remote from houses and infection. Rats, in China (Liebrecht, *Zur Volkskunde*, p. 13) are more suspicious. They also gnaw, in the story, the bowstrings of an army. But so do ants, in the Satapatha Brahmana, and ants do not convey infection or destroy standing corn. The legend of mice gnawing bowstrings occurs in the mythology of the Creek Indians of North America, and also in the mythic history of the Utes in the same country (Powell, *Report of Bureau of Ethnology*, I. 51). The Red Indians have no bubonic plague. Here, then, in China, India, Egypt, and North America we have the same tale of an army defeated, or at least deprived of its artillery, by field mice, rats, or ants. I scarcely think that bubonic plague can have anything to do with this fable. Apollo of Sminthos is perhaps addressed in *The Iliad* merely as a local Apollo, without any thought of field mice or infection in the poet's mind.

A. LANG.

CLASSICS IN EDUCATION.

TWO LETTERS TO A CLASSICAL FRIEND.

II.

My Dear ——,

I resume my story. A few years since I spent much time over Mommsen's History of Rome, and I then read again the two books of Livy which I had taken up so long before. Later on I turned to Caesar and read through the whole eight books of the Gallic War. These prose texts I was able to read, not without pains, but still as literature, and therefore with interest and a kind of pleasure. Then a friend of mine asked me to coach a medical student in two books of Horace, the third and fourth of the Odes. I objected that I had never read the Odes, but I was assured that my knowledge of Latin was sufficient for the purpose in hand. And so, in fact, it proved. Later still, I found a neighbour whose classical knowledge was about equal to my own, though gained by the reverse process, viz. a school education without the experience of the 'Varsity. He was willing to join me in reading through the four books of the Odes. Will you ask the result? I find that, so far as I am concerned, an Ode of Horace is the literary equivalent of a Chinese puzzle. With pains I can solve the puzzle or construe the text; but the result has neither beauty nor meaning. The whole thing leaves me weary and indifferent. One stanza of FitzGerald's Rubaiyat means more to me than all Horace put together. With the Horatian sentiment, the Horatian view of life, I have been familiar, oddly enough, from boyhood upward, when I learned it, not from Latin verse, but from the English prose of Thackeray. My failure to enjoy Horace (and Poetry, as H. Nettleship said, is nothing, if it cannot be read and enjoyed) might be due to the fact that I was never properly grounded in Latin quantity and metre. And even to-day I can nowhere find any intelligible account of the relation between metre, quantity, and accent, in Greek and Latin verse. Consider for a moment what this means. From the sixteenth century to the close of the nineteenth, the classic poets have formed the staple of our higher education. The principal merit of classical poetry lies admittedly in the perfection of its form. And all poetry is primarily addressed to the ear. Yet our teachers are content to employ, both in Greek and Latin, a mode of pronunciation demonstrably barbarous; to perpetuate mechanically, in the case of Greek, a system of accents which in speech they ignore; while in Latin, whether spoken or written, accent is neglected altogether,[1] and though a theoretical importance is attached to quantity, it is not thought worth while to indicate it in writing, and in spoken utterance it is constantly set at nought. Such an habitual disregard of the essential conditions on which the apprehension of poetic art depends, goes far to justify the suspicion that the classics have neither been taught nor learned from the love of Poetry. If Latin lived on the lips of our teachers, I think the Odes of Horace would have conveyed more to me than they do.

My love for Lycidas and Adonais, and even my indifference to the Bucolics of Virgil, now led me to attempt Theocritus. I might as well have read so many consecutive pages of Liddell and Scott. And when

[1] See Dr. Granger's letter in *C.R.* for June, p. 282.—ED. *C.R.*

Liddell and Scott come in at the door, Poetry flies out at the window. Clearly Theocritus was a task beyond me, a task for the man who makes the study of classical literature the main business of his life. I must be content to let that go. I had wished to follow downwards the tradition of pastoral poetry. That must now be left to others.

On many accounts I was attracted to the Homeric poems. Their place at the beginning of Greek Literature, at the head of the epic tradition, their surpassing fame, the testimonies of Virgil, Milton and Shelley, all predisposed me in their favour. I hoped to gain from them fresh light on that antique world which I was studying in the pages of the Old Testament. The use made of Homer in the writings of Mr. Lang, as well as his own contagious enthusiasm, added to the inducements which led me to make this attempt. I was prepared by previous experience to find the difficulties considerable. I found them even greater than I anticipated. To read an epic in this way is like looking at a tapestry through a magnifying glass. You see the stitches, but the design is lost. Still, I have somehow made my way through the first twelve books of the Iliad. Frankly, I find it detestable. Let me remind you once more that I am not passing judgment, I do but register the results of much painstaking labour. The vile jargon in which the poem is composed, half barbarism and half affectation; the inextricable confusion of the accidence, which keeps the reader in continual perplexity and embarrassment; the peculiar vagueness and obscurity of the vocabulary, which prevent him from receiving any clear or forcible impression; the sickening conventionalities of the style, the rhetoric and rhodomontade, the verbosity and diffuseness, the set phrases and recurring formulae, the epithets without meaning and adjectives which go without any word; the interminable declamation, as of the professional reciter mouthing polysyllables at so much a verse; the uniform monotonous flow of twaddle disguised in verbiage; the disjointed succession of episodes, without unity, or plan or progress; the tedious elaboration of trivial detail; the prating heroes and ignoble gods; have left upon my mind a sense of absolute nausea. A plaster cast from Brucciani's exceeds the value of the whole.

Of course I do not put this forward as a final estimate of Homer. There may be something there that I do not see, there may be a point of view from which all that disgusts me takes on a different aspect, or at least sinks into insignificance. What Homer conveyed to the native Greek, what it may convey in our own time to the classical scholar, to Mr. Lang or Prof. Jebb, I neither know nor care. My quarrel is with the almost inconceivable pedantry which has selected such a text as an instrument of ordinary education, or a means of literary culture. Out of my unlucky experience, one broad result has clearly emerged, and for myself at least, is henceforth placed beyond the possibility of doubt. *The classical literature is by its very nature a study for the specialist; no real appreciation of it is possible except to the specialist; and classical education is the education of the specialist or it is nothing.* A subject so alien, so remote, so difficult, so technical, so elaborate, so artificial, can have no value for the purpose of general education. The fallacy which you classical men commit is that of supposing that the ancient languages and texts have, or can have, for your pupils, the same significance that they bear to yourselves. While I am writing to you there comes to hand an advertisement of a method of instruction in pianoforte playing, which has for its object 'a complete separation of the *musical* and *mechanical* elements in teaching and practice.' I do not know whether this is practicable, but I am sure that the distinction drawn is of real importance for the teaching of literature, and this not only because (as I have sometimes said to you) a boy's classics are the equivalent of a girl's music, a conventional accomplishment to which education is sacrificed. For most of us, what is called classical education means no more than an imperfect, and therefore useless, acquisition of the mechanical or linguistic part of the study; and that which alone has, in the Greek sense, *musical*, or, as we say, literary value, is never really assimilated. The texts read remain not a literature but a chrestomathy. We ask for bread and you give us a stone. In order to impart, in nineteen cases out of twenty, a mere smattering of the grammar and rhetoric of two dead languages, you have sacrificed all the opportunities of culture and the faculties of the mind. So far from inspiring the love of letters, it would be nearer the truth to say that you have stifled it. So far from communicating a real knowledge of any part of literature, you have stopped the way with your costly and useless commodities, your display of learning with-

out life. In the few cases where your system has the only success of which it is capable it produces the professional scholar, for whom I have no less respect than yourself, though perhaps a less exclusive admiration. In the vast majority it generates the prig, taught to flatter himself upon his acquirements and to prefer form to substance; the smug, versed in his especial task of book-learning and ignorant of all beyond; or the dunce, whose small capacity has been extinguished by those who should have developed it. If I am angry with such a system as this, if I regard it as an imposture bearing to a true system of education the relation that quackery bears to medicine, if I feel that its existence is the greatest obstacle to the diffusion of genuine culture, and that an incalculable liberation of mental energy would follow from its abolition, will you say that I am wrong? If so, you have to show that the ordinary schoolboy, the average undergraduate, gets more out of the classics than I do; and I fancy you will find this no easy task. Perhaps you will ask what I would substitute. Substitute what one can reasonably expect an intelligent lad to master, to assimilate, to retain, and to employ. For the faculties of the mind are cultivated by exercise, and they are exercised only upon those objects which form an integral portion of our mental life. For you, my dear ——, the Classics fulfil this function, but for most of us it can never be so. For most of us Greek has no more value than Hebrew. It is a mere clog on the mind's action. I would have a lad well grounded in Latin that he might the better comprehend the Latin element in the modern languages. Let him learn, if you like, to read with facility, and with a correct pronunciation, the Latin prose authors, but let the poets be read, if read at all, only in select passages which should be learned by heart, and declaimed aloud. French and German must form an essential part of modern education, and surely it is important to guide the youth into what is best for him in those literatures. I hold strongly that an educated man ought to comprehend the history of the language and literature which may properly be called his own. Surely here is scope enough. Would that I had employed upon such studies the hours that I have wasted on the barren pages of Horace and Virgil, of Euripides and Homer!

I am ever, my dear ——,
Your candid friend,
G. H. S.

October, 1900.

ARCHAEOLOGY

OAK AND ROCK.

HEKTOR in his famous soliloquy before the final encounter with Achilles considers and rejects two possible means of avoiding the fight: (1) he could take refuge within the walls of Troy—but this would at once bring upon him the bitter reproaches of the Trojans; (2) he might lay aside his armour and make an offer of ample atonement to Achilles—but his overtures, he fears, would probably be futile; Achilles would only take advantage of his unarmed condition to slay him on the spot. At this point occur the obscure lines (*Il.* 22. 126 ff.) which form the subject of the present paper:—

οὐ μέν πως νῦν ἔστιν ἀπὸ δρυὸς οὐδ' ἀπὸ πέτρης
τῷ ὀαριζέμεναι, ἅ τε παρθένος ἠίθεός τε,
παρθένος ἠίθεός τ' ὀαρίζετον ἀλλήλοιιν.

They are followed immediately by the heroic conclusion: 'Nay, better is it to charge amain and that with all speed; so shall we know to which of us two the lord of Olympus will give glory.'

Before discussing the meaning of these disputed verses it is worth while to note their external resemblance to some other passages in the context. Twice within the next seventy-five lines do we get the same telling but rather affected device of an echo-line, *i.e.* a line in which the principal words of a previous line are repeated and slightly expanded, the repetition in each case being asyndeton and double or antithetic in form. In 157 f. we read of Hektor and Achilles—

τῇ ῥα παραδραμέτην, φεύγων, ὁ δ' ὄπισθε διώκων·
πρόσθε μὲν ἐσθλὸς ἔφευγε, δίωκε δέ μιν μέγ' ἀμείνων.

And in 199 f.—

ὡς δ' ἐν ὀνείρῳ οὐ δύναται φεύγοντα διώκειν·
οὔτ' ἄρ' ὁ τὸν δύναται ὑποφεύγειν οὔθ' ὁ διώκειν.