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GEORG CURTIUS.

*Georg Curtius. Ein Charakteristik* von E. WINDISCH. Berlin. Calvary and Co. 1887. pp. 56. Mk. 2.40.

THE short pamphlet by Professor Windisch is a welcome addition to the memorials of his revered master. Dr. Angermann in the tenth volume of *Bezenberger's Beiträge* has given an interesting sketch of the life and the personal influence of Georg Curtius. His elder brother, Professor Ernst Curtius, has prefixed to the first volume of the *Kleine Schriften* of the deceased scholar a charming picture of him as he appeared to one of the comparatively few who were honoured with a close and affectionate intimacy. But there was still room, and indeed there was a real demand, for an account of his scientific work, from a sympathetic but not a partisan's standpoint; and this has been well given us by Dr. Windisch. There was a demand for this, because unquestionably the tendency of the most advanced school in comparative philology has been to lay undue stress upon those parts of the work of Curtius which may now appear to be antiquated, to bring into prominence points of difference rather than those of agreement, and to ignore or pass over lightly contributions to the development of the science which were of real value. From these faults the memorial sketch by Dr. Windisch is entirely free. He does not disguise the extent to which he differs from some of Curtius's conclusions. He does not deny the value of some of the more recent theories, to which Curtius never gave his assent. But he brings out clearly the full significance of his work and his personal influence as a whole; and rightly lays stress upon it as an essential factor in the history of his favourite science.

The most important service that Curtius rendered was one which no man could have done who was not, as he was from the be-

ginning to the end of his career, in the first place a classical scholar. Schleicher, with all his wide linguistic attainments, was not this even in the second place. He was at heart a Darwinian botanist, who handled language as if it were the subject-matter of natural and not of historical science. His services are not to be underrated, obsolete as are many of his results. But it could never have been said of him, as Dr. Windisch well says of Curtius, that he first brought two great sciences into a mutually helpful relation to one another. Curtius was not a student of language, availing himself of the aid of Latin and Greek to attack the general questions of linguistics, but a classical scholar, studying the languages of Greece and Rome in the light of comparative philology. It was very significant that his first important work was dedicated (1846) to Lassen and Ritschl. In the earlier part of his career, his lectures extended over a wide field of Greek and Latin literature. To the last he retained his interest in the literary as well as the purely grammatical study of the ancient authors. Hence few men were better fitted to maintain the connexion between the two sides of philology, which cannot be parted without serious loss to both. He never appeared as leading an irruption of comparative philology into the territory of scholarship, but rather as welcoming its aid in a field to which much of his own labour was devoted. He was always proud to be a classical scholar, and whatever he could learn from the comparison of other languages was always brought to bear upon the explanation of the structure of those with which he was immediately concerned. Sometimes he was taunted with not having a wide enough command of languages for a comparative philologist; but for the work which he had to do, a thorough knowledge of the classical tongues, combined with the power to follow adequately what others

were doing in cognate languages, was what was most necessary, and this never failed him.

Dr. Windisch shows well how it was the instinct, or call it, if you please, the prejudice of a classical scholar, which made him cling to the notion of a Graeco-Italic unity, after the scientific basis of this theory was really destroyed.

Not that Curtius was without a keen sense of the mysterious nature and vitality of language, and of the fascination of the more abstract problems which it presents. But he never lost himself in details, and hence, while he contributed less than some of his contemporaries by special investigations, no one was better fitted to survey the general progress of his science, and to sum up its total gains at any particular time. This is what gives to his *Grundzüge* the character which, as Dr. Windisch justly says, even his opponents allow to it, that of one of the most valuable and useful works on the science of language. The successive editions of it showed how ready he was to learn as well as to teach; and a comparison of the eleventh section of his Introduction in the first and in the fifth edition gives a vivid conception of the progress of the science during the years which separated them.

Dr. Windisch rightly regards the year 1873, in which the second edition of Curtius's *Zur Chronologie*, and the first volume of *Das Verbum der Griechischen Sprache* appeared, as the last in which the clear majority of competent scholars was decidedly on the side of Bopp and his school, the last in which Curtius could hold his favourite position as the representative of a general *consensus*. When, four years later, a second edition of the latter work appeared, it was already, though far too harshly, pronounced to be antiquated. In a sense it will never be antiquated. It sums up in a final form the results of a certain method, which long held sway in philology, and it marks the utmost progress attained along certain lines. To advance further, the problem had to be attacked in an entirely different fashion; and for this the materials collected by Curtius gave the most valuable help. But both as a writer and as a teacher he reached at this time his zenith. His pupils were even more numerous than those of his illustrious colleague Ritschl, and in the winter of 1874 his lectures on Greek Grammar were attended by 273 students. This date happens to mark the completion of his twenty-fifth year as a professor; when the foundation of the *Curtius-Stiftung* by contributions from all parts of the civilized world showed the honour in which he was held.

From that year a certain decline in his personal and scientific influence may be dated. In 1868 Scherer in his *Zur Geschichte der deutschen Sprache* had protested against the undue limitation of philology to the merely mechanical aspect of phonetic changes, and had called for more attention to the psychical processes underlying the development of languages. At the same time, and in close connexion with this, he had urged that the only safe basis for the theoretical reconstruction of the earlier forms of speech was the careful study of the forces at work in the periods more directly and intimately known to us. His protests told more immediately upon the method of Schleicher than on that of Curtius; but the two scholars belonged essentially to the same school, and the teaching of the latter did not pass unchallenged. The view *e.g.* that the Sanskrit *bhārāmi* was the representative of a primitive *bharāmi*, from which *φῆρω*, *fero*, &c., were derived, was directly denied by Scherer. He maintained that the primitive form was *bharā*, and that *bhārāmi* was a later form due to the analogy of verbs like *dādāmi*. The operation of analogy was universally admitted in modern languages. He insisted that it should be no less fully recognised as at work in the ancient languages, even in comparatively early stages. Of the younger scholars it was Leskien in Leipzig who took up most warmly the views of Scherer, and urged them, both in lectures and in private conversation, on those of his own generation. So was formed by degrees the school of the 'young grammarians.' Their cardinal principles were (1) that phonetic laws, so far as they act mechanically, admit of no exceptions; (2) that the 'association of forms' in all stages of the history of a language has led to changes due to a false analogy. Both these principles were applied with a rigour and consistency which led to very different results from those which had been generally accepted. Curtius, for example, had endeavoured to bring as many as possible of the letter-changes in Greek under the heading of regular laws. But he had devoted quite half of his *Grundzüge* to the discussion of what he called 'sporadic' or 'irregular' letter changes. The very existence of such sporadic changes, except so far as they were dialectic, was now denied. 'Analogy' was pressed into the service, to account for all phenomena which did not agree with regular laws. The boldness and consistency with which Curtius's younger colleague Brugmann applied these principles in a famous article on the *Nasal's sonans*, published in the ninth volume of Curtius's

*Studien*, showed clearly how far the new school was ready to push its dissent from currently received conclusions, and made it impossible for that series of studies to be continued as a joint publication. In 1878 and the following years Brugmann and Osthoff published four volumes of *Morphologische Untersuchungen*, in which various problems of etymology and inflexion were attacked with remarkable learning and ingenuity. The views of the new school were really only an expansion and a natural outcome of the principles for which Curtius had long been contending. But it was only natural that he should be slow to accept the far-reaching modifications of his explanation of many details which they seemed to entail. It was not less natural that his caution and sobriety should appear timorous to many who were fascinated by the boldness of the younger philologists, and that his teaching should seem to be antiquated. His attitude in face of the new doctrines was thoroughly dignified, and worthy of his high position. No element of personal bitterness, no jealousy or irritability, for which his severe physical sufferings at this time might have served as some excuse, was ever allowed to interfere with his calm consideration of his young opponents' theories. Wherever he was able to recognise any well-established contribution to science, he accepted it gladly, and the fifth edition of his *Grundzüge* (reproduced in the second edition of the English translation) showed how ready he was to incorporate all changes which convinced his judgment. For nine years he contented himself with watching the development of the new doctrines, and occasionally uttering a warning against premature or extravagant conclusions, which their champions seemed to be advancing. At last in 1885 he published his *Zur Kritik der neuesten Sprachforschung*, in which he attempted a more systematic and complete criticism of the newer philology as a whole. It cannot be denied that in this brief, but most pregnant, treatise, he hit not a few weak points in the doctrines now rapidly becoming popular. But the work was essentially one of reconciliation. It had been common to speak of the new views as amounting to a 'catastrophe' in the history of comparative philology. Curtius showed that after all the movement in advance—and he did not deny for a moment that it was in advance—was proceeding along lines which had been laid down by the founders of the science, and that the appearance of discord had arisen, at least in part, from an undue stress

upon the physical aspect of language, and a neglect of its historical development. On the other hand it must be admitted that Curtius hardly realised the full force of the arguments in support of the new views, and Brugmann's rejoinder, appended to his inaugural address as Professor of Comparative Philology at Freiburg, was a masterly and conclusive defence of the positions taken up by the school of which he is now one of the foremost representatives. Not only on the general questions of the action of phonetic laws, and of the far-reaching influence of analogy, did he show that his views were a legitimate and consistent development of principles which Curtius himself had admitted; but also with regard to the varied vocalisation of the primitive Indo-Germanic stock, and the untrustworthy character of much of the analysis of inflexions commonly taught, he gained an unquestioned victory. A teacher who now contents himself with reproducing the doctrines of Schleicher and Curtius, as they were all but universally accepted ten years back, ought to be aware that he has been left far behind by the progress of his science, and that much of his teaching will consist of baseless theories and exploded speculations, while even what is correct will be lacking in the unity of a rigorous and accurate method.

But admitting this to the full, the place of Curtius is none the less assured in the history of comparative philology. For thirty years he stood in the very forefront of those who were leading the advance. His original contributions were not numerous, and some of those which appeared at the time the most valuable have been set aside by more recent researches. But no one of his contemporaries was guided in his inquiries by a finer instinct; no one had a fuller knowledge of the work that was being done in the philological field, or examined its results with a more sober and vigilant criticism, or gathered them into a more attractive and intelligible form; no one finally had a deeper influence on the pupils that gathered in such numbers around him, or inspired them with a purer delight in that pursuit of truth to which his own blameless and exemplary life was devoted. It will be long before the scientific value of his works shall be exhausted; but when, in the progress of the study, for which he did so much, that day arrives, they will still retain their interest as marking an important stage in its development, and as models of sound learning, clear statement, and judicial sobriety.

A. S. WILKINS.