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The Intrusions of Science

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THE INTRUSIONS OF SCIENCE

It is not infrequently related that human arrogance was sadly but not unjustly rebuked by Darwin and the evolutionary science of the Nineteenth Century. And indeed from the point of view of pure science there was arrogance in an assumption that the enveloping intelligence of the universe looked upon mankind as its *terminus ad quem* to which all parts were subordinate—in an assumption that men were made in the likeness of an over-ruling power that worked by ways which, paradoxically, even that likeness was fain to call mysterious and incomprehensible. Science seemed to make these ways less mysterious, less incomprehensible; but the price paid was a fall of that pride of place. The biological continuity of man in the hierarchy of the beasts that perish was a little hard to bear, and it had to be borne.

And yet, now that we are able to pause, and look back upon the half-century in which science has outlived the astonishment it created, the advantage it had on the ground of its humility appears to have been indeed only verbal. It would be hard to find a humility more arrogant than Clifford's, more self-assertive than Haeckel's, more truculent than Spencer's.

"We conclude, then," says Spencer at the end of his famous essay, *What Knowledge Is of Most Worth?* "that for discipline as well as for guidance, science is of chiefest value. . . . To the question—What knowledge is of most worth?—the uniform reply is—Science. . . . For the due discharge of parental functions the proper guidance is to be found only in—Science. For the interpretation of national life, past and present, without which the citizen cannot regulate his conduct, the indispensable key is—Science. Alike for the most perfect production and highest enjoyment of art in all its forms the needful preparation is still—Science. And for the purposes of discipline—intellectual, moral, and religious—the most efficient study is once more—Science."

And if we should look, as we might have looked any time these fifty years, into the psychology of that surprising intellectual revolution, we could find a self-satisfaction no less towering in those men whose talk was of fossils, of carbon, of mammals, and

of evolution, than in those whose talk was of virtue, of wisdom, and of the discourse of reason. For human arrogance hardly dwells in the object of pride, but rather in the human consciousness. In both cases the pride was the pride of accomplishment, the pride of discovery, the pride of having adjusted and trained the mind to the grasp of valuable truths. It was, I dare say, as purely a self-satisfaction when the subject of discourse was objective scientific data as when it was the human spirit itself.

The significant thing, however, is not the distribution of invidious terms, but rather the recognition of an important truth of which this arrogance is the curiously decisive witness. For this arrogance, whether of scientist or humanist, bears evidence that human knowledge, scientific or humane, attains its only importance through the estimate put upon it by the human consciousness. Arrogance is but an expression of the estimate. Science, however, seemed long to forget, in its own preoccupation with the external world, that this was an activity of the consciousness—this decision that science was momentous. It seemed long to forget that it owed its own importance to the approval of that consciousness. It seemed long to forget, that is, that it itself was humbly subordinate—that the judicial consciousness was the superior.

No doubt there was great attraction in the first promises of science. It seemed to offer hope of an ultimate philosophy of life. The conception of hierarchies of laws leading to a universal law seemed at last to give assurance of that resting-place that the human spirit craved beyond all things. The mystery of life was solved, so science seemed to whisper. What a seductive whisper to one whose spirit was wearied with the baffling search after an order that as yet seemed to be but faintly coagulating in the structureless fluidity of human life. It was possible in the rapt contemplation of that hypothetic spectacle to forget for a time its bearing, its whole implication, as it is always possible in the presence of grandeur to be for a time wholly self-forgetful. But the mountain dweller soon finds the magnificence of his view insufficient to satisfy all the needs of his being. Life must go on, and the spectacle stales. Our interest in life is more than spectacular, though a spectacle may enrapture us for a moment. In the end we find that our interest comes back to humanity. Even our gratification at the spectacle is a gratification of our own spirits and significant only because our own spirits are gratified.

What other end, when at last we recover from the intoxication of that self-forgetful moment, and inquire calmly into the bearings of the situation—what other end is imaginable? Who else is to be pleased, helped, served, made better, made happier? When we hunt down all the criteria by which the worth of things is ultimately established we find them homing at last to the human spirit. The scientific revolution of the second half of the Nineteenth Century was essentially a moment of intoxicated self-forgetfulness.

Though the present moment is not without signs of a sober return to the fuller concerns of life, yet our intellectual inheritance of to-day is still representative of the mood of rapt wonder. That mood was strong enough, and definite enough in its point of insistence, to have got itself heard above the other voices of the time. Once dominant it had in its power the means of persistence; it commanded the training of the new generation of intellect. There is something to be said for the splendid militancy of the earlier generation of scientific controversialists—for the Huxleys and Tyndalls of the first decades of the revolution. They were not themselves, without some sense of the valuable points in the attitude they were opposing. That they bore so heavily upon their own end of the beam was due to the dead weight upon the other. But they were taken surprisingly at their word; there was a great shift of weight—perhaps dead weight—and the balance was overthrown. The newer generation of scientists, however, born and bred under the scientific régime, has not, naturally enough, had a keen sense of other than scientific values, not having been informed of them. The very momentum of their propaganda has been sufficient to keep them preoccupied, to keep them from inquiring too minutely into the ultimate bearing of their philosophy. Success has bred success. Contemporary honour, popular confirmation and encouragement arising out of the industrial situation, and the establishment of an imposing material equipment in every seat of learning have all tended to make for an unquestioning acceptance of the scientific dogma.

The attitude of the new generation of scientists, who fell heir to the earlier conquests is not without psychological interest. Their training has been wholly a training of the intellect. The whole liturgy of the scientific service has been made up of variations upon the theme of minute care untiring patience, infinite

pains, to the end of absolute accuracy. The preoccupations of science have been with material things—things so definite that such accuracy is approachable if not really attainable. Indeed the whole ideal of scholarly procedure attained in science is one of the noteworthy accomplishments of the period. But the reaction of such exclusive attention to definite and tangible things has been curious. Perhaps the scientific inheritors are the victims of the said perfunctoriness which follows success, and follows the more quickly the less protracted the struggle, and falls the more inevitably upon those who are bred in established tenets and accept them as a matter of course rather than as a matter of deliberate judgment. However that may be, the thoroughness with which their training has ignored the humane aspects of life and the thoroughness with which it has inculcated the virtue of absolute accuracy, has taught them to mistrust the exercise of the intellect in those humane fields where the data are less tangible than material things.

Beside the apparent pride of the humanist, there were other coincidences in the scientific revolution that lent a verbal if not a real colour to the contrasts of which science was able to avail itself. Literature was ever the humanist's theme, and the humanist's mode of expression, the object of his concern, and the ground of his discipline. And literature—that term, alas, that covers so much that is mean and paltry and unworthy, as well as much that is great and noble—had come, fittingly to the scientist's dialectic purpose, to cover something that would be hard to defend from any point of view. Romanticism had done much to spread the conception that literature was, not a matter of intellect dealing with life, but a matter of sensuous pleasure, of æsthetic enjoyment.

"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know,"

sang Keats; and the scientist of intellectual vigour could well feel assured that if the end of literature were a mere dallying with the emotions, a mere titillation of the sensibilities, he for one could not subscribe to that creed as sufficient for his guidance in the more serious business of life. The great names of Wordsworth and Shelley could do nothing to win his respect for literature, or make him critical of his master, Spencer, when he pronounced

literature a play activity. There was little enough in the literature or the literary judgment of his time to counteract the tendency to mistrust the exercise of the intellect in the humane field.

Of other literature he knew little or nothing. His formal training did little or nothing to acquaint him with it, and little to make him understand its point. His tastes hardly sent him to it; rather he was prone to accept the word and the spirit of Spencer as indicative of the proper scientific attitude; "Never stopping to ask what has been thought about this or that matter, I have usually gone direct to the facts as presented in Nature";—or again, with respect to Plato: "Time after time I have been tempted to read, now this dialogue and now that, and have put it down in a state of impatience with the indefiniteness of the thinking." The indefiniteness of the thinking! Put to it, the humanist could hardly point to more definite thinking in his own field than Plato's; and if that were the case the scientist felt that he could hardly think well of the humane field as a place for intellectual exercise. All in all he found little to alter his preconception that the serious intellectual concern of life was scientific, and that literature was a matter of play.

To such a conclusion he was further predisposed by something deeper than these external influences. He became, himself, in his human relations, a thorough-going romanticist. It is the quality of the romanticist that he values supremely the intensity of certain of his emotions. Finding that the exercise of his intellect is not in itself conducive to the exaltation of these feelings, but rather that its tendency is to guard and restrain them, he is inclined to think of the intellect as a harsh, unwarranted restriction upon their supreme spontaneity. So felt Rousseau; so felt Wordsworth; and so, in effect, has felt the romantic temperament in all times. It is needless to say, therefore, that the romanticist has chosen as the field of his indulgences those themes that are most prolific of emotion—human relations. Where he has concerned himself with things it has been wholly in the search for beauty. Now it would seem that the scientist, whose whole serious preoccupation has been intellectual, would be perhaps the last to fall into the ways of the romanticist. But the peculiarities of his training have been of a kind but slightly to interfere with his falling into those ways. He has eschewed the exercise of his reason among data less tangible than things; his hard-headedness has confined itself largely

to things to which the romanticist is indifferent. There is little, therefore, to keep him from being romantic in the romantic field.

On the face of it, it might seem probable that the scientist's training would leave him hard-headed in every relation of his life. But there are circumstances which interfere with such universal hard-headedness. The intellect is not spontaneous: it is a faculty, as the scientist knows, dependent for its value upon specific training. The test of its value is exterior to the thinker himself; its test is truth, and the thinker succeeds or fails as he attains to a measure of truth. Propound to a chemist the problem of analysing a given fluid, and though he may take pleasure in the operation, the test of his success lies not in the pleasure but in the degree to which his report corresponds to the reality. It is externally measurable, and is of value as it is found by others to be true. Truth can be attained only by knowledge and training among the specific data involved in the problem. Hard-headedness is therefore the fruit of specific training, and is perfected only in the matters in which it has been trained.

With the romantic emotions, however, all this is different. Their end is the pleasure of their own exercise. The final test of their success is internal to each individual and then only as to his own. There is no external standard to which he must attain or fail. Of two lovers of art sitting in silent rapture before a Madonna of Raphael's who shall judge of the more perfect attainment of the romantic aim. Each is the measurer of his own success. If each has thrilled to his utmost, that is as much as can be said. But which utmost is greater no one can say. And such perfect success is open to all, since the emotions are spontaneous, the fruit of indulgence, not the fruit of discipline.

The point of such a discrimination is that the scientist is not, by virtue of his intellectual training, excluded from high romantic privileges in fields where his intellect is not disciplined. The romanticist may be a romanticist pure and simple, and avoid the scientific subject matter; but the scientist cannot be a scientist pure and simple, and the one subject matter that he cannot avoid is the romantic subject matter. He may, in effect, leave his disciplined intellect behind when he wanders into strange places; but he can never leave his common humanity behind. And here in the realm of his common humanity he cannot leave behind his inheritance of sensations, tastes, appetites, emotions, his desire for happiness. His perfected hard-headedness is not

scientifically applicable here. And because here in the midst of his inevitable human relations the type of reason that is applicable has not been specifically disciplined, and because here the emotions are most prolific, his tendency is to be a romanticist in the humane field.

All this is but to apply the scientist's own principle of specialisation. To the trained doctor the empirical practitioner is an abhorrence; to the scientist the lay dabbler is a subject of disgust. The mere impressionism of the amateur could never have attained to the atomic theory, the ionic theory, or the discovery of bacteria and antitoxins. It is, therefore, far from illogical to apply the same principle to the human problem. The scientist can indeed endeavour to escape the taint of amateurism, of romanticism, by the plea that in human affairs he is a human being, and by virtue of his common humanity is inherently fit for wise counsel and wise action. But he cannot in truth escape the sense that in such a plea he is denying the logic of his own scientific position, and allying himself with those impressionists in science whom he so justly despises. He cannot quite blind himself to the realisation that life, if left to the casual impressionism of the untrained, would never have attained to whatever degree of nobility men have brought it to.

Such an arraignment is indeed ungracious, or must seem so to those who feel a sting of reproach in the term "romanticism." That the world owes an incalculable debt to science is a truism that goes without question. Mediæval speculation over problems of the physical universe are as laughable to-day as a sophomore's. Science has done much to fight in its own field the vicious obscurantism that has survived from the Middle Ages. To know the things about which speculation is sophomoric is something; to have disciplined a generation in a knowledge of such things is much. None the less science has not won the whole intellectual battle, and to suggest the insufficiencies of science and of the scientific discipline is but to carry farther the very service which it has so effectively rendered to a single part of life and thought. It is but to assert the value of a rational discipline for that part of life which science must ignore, and with which to-day romanticism is making such havoc.

And yet, in the curious but not incomprehensible blindness which we all experience in matters with which our eyes are familiar but into which our minds have not been taught to pene-

trate, the man of science is loth to admit just the element in the human field which is the determinant of all that is of moment there. Had he and his revolution fallen upon an age when that aspect of life in which he was untrained was in the hands of its own proper guardians, he might have found, in the culture of educated men, in the literature which the time elevated to the general respect, in the scholarship and criticism of his colleagues, a force to counterbalance his instinctive tendencies toward loose impressionism when he wandered from home. Instead, he fell upon a period in which not only had the human garden been let run wild, but in which all the traditional oracles to which men looked for wisdom praised wildness as the form proper to gardens. Dionysus was enthroned; and though many sang in the name of Apollo, they were in truth but wreathed Bacchæ. The romanticists were the spokesmen for all that part of life that lay beyond the range of his trained competence. They had captured literature, and with it all those quiet voices that spoke to him in moments of seclusion and contemplation. They had captured education, and with it those voices that bent his pliant spirit in its youth. They whispered nothing to him of a discipline of that spirit; they whispered nothing to him of a field of austere thought that comprised all great literature, and dealt with matter larger, and to humanity immeasurably more important, than the science of things; they whispered to him only subtle flatteries of his own innate instincts—seductive flatteries that drew his thoughts from the presence there of an element that was the most momentous element of all.

There were other flatteries, less subtle, addressing themselves to the more rational part of his nature, which did little less to seal the scientist's content with the segregation of his intellectual life. He saw those whose avowed intellectual concern was with human experience hastening to enlist themselves under the banner of science. He saw erstwhile humane scholars comporting themselves strangely, though to him not strangely, in their desire to appear in the current scholarly fashion, imitating the scientific gait and manner, and more importantly, proclaiming the objective point of science to be their own objective point. Such imitation could do little but confirm him in his sense that the one mode of thought capable of worthy results was the one of his own predilection.

It was not, indeed, that he thought of intellect as having no

place in the ordering of human relations, but that he saw those relations gathering under the wing of sociology—a branch of scholarship that promised to care for them in the name of science. He could, it is true, lift questioning brows in the presence of a science so indefinite in its data as to be capable of no reliable generalisation. Yet he could look with tolerance, even with sympathy, at its endeavours to do its best with matter so unsystematised, so various, so incalculable as humanity. If the matter was to be dealt with, that was the manner in which results were to be attained. With a little more discriminating scrutiny, however, than he was quite prepared to give it, and a little more humour than he was accustomed to apply to the objects of his serious preoccupation, he might have smiled at its solemn proposal to deal with humanity as its subject, and its prompt exclusion from that subject of the very element that made it human.

To make a merit of excluding Hamlet from the play is but sorry fun for the spectators, however much it may simplify the problem of acting for the players. The sociologists, however, little enough aware of the subtler values that qualify the human outlook, saw no humour in their exclusions, saw nothing but grim necessity driving them, if they would deal with humanity after the manner of science, to cast overboard all the incalculable factors of thought and genius that have elevated mankind to the possibility of even sociological pursuit. They have not, even to-day, naturally enough, been able to sink all such contraband cargo, but they have done pretty well. They have largely limited themselves to savages, barbarians, and the least intelligent strata of civilised society; and though even these simple peoples have contraband qualities they have succeeded not badly in bringing them through under friendly labels. None the less, by narrowing their field they have pretty well evaded the confusion that would arise from an attempt at scientific treatment of that surprising, spontaneous, incalculable element in men which at its highest we call genius and which in its lower degrees characterises every man's conscious actions. For the accredited scientist, however, with his predisposition to think of the reason as trustworthy only when dealing with tangible, calculable data, sociology has done much to quiet whatever lurking sense may have troubled him of a need to take care of a part of life which humanly he could not ignore.

If he had, with orthodox scientific doubt, still been left unquiet in his mind by a glimpse of the insufficiency, the fundamental evasion, of the sociologists, his lingering questions might have been stilled by the eagerness with which another class of scholars in the field of human experience gave up their older methods as unfruitful, and allied themselves to his forces, with every confirmation that specifically trained intellect could give of the sufficiency of the scientific mode to deal with the human problem. Sociology was new; it was without traditions; it was a product of science itself. And moreover it might logically claim for itself simply those aspects of humanity that fell short of the humanising qualities of thought and genius. History, however, was anciently established, had its origin in humane impulses, and had long-established traditions. Still more importantly its subject matter was almost exclusively that human experience that had been moulded by the very thought and genius which sociology so selectively eschewed. History was predominantly the history of civilisation, not of savagery and barbarism, and one important branch of history was the biography of men whose only distinction from other men lay in the quality of their spontaneous genius. It was patent, therefore, to the scientist that here at least was a body of trained scholars whose subject was not exclusively one aspect of life, but was life as it has been lived, and life as it has been significantly lived. With his strong inherent sense that life as it is commonly lived is an amateur affair, his lingering sense that perhaps it needed intellectual direction could hardly fail of satisfaction at the accession of the historians. The spectacle of that shift to the scientific ideal and the scientific method, that ideal and that method which had come to mean to him the difference between chaos and order, was but a promise that at last something was to be done to orient the chaos by those whose concern for it was most serious and whose competence was most established.

More amazing, if anything, than the historians and still more confirmatory of the modern attitude, are the scientific scholars in the field of literature. And yet there are conditions in the field of literary scholarship which make it a fair question whether the subject of that scholarship is not even less susceptible than history and sociology to the scientific mode of treatment.

Science itself is not, indeed, uniformly scientific. We may—to be for the moment wholly elementary—watch the sciences

shading off from one to another as they grow less and less accurate in their powers. And we may witness a progressive attempt to evade the less calculable elements that disturb the reliability of their generalisations, and a disposition to fall back upon the more definite sciences. Mathematics we speak of as the exact science because its data are controllably definite and ideally stable. Astronomy, physics, and chemistry are next and tend to become more and more mathematical. Next stands biology; and here the scientist begins to be troubled by an incalculable element; a given amoeba does not act so calculably as a chloride or a ray of light; it may surround and not irritably repel a grain of inorganic matter. But the biologist is not concerned with the spontaneous individuality of his amoeba; he deals with its internal unconscious reactions, and reduces these more and more to matters of chemistry and physics and mathematics. Even when he comes to man he limits himself to those same internal calculable facts that make up human anatomy, histology, embryology, physiology, and related sciences. He would shift the less calculable elements to, let us say, the sociologist.

The sociologist nominally accepts them; but he again divides his human material into two classes—on the one hand those in whom the incalculable elements are comparatively low, and who live so close to the immediate demands of physical life that in the mass and on the average their actions may with some degree of accuracy be predicted; and on the other hand those among whom the intelligence is high enough to lift them above an exclusive attention to the demands of physical life. Among these latter the characteristic activities are so far determined by the genius of its leaders and the ideas that they propagate that it is impossible to reduce to laws the actions and reactions of the mass. And so the sociologists have limited themselves consciously or unconsciously to the former class, and shifted the latter to the care of some one else. History accepts what is, scientifically speaking, too incalculable for sociology. History is primarily the history of civilisation. Now it is the very quality of civilisation that it is the addition built by the spontaneous genius of men upon the substratum of instinctive animal life. It is true, however, that the historian must take into account both the superstructure and the substratum. Both are important in determining the development of a people however civilised. It is to be admitted, therefore, after watching the gradations of

science to the less and less definite, that there remains over for history an element that relates it, however remotely, to the skirts of science. Its main subject is something else, something not so calculable, but it has this calculable element attached to it though in a wholly subordinate way.

Literature is trebly distinguished from science by the nature of its origin, of its subject matter, and of its reception. It does not spring from a set of natural laws with which science can grapple. M. Lanson's "law"—"*Le chef-d'œuvre est moins un commencement, qu'un terme*"—infinitely contestable though it is, in no way even tries to explain the capital fact of the masterpiece. That it becomes a masterpiece at all is not that it was "influenced" by a mass of "sources"; those "sources" existed in the presence of every contemporary of the writer, and in the consciousness of hundreds. The existence of the "sources" even in the consciousness does not work as a natural law, automatically, to the production of masterpieces, though the law has that delightfully preposterous implication, and literary scholars seem to believe it. That it became a masterpiece at all is due, of course, to the spontaneous genius of the writer; its very essence as a masterpiece is the addition which that genius has made upon the inert particles which constitute the "sources." And that spontaneous genius science has found to lie beyond its scope. Moreover, the subject matter of literature is again that same incalculable element in men. If the writer is concerned with the scientifically calculable elements in humanity he is writing biology, not literature. His work becomes literature when he is concerned with human life as it is lived under the direction of the spontaneous elements of the consciousness. And finally in the hands of the reader it attains to its rank as a masterpiece by virtue of his recognition of its value through its appeal to those same elements in his own consciousness. Nowhere, therefore, in its whole "life history" does literature, the thing itself, touch even the skirts of science. It has its rise, its substance, and its destination beyond the scientific pale.

All this has, it is true, failed explicitly to recognise a distinction which would no doubt make the whole difference in the mind of the scientific scholar. What this difference is we may see by a scrutiny of the present academic situation. Though our literary faculties are dominated by what has, with perhaps justifiable petulance, been called the philological syndicate, there are tol-

erated on every faculty two or three representatives of another type of mind. These men are concerned with literature itself as distinguished from philology and literary history, and in literature itself they are concerned with its æsthetic and emotional values. In this way there is established what is commonly called a "balance"; for it is believed that the "artistic side" of literature must not be ignored. The establishment of this "balance," however, is curiously indicative of the attitude of the accredited scholar. Apparently, to him, being himself romantic in his attitude to life, literature itself is purely "artistic," purely æsthetic and emotional; and those whom he provides to take care of literature itself seem aware of only those romantic values. For his own part he has, as is well known, a tolerant contempt for the emotionalists. And in truth he may well have such a contempt. There is something weak and effeminate in the cultivation of the sensibilities for their own sakes, which a person of intellect cannot but scorn. He himself devotes his energies to more intellectual tasks. He is a philologist or a historian of literature, and as such feels himself to be concerned with matters of genuine import and masculine worthiness. This balance which he has established, however, is indicative of his conception of what literature is, the thing itself, what is its worth, and what is its proper treatment.

It is the failure to have recognised that the scientific literary scholar is not really concerned with literature itself that will make the distinction of the foregoing section seem unjust and somewhat beside the point. And indeed literary history must rank as of high importance. The production of a masterpiece as an historic event stands eminent among the occurrences of the past. It were fatuous to slight the importance of the historian's work, and to slight the importance in this connection of the scholarly virtues that are called scientific. They are important here though in a less degree, just as they are important in the field of society and political history, and in the same way. But it is hard to escape the sense that they are important because they establish with accuracy the circumstances that surround the occurrence of something that is in itself important. Their service is subordinate to the significance of the fact that they establish.

What the historian may find of the circumstances that preceded and surrounded the production of *Hamlet* surely gain

their point from the greatness of *Hamlet*. And what is the greatness of *Hamlet*? Why search so patiently for the "sources," for that ur-Hamlet that is so ardently believed in—for all the links in the chain of revenge-plays that eventuated so gloriously? Suppose they were all found, what then? The question is not hard to answer from the humane point of view, but for the scientific scholar it is disconcerting. The practical answer would be to go on to something else. But such an answer, though the one that is made, is something of an evasion. If all that scholarship could hope to know were known, what would be the point of knowing it? What is *Hamlet* that all this pother of research should go on about it? The syndics have put themselves in a way to make it hard for them to reply. They have indicated their sense of the significance of literature by the type of men they have put on their faculties to deal with the thing itself; and they have indicated their attitude to the thing itself by their scholarly contempt for the activities of these men. It is, we might say, a little inconsistent to act on the belief that the production of a piece of literature is momentous enough to warrant the existence of a whole body of historical scholars, but to believe at the same time that literature itself is a mere matter of pleasurable emotions, of an effeminate titillation of the sensibilities, and unworthy the serious occupation of earnest men of intellect. Yet such is, in effect, the attitude of scientific literary scholarship to-day.

How wholly the modern official literary scholar has, in his eagerness to be scientific, effectively denied the existence of all scholarly values except those that inhere in the establishment of facts is shown perhaps nowhere so strikingly as in the modern concern for Mediæval literature. That most of the matter dug out of that dark period is intrinsically worthless is well known. But the circumstances of its production, its *Quellen*, are notably obscure. To find an old play or tale or poem which men had willingly let die; to trace its "origin", after the analogy of the biological sciences, in its resemblances to other plays and tales and poems; to hunt down parallels in contemporary and antecedent literature; to range as possible sources and influences a nicely graded list of works the author, if he is known, had read or might have read, men he had known or might have known, conversations he had held or might have held—such is the activity of those to whom the establishment of facts is the sufficient

exercise of literary scholarship. It is all done with an earnest solemnity that apparently asks no disconcerting questions; never ventures to lift an inquiring eye from the details in the foreground; never, in the flush of its accepted success, has come to murmur the *cui bono* of disillusion. To its protagonists the facts are sufficient—the things to be worked with, the things to be worked for.

Were we concerned to understand this curious activity, so vigorous, so ceaseless, so unmorbid in its freedom from wearying thought, this busyness over things so obscure, so worthless, we might see, in this ignoring on principle of the spontaneous and the incalculable in the human spirit, the decline of the very judgment by which in the reader the better and the worse are intuitively recognised. Once such a decline is complete the critical judgment is overthrown and whatever has attained to the external form of literature becomes worthy of treatment by the scientific mode of thought; for the element of fact is as large in the worse as in the better. However we may explain it, the spectacle remains of an indiscriminately vigorous activity over literary products whose only importance lies in the opportunity which they afford for that activity itself.

The particular result of the official half-truth that the discovery of "sources" and facts is the sufficient exercise of literary scholarship has been to elevate the ethics of the drudge into the law of the masters. It has been to do nothing for those rare spirits who have in them the germ of the master; it has been to sacrifice the best for the many, to proclaim as the fair shining body of truth the shoe latchet which those many can indeed be taught to unloose. The more general result has been to cultivate a generation of literary scholars who take their place beside the historians of the scientific school, beside the sociologists, and beside the natural scientists, and who with those others at their side search for more and ever more details to wonder at. It is to encourage a forgetfulness of the fact that the details, even the perfected, unified spectacle itself, has no significance save in its relation to that larger synthesis which takes place in the human consciousness. It is to forget that the enrichment of that consciousness is the only conceivable end of all their preoccupation. It is to complete the circle of those who ignore in that synthesis the supreme significance of an element that makes even that scholarship possible—personality, the spontaneous play of the

reason, the genius of the individual. And more than all, because literature is the field wherein that genius which they ignore is the sole actor, it confirms those others of the closed circle in their predisposed sense that that genius, that personality, is, like the romantic sentimentality to which they have thrown a contemptuous sop, but a trivial accident of the human situation. It leaves uncontradicted in the place where contradiction would most logically appear, the impression that gazing at the facts is the end of intellectual activity, and leaves unbroken the moment of intoxicated self-forgetfulness in the wonder at the objective accumulation.

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