

## THE FUTURE OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE.

IF in some future time a literary historian attempts to estimate the critical output of these last fifty years, he will find his task to be a labour of Hercules. He will be able at once to single out a few prominent figures such as Sainte-Beuve, Taine, Matthew Arnold, Brunetière, Faguet and Benedetto Croce, and he will easily understand and explain their messages. But he will also notice that these thinkers have had comparatively few followers, and that hundreds and hundreds of other workers in literature have sprung up, mostly in the Universities, with quite different aims and methods. He will readily recognise that these academic men—and women—of research have done a vast amount of valuable work; that they have cleared up obscure questions, annotated and reprinted obscure authors, systematised and tabulated obscure periods, each contributing his own piece of masonry to a vast edifice of learning. But when he enquires what common bond united all these scholars and to what common goal all these efforts were directed, he will search long and in vain for a sufficiently convincing reply. This question, which a future historian is bound to put, we cannot help asking now. After all, to what purpose is all this minute knowledge of literature? Much of it has obviously and clearly no purpose at all, and runs riot almost as wildly as did the post-Augustan Virgilians or some of the seventeenth century scholars; so that able men devote toilsome years to the discovery of quaint and curious details which they vaguely declare to be important, without saying why. Can all this erudition be put to any ulterior and nobler use, or must most of it lose its vitality as soon as created? The present writer believes that the 'voluminous and vast' body of knowledge, which has now been made so easily accessible, can be coordinated and interpreted in a way impossible half a century ago. He believes that a subtler and higher kind of knowledge can be extracted from it by a method rather inadequately designated as that of Comparative Literature.

To understand the possibilities of comparative literature it is necessary to see in what relation it stands to the present tendencies of research. Owing to the strenuous competition for academic emoluments, many advanced students are guided in their labours by no other ideal than that of a higher position or an increased salary. But wherever a scholarly and intellectual purpose can be detected, it is generally this—to enable others to view some fragment of literature with the same eyes as the specialist. The uninitiated reader looks upon a play, a poem, an essay or a novel much as the man in the street will soon look upon aeroplanes. It is there because it is there. The man of letters realises that a masterpiece is not only an aesthetic pleasure but a triumph of inventiveness for those who know the history of its type. He also perceives that the great books of the past were written for readers with different ideas and surroundings and sometimes with a different idiom from our own, and that much of their thought and style can be appreciated only when this atmosphere is recreated. Again, while performing his task of classification and appreciation, he finds that some classic has really borrowed the ideas and even the phrasing of another writer, perhaps of a different age or country, and must be stripped of his borrowed plumes. Thus the critic is really an artist, not necessarily of words but of facts. Whether he is studying an author, an age or the history of a type of literature, he has to gather together a mass of sometimes apparently incongruous knowledge, often penetrating far into other ages and languages or digressing into history, economics, sociology and art, and he weaves all this learning round his theme, till it stands out in a new garb. It is obvious that in such a scheme of study there can be no place for comparative literature. Every advanced worker in the most restricted field is himself a student who compares. To add to this programme a comprehensive history of 'influences' and parallels would be merely to authorise a sciolist to attempt what is now achieved by an army of specialists.

It was this misdirection of energy and erudition against which Professor Gregory Smith, though for other reasons, warned the first readers of *The Modern Language Review* in 'Some Notes on the Comparative Study of Literature,' urging that this method, as usually applied, was a desiccated perversion, interesting only to scientists and antiquarians, whereas the true scope of such synthetic study would be found in the positive side of criticism, in discovering 'what Aristotle taught us to understand by the Universal in literary art.' Few broad-minded students are likely to disagree with Professor Gregory Smith,

as far as he goes. Undoubtedly one of the functions of comparative literature will be to emphasise what is fundamental and common 'in the history of *motif* and form.' But does he go far enough? Besides 'mere Darwinism' or 'the analogies which an unreasonably scientific age borrows so readily from the weather bureau or the physical laboratory,' the genesis of books has a philosophy peculiar to itself. We have, of course, long recognised that literature is a part of a nation's life and often indicates more clearly than laws or treaties or revolutions the trend of a people's mind. But quite apart from, or only half associated with this historical significance, it should be possible to investigate and explain the forces and influences which, in different epochs, bring different *genres* into existence. It is only by a method of comparative study—though not the method justly censured by Professor Smith—that the enquirer can win access to these secrets.

It may well be urged that the achievements of comparative literature, painstaking and valuable as such work undoubtedly is, are far from justifying such pretensions. Such a contention is only too true because, up till now, comparative literature has generally concerned itself only with resemblances and parallels. But if the student were to turn his attention to differences and contrasts, he would be amazed to find how quickly his researches were leading him behind the scenes. Why did the essay, which sprang into a sudden and glorious existence in France, die out of that country almost immediately afterwards and thrive and multiply for over three centuries among the English? And, in revenge, what caused the French to look to England, in spite of Rousseau, for romantic inspiration, and then so rapidly and splendidly to develop an artistic ideal of their own? Why has oratory flourished as a literary type during only four periods of European history, with Demosthenes, with Cicero, with Bossuet and with Burke? How was it that Greece created a certain kind of epic, that a Roman took that epic as the model for a similar poem, that then an Englishman drew inspiration from both, and yet that each one (assuming for convenience sake that Homer existed) produced something essentially different from the others? And how was it that after Homer only Virgil, Milton and, in a less degree, Dante caught the epic spirit, while so many other gifted poets from Lucan to Morris failed? Again, how was it that antiquity created a certain type of drama, that England and France accepted this model in the sixteenth century, blended it with their miracle plays, and yet produced a literature so fundamentally different each from the other? How was it that both countries produced their best drama in the

seventeenth and not in any other century, while Italy failed to produce any first-rate work and Germany, drawing on the same sources of inspiration, produced yet another type of drama, and that too in the eighteenth century? Then as a contrast turn to the Roman *satira*. It differs from other types of Latin literature in being of native origin. Again it differs in being profoundly modified by the Romans themselves, first by Lucilius, then by Horace and then by Juvenal. Yet in northern and modern Europe, unlike the drama and the epic, it retains, beneath superficial changes, the spirit of the old classics, and again, unlike the drama and the epic, it is completely effaced in the nineteenth century by the novel and the short story. How was it that the Renaissance in Italy found vent in an assertion of individuality, while in France, the pupil of Italy, it subjected itself to law? Why did lyric poetry spring into a short and imperfect existence in Greece, an even less perfect existence at Rome, and then, after fitful and timorous efforts in medieval Latin and one short if glorious outburst at the Renaissance, find full and free scope only in the nineteenth century? Why was it the eighteenth century, in which sentimentality first really made its presence to be felt? Or take the idea of the Devil and the idea of a Gentleman, which run like threads through post-classical civilisation. Of course an exhaustive antiquarian enquiry into these two conceptions would be beyond the most prodigally comprehensive scheme of literary research, but a comparative study of how each idea changes as one age succeeds the other is like reading a picture history of moral and social development.

These are a few examples, chosen almost haphazard, of the riddles which present themselves for solution as soon as the student begins to *compare* literatures. In compiling such a list it is hard to avoid debateable ground and a critical reader will undoubtedly shake his head at incidental assertions, which lack of space compels the writer to state with dogmatic brevity. But very few will deny the suggestiveness of the principle. In fact, most will go so far as to point out that such a method has long been recognised, and up to a certain degree has been put into practice. It would readily be conceded, for instance, that the Marprelate controversy can be understood more clearly by comparison with the *Satire Ménippée*; that Pope should be read side by side with Horace and Boileau; that Racine will suddenly stand in a new and fuller light when his *Iphigénie* is compared with the *Iphigenia* of Euripides, and then with that of Goethe; that Montaigne's *Institution des Enfants* will, by contrast, illuminate Ascham's *Scholemaster*, and

that Faret's *Honnête Homme* will do the same for Peacham's *Compleat Gentleman*. All this and far more will be conceded, and it will furthermore be pointed out that such comparisons do not merely trace the influence of one author or the indebtedness of another, but bring out the peculiarity or significance of a work as one shade of colour is heightened when compared with another. To this extent the comparative method is certainly far from new, but while it is applied only in this fragmentary way, to throw light on some specialist's subject, it is not a department of study but an obvious resource for any well-read and conscientious monographer. The real value of comparative literature can be appreciated only in the hands of some scholar who has no special author or period in mind, nor any desire to 'give a bird's eye view of the whole field,' but whose curiosity is excited by the strange contrasts and deviations of literary development. Such an enquirer will not dream of covering Europe's output in prose and poetry, but will concentrate his attention, almost instinctively, on those authors and schools of expression which, at any time or in any place, have unexpectedly differed. Not being distracted by any of the specialist's interests, though availing himself largely of his labours, he will pass from one author to another, wherever contrasts suggest an opening, first of all estimating the art and ideas of the works momentarily in question, then examining the *milieu* which shaped each literary life, then enquiring into the causes, whether social, domestic, racial, climatic or political which turned them severally from one trend of thought and one form of expression and drew them to another. By and bye, as he gradually learns what influences count in the formation of thought and what other influences, though considerable in history or sociology, are powerless, and again what qualities are essential to a particular type of literature, while certain other qualities are accidents of time and place, his apparently erratic footsteps begin to progress along definite lines. He finds that while avoiding the bibliographical and textual minuteness of the specialists, he has himself become a specialist of another sort, who supplements their discoveries by researches just as recondite. His chosen province is neither aesthetics nor biography, but the study of literary essence and evolution. Books to him are so much data for investigating the conditions which inspire and the conditions which diversify the written word.

It will readily be granted that no single literature can give the full materials for such an enquiry, and some will contend that all the

materials of all the literatures will never enable the student to arrive at anything but a half result. They will urge that such a method, however comprehensive, necessarily confines itself to the study of periods and tendencies, and overlooks the inexplicable but predominant personal element. Literary inspiration, they will add, like the wind, 'bloweth where it listeth,' the greatest intellectual movements are controlled by accidents of temperament or circumstance, and can often be traced to an obscure idiosyncrasy lurking in the brain of some genius. Thus any attempt at a concordance of literary tendencies must end in something academic and artificial. In reply to such objections it must certainly be admitted that all literary research is restricted in its range. Books are only one of the many products of the human mind and give an attenuated insight into its labyrinthine depths. But within the limits inevitably set to this source of knowledge, the comparative method will penetrate further towards fundamental truths than any specialised enquiry can do. To begin with, it is only by some such process that the personal element can be distinguished from the influences of environment, and again, it is only by the same means that the student can see how far-reaching these influences are. So imitative is the human mind, and so impressionable the creative faculty, that every author, even the most self-centred and secluded, produces his works in collaboration with all those whom he has read or who will read him. So although much in the genesis of human thought will always be a mystery, even more can be explained.

Let us attempt in a rough and conjectural outline, to sketch the method of an enquirer who is endeavouring to construct the laws of literary production. After all, the only effectual advocacy in these matters is by demonstration. Such a student duly observes that certain types of literature, certain arts of expression and phases of thought, appear, disappear and reappear at different times and in different countries, down all the course of history. And he further observes that there is always some one age when each literary phenomenon seems to stand out most clearly and completely, whereas at other periods its development and characteristics are either defective or obscure. So he stops at the favourable moment, where the material seems richest or most accessible, and constructs therefrom his theory of the conditions affecting his *genre*, and then he tests his conclusions by comparison with the other *milieus* in which the same type appeared. By watching a form of literature arise, flourish and decay in different ages and among different nations, he distinguishes between its essential qualities and the mannerisms which it affects at each epoch, and he

comes to see what spiritual and social atmospheres are necessary to its growth. After investigating one *genre*, he goes on to the next and then the next, until he has completed the study of every type which lends itself to this treatment.

Thus, in a certain sense, comparative literature is not a history but an aggregate of independent enquiries, each covering its own set of periods, though all contribute knowledge with regard to the place of literature in civilisation. Nevertheless these investigations almost naturally fit into a chronological sequence, and carry the student along the course of time, while he stops at the formation of each set of deductions, to digress into the past or the future in search of corroborative evidence. He begins with the types which can best be studied in the classical world, and he finds that his researches centre in Rome, because we still know too little about the origin and aims of Greek literature and inherit too fragmentary a residue of their output, to use their achievements except for comparison. But oratory, the 'self-conscious' epic, erotic poetry and satire can be studied in Roman literature better than elsewhere. In every case we first consider the ideas, sentiments, society and politics of the time which made these *genres* possible; then the genius and training of their chief exponents; then the Greek models which they copied; then their own artistic ideals and the characteristics of their work. After thus forming an idea of how these types came into existence, in what *milieu* they thrive and of what quality of excellence each is capable, we test our deductions by comparison with the same types at other periods. In oratory we have Bossuet, Bourdaloue, and Massillon under Louis XIV, and Burke, Sheridan, Macaulay and others in the Georgian and early Victorian eras. With Virgil we compare Milton, to see what the epos was like in later ages, and a host of poets, including Lucan, Statius, Tasso, Voltaire, Hugo, Tennyson and Morris, to see when and why the epic spirit dies. Our ideas of erotic poetry are enlarged and corrected by comparison with the Italians of the late Middle Ages, the English of the Renaissance, the Germans of the *Sturm und Drang* period and the French of the nineteenth century. In satire we have Boileau, Dryden, Pope, Johnson, Crabbe, Rabener and Liscow. But no conception of formal satire would be complete unless we compared it with informal satire, and by briefly reviewing many famous diatribes, pasquinades and parodies (such as *Satyricon*, *Epistulae Obscurorum Virorum*, *Simplicius Simplicissimus*, *Hudibras*, *Les Châtiments*) showed how different was the atmosphere and scope of the two types, and how both were absorbed in the nineteenth

century novel. The study of these four *genres* will incidentally have given the student some idea of the distinctive classical spirit, and with this knowledge he will be able to approach the Middle Ages and investigate mysticism, romance and the art of story telling. As before, he compares. The first thing which strikes him is the difference between the spirit of medieval and classical Latin; the contrast in idiom and structure, in philosophy, in the legends which gathered round Aristotle, Cicero and especially Virgil, the transition from lyrical to sacred poetry and the transition from Plautine to goliardic humour. Then he compares the vision literature of ancient and medieval times; then the growth of the idea of the Devil, comparing this medieval superstition on the one hand with classical conceptions of evil spirits, and on the other hand continuing the study to Marlowe, Milton and Goethe. Then he compares romances such as *Roman de Troie*, *Roman de Thèbes*, *Roman de Jules César* and Chrestien de Troye's imitations of Ovid, with the classical sources to which they are distantly akin, and after that he examines the romantic spirit in the native epics such as the *Chanson de Roland*, *Nibelungenlied* and the Arthurian cycle. These epics, like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, are too obscure in their origin and composition to supply data for the study of literary production, but they will be used to complete our conception of romance and of medieval civilisation. We shall now have formed some idea of the conditions, social, domestic, educational and religious, which made story telling one of the chief literary features of this era. The student next proceeds to study the medieval fable and allegory which culminated in *Roman de la Rose* and in *Renard*, emphasising their qualities by comparison on the one hand with Æsop, Phædrus and Avianus, and on the other hand with modern allegories and symbolism. He ends by studying the tale. He forms his first conceptions of the narrative gift from Herodotus, Euripides and Ovid. Then he sees how the *genre* developed in the *exempla*, the *fabliaux*, Boccaccio and Chaucer; then he tests his impressions by comparison with the Renaissance *facetiae* and novelettes, and ends by establishing the essential difference between this old fashioned art and the modern short story. Just as a knowledge of the ancient world is necessary to understand the Middle Ages, so an idea of both these cultures is needed if a student is to appreciate the complex conflict of tendencies out of which the Renaissance sprang. In this period we can most conveniently consider Hellenism, centring our researches round the sixteenth century Grecians, but always comparing their activity with the civilisation of Periclean Athens, the aims of the



German 'Aufklärung' and the later movements represented by such poets as Heine, Chénier and Shelley. After thus studying the scope and character of humanism, the enquirer passes on to the other three distinctive features of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: the idea of a gentleman, the essay and the drama, about which as much has been said as the narrow limits of this article permit. Most of the literary types which flourished in the eighteenth century can be more successfully studied at other periods; this age, however, brings out most fully the environment and art of letter-writing. The student establishes the difference between natural and artificial epistolography by comparing Cicero and Pliny with Seneca and Cassiodorus. He next enquires why the artificial form recurs so frequently through the Middle Ages up to the mid-seventeenth century and why the true epistolary art is found so seldom. Then he investigates the difference in circumstances, ideas and *milieu* which made the eighteenth century the great age of letter writers. By a comparative examination of such men as Gellert, Voltaire, Goethe, Schiller, Walpole, Gray and Cowper he discovers the secret of their art. On leaving the eighteenth century, it is observed that the drama, the epic, the epistle and formal satire decay, and so by reviewing the conditions which in previous ages had been favourable to these types, the student begins to understand the negative side of the nineteenth century. When he turns to the positive side of this era of change, he finds that the chief features to be investigated are sentimentalism, the feeling for nature, the romantic spirit, and among the more definite achievements, the novel and literary criticism. All that has been learnt of previous centuries contributes towards an understanding of these movements. Sentimentalism, it is true, does not go much further back than the Elizabethan broadsides, but a knowledge of the more academic and scholarly literature of other times enables the reader to understand why this atmosphere began to pervade such novels as *Clarissa* and such dramas as *Kabale und Liebe*. Landscapes are described in Homer, the Greek tragedians, all Roman poets beginning with Catullus; there are allusions to nature throughout the Middle Ages and many formal descriptions of the country in the Renaissance and the Augustan age. Criticism became a science in the hands of Aristotle and was zealously practised by Italy in the sixteenth, by France in the seventeenth and by England and Germany in the eighteenth centuries. But the nineteenth century saw both lines of thought develop amazingly in a new direction, and the significance of such men as Rousseau, Walpole, Ugo Foscolo and Sainte-Beuve cannot

be fully appreciated without such a system of comparison. In the same way the study of the novel and of romanticism must begin by a review of the classical spirit down to its ultimate development in the eighteenth century. Having thus grasped what the reaction of this age really means, the student is enabled with more penetration to examine the immediate influences which bore upon nineteenth century literature, and the artistic or social ideals at which its writers aimed. As at other times, he distinguishes what is essential from what is accidental, and what is national from what is universal, by comparing the development of the chief *genres*, such as the lyric or the novel, in different countries and by enquiring why some countries, as England, were so far in advance of others, as Italy.

This scheme of study must necessarily be incomplete and incorrect. In making such an experiment the actual operator has to feel his way; no onlooker or projector can entirely forecast its line of development, and the narrow limits of a periodical publication compel one merely to hint at ideas which need a full explanation. At the same time, enough should have been said to give some glimpses of the field of speculation opened up by the comparative method. In the first place attention would be drawn to many important 'side lights' of literature which do not at present adequately fit in with any specialised course. Not only would such books as *Libri VIII Miraculorum*, *Eckius Dedolatus*, *Le Moyen de Parvenir*, *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft*, and *Le journal des frères Goncourt*, be discussed on their own merits, but the enquirer would have to reckon with all that moulds the thoughts of men and modifies their ways of expression. Political and social changes—wars, alliances, the rise and fall of classes and religions—or the great contagious outbursts which from time to time have passed over Europe, have often been discussed, but we have still to seek for a point of view which embraces the more commonplace and accidental developments, such as the improvement of houses, the cultivation of gardens, the fluctuations of the labour market and the invention of railways, not to mention matters of direct literary interest, such as the establishment of printing presses, the sale of books, the art of the theatre, censorship, patronage, travelling scholars, and all the hundred ambiguous and tortuous ways by which two writers, separated by space and time, may yet hold communion of thought and expression without one understanding a word of the other's language. And lastly, these general considerations would not blind the enquirer to the more academic questions of style and form. There is a subtle magic in the

arts of expression, and our student must note how and when one writer copies another out of sheer love for the literary type,—yes, and often centres his imitation on some whimsical peculiarity, till the true characteristics of his model are lost sight of. It may be objected that the proposed scheme is far too wide for a limited human intelligence; but it is surprising how much one man may accomplish if he makes proper use of his authorities and takes regular exercise.

A survey of the most suggestive workers in comparative literature, even though necessarily incomplete, will perhaps make clearer the intentions of the present writer. Some of the best known productions are really no more than accumulations of stores, from which each specialist may pick valuable material. In this category fall *Types of English Literature* and *Periods of European Literature*. The former series records how certain *genres* have originated and flourished in a single country, and the latter shows how certain habits of thought and of expression have prevailed at a single epoch. Such compilations cannot be missing from the library of any literary scholar, but, we repeat, they are records, they are books of reference. Professor Neilson's series cannot give us general truths, because each volume is confined to a single nation, nor can Professor Saintsbury's, because the volumes are confined each to a single age. The danger of constructing generalisations out of insufficient material are well illustrated in Taine's *Histoire de la Littérature Anglaise*. That book is one of the first attempts at a philosophy of literature, but so erratic and protean are the growth and development of books, that the learned Frenchman was led into numberless inconsistencies as soon as he began to establish a world-wide theory out of the evidence gathered from one literature. Professor H. M. Posnett in his *Comparative Literature* avoided such pitfalls by drawing on all literatures eastern and western, but in his endeavour to prove that they were susceptible of scientific treatment he hardly did more than demonstrate that literature is not independent of environment, just as M. Loliée in his *Histoire des Littératures Comparées* has confined himself to showing that civilisation, in some respects, is international. Neither thesis now-a-days needs demonstration. To turn to more specialised workers, we find that the chief exponents of the comparative method fall into two classes. On the one hand there are such men as Comparetti, Reinhartstöttner, Zielinski, Süß, Stempfänger, Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Krumbacher, Norden and other contributors to Dr Hinneberg's *Die Kultur der Gegenwart*, some of the essayists in *English Literature and the Classics* recently collected by

Mr G. S. Gordon, and in a wider, more constructive field, Mr H. O. Taylor. These scholars show how posterity has clung to the memory or teaching of the great classics, disguising them in the garb of its own civilisation rather than forget them. Thus, while one generation after another is called up to give its estimate of a classic, it is really disclosing the thoughts peculiar to its own age, and through this series of confessions we gain some insight, by means of comparison, into the history of the human mind. And yet these records of the influence of Virgil or Cicero or Plautus or Boetius, are too specialised or too purely historical to give more than fleeting glimpses at the other broader questions which they involve. The mysteries of literary transmission, adaptation and antipathy are touched on only as side-lights, and these valuable monographs are not so much contributions to the philosophy of literature as studies in the posthumous biography of the immortals. However, this school of writers is indispensable to the student of comparative literature, because it shows how a master-mind projects the shadow of his thoughts or of his own personality down through posterity and thus gives some insight into the continuity of literature. The other class, including scholars of such varied attainments as Sir Sidney Lee, M. Charlanne, M. Huszár and M. Bastide, show how a creative author absorbs from other sources much of the material which he is popularly supposed to invent. Such research throws valuable light on the whole question of literary invention and originality and, in some cases, such as in Professor Herford's long established *Literary Relations*, we gain some insight into a people's psychology. And yet all this work cannot be regarded as more than materials for the study of comparative literature. These scholars provide us with remarkable instances of the dependency of writers, but their province is still that of the literary specialist who confines himself to the task of estimating and classifying certain authors or groups of authors.

Few authorities have shown themselves better qualified than Brandes in his *Main Currents* to write philosophically on comparative literature. As he shows how permanent influences, such as national character and geographical conditions, combined with temporary reactions in society and politics, to produce, at a certain period, new forms of thought, we get some glimpses of the forces which govern the creation of books. As he shows how different nations, at different moments, contributed their currents to the flood which was covering Europe, we gain some insight, by comparison, into the value and significance of these forces. But

*Main Currents* has neither the aims nor the method of comparative literature. Brandes is not attempting an 'anatomy' of literature, but only the appreciation of a 'movement.' His contributions towards a knowledge of how thought takes the forms of artistic expression are incidental.

As might be expected, the comparative method has found its most whole-hearted advocates among writers and lecturers who address themselves to a more general public. Foremost among these stands Brunetière. The author of *L'Évolution des Genres* never carried out his scheme, but, as far as can be judged from the fragments which he has left, his purpose was to centre his studies on France, which has produced the most logical, complete and formal body of literature in the world. Thus his deductions would have been incomplete. He misses all that is to be learnt from the eccentricities and failures of the English, the Germans and the Italians. He did not attempt to gather together all the instances where literature has conspicuously succeeded or conspicuously failed to express the human mind and out of such data to create a philosophy. He aimed rather at showing through what causes certain types of expression have arisen, reached perfection and decayed in a certain literature—a more difficult and questionable task—and out of such material to form a science. He seems to have intended his work to have been a record rather than an explanation. Professor Vaughan, in *Types of Tragic Drama*, has shown how one national theatre can be used to throw into relief the characteristics of another and Mr W. H. Hudson in his suggestive *An Introduction to the Study of Literature* discusses avowedly 'the comparative method.' Mr Hudson is fully alive to all that can be learnt by tracing the influence of one race or age on another, and by watching how any one of the great literary motives (e.g. the love of man and woman) is passed on from civilisation to civilisation. But, as he is writing for the general public, he contents himself with showing how these studies stimulate that sense of interest and curiosity which we have now accustomed ourselves to name culture. Professor Moulton's otherwise admirable *World Literature* suffers from the same limitations. Though he treats his subject as an organic whole, and has judiciously collected and compared some of its greatest masterpieces, he clearly aims at teaching little more than catholicity of taste; his suggestive book is no new departure in advanced education, but is merely a short cut to what most men of culture accomplish for themselves. Strange as it may sound, the comparative method has been applied in the most philosophic spirit by writers whose intentions are not literary.

Taine's *Philosophie d'Art* (as opposed to his *Histoire de la Littérature*) and H. S. Chamberlain's *Die Grundlagen des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* will at once occur to the reader; so will Troels-Lund's *Himmelsbild und Weltanschauung* and *Gesundheit und Krankheit in der Anschauung alter Zeiten* (German translation), which show how man's conception of the stars, attitude to the Devil, belief in God and ideas of health and sickness vary with every stage of civilisation and furnish the key to each of the past ages. Even more noteworthy examples can be found in the new movement towards psycho-analysis which is being expounded, under Dr Freud's editorship, in the *Schriften zur angewandten Seelenkunde*. Whatever votaries of Belles-Lettres or the 'genus irritabile' may think of the intrusion of these pathologists 'where angels fear to tread,' their contribution to the understanding of literature is considerable. In their endeavour to analyse the fundamental instincts of humanity, they turn to the folk poetry, epic and drama of all countries and ages for illustrations, and show how primitive tendencies, often distorted and perverted by civilisation, inspire and find symbolical expression in some of the greatest themes of literature. The criticism of the future will probably give full consideration to such questions, but, in the meantime, these scientists look at so complex a thing as art from only one point of view, and so see less than half of it.

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LONDON.