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American Doctoral Dissertations in Classical Philology

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AMERICAN DOCTORAL DISSERTATIONS IN CLASSICAL PHILOLOGY.

WHEN it was first proposed that I should undertake a review of recent dissertations in the field of Classical Philology submitted to American universities in candidacy for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the task did not appear to be so great as it has proved to be. The list (which I append) of theses sent in response to my request has grown from eight to forty-six, with an average of more than eighty, and an aggregate of nearly four thousand pages. Hence it would be manifestly impossible to consider the dissertations in detail, even if one arrogated the right, which few if any could fairly claim, to pronounce judgment upon the work of scholars labouring in so great a variety of fields. The only practicable course to pursue will be, therefore, to confine this article to somewhat general considerations, referring to individual dissertations by way of illustration rather than in criticism of details.

A glance at the list will show that the degrees were conferred by ten institutions of higher learning, and that in consequence a number of universities are here not represented. This is due in part to the circumstance that all do not require the publication of dissertations,—a fact which accounts also for the small number in some cases, as notably in that of Harvard University. The question whether publication should be required is one of some difficulty. The instances are naturally rare in which sales cover the cost of printing; and with the relatively high rates prevailing in America the requirement may be a real hardship to the young scholar who has, as not unfrequently happens, sacrificed his all to attain the coveted degree. In recent years recourse has been had to various devices, such as publication in journals, in the proceedings of various learned societies, or in 'Studies' or 'Bulletins' issued by the several universities. One of our authors has even resorted to publication in Germany. But, on the other hand, it cannot but be vexatious to scholars to find here and there references to excellent work in unpublished dissertations, treasured in the archives of certain universities, where they are practically inaccessible.

A study of the list suggests some interesting reflections. First of all, it is noteworthy that Greek carries off the lion's share, having to its credit twenty-five dissertations,—as against eighteen for Latin, with three overlapping in subject matter. In view of the constant pressure upon Greek and the steadily declining

ratio of Greek to Latin in the number of students in school and college, this fact is doubly significant. It plainly shows that those who are attracted to the classics, and are disposed from a love of the subjects to devote their lives to them, are still most interested in Greek. Many, perhaps most, will undoubtedly end by occupying chairs of Latin, but this is not to be regretted. Indeed, this is as it should be ; for they will possess in their Greek studies the indispensable background for both their future studies and their teaching. One cannot help wishing, however, that more universities might follow the wise example of Harvard, which confers the doctorate in the Classics, not in Greek or in Latin alone, recognizing them as coördinate and bound together in a higher unity. All scholars should feel that the classical languages stand or fall together, and that Latin without Greek is as impossible as it is illogical.

One naturally inquires concerning the range of studies represented by the dissertations as affording an index of the relative emphasis given to various subjects in the classical instruction of American universities. Some years ago one of the foremost Hellenists of the United States remarked that Teubner texts were cheap and that our graduate students might at least be presumed to be able to count, and that therefore some statistical study of grammar was perhaps the most feasible task to set. Bearing that doctrine in mind, one might have been prepared to find such studies largely predominating. But such is not the case. Indeed, there is hardly one dissertation in the list that could be fairly so classed. The prominence of American scholars in syntactical studies in particular might have led one to expect a larger number of dissertations in this field. As a matter of fact, there are only eight devoted to syntax, whereas nine or ten may be counted for the study of institutions, six for rhetoric, and five for the archaeology of art. Besides these subjects, morphology, metrics, lexicography, semasiology, epigraphy, palaeography, textual criticism, literary and political history, religion and folklore, the study of nature, and the development of moral ideas, are all duly represented.

This survey amply proves that the classics are being taught in no narrow spirit. It is frequently asserted by those who criticize the teachers of Greek and Latin that their interest is in the formal rather than the substantive, and that their instruction lacks that intimate human touch which lends vitality. The evidence seems to discredit the charge. At all events, if there be a tendency on the part of certain teachers to confine their instruction to matters by nature somewhat formal and abstract, it is evident that the healthy humanity of their students soon breaks through the toils thus woven for them.

One is naturally prompted next to inquire concerning the quality and value of the work here presented. Ten or fifteen years ago an American dissertation was rarely noticed in a foreign review, or if noticed at all, then only cavalierly and superciliously, in a tone implying the question whether anything good could come out of America. This was particularly true of Germany. In more recent years all this has changed. Every dissertation now receives consideration, and the

prevailing judgment in most cases is highly favourable. Now and then one chances on a review calculated to evoke a smile, as when a recent reviewer compared, to its disadvantage, an American dissertation with a study in the same field written by the veteran Leo. Such reviewing can be had cheap and would excite more unfavourable comment if it was less common. On the other hand, competent German scholars recognize the kinship of classical work done in America with their own. Indeed, it were strange if they did not, seeing that the productive American scholars in middle life or older were almost without exception trained by the German masters. And if there is not now the same necessity as formerly existed for resorting to Bonn, Goettingen, and Berlin, it is because the same spirit breathes and the same methods are pursued in the seminar in the American university as prevail in the schools of Germany.

In trying to gauge the value of the American dissertation one inevitably compares it with the German, since England has no analogue to offer. The American may well make the comparison with confidence in the result; and it may be something more rational than chauvinism that leads him to give the American dissertation the preference. The average age of the German candidate for the doctorate of philosophy cannot be more than twenty-four. The average age of the American cannot be so easily computed. The time-honoured practice of adding a 'Vita' to the dissertation has been almost universally abandoned in America, but it seems a safe guess that the average age of an American on attaining the doctorate is not much short of twenty-nine. He may not have acquired more technical knowledge than his German cousin, but the difference of five years makes effectively for greater maturity, and this relative maturity shows to advantage in sanity of judgment and breadth of view. These qualities do, as a matter of fact, in a high degree distinguish the best American work.

It is only fair to say that no small share of the credit for this fact is due to the professors in our leading universities. As graduate instruction on this side of the Atlantic is a comparatively recent growth, some teachers have doubtless felt that international recognition of the dignity of their work must depend on the productions of their students. In order to ensure the best results and to compensate for the absence of a general atmosphere favourable to scholarly pursuits, they have in many cases sacrificed their own ambitions to the cause, bestowing time and criticism without stint upon their more promising students. Hence an American dissertation often owes far more than the initial suggestion to the university professor, and many an American scholar owes more to his teachers than he can ever fully know.

It is, of course, true of all scholars that their first considerable task gives direction to their subsequent studies. But of the American student this is perhaps true to an exceptional degree, because of the scope of the inquiry upon which he is launched by his advisers. If one considers the themes chosen by the American candidate and compares them with those of the German student, the difference is often very striking. It must frequently happen that for sheer lack of time the

subject to be treated of in the dissertation must be narrowed, and sometimes the result will necessarily prove so vague that, considered objectively as an addition to science, it will possess little worth. But, regarded from the point of view of the young scholar, such themes, open though they be to serious criticism, may be a great boon. Once embarked on his investigation, he is led into many paths, and the subject he has chosen thus becomes the nucleus of a life-work. It was remarked above that the average length of the dissertations in our list is upwards of eighty pages, and some of them assume the proportions of large volumes. Dr. Bonner's excellent study of *Evidence in Athenian Courts* (7) shows on every page his teacher's training in the law, and thus affords a striking illustration of the extent to which a dissertation may be indebted to the professor. In the same way Dr. Wetmore's prospectus of a complete Vergil Lexicon (43) shows how ambitious some of the schemes are upon which the graduate student embarks.

There is, therefore, good reason for a favourable opinion of the average dissertation, so far as concerns scholarship and its significance for the scholar himself. It is usually more than a *specimen eruditionis*, and often marks the beginning of a career of productive research, the fruits of which are overcrowding the classical journals. Some there are, no doubt, who deprecate this result, believing that it betokens a loss to the teacher ill compensated by the advancement of learning. But I do not think it possible that work which serves to unify and organize the acquisitions of a scholarly pursuit can fairly be said to redound to the detriment of classical teaching. If the interest in the class-room be found to suffer discount, this may be due to other causes. One such possible cause is suggested by a reading of the dissertations. It is the want of literary form and finish that mars to an appreciable extent the impression produced by some dissertations which in point of matter are excellent. It is not surprising that this should be found to be true, but one cannot help regretting the fact, particularly as the same defect is likely to characterize the subsequent work of the scholar whether in the lecture-room or in his published writings.

One more point of considerable interest disclosed by a study of the list of dissertations ought not to fail of mention: women constitute nearly twenty-five per cent. of the total number of authors. In quality their work averages well with that of the men, and their subjects cover almost the same range. This is significant for the higher education of women, which is having a growth in the United States without precedent. The General Education Board has recently called attention to the fact that, while colleges generally are attracting students in ever increasing numbers, those for women in particular are taxed beyond their capacity. As the policy of that influential body will favour the addition of more women's colleges, it is comforting to know that there is an increasing number of women admirably prepared to assume the office of instruction in the classics.

W. A. HEIDEL.

LIST OF DISSERTATIONS.

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- (5) BECHTEL, EDWARD A., *Sanctae Silviae Peregrinatio: The Text and a Study of the Latinity*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1902, Pp. 160. U. of Chicago.
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- (7) BONNER, ROBERT J., *Evidence in Athenian Courts*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1905. Pp. 98. U. of Chicago.
- (8) BRACKETT, HAVEN D., *Temporal Clauses in Herodotus*. Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Vol. XLI., No. 8. July, 1905. Pp. 171-232. Harvard U.
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- (11) CANTER, HOWARD VERNON, *The Infinitive Construction in Livy*. Press of E. W. Stephens, Pub. Co., Columbia, Mo., 1906. Pp. 93. Johns Hopkins U.
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- (13) COSENZA, MARIO EMILIO, *Official Positions after the Time of Constantine*. New Era Printing Co., Lancaster, Pa., 1905. Pp. 109. Columbia U.
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- (16) DIGNAN, FRANK W., *The Idle Actor in Aeschylus*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1905. Pp. 43. U. of Chicago.
- (17) DRAKE, JOSEPH H., *The Principales of the Early Empire*. University of Michigan Studies. Humanistic Series, Vol. I. Roman Historical Sources and Institutions. New York, The Macmillan Co., 1904. Pp. 161-332. U. of Michigan.
- (18) DU BOIS, ELIZABETH HICKMAN, *The Stress Accent in Latin Poetry*. New York. The Columbia University Press, 1906. Pp. 96. Columbia U.
- (19) ELDEN, WALLACE STEDMAN, *The Conditional Period in the Writings of Quintus Horatius Flaccus*. Waterville, Maine, Mail Publishing Co., 1900. Pp. 128, U. of Michigan.
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- (26) HOPE, EDWARD WILLIAM, *The Language of Parody: A Study in the Diction of Aristophanes*. Baltimore, J. H. Furst Co., 1906. Pp. 62. Johns Hopkins U.
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- (28) MACURDY, GRACE HARRIET, *The Chronology of the Extant Plays of Euripides*. Lancaster, Pa., New Era Printing Co., 1905. Pp. 127. Columbia U.
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- (30) MISENER, GENEVA, *The Meaning of Γάμ*. Baltimore, The Lord Baltimore Press, 1804. Pp. 75. U. of Chicago.
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