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The Study of the Classics in the United States

I Seventeenth Century

To the rough, bleak, inhospitable shores of the Atlantic Ocean now known as the Eastern seaboard—Northern and Southern — of the United States, there came, in the early and middle Seventeenth Century, hundreds at first — then thousands — of emigrants from the British Isles, from the Netherlands, and from France.

The two principal colonies were among the earliest settlements — New England (more particularly Massachusetts) and Virginia. Following closely upon these two were three other very important groups of settlers, those who established the colonies of New York, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina.

The earliest settlement was made in Virginia in 1607, by men of cavalier stock from some of the best, and most cultured families in Old England. They settled first at Jamestown on the James River (names brought over from England, and honoring their king) and then at Williamsburg — still a noted, and beautiful shrine of pilgrimage for interested travelers. Coming as these people did from the more highly privileged classes, they brought with them religion (Established Church) and the education (the Classical Tradition) germane to their station in life. They were not businessmen; they were actually idlers — men who lived easily and very comfortably on their incomes — not too ample — and who, having been accustomed to service, expected and demanded service from those whom they considered of a lower class. The Virginians were a most cultivated class and they founded in their Dominion a very high state of civilization. Their clergy were well educated in theology, his-

tory, literature and the Latin and Greek classics. They established, very early, schools and colleges modeled after the high-class type of education to which they had been accustomed at home. Thus, they founded the first college in America — William and Mary College, in Williamsburg. Here were inculcated, from the very earliest days, the classical training — the study of both Latin and Greek — which has survived more strongly perhaps in the «South» of the United States than in any other portion of the country. The University of Virginia at Charlottesville, with its various Schools, began very early to make real the importance of the older classical studies as a mark of a gentleman's education.

In New⁷ England a similar trend was noticeable. The settlement at Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1620 was the actual beginning of New England. Just by a mere chance the landing was made where the town of Plymouth now stands on the inside shore of Cape Cod Bay. The «Mayflower» colonists — fleeing religious presecution in the mother-land—had paused first at the tip end of Cape Cod where now Provincetown stands but had decided, after but eleven days' stay on the Cape, to proceed across the Bay to the coast of the mainland.

These colonists who settled Massachusetts began to come by many hundreds from 1620 on down to 1650. They established Boston as their great centre. This city far out-stripped any city in Virginia in size, wealth and importance. From it went out scores of suburban towns, rapidly becoming populous. Here later, were founded colleges and universities modeled after the Oxford and Cambridge plans and theories of education. While the New England settlers were from a slightly lower class than the Virginians, they had some very splendid qualities which made for the welding of a strong and lasting government. They were more God-fearing, aggressive, practical, and earnest than their Southern neighbors. They did not have the cavalier blood, the dash and spirit of the Southerners, but they believed thoroughly in religion and education and they took them both very seriously. The New England clergy were mostly Oxford or Cambridge trained men, and they early introduced the grammar schools and Latin schools for which Boston became famous; also they founded the second college in Ame-

rica, destined to be, three hundred years hence (in 1936) one of the greatest and most scholarly universities in the world.

Harvard College, beginning in 1636, as a very modest institution of learning was the center of classical studies in New England and in America for more than a century. Here were studied the great Latin and Greek authors, and as schools grew up around the college, these also took up the teaching of the classical languages as fulfilling entrance requirements for Harvard. From these examples there spread all through the Colonies the prescribed classical studies. Not only did every man aiming to devote his life to a profession (such as theology, medicine, law, or teaching) gladly devote the greater part of his time in college to Greek and Latin, but men preparing definitely for business as a career, studied Greek and Latin in high school and college. These studies, as a matter of fact, were the very core and centre of the college and school curriculum. Schools emanating from the Harvard ideal, springing up all over New England, followed steadily this plan of centering all culture and the best preparation for life in and around the classical studies. The principal authors read in Latin were: Sallust, Cicero, Vergil and Horace; in Greek: Thucydides, Homer, Plato, Demosthenes. Just as in the South, «no gentleman's education was complete» without this classical tradition, so in New England, all scholarship, theology, science, law and the business career must be absolutely based and nurtured upon the great thinkers and writers of Rome and Greece.

It was very natural then, that the colonies in between Virginia and Massachusetts should be much impressed and influenced by the educational systems of their immediate neighbors, and such was the case. The classical school, the Latin school, and the college in which Latin and Greek were the very foundation stones of education swept over the entire area of the American Colonies between 1620 and 1720.

II Eighteenth Century

At the turn of the Century, Yale College was founded in Connecticut (1701). It was located at first near Saybrook, but soon moved to New Haven. It was founded by a group of

scholars as a rival to Harvard, and exemplified the same standards of sound learning. Just as Harvard stood for the Unitarian theology, so Yale was established to prepare men for the sacred ministry of the Congregational Church, or Society, as it was then called. Yale very early became a rival of Harvard in a real sense, and as the New England colonies continued to grow by increase of population and by additional colonists coming from England, the tenets of Protestantism and the firm adherence to the classical curriculum were thereby strengthened. Not only the two great New England colleges, but also the preparatory schools were imbued with a devotion to Greek and Latin. This spread outside the Colony into the Dutch Colony of New Amsterdam. There were soon established, as the Century advanced, colleges in the neighboring sections. Among those founded during this Century two rank among our greatest universities today — Columbia and Pennsylvania. The former was founded by Episcopalians, who had now come to live in the American Colonies in increasing numbers; the latter was founded by the Friends' Society, known also as the Quakers, soon after the settlement of Pennsylvania by William Penn and his Quaker colonists. Both of these schools — established at first as colleges — were leaders in the classical ideal of education. No student could enter or pursue the courses in the curriculum of these two excellent schools without having become acquainted with the great thinkers and writers of classical antiquity. This was true of all of the other new colleges: Princeton, Williams, Brown, Hamilton, Union, Dartmouth, founded during the century — some of them towards the end of that era, subsequent to the great War of the Colonies waged in order to win freedom from the mother-land of Britain.

Some years before the outbreak of the Revolution, one of the greatest minds of New England was carrying on the theologico-classical tradition with all the vigor of his powers. This was the eminent divine, Jonathan Edwards, who was one of the early graduates of Yale. His forebears had been Harvard graduates, for one of his ancestors was a settler in Boston in the early seventeenth century, but Jonathan Edwards was sent to Yale preferably, and he became her greatest son of the

century. Imbued with the love of classical lore and possessed of a most unusual mind — gifted in logic and in philosophical thought, Edwards became not only the greatest American philosopher of his age, but also the leading educator and proponent of classical culture. He became president of the College of New Jersey, later called Princeton University. This university also prided itself on its devotion to classical learning; and it has continued to manifest such devotion until the present time. Edwards had a son, also a graduate of Yale, who became the first philologist in the American colonies, working not only in Greek and Latin, but also in the then unknown languages of the American Indians located in western Massachusetts. Following in his father's footsteps he became likewise a college president — of Union College, Schenectady, New York. His son was a teacher of Latin at Yale.

The Latin and Greek curriculum of this century was enhanced by the use of such textbooks as *Graeca Minora* and *Graeca Maiora*, the former containing easier selections from Greek authors, chiefly poets, and the latter containing more difficult selections. All textbooks in the classics were still made in and imported from England, and it was not until the close of the Revolutionary War in 1782 that Latin and Greek textbooks began to be edited by American classicists and to be printed and published on this side of the Atlantic. Naturally the trend of study — as appears to be the case after a war — tended somewhat away from the classics for a few years, but then the great revival of religion and learning called, and drove, men into higher studies of theology and the Classics.

No man could be prepared for the Christian ministry of the Protestant denominations or societies without studying Greek and Latin for many years. Of course the Catholic priests educated in Europe for the most part were thoroughly grounded in Latin for use in the Holy Mass and other Liturgies of the Church. Latin gradually took the lead over Greek in all the schools and colleges of the new republic, although Greek was never abandoned wholly by any school. The study of Herodotus and of Aristotle came in about this period in the American schools and colleges. On the Latin side, the new authors to gain wide approval and continued acceptance were Livy and

Tacitus, while Cicero, Vergil, and Horace were still the most widely read, and the most popular of all the classical writers. Cicero appealed to the forensic and political, in our early ancestors; Vergil appealed to our literary and artistic senses, as well as to the imagination; while Horace, the poet of the simple life, continually won many new friends by reason of his felicitous expression, and kindly philosophy of the life of contentment. Similar reasons for the choice or preference among Greek authors could also be recounted. Demosthenes roused the love of forensics, and of fiery oratory; Thucydides and Herodotus taught us lessons for practical use in government, as well as the great deeds of important historical peoples and personages. Homer won countless readers through his rich store of marvelous story, colorful pictures of war and peace; while Plato led the early American along much desired paths of contemplation and of pure reason. The richness of the store of this learning left its impress on the men and women of those closing years of the Eighteenth Century. They were, as in Europe during the same era — both Northerners and Southerners — a staunch race of patriotic, cultivated, imaginative, energetic, and productive people, and much of their success in an experiment of colonization and, at length, the organization and establishment of a great and sound government and nationality was due to the fine training all the leaders had received in the schools, colleges and universities in which the classical form of education prevailed. Greek and Latin continued to march onward in the new United States.

III Nineteenth Century

From the year 1820 to about 1920 the civilization and culture of the United States were at their highest points. In government, religion, education, a kindly, genial type of culture, and a devotion to the highest ideals in each one of these divisions of civilization, the whole nation was at its best. Much of the finer type of culture was due entirely to education. It was a time of great expansion in all fields of learning: it was the time of expansion of the American domain; it was a period of expansion in business and commerce. Yet there was, as yet, no taint

of materialism; there was a clean spirit of honesty and fair play; there was a calm and unhurried atmosphere — especially from the close of the Civil War until the beginning of the First World War — which is totally unknown in the United States of the first half of the Twentieth Century.

What had classical learning to do with this ? What effect has the study of any one particular field upon the tone and feeling and atmosphere of a people ? Much, very much.

In the early years of the Nineteenth Century, began the trek to the West. With the Louisiana Purchase in 1807 vast territories were to be opened up, colonized, improved and eventually to become the type of the finest things in every branch of our civilization. As the great West was opened up to pioneers, there moved to the western lakes, mountains, shores, with them, the fear of God as expressed in religion, and the devotion to higher education as exemplified in the establishing of schools and colleges, usually under religious influence.

The Central and Far West during the first half of the Nineteenth Century were peopled by religious, educated, industrious pioneer settlers. Colleges sprang up by scores — hundreds. The new great «state universities» set the high standard of training not only in agriculture — as at first — but also in the classical training as a *sine qua non* for the great professions of medicine, law, theology and teaching. Scientific schools, medical colleges, theological seminaries, agricultural, and dental schools increased from 1850 to 1900 in keeping with the population and the indefatigable industry of the people, but also in close harmony with the ancient religious ideals of the early settlers on the Atlantic Coast.

In this century, productive classical scholarship began in America. Naturally it went hand in hand with the cultural and religious ideals now inculcated and enhanced. Some of the early textbooks on Greek and Latin authors produced in these early years show remarkable acumen and sound learning. To name and comment upon a few of these early texts and their editors or authors may be in order.

The entire twenty-four books of Homer's *Iliad* were edited by John J. Owen in 1851, a handy volume well printed and

carefully annotated for the aid of students, who often read — in those years — practically the whole *Iliad* instead of a few selected books as in later times. The study of Tacitus became immensely popular in colleges. Able editions of this Latin author were produced by Charles Anthon — especially his good editing of the *Germania* and *Agricola* as early as 184g.

Thomas Chase edited the *Tusculan Disputations* of Cicero in ! 856 in a volume remarkable for clear type and well chosen annotation.

President Theodore Woolsey of Yale College has left us an admirable example of editing, in his volume of the *Gorgias* of Plato, appearing in 1856.

Alphæus Crosby, professor of Greek in Dartmouth College issued an exceptionally fine series of Greek textbooks: beginners' book, grammar, and the *Anabasis* of Xenophon, the first edition in 1843, with later printings as late as 1856.

The cruel war between the States, 1861-1865 -, was naturally detrimental to the cause of education. It drew away from the colleges and universities during those fearful four years, the very flower of the youth of that cheerful, kindly, industrious America just budding into maturity. Some of the great soldier-scholars of that day left the class-room and lecture hall to lead armies. Such was General Robert E. Lee, the commanding leader of the Southern side; such were many others who, after the War, returned to the colleges and universities from which they had gone forth.

There was, as yet, no post-graduate university in the United States. Professors in our colleges had all gone to Europe to obtain their degrees of Doctor of Philosophy, or they had remained satisfied with the Master of Arts degree which Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Princeton were already conferring. The vast majority of college and university professors in America earned their doctorates at Göttingen, Heidelberg, Berlin, and Leipzig. Few went to England; even fewer to France. All education in the higher groups became imbued with German ideals — actually Germanised.

It was natural, then, that a purely post-graduate university modeled after the German plan should be eventually established in the United States. This was the Johns Hopkins

University in Baltimore which opened its doors to graduate students *only*, for a possible admission to candidacy for the degree of Ph. D. in the autumn of 1876, — America's first university.

From its inception, the Johns Hopkins University adhered to the true classical tradition. The leading scholar among the first appointments was Basil L. Gildersleeve, who lived to be the most renowned American classicist of our time. He was professor of Greek in the university from 1876 to 1913. His most profound study was Pindar: *Olympian and Pythian Odes*, first published in 1886, and continued through many editions until the present time. It formed one volume of a noble series of classical texts edited under the guidance of Henry Drisler, the great classicist of Columbia University, and containing, besides Gildersleeve's *Pindar*, an eminently successful book of selections from the *Iliad*, edited by the famous Greek professor for fifty years at Amherst College, namely William S. Tyler. Other great Greek scholars of the century were Thomas D. Seymour of Yale University, W. W. Goodwin and John Williams White of Harvard in whose succession followed Herbert Weir Smythe and Morris H. Morgan.

As the Johns Hopkins University was open only to a select group of men, competent in character, health, and intelligence, giving promise of approved service in the field of scholarship, the numbers in each branch of graduate study were at first small. Greek under Gildersleeve, Latin under Kirby Flower Smith, and Sanskrit under Maurice Bloomfield were, however, always populous in comparison with other departments on the «humanities» side in contradistinction from science. From the classical schools of Gildersleeve and Smith there went out — as later from Harvard also — an earnest group of men, each succeeding year, prepared to teach, to study, to investigate and above all, to write and to publish. They proved to be the true scions of the classical cult.

Late in the ((Nineties)), Harvard became actually a university, entering upon graduate work in earnest, leading to the degree of doctor of philosophy in many departments of scholarship — none more fruitful than the classics. From the pens of Harvard classicists such as Smythe, Goodwin, White, Mor-

gan, and Greenough came splendid texts — books for the use of schools and colleges. The Yale classicists followed soon, and Yale became a true university granting the doctor's degree in 1901, just two hundred years after her founding. Several magnificent series of Greek and Latin texts covering all of the principal authors emanated from these and other classical scholars, published by the famous firms of Ginn and the American Book Company. These books are still in demand, for their eminent editing, beautiful type fonts — especially of the Greek — and for their attractive bindings. The scholars named, and many, many others, coupled with these excellent text books, made Greek and Latin the outstanding fields of study in the century.

There is obviously no intention in this account here to omit the name of any great classical scholar of the 19th century, nor is the brief list of published classics an implication that books for the study of Greek and Latin were few. Far from it, there were scholars and teachers in satisfying numbers and textbooks in profusion and abundance. This paper is necessarily limited in extent and it cannot include all. Suffice it to say that nearly every one of the six hundred and more colleges and universities in the United States in this century, possessed several excellent champions of our great and noble cause. Striking contrast both in books and personnel with the latter years of the first half of the twentieth century, as we shall see.

Among other leading factors which helped to keep the classical languages and literatures in prominence in the public mind, were the recently organized clubs and societies, associations and sodalities having as their purpose the fostering of these ennobling studies. The most important of these associations is the American Philological Association, numbering several thousand annual members, comprising the teachers of Greek and Latin in the leading schools of all levels throughout our vast country. So vast in fact that soon the philological association had under its aegis : the Classical Association of the Middle West and South; of the New England and Middle Atlantic States; and of the Pacific Coast and Far West. Each and all of these meet annually in the spring vacation for the purpose of presenting papers, for helpful association, exchange

of ideas, and good fellowship. The American Philological Association publishes an annual volume of papers accepted at the great annual meeting in December of each year.

In the Nineteenth Century, in the United States, hundreds of high schools offered four years of Latin and three years of Greek. The tide was at its height. For entrance to college these preparations in the languages were absolute requisites; they were the very back-bone of a curriculum comprising also studies in history, mathematics, sciences, and English. In the average ((liberal arts» college—in distinction from a vocational school, or agricultural and mechanical college—the student was required to continue with both Latin and Greek as well as sciences and mathematics, in his first year; he could choose between the two for his next year. Thereafter, with such a firm foundation laid, he or she (since colleges for women had now been established, as well as ((c0-educati0nal» departments in the universities, and Middle West colleges) could enter upon such fields of study as: philosophy, psychology, government, education, economics and sociology. All these came *after* the classical studies had been well inculcated and usually mastered. This plan made for logical thinking, gifted expression, fine discrimination, and a maturing judgment. And this was, and should be, the only sensible arrangement. To cast out the foundational studies and thrust all students — as today-*pell-mell* into the social studies, without ample preparation, background, or experience, is destined to prove in the long run absolutely illadvised.

The theological seminaries in the Nineteenth Century in America, practically all required the study of Greek. In the Catholic seminaries the stress was naturally on the Latin side. These latter schools have maintained the classical languages, while nearly all of the Protestant schools of theology began to dispense with a study of the Holy Scripture in the original tongues, deeming such study needless, for some unaccountable reason. Besides the Catholics — which had now become the most numerous one group of Christians in America, and had founded a great number of colleges — the Episcopalians and Lutherans adhered to the classical curriculum. All of the other ((denominations» gradually curtailed these studies, reduced them

to a minimum, or abolished them altogether as useless. These methods had, naturally, an unfortunate reaction on the position of classical studies in general in the United States towards the close of the century.

But still the spark was kept alive. Still there were young men — and now young women — a choice, devoted group, never too numerous, determined to go on in classical studies. Still there were boys who, in their high school days, in the midst of sports, and school activities, never lost sight of a goal they had set for themselves, that of becoming college professors of Greek and Latin.

*Few but fine are they that drink of that cool spring —
Few but swift those bearers of the torch,
Who round the course and make the stadium ring!*

IV Twentieth Century — first half

When the writer of this paper was privileged, in his college days, to witness the turn of the century, he realized on that famous mid-night, December 31, 1900, that something tremendous was transpiring: the beginning of a new century! What would it bring? What would occur — what changes would come? What new inventions?

Within fifteen years, the first World War was upon us. Europe was torri, up-rooted, wantonly laid waste. The United States, Britain, France, and Portugal stood up boldly against Germany, Austria, and Italy. When hostilities ceased, there was a new world — a calm, an endeavor to rebuild, a partial recovery, and then, within a little over twenty years from the ceasing of the First War, there was looming upon us a greater, more cruel, more unspeakable, Second World War. This uncalled-for exhibition of the second Fall of Man has left human beings distraught, unsettled, hateful, resentful, still very wicked. And the end is not yet, as we approach the halfway mark of this terrific century.

What of learning, scholarship, education, the classical languages and literatures, in such an age? Remarkable it is that

the love for these studies cannot be said to have died in the United States; and yet one must say, in all candor, that they have diminished in popularity and influence. We have entered upon an era wherein nuclear physics, social sciences, business economics, politics, modern languages for immediate use only, («practical»)), usable subjects are definitely crowding out Greek and Latin. Even the study of English begins to feel the pull, and history is becoming *passe'*. A writer in the *New York Times* recently declared that the study of the classics in America began to die in 1920.

However, these studies are not dead. It has been during the past forty-five years, despite desperate, and unconscionable interruptions, that the work has gone forward. Excavations in Athens under American guidance have been yieldful of splendid results. Journals, weeklies, and annuals devoted to the study and investigation in the field of classical languages, literatures, archeology, history and art, have been established, and have gained wide circulation. While the number of high schools offering Greek has been reduced from hundreds to tens, and those offering Latin from thousands to hundreds, yet the colleges and universities have continued to finance professorships in each of these splendid fields, to call competent men and women ably to occupy these chairs of the classics, and have placed before these professors every possible opportunity for the prosecution of their laudable endeavors. The enormous output of reviews and articles of distinction filling the pages of the *American Journal of Philology*, the *Classical Journal*, the *Classical Weekly*, the *Classical Outlook*, and the *Classical Bulletin*, testifies to the continuing interest on the part of groups of scholars, who are finding, in twenty-five or thirty unquestionably sound universities, opportunities for research leading to the Doctor of Philosophy degree, and placing the recipients in line for higher positions. True, the number of students in Greek — for example — has, as a matter of fact, fallen off in the United States, even in the colleges; Latin is beginning to display similar indications of weakness. Still the race goes on. The battle is not to the many nor to the swift,* it is to the sturdy, the sound, the faithful, and the persevering. Inspiration is derived from inspiring teachers.

During the first half of this materialistic, machine-age century, while whole series of Greek and Latin textbooks have been withdrawn from the market and the lines discontinued because of startling decreases in sales, yet there have been published some undeniably excellent texts, and examples of fine, scholarly editing in the United States. We shall bring this article to a close by listing — with but little comment — several of the most able books, some of which, unfortunately, are now no longer available: Lucretius: *De Rerum Natura*, edited by W. A. Merrill of the University of California — a great Lucretian, worthy to stand alongside Bailey, and Munro. Horace: *Odes, Epodes, Satires, and Epistles*, by Morris of Yale and Moore of Harvard; Tibullus: *The Elegies*, by Kirby Smith of Johns Hopkins — the definitive edition of Tibullus; Tacitus, *Agricola*, and *Germania* by Gudeman; Cicero's *Tusculan Disputations* by Nutting of the University of California; Martial's *Epigrams* by Post; Juvenal: *Satires* by H. L. Wilson; Vergil: *Aeneid Book Iv*, by Pease of Harvard — a masterpiece of erudition; splendid revisions of such great Latin and Greek grammars as those of Gildersleeve, Lane, Smythe, Goodwin, Bennett. On the Greek side, the scholars of Twentieth Century United States have put forth, besides thousands of reviews, articles, translations, such recognized texts as the following; Homer: *Iliad* by Sterrett of Cornell; *Greek Religion* by Fairbanks; *Greek Archaeology*, by Fowler of Western Reserve and Wheeler of Columbia; Aeschylus: *Prometheus* by Harry; Euripides: *Medea* by Mortimer Earle; Lucian, by Allinson of Brown; Pausanias, by Mitchell Carroll; Aristophanes: *Clouds* by Humphreys of the University of Virginia. So the list could be continued adding the names of many other well known American classicists.

Last, but by no means least, is the splendid Loeb Library, a vast undertaking in which an attempt is being made to have the entire body of the works of the Classical Authors re-edited with a new English translation accompanying the text on opposite pages and all done by eminent, and recognized specialists for each author. Already about seventy-five titles on the Latin side have been published, and over one hundred for the Greek representation.

Thus we may conclude that the study of the greatest literatures of the Ancient Age is surviving and flourishing in the United States, and, having passed on down through almost three and one-half centuries of steady growth and development, in interest, personnel, scholarship, serious investigation, editing, and publishing, this study gives promise of enduring and steadily progressing through the present century, and beyond.

HERBERT PIERREPONT HOUGHTON

(A. B., Amherst College; Ph. D., Johns Hopkins University)
Professor of Greek, and Chairman of the
Department of Classical Languages in
Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, U. S. A.