

Mr. Hooker, consists in facing risks." And like other Regius Professors of Oxford, he wasn't far wrong. I believe I am one of the few elderly dons who have been run over by an undergraduate, but he was on a "push bike," and I think few members of the Senate have appreciated the nobblyness of a bicycle as I appreciated it when I was lying on the ground and it was lying on my back and a heavy undergraduate was lying on it. However, we picked each other up, and he was so frightened and apologetic that I had to hold his hand and comfort him instead of upbraiding him, as really I suppose I ought to have done.

The attempt to check progression by petrol is like Mrs. Partington's effort to keep back the Atlantic, and is likely to be about as successful. After all, it is really a matter for the police. If driven too far, the undergraduate will simply take to flying. You can get a perfectly good secondhand flying machine for far less than a motor bicycle; and the Air Force is doing what it can to encourage aviation amongst our students. Flying will inevitably meet with similar opposition, and proposals will undoubtedly be made to net in the College courts.

ENGLISH-SPEAKING MEDICINE

MODERN medicine is an international product for all mankind. Frontiers mean nothing to it, except in so far as they may complicate such problems as the fight against infection. The development of national feeling since the War has been of no service whatever to medical science. It is time to return to the great spirit of the International Medical Congress, last held in London in the year 1913. The hero of that occasion, applauded by all alike, was the German-Jew, Paul Ehrlich, the founder of chemotherapy and the creator of salvarsan, or 606. All nations united to honour him. The President, Sir Thomas Barlow, acclaimed the idea of peace, as part of our underlying principles, and declared, alas! that the prospect of "bloody strife," after such a Congress, was unthinkable. We were to have met in Munich in 1917, and no one knows when we shall meet again.

Meanwhile the spirit of "Chauvinism in Medicine," to quote the title of a paper by Sir William Osler, needs to be exorcised. He actually declared that medicine was more international in the seventeenth century, for instance, than in our own day, and he called nationalism in medicine "the great curse of humanity."* The words of this incomparable teacher, who successively professed Medicine in his native Canada, in the United States and in the England of his ancestors, recall certain sentences from the later addresses of Pasteur, who sought to honour his own beloved country by the service of all mankind.

In the fight against what Osler called "a cursed spirit of intolerance, conceived in distrust and bred in ignorance, that makes the mental attitude perennially antagonistic to everything foreign, that subordinates everywhere the race to the nation, forgetting the higher claims of human brotherhood," a special duty devolves upon the English-speaking peoples. Modern medicine owes a great debt to men who have thought and written in the tongue that Shakespeare spake. The distribution of that tongue is world-wide, and no one whose habit it is to attend the periodic Babels called International Congresses, during which most of the time is occupied in listening to imperfect translations of the foregoing speech, can under-rate the practical advantage of this English tongue, which is already an international language. Further, in the

English-speaking world there is a certain attitude of humanity, a certain spirit in the hospital, seen at its best in the "voluntary system" of which we are so proud, that by no means is reflected in, let us say, the vast institutions of Berlin or Vienna. And we English speakers do not need to wait for the long delayed defervescence of the War-spirit in order to "get together" in matters medical forthwith.

This week there have been welcomed to our shores several hundred doctors, mostly recent graduates, who propose to hold here, for the first time outside their own country, the Inter-State Post-Graduate Assembly of America. This is an annual affair for post-graduate work, and now the work is to be done on "foreign" soil. But the soil of Hunter and Harvey and Lister and Horsley cannot be foreign to any real doctor. Our visitors will study our hospitals, which will be open to them, and they will confer with the leaders of the profession in this country. They will not forget that the present splendid standard of medical education in their own country and the widespread belief there that the doctor must perpetually keep up with the times by post-graduate work owe everything to the Canadian-born Cornishman, who taught medicine at Johns Hopkins before he came to Oxford, and who, almost single-handed, raised the standard of medical education and the status of medicine in America, as Florence Nightingale, almost single-handed, created the modern nursing profession in England.

At the medical events of June, in London, our Dominions must surely prick up their ears. For them, surely, London should be the great centre for post-graduate work, to which members of the medical profession should repair when they can, and receive what no other city on the earth should so fully and easily be able to afford them. But, indeed, it has long been and still is a reproach to London that its incomparable wealth of what doctors call "clinical material" is so largely wasted, and that no post-graduate work really worthy of its prestige and size is done in this vast metropolis. The visit of these American doctors will be of immense service to ourselves, for it requires that we shall here organize *ad hoc* post-graduate services for their advantage, and surely here must be the nucleus of a permanent organization which, in coming years, may at last become really worthy of London, and constitute a magnet for parties of doctors from the Dominions to visit, every year, thus serving several good causes all in one. We sadly need some such stimulus as this visit will afford. London has never yet been the great medical centre, organized, directive, copious, that it should be. We still lack a real University in this metropolis: for examining and granting degrees are all very well, but they are very far from fully embodying "the spirit of a University." Nor should the least boon of such a visit as this be the development of a more general desire for post-graduate work amongst medical practitioners in this country. London must really be organized for that purpose. It is utterly ridiculous that doctors should, as in many instances, be introduced to new developments by patients who have read a medical article in the Press and then inquire about it; and it is much worse than ridiculous that great and epoch-making discoveries, like the iodine-prophylaxis of a vast range of disease, should remain unused in this country because the work happens to have been done not here, but in the United States and Switzerland.

Enough of such folly. Let us welcome our guests and inspire ourselves with these words of Pasteur:—

"Two contrary laws seem to be wrestling with each other nowadays: the one, a law of blood and death, ever imagining new means of destruction and forcing nations to be constantly

* The reader should consult Dr. Harvey Cushing's great biography of this perfect doctor. (*Sir William Osler*. Oxford University Press. Two volumes. 37s. 6d.)

ready for the battlefield; the other, a law of peace, work and health, ever evolving new means of delivering man from the scourges which beset him. The one seeks violent conquests, the other the relief of humanity. The one places one human life above any victory, while the former would sacrifice hundreds and thousands of lives to the ambition of one. The law of which we are the instruments seeks, even in the midst of carnage, to cure the sanguinary ills of the law of war; the treatment inspired by our antiseptic methods may preserve thousands of soldiers. Which of these two laws will ultimately prevail, God alone knows. But we may assert that French science will have tried, by obeying the law of humanity, to extend the frontiers of life. And you, delegates from foreign nations, . . . you bring me the deepest joy that can be felt by a man whose invincible belief is that science and peace will triumph over ignorance and war, that nations will unite, not to destroy, but to build, and that the future will belong to those who will have done most for suffering humanity."

"There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered." And these have now their natal hour.

CRUSADER.

OLD AND MIDDLE ENGLISH AT OXFORD

[Not only at Oxford but at Cambridge a fashion has spread of condemning the study of pre-Chaucerian literature. Undergraduates and the parents of undergraduates naturally take a lively interest in this subject. The article below is a spirited defence of the established practice.]

IT has been contended that to compel the study of pre-Chaucerian literature in the "English School" at Oxford is pedantic, vexatious, and unprofitable. Those who hold this opinion argue that undergraduates are forced to waste their time in tedious and futile application to a language difficult and dead, and to texts of no literary merit; further, that these pursuits lead them ultimately into the arms of that Bedlam's Procuress, Philology. Students, they assert, would gain, by ignoring Old and Early Middle English altogether, and by starting directly with Chaucer, the obscurities of whose dialect are not impenetrable, and the excellences of whose matter and style are admitted.

The official disregard of these suggestions is not, as is commonly supposed, part of the natural pedantry of Dons, but is founded in the conviction that the objections, however plausible, to the study of our older literature draw their substance from fallacy and superstition.

The charms of the Lady Philologia, her dangers and her delights, need not here be considered: comparatively few lose their reason in a debauch of *umlauts* and mutations; and it may be supposed that a sanity disordered by these would be disordered by any studies.

But it is a superstition (and one of comparatively modern growth) to suppose that nothing but what appeals easily and at once to a student's sensibility should be admitted to a curriculum, a fallacy to think that education can be achieved by eliminating "drudgery." Indeed, it is only by "drudgery" that a man can reach the deep heart of his work, the real vitality of its interest; cursory appreciation is worthless and superficial. Idleness and inexactitude of thought, and a disposition to trust in those hopeless "general impressions" of a period, must be the only outcome of a system that makes its only and perpetual appeal to the voluptuous love of "fine passages" of easy reading: if it were not so, the business of the "English School" were easily accomplished by some compendious anthology of selected delicacies from the great writers.

But even so, students of Old English are not asked to live by drudgery alone; for it is a further delusion to imagine the ancient texts inferior in "literary" interest

to many of the more modern writings which no one would dream of excluding from the syllabus. Anyone who has taken the trouble to read *Beowulf* will recognize an economy and a proportion in it superior to those in, say, *The Duchess of Malfi*, a presentation of living characters, and a beauty of phrase not much, if at all, inferior. If Lawman's *Brut* is dull, what can be said of *Euphues*? *The Dunciad* is too often a "Triumph of Dullness"; and many students would agree with the verdict of Miss Thorpe in *Northanger Abbey* (if not quite in the sense she intended) that *Sir Charles Grandison* is "an amazing horrid book."

But, as has been said, the intrinsic interest of any one piece of writing, or group of writings, has nothing to do with its suitability for inclusion in the "English School" syllabus. For if many books are dull and difficult in themselves, none are not endowed with the interest of their place in the evolution of our literature. Suppose a student to be started at Chaucer: is he to accept him as a sudden emanation in the void, a poetic First Cause, the Adam of English Poetry? And how is he to regard Langland, Chaucer's contemporary, or to explain the phenomenon of two such diverse styles, each perfect in its kind, as appear in *Piers Plowman* and *Troilus and Criseyde*? It is not enough for him to be told that the former is the swan-song of a long and moribund tradition into which he need not enquire, and the latter a child of the Anglo-Norman manner, with Boccaccio for god-father, about whom he need not trouble his head. And is he to remain ignorant of the fact that shortly before Chaucer, England produced a very perfect but anonymous exponent of both these styles, who bequeathed *The Pearl* and *Sir Gawain* to the puzzlement and admiration of posterity?

But apart from the necessity for a student of English literature to have an understanding of its evolution (without which it is impossible for him to have any very valuable opinion on the merits of Chaucer—or on those of the Sitwells, for that matter), it is necessary to offer his mind some exercise more intense than that of perusing texts in his own familiar tongue. The very ease of reading a modern (Jane Austen, for instance) lulls the faculty of critical awareness; a syllabus which included nothing but easily intelligible texts would atrophy discrimination; for those who are allowed to "settle *δτι*'s business" by ignoring *δτι*, are not fitted for greater matters.

Slipshod work is the chief danger against which all "Schools," but particularly the "English School," have to contend. It is well known how easy it is to offer plausible and even ecstatic criticisms of books that have not been read, and what facilities there are for imitating the rhapsodies of the Romantic Critics, without betraying fundamental ignorance. Old and Middle English offer a training of conscientious work, and Dryasdust teaches his pupils to discriminate, and to feel genuinely for their personal perspectives; and if the School of English Language and Literature does not produce these qualities, it may as well acquiesce at once in Pope's gloomy prediction that "such as Chaucer is, shall Dryden be."

N. C.

CHANGES OF ADDRESS.

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