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GOURMY'S *LES LATINS*.

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It is to be inferred from M. Gourmy's posthumous work that he was not ardently devoted to the form of his country's constitution: one leading note of these essays being a strong *parti pris* for Caesarism, or at least an antipathy to the republican institutions of Rome. For the rest, they are brightly and pleasantly written, if not always to be taken quite seriously: and are in fact—if M. Gourmy's *mot* about the *De Amicitia* and *De Senectute* may be applied to himself—'*Declamatiunculae non sans quelque agrément*.' The preface states that the author had no intention of writing a history of Latin literature: literary criticism pure and simple plays a subordinate part: by *Les Latins* are meant not only the works but also the men, much more in fact the latter than the former. We deduce the personality and motives of an author from his own writings—a much more immediately interesting process, as offering a wide field for speculation, than a merely impersonal survey of so many pages of verse or prose. This is the method of M. Gaston Boissier as a critic of Juvenal: and if the method does not always tend to the actual advancement of learning, it is at least generally amusing. M. Gourmy's ingenious imagination has thus arrayed before us a very remarkable gallery of portraits,—including a Sallust who plunders his province apparently out of pure *esprit*, and a Lucretius who is a combination of St. Paul and Buffon. With Cicero the process of hypothesis will not work satisfactorily, because we know so much about him already: but that has not saved the unfortunate orator from some thirty pages of ultra-Mommsenian depreciation: after reading which one is really surprised that an author who merited '*l'écrasant arrêt de Mommsen* "*Feuilletoniste!*" should still be studied in schools. Cicero the man has always been an easy prey to those who wish to display independence of the effete judgments of antiquity. But in this instance he has been so unlucky as to fall into the

hands of a vehement anti-Republican—and even Catiline is partially whitewashed at his expense. When that conspirator was driven from the senate by Cicero's eloquence, it was apparently the expelled and not the expeller who was the real hero of the occasion.

Modern French criticism is apt to be rather exasperatingly flippant, and to treat its victims with a familiarity that generally oversteps the line of contempt. Much of *Les Latins* would be regarded as simply impertinent in English: but it is redeemed from impertinence by the amiable vivacity of the French language. The book is eminently French, not only in liveliness but in the constant comparisons between the national literature and that of Rome, usually to the disadvantage of the latter. That Terence should be placed below Molière is intelligible: and perhaps admirers of André Chenier may hold him superior to Catullus. But patriotism has its limits: and when we are told that '*Lachaud valait bien Cicéron*,' we feel that they have certainly been reached. Nevertheless the present author has often shown that he possessed a true and fine literary judgment. He is quite free from that enthusiasm for mere antiquity which has sometimes caused a very good scholar to be a very bad critic: and on the whole the essays on Virgil and Catullus show a real and genuine appreciation. They do not contain very much that is absolutely new—which indeed would be difficult—but they do contain (more especially the chapter on Virgil) a great deal of sound literary criticism. Nay, even Cicero has his meed of praise as at least a consummate artist in words: an excellence which surely might go far to justify the derided publication of speeches which no doubt have ceased after nineteen centuries to palpitate with actuality. One is sometimes tempted to wish that so sane a judge as M. Gourmy had given us more criticism of style and fewer personalities: but then his book would perhaps have been less readable. Certainly it would not have been so amusing.

A. D. GODLEY.