptible ourselves. A mean, narrow-minded man is despised as soon as he is known, and great eccentricity is but slightly removed from insanity.

The above thoughts formed the basis of one of these lectures, and from them we see the necessity of having in the foundation of a noble life, a strong and noble purpose together with open and generous impulses.

At another time "Enthusiasm" was the theme. Very little can be accomplished, either in our studies here or in the affairs of life without enthusiasm; and if it is guided by a noble purpose into the proper channel it may be the main-spring of success. Again we are kindly advised and instructed to keep our minds free from prejudice, and to let our judgment incline to benevolence and charity. Think ill of no one from mere prejudice, for if we are continually thinking meanly of others we are apt to become mean ourselves.

But the most important of these principles, if I may be allowed to judge, is "Accuracy." Than this there are few things more essential to success. The business man must be accurate in his calculations or he makes a failure. The builder in making a contract must be accurate in his estimates or he is liable to loss. And so as to other things. We should cultivate this habit now at school, in learning our lessons, and in the use of words while writing or speaking, that it may be fixed in our minds that accuracy is a necessity.

And thus it goes on. Every morning new and choice thoughts are brought forward which are worthy the careful attention of all the students, and which materially add to the usefulness of the institution. K.