

best thing he can do is to let his mind soak and tan in the vats of literature. The atmosphere of a university is breathed into the student's system,—it enters by the very pores. But, just as all roads lead to Rome, so I hold there may be a modern road as well as the classic avenue to the goal of a true liberal education. I object to no man's causing his children to approach that goal by the old, the time-honored entrance. On the contrary, I will admit that for those who travel it well it is the best entrance. But I do ask that the modern entrance should not be closed. Vested interests always look upon a claim for simple recognition as a covert attack on their very existence, and the advocates of an exclusively classic college education are quick to interpret a desire for modern learning as a covert attack on dead learning.

I have no wish to attack it except in its spirit of selfish exclusiveness. I do challenge the right of the classicist to longer say that by his path, and by his path only, shall the university be approached. I would not narrow the basis of liberal education; I would broaden it. No longer content with classic sources, I would have the university seek fresh inspiration at the fountains of living thought; for Goethe I hold to be the equal of Sophocles, and I prefer the philosophy of Montaigne to what seem to me the platitudes of Cicero.

Neither, though venturing on these comparisons, have I any light or disrespectful word to utter of the study of Latin or of Greek, much less of the classic literatures. While recognizing fully the benefit to be derived from a severe training in these mother tongues, I fully appreciate the pleasure those must have who enjoy an easy familiarity with the authors who yet live in them. No one admires—I am not prepared to admit that any one can admire—more than I

the subtile, indescribable fineness, both of thought and diction, which a thorough classical education gives to the scholar.

Mr. Gladstone is, as Macaulay was, a striking case in point. As much as any one I note and deplore the absence of this literary Tower-stamp in the writings and utterances of many of our own authors and public men. But its absence is not so deplorable as that display of cheap learning which made the American oration of thirty and fifty years ago a national humiliation. Even in its best form it was bedizened with classic tinsel which bespoke the vanity of the half-taught scholar. We no longer admire that sort of thing. But among men of my own generation I do both admire and envy those who I am told make it a daily rule to read a little of Homer or Thucydides, of Horace or Tacitus. I wish I could do the same; and yet I must frankly say I should not do it if I could.

Life, after all, is limited, and I belong enough to the present to feel satisfied that I could employ that little time each day both more enjoyably and more profitably if I should devote it to keeping pace with modern thought as it finds expression even in the ephemeral pages of the despised review. Do what he will, no man can keep pace with that wonderful modern thought; and if I must choose—and choose I must—I would rather learn something daily from the living who are to perish than daily muse with the immortal death. Yet for the purpose of my argument I do not for a moment dispute the superiority—I am ready to say the hopeless, the unattainable superiority—of the classic masterpieces. They are sealed books to me, as they are to at least nineteen out of twenty of the graduates of our colleges; and we can neither affirm nor deny that in them, and in them alone, are to be

found the choicest thoughts of the human mind and the most perfect forms of human speech.

All that has nothing to do with the question. We are not living in any ideal world. We are living in this world of to-day; and it is the business of the college to fit men for it. Does she do it? As I have said, my own experience of thirty years ago tells me that she did not do it then. The facts being much the same, I do not see how she can do it now. It seems to me she starts from a radically wrong basis. It is, to use plain language, a basis of fetich worship, in which the real and practical is systematically sacrificed to the ideal and theoretical.

To-day, whether I want to or not, I must speak from individual experience. Indeed, I have no other ground on which to stand. I am not a scholar; I am not an educator; I am not a philosopher; but I submit that in educational matters individual, practical experience is entitled to some weight. Not one man in ten thousand can contribute anything to this discussion in the way of more profound views or deeper insight. Yet any concrete, actual experience, if it be only simply and directly told, may prove a contribution of value, and that contribution we all can bring.

An average college graduate, I am here to subject the college theories to the practical test of an experience in the tussle of life. Recurring to the simile with which I began, the wrestler in the games is back at the gymnasium. If he is to talk to any good purpose he must talk of himself and how he fared in the struggle. It is he who speaks.

I was fitted for college in the usual way. I went to the Latin School; I learned the two grammars by heart; at length I could even puzzle out the simpler classic writings with the aid of a lexicon, and apply more or less correctly

the rules of construction. This, and the other rudiments of what we are pleased to call a liberal education, took five years of my time. I was fortunately fond of reading, and so learned English myself and with some thoroughness. I say fortunately, for in our preparatory curriculum no place was found for English; being a modern language it was thought not worth studying—as our examination papers conclusively showed. We turned English into bad enough Greek, but our thoughts were expressed in even more abominable English.

I then went to college,—to Harvard. I have already spoken of the standard of instruction, so far as thoroughness was concerned, then prevailing here. Presently I was graduated, and passed some years in the study of the law. Thus far, as you will see, my course was thoroughly correct. It was the course pursued by a large proportion of all graduates then, and the course pursued by more than a third of them now. Then the war of the rebellion came and swept me out of a lawyer's office into a cavalry saddle. Let me say, in passing, that I have always felt under deep personal obligation to the war of the rebellion. Returning presently to civil life, and not taking kindly to my profession, I endeavored to strike out a new path, and fastened myself, not, as Mr. Emerson recommends, to a star, but to the locomotive engine. I made for myself what might perhaps be called a specialty in connection with the development of the railroad system. I do not hesitate to say that I have been incapacitated from properly developing my specialty, by the sins of omission and commission incident to my college training. The mischief is done, and, so far as I am concerned, is irreparable. I am only one more sacrifice to the fetich. But I do not propose to be a silent sacrifice. I am here to-day to

put the responsibility for my failure, so far as I have failed, where I think it belongs,—at the door of my preparatory and college education.

Nor has that incapacity, and the consequent failure to which I have referred, been a mere thing of imagination or sentiment. On the contrary, it has been, not only matter-of-fact and real, but to the last degree humiliating. I have not, in following out my specialty, had at my command—nor has it been in my power, placed as I was, to acquire—the ordinary tools which an educated man must have to enable him to work to advantage on the developing problems of modern scientific life. But on this point I feel that I can, with few words, safely make my appeal to the members of this Society.

Many of you are scientific men; others are literary men; some are professional men. I believe, from your own personal experience, you will bear me out when I say that, with a single exception, there is no modern scientific study which can be thoroughly pursued in any one living language, even with the assistance of all the dead languages that ever were spoken. The researches in the dead languages are indeed carried on through the medium of several living languages.

I have admitted there is one exception to this rule. That exception is the law. Lawyers alone, I believe, join with our statesmen in caring nothing for "abroad." Except in its more elevated and theoretical branches, which rarely find their way into our courts, the law is a purely local pursuit. Those who follow it may grow gray in active practice, and yet never have occasion to consult a work in any language but their own. It is not so with medicine, or theology, or science, or art, in any of their numerous branches, or with government, or political economy, or with any other of the whole long list. With the exception of law I think I might

safely challenge any one of you to name a single modern calling, either learned or scientific, in which a worker who is unable to read and write and speak at least German and French does not stand at a great and always recurring disadvantage. He is without the essential tools of his trade.

The modern languages are thus the avenues to modern life and living thought. Under these circumstances, what was the position of the college toward them thirty years ago? What is its position to-day? It intervened and practically said then that its graduates should not acquire those languages at that period when only they could be acquired perfectly and with ease. It occupies the same position still. It did and does this none the less effectually because indirectly. The thing came about, as it still comes about, in this way: The college fixes the requirements for admission to its course. The schools and the academies adapt themselves to those requirements.

The business of those preparatory schools is to get the boys through their examinations, not as a means, but as an end. They are therefore all organized on one plan. To that plan there is no exception; nor, practically, can there be any exception. The requirements for admission are such that the labor of preparation occupies fully the boy's study hours. He is not overworked, perhaps, but when his tasks are done he has no more leisure than is good for play; and you cannot take a healthy boy the moment he leaves school and set him down before tutors in German and French. If you do, he will soon cease to be a healthy boy, and he will not learn German or French. Over-education is a crime against youth.

But Harvard College says: "We require such and such things for admission to our course." First and most em-

phasized among them are Latin and Greek. The academies accordingly teach Latin and Greek; and they teach it in the way to secure admission to the college. Hence, because of this action of the college, the schools do not exist in this country in which my children can learn what my experience tells me it is all-essential they should know. They cannot both be fitted for college and taught the modern languages. And when I say "taught the modern languages" I mean taught them in the world's sense of the word, and not in the college sense of it, as practised both in my time and now. And here let me not be misunderstood and confronted with examination-papers. I am talking of really knowing something.

I do not want my children to get a smattering knowledge of French and of German, such a knowledge as was and now is given to boys of Latin and Greek; but I do want them to be taught to write and to speak those languages as well as to read them,—in a word, so to master them that they will thereafter be tools always ready to the hand. This requires labor. It is a thing which cannot be picked up by the wayside, except in the countries where the languages are spoken. If academies in America are to instruct in this way, they must devote themselves to it. But the college requires all that they can well undertake to do. The college absolutely insists on Latin and Greek.

Latin I will not stop to contend over. That is a small matter. Not only is it a comparatively simple language, but, apart from its literature,—for which I cannot myself profess to have any great admiration,—it has its modern uses. Not only is it directly the mother tongue of all southwestern Europe, but it has by common consent been adopted in scientific nomenclature. Hence there are reasons why the

educated man should have at least an elementary knowledge of Latin. That knowledge also can be acquired with no great degree of labor. To master the language would be another matter; but in these days few think of mastering it. How many students during the last thirty years have graduated from Harvard who could read Horace and Tacitus and Juvenal, as numbers now read Goethe and Mommsen and Heine? If there have been ten, I do not believe there have been a score.

This it is to acquire a language! A knowledge of its rudiments is a wholly different thing; and with a knowledge of the rudiments of Latin as a requirement for admission to college I am not here to quarrel. Not so Greek. The study of Greek, and I speak from the unmistakable result of my own individual experience in active life, as well as from that of a long-continued family experience which I shall presently give,—the study of Greek in the way it is traditionally insisted upon as the chief requirement to entering college is a positive educational wrong. It has already wrought great individual and general injury, and is now working it. It has been productive of no compensating advantage. It is a superstition.

But before going further I wish to emphasize the limitations under which I make this statement. I would not be misunderstood. I am speaking not at all of Greek really studied and lovingly learned. Of that there cannot well be two opinions. I have already said that it is the basis of the finest scholarship. I have in mind only the Greek traditionally insisted upon as the chief requirement to entering college,—the Greek learned under compulsion by nine men at least out of each ten who are graduated. It is that quarter-acquired knowledge, and that only, of which I insist that it

is a superstition and educational wrong. Nor can it ever be anything else. It is a mere penalty on going to college.

I am told that, when thoroughly studied, Greek becomes a language delightfully easy to learn. I do not know how this may be; but I do know that when learned as a college requirement it is most difficult,—far more difficult than Latin. Unlike Latin, also, Greek, partially acquired, has no modern uses. Not only is it a dead tongue, but it bears no immediate relation to any living speech or literature of value. Like all rich dialects, it is full of anomalies; and accordingly its grammar is the delight of grammarians and the despair of every one else. When I was fitted for college the study of Greek took up at least one half of the last three years devoted to active preparation. In memory it looms up now, through the long vista of years, as the one gigantic nightmare of youth,—and no more profitable than nightmares are wont to be. Other school-day tasks sink into insignificance beside it. When we entered college we had all of us the merest superficial knowledge of the language,—a knowledge measured by the ability to read at sight a portion of Xenophon, a little of Herodotus, and a book or two of the "Iliad." It was just enough to enable us to meet the requirements of the examination. In all these respects my inquiries lead me to conclude that what was true then is even more true now. In the vast majority of cases this study of Greek was looked upon by parent and student as a mere college requirement; and the instructor taught it as such. It was never supposed for an instant that it would be followed up.

On the contrary, if it was thought of at all, instead of rather taken as a matter of course, it was thought of very much as a similar amount of physical exercise with dumb-

bells or parallel bars might be thought of,—as a thing to be done as best it might, and there an end. As soon as possible after entering college the study was abandoned forever, and the little that had been acquired faded rapidly away from the average student's mind. I have now forgotten the Greek alphabet, and I cannot read all the Greek characters if I open my Homer. Such has been the be-all and the end-all of the tremendous labor of my school-days.

But I now come to what in plain language I cannot but call the educational cant of this subject. I am told that I ignore the severe intellectual training I got in learning the Greek grammar and in subsequently applying its rules; that my memory then received an education which, turned since to other matters, has proved invaluable to me; that accumulated experience shows that this training can be got equally well in no other way; that, beyond all this, even my slight contact with the Greek masterpieces has left with me a subtle but unmistakable residuum, impalpable perhaps, but still there and very precious; that, in a word, I am what is called an educated man, which, but for my early contact with Greek, I would not be.

It was Dr. Johnson, I believe, who once said, "Let us free our minds from cant;" and all this, with not undue bluntness be it said, is unadulterated nonsense. The fact that it has been and will yet be a thousand times repeated cannot make it anything else. In the first place, I very confidently submit, there is no more mental training in learning the Greek grammar by heart than in learning by heart any other equally difficult and, to a boy, unintelligible book.

As a mere work of memorizing, Kant's "Critique of Pure Reason" would be at least as good. In the next place, unintelligent memorizing is at best a most questionable educa-