

## CLASSICAL EDUCATION IN GERMANY.

(Translated from the German original.)

## LETTER II.

SIR,—I take up my subject where I left it at the close of my former letter.

It is becoming more and more widely recognized that Greek is the kernel of the teaching of the *Gymnasium*: indeed, it has been proposed, by Herbart for instance, that the study of the ancient languages should begin with Greek, or even, as a Swiss philosopher (A. Stadler, *Ueber die Aufgabe der Mittelschule*, 1887) would have it, that Greek should be studied to the exclusion of Latin. These are extreme views: I believe, indeed, that on the whole the present arrangement is the right one. Latin is indispensable: it is a discipline in logic and grammar, and therefore it is right that it should be begun before Greek and should have more importance attached to it in the lower classes. On the other hand, I am certainly of the opinion that higher up in the school the relation should be reversed, and that a larger number of hours should be assigned to Greek. At present in the Prima Greek, with six weekly hours, comes behind Latin which has seven or eight. In Prussia, since 1882, the commencement of Greek has been postponed from the Quarta to the Unter-tertia.<sup>1</sup> It may be questioned whether this measure, which was accompanied by an increase in the hours given to mathematics, was a wise one; but Baden has now had a considerable experience of its effects, and I believe that with the six school-years which are now at the teacher's disposal satisfactory results may be attained, especially if, as I have just said, an increase of the hours for Greek from six to eight be accompanied by a decrease of those for Latin from eight to six in the Prima. The total number of hours in a week given to Greek varies in the different German States between forty-six (in some schools in Mecklenburg) and thirty-six (in Bavaria, Baden, Alsace): Prussia stands between the two extremes with forty.

The objects of the teacher of Greek are thus defined by the Prussian Scheme of Instruction of March 31, 1882: 'Sound knowledge of Attic Accidence; acquaintance with the Accidence of the Epic dialect: knowledge of the chief rules of Syntax, together with a wide vocabulary. The reading of the most important classical works, both in prose and poetry, is to be as extensive as the time at disposal will allow, the object being to create a permanent impression of the value of Greek Literature and of its influence on the development of the literature of modern times.' The instruction begins with grammar. Teachers were for a time dazzled by the new light of Comparative Philology and wished to make more use than is possible of the discoveries in this science, and especially to use it in teaching beginners: but the attempt was soon given up, and we confine ourselves to the portions of the science which are adapted to school teaching, roughly speaking to that which is contained in Georg Curtius' *School Greek Grammar* (which has appeared in many editions since 1852: compare also the same author's *Explanations to my School Greek Grammar*, second edition, 1870) or to that which is given with a still more sparing hand

<sup>1</sup> It may be convenient to mention here that the usual age of the pupils is from 9 to 10 in the lowest, Sexta, from 10 to 11 in Quinta, 11 to 12 in Quarta, 12 to 13 in Unter-tertia, 13 to 14 in Ober-tertia, 14 to 15 in Unter-secunda, 15 to 16 in Ober-secunda, 16 to 17 in Unter-prima, 17 to 18 in Ober-prima. In the upper classes the average age is sometimes a little higher than this, especially in North Germany.

in Ernst Koch's *School Greek Grammar*, based on the results of the *Comparative Study of Language*. Yet both these books, which are those most commonly used, contain too much matter, especially in the syntax; for this reason attempts are being made to effect a real simplification of the Greek Grammar. In the first year (in Prussia, therefore, in the Unter-tertia) the grammar is learnt up to, but not including, the verbs in  $-\mu$ , and, for exercise in the grammar, a reading-book, such as Wesener's is used which contains pieces for translation both from Greek and German. In the second year the verbs in  $-\mu$  and the irregular verbs are taken: here Comparative Philology, with the limitations already insisted on, can do good service. Besides this the pupils are instructed in the chief rules of syntax, of course in connexion with the terminology and rules of the Latin syntax already acquired, and as opportunity may offer, in connexion with the translation-exercises and the reading which now begins. A regular learning of vocabularies is absolutely necessary in these two classes, till quicker progress with reading makes it superfluous. The object of written work in the Unter- and Ober-tertia is to give practice in grammar and attain certainty in the use of the various forms. *Extemporalia* and translations from German texts, done at home or in school, again alternate with each other. These exercises should be made to bear on the books read in school as soon as possible: and then the exercise book is abandoned: in any case it ought not to appear in the Secunda. The reading begins, as I have said, in the Ober-tertia. The usual text-book is Xenophon's *Anabasis*, as it goes well with Caesar, which is read at the same time. It is not advisable to put off the introduction of Homer later than the Ober-tertia, even if a beginning is made only in the last weeks of the school-year.

In the Secunda and Prima reading holds the first place without dispute. As the Prussian Scheme of education says, 'Lessons in syntax are to be devoted merely to producing a clear view and a firm grasp of the chief rules, and the only object of the written exercises is to lay a sound grammatical foundation for the reading by making the knowledge of the accidence sure and giving practice in the chief rules of syntax.' In the Prima special lessons in grammar may be dispensed with, provided that *Extemporalia* are written every fortnight, in the composition of which the teacher endeavours skilfully to supply what he finds to be wanting in the grammatical knowledge of his pupils. And here we touch on a question which has been much discussed in recent years. It is one of the principal demands of the Professors of Medicine and Natural Science, and of all who seek to reform the *Gymnasium*, that there should be no more written Greek exercises. The reason assigned for this by those who do not wish either to get rid of Greek altogether or to limit the time devoted to it considerably is that by omitting the Greek exercises an opportunity is given for laying more stress on and extending the reading of Greek authors. But what if the result should be to limit the reading itself and tempt the teacher to misuse the works read in order to exercise his pupils in grammar? It is notorious that the grammatical knowledge of the boys in the Prima and their grip of the Greek forms is not above suspicion. The teacher must put this right in one way or another: and if he is to have no exercises he will be led to use

the most beautiful passages as a peg for grammatical discussion, and so trouble and weary his pupils. If, on the other hand, he has his written exercise every fortnight he can put into it all the grammatical work which is necessary, and in correcting and discussing it he can treat of those points which in the course of the reading have struck him as needing to be repeated. Accordingly, it is just those who wish to see reading recognised as the main object of instruction in Greek, who should favour the maintenance of Greek exercises to the end of the *Gymnasium* course. The proposals mistakenly urged in the interest of the study of Greek only show how unfruitful is the discussion by *dilettanti* of technical questions: for this question of Greek exercises is exclusively technical. Apart from their helping to make grammatical knowledge secure, these exercises are a direct help towards reading, because they are especially adapted to make the pupil feel the delicacy of the Greek language, to help him to grasp the force of particular forms of words, and compel him to notice the characteristic expressions of the author he is reading. The logical acuteness and aesthetic nicety of the Greek tongue can only be understood and felt by the most advanced pupils: and for this purpose also these exercises are a help.

But, undoubtedly, it is the reading of Greek authors which is the main, indeed the only object, of the teacher in the *Secunda* and *Prima*, and, as the Prussian Scheme of Education says, 'the reading, if properly managed, finds a natural support in the attraction which Greek literature exercises over youths capable of culture.' In the *Unter-secunda* it is usual to continue to read the *Anabasis*, begun in the class below, but at a greater pace. As a rule, I think, too much time is spent over this writer, who becomes somewhat monotonous and lifeless after a while; perhaps the *Cyropaedia* might with advantage be occasionally substituted for the *Anabasis*. In any case it is advisable to introduce Herodotus as soon as possible. The desire to make the knowledge of Attic grammar secure ought not to limit the reading of an author so especially suited to the youthful mind. If for a time the exercises show an Ionic colouring, no great harm is done; it is soon lost in the *Prima*. It is unnecessary to learn explicitly the Ionic forms: whatever is wanted in this respect could be brought before the pupils in the few first lessons. In any case I must protest against the habit of turning Herodotus into Attic, and so losing the charming *ναiveté* of his style. As the third prose writer of the *Secunda* Lysias is recommended: his speech against Eratosthenes, interesting from a historical point of view, and the humorous and witty speech *Ἐπὶ τοῦ ἀδυνάτου* are often read. Plutarch's *Lives*, which were approved in the last century for their moralising tendency, and made a great impression on Schiller, for example, are less popular with our generation, and are also somewhat hard at this stage: besides, we have more important works for the *Prima*. They are, however, recommended in the Scheme of Education of Alsace-Lorraine. In the *Prima* Demosthenes, Thucydides and Plato are universally read. Of Demosthenes, some of the shorter speeches suffice, since the *De Corona* covers too wide a field: the first and third *Philippics*, which Niebuhr and Jacobs translated at the beginning of the century, and published as contributions to the contest with Napoleon, ought certainly to be read. From them our boys may still learn what love for the Fatherland is; they are introduced to oratory in its noblest form; and if they find that Philip of Macedon appears in a more favourable light to the historian than to the Athenian orator, this will teach them the difference between writing history and making a speech. In reference to

Thucydides the question arises, whether he is not in parts too hard for school-reading: this would, of course, be especially true of the speeches. Yet what would Thucydides be without his speeches, above all without the *λόγος ἐπιτάφιος*? It is precisely in the fact that we are forced to struggle and fight it out with the difficulties of this work that its special didactic value consists. Beside the pregnant brevity and precision of this author phrasemaking becomes contemptible. The portions most commonly read are the beginning of the work (Book I. and parts of Book II.) or the tragic catastrophe in Sicily (Books VI. and VII.) F. Classen's altogether admirable edition of Thucydides is to be recommended for preparation at home. Teubner's text in this, as in other cases, is best for school use. Of Plato, the *Apology*, *Crito*, and the narrative parts of the *Phaedo* are naturally read first, in order to bring the figure of Socrates before the pupils in all its moral greatness. The philosophical parts of the *Phaedo* will only be chosen for class-reading by a teacher, who is able to convince himself of the soundness of the proofs adduced. The *Gorgias* and *Protagoras* are often seen in school programmes; less often the *Euthyphron* and *Laches*. In the last few years trial has been made of selected portions of the *Republic*, and the experiment has, I believe, been successful and has had good results. As in reading Demosthenes the pupils learn to understand thoroughly the circumstances and resources of Athens in the fourth century, so in reading Plato they gain a knowledge both of ancient philosophy and of philosophy in general, and acquire a special interest for ethical questions and problems. A sketch of the development of Greek philosophy up to the time of Plato would naturally precede the reading of the *Dialogues*. A certain number of hours is set apart in South Germany for Logic and Psychology (*Philosophische Propädeutik*): in North Germany these subjects are taken in connection with German lessons, or, alas! altogether left out. Plato is of the very greatest value in teaching German, especially for essay-writing: for this reason the conviction is steadily gaining ground that in the *Prima* Greek and German should be taken by the same teacher. There is a similar advantage in the case of Greek poetry, to which I now pass.

In the *Secunda* the only Greek poet read is Homer, the *Odyssey*. In the *Prima* the *Iliad* is read, but, as we shall see, it has to divide the time with the tragedians. It is expected that the pupil should have a general acquaintance with the whole of Homer, and read from twelve to fifteen books of the *Odyssey*, and about eighteen of the *Iliad*. In reality this is enough: the battle scenes, for instance, which continually recur in the *Iliad*, may remain unread without harm to the impression produced by the poem as a whole. The selection must, of course, be made not on philological and critical grounds, but from an aesthetic and didactic point of view. When opportunity occurs the pupils may be told something of the so-called Homeric question: but it is of more importance to insist on the aesthetic unity of the whole than to pull the poem to pieces for the purpose of philological analysis, a process for which boys are not ripe and which has no interest for them. Portions are learned by heart, at first, above all, to accustom the boys to the metre and make them read with appreciation; afterwards, only when the value of the passage demands it. For instance, the latter part of Book VI. is always learned. To introduce his pupils to the Homeric dialect and the Epic style, to give them, as far as is possible, a complete knowledge of Homer's words, to teach them as much of Homeric antiquities as a school-boy may be expected to know, and, above all, to open up to them the aesthetic

interest and value of these two epics: to do all this makes the greatest demands on the ability and capacity of the teacher. The same is the case with the reading of the tragedians, who are taken with the *Iliad* in the Prima. In my opinion those teachers are right who confine themselves mainly to Sophocles, and try to get through two of his plays in each of the two years: *Oedipus Rex* and *Oedipus at Colonus*, *Antigone* and *Philoctetes* will be the best. If the teacher seeks change and refreshment for himself—which will, of course, also be good for his pupils—he may take a play of Euripides (perhaps the *Iphigenia in Tauris*) by way of variety, or the *Persae* of Aeschylus. Before the class begins its first play the teacher will tell them what is necessary of the history and arrangements of the Attic stage, and, in so doing, he will not disdain the aid of good works of art. The chief question is how to treat the choruses. Like the speeches of Thucydides, they must be read, analysed, thoroughly understood; and this is true not only of the subject-matter, but also of the metrical form. It is possible to do this, and the boys take a lively interest in it. In order to show them what a wealth of poetry there is in these odes, it is a good plan to read them at first in a modern version, such as those in Theodor Kayser's *Translations from Sophocles*: later on it is better to choose a rendering which keeps as nearly as possible to the rhythm of the original. A translation of some sort should always be read. The preparation of the choruses should not be demanded, since they are too difficult: but the more diligent boys and those who have made most progress will, nevertheless, be able to gain a knowledge of them for themselves by the help of the excellent school editions which we have of Sophocles (Schneidewin-Nauck's in Weidmann's series, Wolff-Bellermann's in Teubner's). What I said of the usefulness of the Plato reading for German lessons is, if possible, even more true of Homer and Sophocles. They not only provide subjects for essays, but constantly prove of more direct value in the comparisons which suggest themselves in the study of Lessing's *Laocoon* or *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*, or Schiller's *Braut von Messina* or *Abhandlung über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, or Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea*. Aristotle's *De Arte Poetica* may also be taken up and parts of it used in the lesson to make the subject clearer. In the case of Sophocles the most important point is of course to awaken the understanding for dramatic composition, for tragic fate, for typical personalities and individual characters. Sophocles and Shakespeare, Aristotle and Lessing, Homer and Goethe, must help one another.

Lyric poetry, apart from the tragic choruses, does not come within the bounds of school reading: but it is open to the teacher of Latin to bring forward some examples, when reading Horace, for the sake of comparison. Aristophanes is not a school author: he ought not to be recommended even for private reading.

In view of the great wealth of Greek authors and Greek works suitable for schools it is often suggested that this is the sphere for which the 'private work' of the pupils should be claimed, and that much of what cannot be got through in school should be left to be done at home. So far as this is done quite freely, there is certainly nothing to be said against it; indeed one can only be glad that our boys should feel the beauty of classical works so strongly as to take them up of their own free will, and seek to gain a wider knowledge of them than the school can give. And if some pupils claim their teacher's help in this, ask his advice in the choice of their reading, or apply to him for assistance when they come upon

difficulties, so much the better. But this is not what is generally meant by these proposals as to private reading: it is rather that it should be so planned out and set before the boys, so conducted and directed by the teacher, that the school-reading may thereby be rendered full and complete. For instance, in the Secunda a number of books of the *Odyssey* and portions of Herodotus, in the Prima the parts of the *Iliad* not mastered in school, a tragedy or two, some dialogues of Plato, and lastly, even some plays of Aristophanes are to be read. If this plan is adopted we must not talk of voluntary reading in the Secunda: this is simply an increase of 'homework.' There will always be a moral compulsion in such guidance and direction on the part of the teacher, because the better pupils will be ambitious to please their teacher: and those who have but little capacity and energy, are likely either to be driven to use forbidden aids, or to incur the danger of overpressure which now threatens our *Gymnasia*, chiefly no doubt from the mathematical side. Even in the Prima the gain in knowledge is more than counterbalanced by the moral loss. The gain ought to be shown not only in the more extended acquaintance with Greek literature, but above all in the fact that the boy in the highest class learns to work alone. But when teacher and pupils, in their work both in the school and for the school, but especially during the lessons in the school, are diligent and conscientiously make use of every minute; and when the teacher of the higher classes does not work mechanically and without enthusiasm, but leads and urges his pupils on to put their mind and heart into their work, there will be no occasion for additional private study. Besides, where good work is done in school the teacher has no time for the direction of private work, and he can attain his ends quite as well without it. A boy of industry and talent will, as inclination leads him, take to Greek or Latin, mathematics or history, best of all to German literature (in which we reckon your Shakespeare): he will give himself up to one of these subjects without any direction or control. And as each member of the two highest classes has to deliver an oration every half-year (as a rule) on some subject which he chooses himself, the teacher has an opportunity of seeing in what direction his pupil's inclinations tend, at what subjects he works with the greatest interest, and how he stands with regard to the work connected with it: and so he has an opportunity of giving hints and advice of every sort. Of course the case is different when a boarding-house (*Convikt*) is connected with the *Gymnasium*, as at Schulpforte, for instance, or in the (Protestant) convent schools of Württemberg: here the home-work may be arranged, supervised, and made fruitful: and by setting apart days for private study a habit of scientific study may be inculcated, though this must in general be left to the University. But here the school is taking the place of home and family, and is only doing what a wise and cultured father does: the school does not do this as a school, but in place of the father.

Now that I have briefly sketched the course of instruction in the two ancient languages as given in German *Gymnasia*—of course in varying degrees of perfection—I shall have to ask what ought to be, and what actually is, attained under the system. I shall apply this question first to the qualifications demanded of the candidate for the *Abiturienten*-examination. But I had better leave this to my next letter. Now I will only make a correction in my last letter: in p. 89, column 1, read 'generally only two or three' of the *Orationes in Catilinam* are read in the *Gymnasia*, instead of 'only the second or third.'

THEOBALD ZIEGLER.