

are others fully as serious. Most fallacious of all is the notion that one study contributes as much as another to that general development of the mind which must be the primary aim of any college education worthy of the name. And when it comes to the objections that are not inherent but which experience shows to be of the utmost practical importance, we are confronted with the fact that in thousands of cases studies are chosen with no other measure of their attractiveness than that furnished by their standing in the scale of "soft snaps." All this the Harvard authorities are preparing to do away with; and to substitute for it something approaching the coherence and balance of the old college course, which, whatever its faults, was successful in building up, generation after generation, men who justly bore the title of gentleman and scholar.

THE GAY SCIENCE OF PHILOLOGY.

Philologists pass for dull dogs. Deeply immersed in severe studies, they preach and are supposed to practise a scientific method of inhuman exactitude. Many of them admit this, and the solemn occasions on which they convene are frequently enlivened by discussion whether, for the good of the feeble-minded greater number, philology ought not really to loosen up. But it can easily be shown that, far from being the most precise of the sciences, philology is, in actual practice, one of the most romantic of the arts. These grave men are inwardly fond adventurers and their trade as hazardous as the quest of samphire.

Only consider the interpretation of that charming Middle English poem, "The Pearl," which Professor Gollancz first rescued from the files of the Early English Text Society. Five translations and commentaries have ensued. Now, the especial point about this very pretty poem is that it either is or isn't that quite slippery thing, an allegory. It appears to be a lament for a little girl who is dead, whose purity is symbolized by the pearl. It is certain, that is, that the pearl means the girl, and it may well be that both, after approved mediæval fashion, mean something else. Hard words have passed on this issue, and in more robust days blood would doubtless have been shed. Where the

fun really comes in is not in the rightness or wrongness of the partisans, but in the fact that half a dozen scholars of repute, professing to translate this poem for us laymen, have so garbled the meaning as to prove that the pearl was a real girl. Professor Schofield of Harvard, who is of the other opinion, has relentlessly shown them up in the vivacious periodical published by the Modern Language Association. One of them had inferred from the reality of the bereavement—itsself an inference—an entire domestic tragedy. Somewhere, if he is rightly translated, the poet declares that he has been two years alone. Clearly, his wife has left him, and, that being so, she may have gone off with another man, accentuating the husband's grief for the loss of his daughter. The pearl, or is it the girl? is once spoken of as "secret," which gives only too much reason to suppose that the innocent heroine of the poem was illegitimate. So philology has dealt with one piece of literature, and yet they say the philologists are prosaic fellows. Turpin himself never more deftly lightened a heavy purse of its superfluous coin than these translators, quite unconsciously and after the manner of genius, deprived the "Pearl" of all evidence controverting their theories.

If the gayety of a science depends upon the temper of its devotees, evidently philology will not fit into the dismal category. But romance requires also the air of varied circumstance. Here, too, the philologer walks in wide-eyed expectancy. From the sands of Turkestan have come recently the fragments of a new Aryan language. The discovery of an inscribed spear-head might any day establish a new theory or mortally smite an old one. Years ago Professor Sievers declared that certain portions of the Anglo-Saxon poem of the Creation abounded in Continental words and phrases, and must be a translation from an Old Saxon original. For some time his rivals cheerfully demonstrated that he knew neither Old Saxon nor Anglo-Saxon. It looked as if his theory must remain in the limbo of unproved hypotheses. But one day another German scholar was rummaging in the Vatican library, and that day, in William James's pregnant words, "truth occurred" to Professor Sievers's theory—a sheet from the posited Old Saxon poem turned up in a book-binding. Here

are suggested hazards of scholastic fortunes with which mere prospecting for gold or cornering cotton cannot vie.

With philologists one is ever in the realm of the imagination. Prof. Brand Matthews takes occasion in his recently published essay on the Speech of the People to praise King Alfred for his "intuitive knowledge" of the profound truth that language "lives in common speech and in daily use, rather than in grammar and in dictionary." See how the philological fancy glorifies Alfred for what the common man would suppose the great king couldn't help doing. But Professor Matthews sees vividly the insidious perils that hung over the grave origins of English prose. Had not Alfred had that instinct for colloquialism, he might easily have been perverted through reading the glossaries in Sweet's Earliest English Texts or similar organs of pedantry. Thus the infant English language might have been broken down at the outset by the sheer weight of its polysyllabic swaddling clothes. And note that it takes the trained philological imagination to perceive this service to England and the world. All of which brings us back to our original contention that, as sciences go, philology is distinctly in the gay division. If a philologist ever seems a dull dog; look out for him. He really is bursting with romance, and if you thwart him he may do you an injury.

GAMES AND TALK.

In formally opening the new links at Gravesend, the other day, Mr. Arthur Balfour made a short speech about golf. Even his oratorical genius was unequal to saying anything new on the subject, but he did say something that appears not to be true. Deprecating the practice of calling upon a public man—already sick unto death with much speaking—to make an address on every conceivable occasion, Mr. Balfour contended that speech-making was peculiarly inappropriate to golf, since it was "a game to be played and not to be talked about."

If this was meant for satire, nothing is to be said except that it was too subtle. As a matter of fact, talking about golf is one of the great and established features of the game. Ask the despairing wives who have to listen to all the

details of the match fought over again at dinner! Freeman's disgust at the "chatter about Harriet" was no greater than that of many a non-golfer compelled to listen to endless explanations of the way in which the ball became unplayable on the thirteenth and hung on the edge of the cup on the last hole. Veterans fighting their battles over again are not a circumstance to the long explanations of golf strategy and the "most wonderful shot I ever made," which go on with inexhaustible zest on club piazzas and around the tables in the café. Condemn the inveterate golfer to silence about his favorite sport, and it would lose half its charm.

What Mr. Balfour seems to have confused is the rule of taciturnity while actually playing, and the rule of limitless discussion and living the scene over again when the match is finally lost or won. Strict observers of golf etiquette go over the course like so many Trappists. The tradition of silence on the links is ancient and severe. Stories and facts without end illustrate it. There were the two old Scotchmen who played a closely-contested round without a word or whisper, until one of them uttered a golfer's oath as his ball jumped out of the cup on the eighteenth hole. The other turned upon him in a fury at his "unbridled loquacity." The conviction is generally held that the best players are the most close-mouthed. The man whom Walter Travis defeated in the finals for the British amateur championship wrote afterwards that the American was the most silent golfer he had ever encountered. His single remark to his opponent during the whole thirty-six holes was: "You are driving a very long ball." This is the kind of golden silence on the links which Mr. Balfour may have had in mind.

There is, to be sure, what is known as "conversational golf," in which contestants are privileged by agreement to keep up a ceaseless patter of guying and banter between strokes, but that is admitted to be a shameless departure from the rigors of the game. Yet the most punctilious player, who holds it a sacred obligation to let his words be few in the course of actual play, feels at liberty to overflow when it is ended. Then come the joyous recollections of the exact difficult lie and the astonishing recovery, the long and absorbing

post-mortems, the nice pointing out just where the match was lost, the conclusive demonstration that if a wooden club had only been taken instead of an iron, or the ball not fallen into a heel-print in the hazard, a glorious victory would have resulted. There is also the utterly illimitable talk about the make of clubs and style of shoes and stance and swing and grip, which flows on no less fatedly and in much greater volume than Tennyson's brook. Golf not to be talked about! Why, it is one of the greatest provocatives to conversation ever brought into this tongue-wagging world.

It is true of all popular games that talking about them is inseparable from playing them. Fancy what would happen to academic conversation if its one great theme for a large part of the college year were to be taken away. Football gives its chief color to the speech of thousands of undergraduates for weeks and months. Before the season opens, there is the vast discussion of plans and possibilities. While the games are playing, the rising hope of American culture can talk of nothing else. After the last struggle has been fought out, there come the long regrets that its strategy or personnel had not been different; and the undergraduate mind carries the matter well into the winter, until it is time to enliven the conversation by speculating on the chances of the nine and the crew in the spring. If it were not for games and talk about them, we should not have any of that play of wit and fancy, and that mind sharpening mind, which this athletic age has made such a social staple. No games, no conversation. A young lady of our acquaintance put the case exactly as it is. She was thrown into the company of a college senior, with whom she endeavored to make talk. "I tried him on books," she said, "but only made him uncomfortable. I asked him about the theatre, but he merely looked blank. I inquired what he thought about politics, but found that he had no thoughts. Then I saw what had to be done, and suggested athletics. Instantly he brightened up, ran on fluently for an hour, and concluded that I was not such a fool as he had feared." So we see that the game may not be worth the candle, but is certainly worth the talk.

RECENT FRENCH HISTORY.

PARIS, December 2.

The latest of the many volumes which Emile Ollivier has in his old age written on "*L'Empire Libéral*" (Garnier), in which the history-making activities of his prime were spent long ago, practically concludes his *Apologia pro Vita sua*. It must be said that time, with its appeasements, had already proceeded to his essential justification. Never was a French minister more vituperated by his countrymen of every degree. After their crushing defeat by Germany, they were bound to find scapegoats. In 1867 Republican agitators had prevented the efficacious army reform urged by Marshal Niel. In the fatal July session of Parliament in 1870, Gambetta shouted loudest for war and branded opposition as *scélérat*. They profited by the Emperor's defeat, which was at the same time a national disaster, to work their Revolution; and when this, instead of mending matters, ended them by the loss of two provinces, they turned first, ungallantly, against the Empress Eugénie—it had been "her war" all along—next against Emile Ollivier, Prime Minister when they forced the Emperor to war against his own feeling and judgment. Ollivier's unhappy phrase of the *cœur léger*, with which he looked forward to the war he had in reality opposed, was taken from its context and for many years he sank under its opprobrium. He has bided his time. Has he justified himself now? Essentially, yes—and, along with himself, the Empress, who was never a friend of his, but whose rôle was grossly exaggerated from social and religious as well as political hatred. Her utterance as she escaped from the Tuileries still best sums up that closing of an historical epoch: "We have been dupes!"

The story is long, but it is well told by this too theoretical statesman who was a chief actor in it and who remains a master rhetorician. The importance of these volumes extends far beyond the defence of their author and the rectification of still burning disputes. The "*Liberal Empire*" was a spontaneous progress of the French people toward representation by an executive power. Its utter failure has left France under the absolute sovereignty of the legislative body in the present Parliamentary Republic. The details of the diplomacy at Ems and the political workings at Paris are here told by one who knows, and, on the whole, with surprising impartiality.

"Napoléon III, devant l'histoire" (Dujarric), by Pierre Gérard, is a popular volume intended to lift the clouds from the memory of the *grand méconnu*. The undoubted progress and material prosperity of France under the hapless Emperor furnish easy arguments,