

THE LEARNING OF LANGUAGES.

THE most striking contrast between ancient and modern education is in the time spent in the acquisition of foreign languages, either what are called dead languages, that is, those which have ceased to be spoken in the form at least in which we study them, or living languages, by which we understand the tongues that we study in their most modern form, as they are spoken by our own contemporaries. The burden of linguistic knowledge required in the cultivated classes has become heavier and heavier with the advance of time. Much of it is due to the idea that without the study of foreign languages a man or woman cannot have a cultivated mind, and also to the other idea that we cannot profit by books that we read only in translations. These are the two ideas that have mainly governed linguistic education in modern times. The invention of railways and steam vessels and the increased facility of travel which they afford have led many people to study modern languages with a view to travel and to social intercourse with foreigners. These motives are not accepted without some curious inconsistencies.

We are taught that foreign tongues, especially the dead languages, are necessary implements of culture. At the same time the ancient Greeks are held before us as the model race, the most cultivated race that ever existed, intellectually and æsthetically as superior to ourselves as we are to untrained savages. We are not without some evidence of the kind of education that prevailed in ancient Greece. Some of this evidence is of a positive kind, and the rest, very easily overlooked but equally significant, is negative. The positive evidence gives an account of the mental and physical training most valued by the greatest philosophers and by the authorities who directed education. It included chiefly what Plato called music and gymnastics, or what we should call intellectual and æsthetic culture for the mind and regulated exercises for the body. The mental culture appears to have been attained by poetry, philosophy, music, some natural science so far as it then existed, and by a certain degree of initiation into the fine arts. In our own time we believe that the

study of languages is in itself an excellent and almost indispensable mental discipline. We find no trace of this belief in Greek antiquity. If we could ask Plato what was the best training for a youth of fortune and ability, he would answer that it was to hear wise discourses on the good and the beautiful, to learn poetry, to open the mind to science and the fine arts. He would not say that it was to learn many words for one thing.

Another inconsistency in our present estimate of the necessity of languages is that whilst the clergy, as educators, insist upon the necessity for studying ancient books in the original tongues, they so rarely, in their own practice, apply this principle to the books of the Old Testament. Taking together the whole of the European churches, it may be doubted whether the number of clergy who have read the Old Testament in the original reaches the low figure of one per cent. English newspapers ridiculed poor M. Guy de Maupassant for having written confidently on English poetry without having learned our language; yet our theological expositors do the same for Hebrew literature which is of much greater religious importance. In both cases translations are talked about as if they were originals. It is like criticising pictures from engravings.

The ancient Romans of the most cultivated time were students of Hellenic literature, but I am not aware that they attached, as we do, great special importance to linguistic study on its own account. They thought more of eloquence than of erudition. Their linguistic education would be like that of an Englishman who knows French well enough to read it and sometimes speaks it. Oxford graduates would look upon that as a very insufficient education. In the Middle Ages languages were scantily and imperfect studied. Laymen could rarely write even their own language, and ecclesiastics had a familiar but uncritical and inelegant knowledge of Latin.¹ Our own conception of languages as an important, if not the most important, part of education has come to us from the Renaissance and is Italian in its origin. The idea prevalent in England during the nineteenth century has been that a man of culture must be able to read Greek and Latin, especially Greek, a knowledge of Latin being almost taken for

¹ One of the best proofs that an elaborate linguistic education is not indispensably necessary to the development of intelligence may be found in the constructive and decorative arts of the Middle Ages, in the admirable conceptions of architects who could not spell, and in the unsurpassed workmanship of craftsmen who could not read.

granted. Men of letters in England are now expected to read two or three modern languages. In France the pretensions are much lower. The educated Frenchman is supposed to know Latin and a little Greek, with the rudiments of German and English.

The facilities afforded by good grammars and dictionaries, as well as by other philological works, make it incomparably easier for us to learn foreign languages than it could possibly have been for the ancients or the students of the Middle Ages. The claims upon us have increased with these facilities; indeed, the demands upon the time and attention of students have gone beyond the facilities themselves. Not only languages, but sciences and arts, put in claims that life is too short to satisfy, and there are already signs of a disposition to lessen the burden by diminishing the study of languages, particularly by the abandonment of Greek. It is probable that we ourselves have seen the extreme of language-learning as a part of education, and that the next century will find relief either in the intentionally partial acquisition of some languages or in removing them from the programme of studies.

The present state of linguistic education gives the most unsatisfactory results. Languages are first very laboriously and very imperfectly learned and then generally abandoned in after-life. Even the learned themselves rarely pursue them unless they have some special reason for doing so connected with their professional business. Modern languages are neglected almost as much as the ancient when they are not wanted for business purposes or travel. An Oxford man who is a ripe Italian scholar tells me that young ladies in England invariably give up their Italian after leaving school, as young men throw aside their Latin. University degrees are evidence of past labor, but not of interest, affection, or facility. Lord Dufferin said that although he had taken a degree he could not really read Greek until he had learned it over again for himself, and in his own way. An English judge who had taken his degree at Cambridge told me that he could not make out Greek in mature life even with the help of the lexicon. A fellow of the French university, a prizeman specially for Latin in a severe competitive examination, told me that he should never think of reading Latin for his pleasure—he did not know it well enough. An English professor, reputed to be one of the best Latin scholars in his own country, gave up Latin and Greek entirely when he turned his attention to modern languages. The principal of a French college once confessed to me that he never read Latin or Greek,

which were taught in the place by the specialist masters under him. All these were what are called "learned men," certainly educated men. What, therefore, are we to expect from the half-educated?

The neglect of languages over which years of painful labor have been spent admits, I believe, of a very simple explanation. The languages, in these cases, have been learned, but only learned, and this is not enough—they have neither been assimilated nor mastered. There are three stages in the acquisition of a language: scholarship, assimilation, and mastery. According to the commonly received notions on the subject, scholarship is everything, a mistake that leads to continual disappointment. Let us consider the three separately.

I. Scholarship. This includes the different sciences concerning a language and also a knowledge of its literature. The sciences are grammar, etymology, prosody, and a sufficient vocabulary to supply the necessary material. Lord Dufferin believes that our education in languages fails chiefly from the want of a sufficient vocabulary, that we are stopped in reading chiefly by our ignorance of words. Educators have usually given the first importance to grammar, trusting to practice for the gradual increase of the vocabulary. A few reformers have argued that grammar, instead of being learned at the beginning, should be deferred as much as is practically possible until there is a supply of material, in the shape of words and phrases, in the mind.

The happiest condition of mind for the early stages of scholarship, and one of the most favorable for the later stages also, is that of the philologist, the lover of words, who takes an interest in words themselves, in their history, and in the shades of meaning which have belonged to them. If to this passion for words the student can add a liking for comparative grammar, he has the advantage that his study of a language is interesting to him at once, from the very beginning; whereas if he takes no interest in philology and grammar and has to fight his way to the enjoyment of literature, he may toil for long years without reward. The true philologist, like the grammarian, has the scientific temper of mind which values every fact and finds in each fresh discovery, however apparently unimportant, the payment of a separate satisfaction. In this way he goes on accumulating his vocabulary with the same interest that a mineralogist has in collecting specimens.

Unfortunately, this philological instinct is rare in boys and young men, whilst from the minds of women it is almost invariably absent. The changes in letters with which a very little etymological learning

familiarizes us appear to them an arbitrary invention of pedants, made only to prove their theories, and with which any theory may be proved. I have known many women who valued beauty, grace, and elegance in language, but I never met with one who cared in the least about its scientific history. If you tell a lady that *episcopus*, *bishop*, *vescovo*, and *évêque* have not only the same meaning but are strictly and literally the same word in the sense that the letters have undergone no changes except those according to well-known laws, she will think that your learning is a vain deception, that the words are obviously different, and that as to their origin, it is idle to inquire about it. If you add that *bishop* only means *overseer*, she will think that you wish to lower the episcopal dignity. If you say that *choose*, in its origin, means only to *see*, she will consider such information useless; as when she chooses a ribbon she selects it—she not only sees, but takes it out of preference. It has been argued, also, that a knowledge of etymology actually perverts our estimate of words as they are used at the present day; and that to employ them exclusively in their present sense, as women invariably do, is better than it is to confuse the mind with disturbing reminiscences of their history. The most formidable of all arguments against scholarship is the undeniable fact that women often speak elegantly and fluently, using an extensive vocabulary, with scarcely any scholarship at all. To this it may be answered that there is no instance of a woman who has written correctly without educational drill. In France there is no more amusing contrast than that between the voluble spoken French and the rare, incoherent, ill-spelt written French of half-educated women.

Another argument against the necessity for scholarship is the case of bi-linguals who know two languages without having scientifically studied them. The true bi-lingual is one who has used two languages from his infancy, and so gained a practical familiarity with both that is almost unattainable in later life. It does not, however, follow that familiar knowledge is either profound or extensive knowledge. As the subject interests me, I have taken every opportunity of observing and questioning bi-linguals, and have come to the conclusion that without scholarly training their vocabulary is always very limited. The Scottish Highlanders speak English creditably for people of limited opportunities, but they know very few words. I found the case to be the same in the Morvan (an east-central district of France), where the peasants speak remarkably pure French when they speak it at all; but it is very limited French, although no one but a careful observer

would suspect the real narrowness of its limitations. When I once complimented my gardener on the purity of his French, he smiled and said it might be pure as far as it went, but there was "very little of it." In these cases it is the absence of hesitation that deceives us. The speaker has a very limited vocabulary always ready, but he himself knows how limited it is when he undertakes to read and is stopped in every line. The case becomes even worse when a half-educated bi-lingual attempts to use language beyond his real knowledge and capacity. Abundant examples of this are supplied by the more or less anglicized inhabitants of British India. The Morvandean is too wary to venture upon grandiloquent French; the British-Indian has an imprudent preference for fine English.

There are differences amongst languages as to the requirement of scholarship. When the grammar is complicated, no uneducated or half-educated native can avoid error; when it is simple, as English grammar is, a naturally clever person hides ignorance more easily by imitating the better educated.¹ In France the half-educated have a great dread of writing, as the pen always betrays them. The ladies of the last century had not this terror before their eyes, because in those days there was a liberty of ignorance that no longer exists. Without scholarship we either do not understand or, what is worse, we misunderstand a number of terms and expressions that are in common use amongst the highly educated, and not used by them from affectation, but from necessity, because the ideas belonging to high culture cannot be expressed without them. The result is that without scholarship we are shut out of cultivated society in a peculiar way; that is, we may be admitted into it as children are, yet excluded, like children, from its serious thought. Hence the uselessness of un-scholarly acquisition for purposes of intellectual intercourse. It is available for the common purposes of travel, but not for the kind of conversation that an intelligent man travels far to seek.

I remember a foreigner who spoke admirably in his own language and whose conversation in that language was extremely interesting. He had a liking for French society, but his knowledge of French was in the highest degree inaccurate and unscholarly, so that he could not take his due share in conversation; and although he knew some eminent Frenchmen, and was personally liked by them, he must have given them a most inadequate idea of his abilities. If his French sentences

¹ No uneducated Frenchman can use the invaluable conjunctive pronoun *dont*.

could have been taken down exactly as he spoke them, word for word, and so printed, every line would have contained several gross blunders. And when we reflect that he was accustomed to deliver French of that quality to ears so sensitive that the mere misplacing or omission of an accent struck them as something almost intolerable, we understand what French politeness really is.

Having fully admitted the necessity of scholarship, particularly for writing and for social intercourse with cultivated persons, I have now to add that scholarship, by itself, can never lead to mastery, and that the commonest cause of disappointment in the learning of languages is to expect from it powers and facilities that it never has given and never can give. Scholarship does not even give the power of *reading* in the true meaning of the word. It enables us to construe, to explain the construction of passages, but not to read, as we read English. The verb "to read" as used by students contains a flattering over-estimate of their own powers. They say they are "reading" Latin and Greek when the process is quite of a different kind. In reading we see the sense of a passage at a glance and appreciate the value of every word. We feel the effect of the passage as a whole, yet at the same time we perceive the significance of every detail. The scientific analysis of passages is not the reception and appreciation of literature; it is one of the varieties of anatomy. One cannot be thinking about grammar and literature at the same time.

The best evidence of the insufficiency of scholarship is that it never enables the pupil either to speak a foreign language or to write it with real facility. There are eminent Frenchmen whose knowledge of English is scholarly and nothing else, and they can neither speak English nor understand it when it is spoken. Their knowledge of English is dead; they have anatomized the language as if it were a corpse. No living Englishman would attach the slightest importance to their opinions about our literature. Not being able to pronounce our language, they can neither appreciate the melodies and harmonies of English verse, nor the cadences of English prose. One of my sons attended a lecture on "The Merchant of Venice" given in Paris by a famous French authority on the English language. As the lecturer could not pronounce English, and did not know on what syllables our tonic accent fell, he had invented the most ingenious theories to account for the construction of Shakespeare's verses, not as we should read them, but as he read them himself. Here is a single instance. The learned lecturer pronounced the second syllable in *Venice* like the

adjective *nice* and passed over the first letter *e*, so transforming the word to "Vnīce." Fancy how Byron's lines would read under such treatment!

"O Vnice, Vnice, when thy marble halls
Are level with the waters," etc.

I have often seriously and unaffectedly doubted whether the scholarly knowledge of languages, taken by itself, was of any real value or use. For some years I believed it to be of the same value as a knowledge of heraldry or numismatics; that is, something to interest a curious or occupy a vacant mind. My present opinion is that scholarship, by itself, is of some practical use in making us independent of untrustworthy translators. There are two opinions about the habit of reading translations. One eminent writer says that however laboriously we puzzle out an authentic original text with a dictionary, it is still far better for us than any translation can be. Another eminent writer and scholar told me that in his opinion it was a waste of effort to make out any difficult original when translators have done the work; it was like hewing one's way through a forest when there is a good road in the same direction. I admit that even moderate scholarship is of great literary use in enabling one to see whether the translator's expressions are to be found in the original or not. If we have not at least scholarship enough to refer to the original whenever a doubt arises, we are utterly at the mercy of translators; that is, of a most unscrupulous class of men who put the living author on a bed of Procrustes, elongating or mutilating at their convenience. There are also many books, useful at least for historical reference, of which no complete translation exists.

If a student has a natural taste for grammar and philology, he will work patiently at difficult texts in languages he can never hope to master; but if his natural gift is for literature, as literature, he will be impatient of the slow and difficult labor, and turn for his reading to some language that he really possesses, nearly always his own. It therefore happens that the love of reading, instead of being an incentive to the acquisition of linguistic science, acts as a deterrent. The philologist goes to his dictionary as to an interesting museum; the reader thinks of every reference to it as an interruption.

The literary rewards of scholarship are few. I never have met a foreign scholar who could appreciate English poetry. In moods of perfect candor, foreign scholars confess honestly that they cannot hear any music in the most musical English verse, that it seems to them

only prose in a metrical form, and that even its prosody is unintelligible. As professors, they sometimes criticise our poets with results like the following, from a French edition of "Childe Harold," with numerous and profoundly learned notes:

"There sunk the greastest,¹ nor the worst of men
Whose spirit, antithetically mixt,
One moment of the mightiest and again
On little objects with like firmness fixt ;"

"Il semble que *the mightiest objects* étant régi par le verbe *fixt* (pour *fixed*) la préposition qui convenait ici n'était pas *of*, mais *on*, comme dans le second membre de la phrase (*on little objects*). Toutes les éditions portent cependant la préposition *of*."

There is no blundering so delightful as learned blundering. Imagine the advantages of French boys with this edition in their hands! The concluding sentence about *toutes les éditions* is delicious.

I never met a Frenchman who had either mastered English or gained any vital knowledge of the language by the methods of scholarship alone, and I never met with an Englishman who by "sound learning" had gained any clear sense of the delicacy and appropriateness of French expression. Yet these modern languages are said to be easy in comparison with ancient Greek, and if "sound learning" only leads, in their case, to a more or less elaborate kind of misunderstanding, it is hard to see how a knowledge of Greek, if acquired only by the same inadequate methods, can be much better.

II. Assimilation. The defect of scholarship is that, taken by itself, it does not insure assimilation. The language learned by grammar and dictionary does not become a part of ourselves. The assimilating power exists in the most various degrees, and is usually called "a talent for languages." The degree of assimilating power, in the same individual, may vary with the languages with which he has to deal. This brings us to the deepest and most mysterious of all questions concerning language—its adaptability to our mental needs. If the genius of a language answers to your own mental nature, you will assimilate it easily; if not, you could not assimilate it in a hundred years.²

¹ The misprint is in the French edition.

² Mentally running over a list of forty or fifty people known to me, I feel well able to divide them into those who might learn a foreign language if they would take the trouble, and those (the majority) who could not possibly learn one if they toiled till the crack of doom. The difference consists chiefly in the presence or absence of the assimilating power. Amongst Englishmen, I could name a dozen who might learn German well, but never French.

When there has been real assimilation it is proved by this, that the words and expressions seem to us perfectly natural and so closely connected with the things and ideas signified that we do not think of them, but only of what is meant by them. Language is a medium that becomes more and more transparent as it is more our own, and, when completely assimilated, language itself gives place to the thoughts and images which it evokes. If a language is too narrow for our needs, we never shall really assimilate it, because our minds will not be able to move easily and freely in its narrow space.¹ No cultivated modern mind would be able to move freely within the limits of ancient Hebrew. A modern Englishman needs a range equivalent to that of English. Still more difficult is it for a half-cultivated intellect to assimilate one of the great languages of modern culture. The uneducated Englishman gets only so much French or German as is suitable to an uneducated mind. In the learning of foreign languages no one can go beyond his tether. The utmost result of assimilation is to give us, in another tongue, the possibility of expressing ourselves fully. We can never express anything greater than ourselves.

When the mother-tongue is primitive and narrow, and consequently unsuited to the expression of advanced and complex thought and knowledge, culture is usually obtained through the medium of another language which is perfectly assimilated by use, and substitutes itself for the mother-tongue. A Scottish Highlander may use Gaelic in his father's cottage, but in the schools of Glasgow or Edinburgh he uses English because the sciences he has to acquire cannot be taught in Gaelic; and ever after, though he may talk to his father in Gaelic about the simple events of his native glen and its primitive interests of pastoral life and the chase, he will think in English about his studies. French has been adopted by the cultivated Russians for the same reason, and I see now that the Japanese students in Japan itself are inclining to the adoption of European languages, because the Japanese tongue is not sufficiently developed for their work. These cases of *forced* assimilation must occur frequently, as culture must necessarily find for itself an adequate expression and will take up a foreign language if the native one does not answer the purpose.

¹ This might, perhaps, be more precisely stated by saying that a narrow language may be assimilated by the sub-mind of a cultivated person, but not by his higher mind. I was at one time master of one of the most uncouth varieties of the Lancashire dialect, and could think in it for all very simple matters; but the moment my attention turned to anything connected with philosophy or the fine arts, I was forced to think in pure English or French.

The teaching of languages being usually confined to the methods of scholarship, with its partial success and persistent causes of failure, we may ask whether it would not be possible to produce assimilation by artificial means, to train the pupil in such a manner that the language shall become part of himself. The answer is that *if the language suited his idiosyncrasy he could do it for himself, but that no teacher could do it for him.* With a considerable appearance of industry, the great majority of learners do not in reality move themselves in the matter. They expect the master to do the work, whilst they are to be almost passive recipients. The consequence is that after dawdling over a language for eight or ten years, they can neither speak it nor write it, whilst even their reading can only be called reading by a polite fiction. Supposing, however, that a young student cared to assimilate a language really suited to his nature, I believe that Professor Blackie's method would be found the best. He recommended the learner to attach words to tangible or at least visible objects. If you are learning Greek, repeat the Greek name for every object in the presence of the thing itself and whilst you are looking at it. By so doing, you will associate the vocabulary with nature in your mind. We may also fasten expression to action by constantly saying to ourselves, in the foreign language, what we have just done or what we are going to do. It is good to keep a diary in the language we have to learn. In a word, if we desire to assimilate a language, we must make it a part of our life, and in most cases this is done only with the native tongue.

The degree of assimilation may be tested by the question: Do you ever find yourself using the foreign language involuntarily? Do you think in it, or dream in it, or write it involuntarily? Mr. G. A. Sala, who is of Italian origin, writes English well, but says that he always thinks in Italian; in such a case English may be well known, but it is not completely assimilated. I have spoken of writing a foreign language involuntarily. What I mean is that if you have really assimilated a foreign language it may happen to you, as it has often happened to me, to make an entry in your note-book in the foreign tongue, quite unconsciously, or to write the first page of a letter in English and the second, after turning the leaf, with the same speed and unconsciousness in French or German as the case may be. It is a misfortune when a foreign tongue becomes in the least degree preponderant so as to impede the free use of the native language. That is too heavy a price to pay for any degree of linguistic attainment. Cavour

spoke French better than Italian. He probably did most of his thinking in French. A very good test of assimilation is our *seriousness* in the use of a foreign language. If it seems to you slightly absurd, so that you cannot speak it without feeling like a comedian acting a ridiculous part in a play, you have not assimilated it. If you can talk in it seriously to a man on his death-bed, the probability is that there is real assimilation. Again, the language you will use when angry is always one that you have assimilated. Vulgar people with superficial refinement revert to vulgar expressions in their wrath. At such times accents will be heard again that the angry man has been at the greatest pains to correct.

Strong individuality in character is against assimilation unless it is accompanied by exceptional powers of mimicry. A famous Scotchman, certainly one of the most able men of his time, told me that he had never been able to learn a foreign language.¹ George Eliot had a rare power of acquiring languages for the purpose of reading, but could speak no language comfortably except her own. Disraeli never could speak French, and took an interpreter with him to Berlin. Bismarck is more of a linguist, but does not like too much perfection in the use of a foreign language, because it seems to denationalize a man. He says he does not like an Englishman who speaks French like a Frenchman, a misfortune little to be apprehended.

III. Mastery. So few people master their own tongue that it seems almost superfluous to consider the possibility of mastering any other. In the fine arts we do not call any one a master unless he has both power and facility in execution; the possession of knowledge is not enough. A musician must execute a rapid passage both rapidly and correctly at the same time—if it is marked *prestissimo*, he has to play it *prestissimo*. A painter is not a master unless, in addition to his knowledge, he has power of manual execution, the power that is called "handling." No one can be said to have mastered a language unless he can read, write, and speak it both rapidly and correctly; and not only correctly, but with the most varied and delicate shades of expression. The words should be the right words effectively placed and judiciously connected, pronounced, too, with just the degree of emphasis that lends them the intended degree of significance. There should be no hesitation, no going back to correct a faulty phrase, no

¹ There was no need for him to tell me this. I knew very well before that he was one of those persons, often very able in other ways, who cannot force their thoughts into the moulds of a foreign tongue.

addition to complete an imperfect statement. The hearer listens to a master of language with delightful feelings of satisfaction.

In every country a few highly educated natives, with strong inborn gifts of utterance, attain this perfect skill. Their talk, at its best, is so superior to common talk that it seems almost a language of the gods. For a foreigner to try to rival them is as if a flute-player were to contend with Joachim on the violin. But the foreigner may at least try not to be slovenly; and if he tries at all, how seldom he succeeds! I have seen a statement in an English educational newspaper that any young lady can "master French" by spending a winter in Paris. Mastery, indeed! I could name an Englishwoman who has lived eighteen years in a French school, and has not yet been able to learn either the genders or the irregular verbs. I know just one lady, one only, who has the purest French of Paris for her Parisian guests, and the best of English for me. To hear her easy alternate use of the two languages, always without a fault, is one of the rarest of linguistic pleasures.¹

One word in conclusion about the moral side of linguistic studies. Mr. Anthony Trollope called Greek the "pride-producing language." That can be only because our Greek scholars have no ancient Athenians to set them in their proper places. In modern languages there is never any room for pride. One of three things always happens: 1. You have poor opportunities and speak badly, a case neither for glory nor shame. 2. You have good opportunities and speak badly, in which case you ought to be ashamed of your laziness and inaccuracy. 3. You have extraordinary opportunities and speak well, a very rare case indeed; but then you can only compare yourself with the few whose opportunities have been equal to your own. The only temper that makes any linguistic acquirement possible is that of patient submission to endless correction; and as all young people detest correction and elderly ones take it as derogatory to their dignity, the rarity of the needful humility may be the true reason why languages are so carelessly studied and so imperfectly acquired.

P. G. HAMERTON.

¹ As some too clever reviewer may say that this is an allusion to Mrs. Hamerton, I may explain that it refers to another lady. This lady is English on her father's side and French on her mother's. She is the only person I ever have met who speaks the two languages in perfection. Being curious in these matters, I inquired whether both were equally easy to the speaker. She said, "No, I feel more at home in French."

REFORMATORY PRISONS AS SCHOOLS OF CRIME.

"THE stability of the state," says Solon, "rests upon two pillars: the first of these is punishment, and the second reward." All history and all scripture, sacred and profane, sustain the truth and wisdom of this axiom. But our prison reformers tell us that in this matter all history is misleading and all scripture mistaken; for, according to their view, we must remove the first of these supports and do away with punishment altogether.

Sixty-four years ago the great and good Sir Walter Scott, whose kindness of heart was never questioned, and whose position as clerk of a court gave him special opportunities for judging, wrote in his "Journal" of the first of prison reformers: "The philanthropy of Howard has risen to a pitch of insanity." "Yet," he adds, "without these extraordinary men prisons would have remained the same dungeons they were forty years ago. I do not see the propriety, however, of making them dandy places of detention. They should be a place of punishment, and this they can hardly be if men are better lodged and better fed than they were when at large." Our unselfish heroes of a single idea are doing great deeds and noble, with their eyes firmly fixed on the sorrows of the desolate, the outcast, and the oppressed. But let us more closely examine the new theory of our active reformers, as expressed in their recent public utterances.

First: the Rev. Philip Moxom, at a meeting of the association of philanthropic gentlemen known as the Massachusetts Prison Reform Association, announced that the person whom we have generally regarded as responsible for the crime he commits is not the real criminal. "Society is really responsible for his crime." Is not this dangerously near what Carlyle calls "the greatest calamity that can befall a nation," a "weakening of the righteous hatred of evil"? The Rev. Mr. Barnes, too, Chaplain of the Massachusetts State Prison, on the same occasion said: "The whole idea of our penal institutions seems to be radically wrong. A man is not sent to jail to be punished." This is the view lately promulgated also at the International Prison Reform Congress in Europe. Mr. Barnes adds: "The criminal, instead of being punished, should be taught moral and intellectual beau-