

PRODUCTIVE SCHOLARSHIP¹

EDITORIAL BY THEODORE ROOSEVELT

WHAT counts in a man or in a nation is not what the man or the nation can do, but what he or it actually does. Scholarship that consists in mere learning, but finds no expression in production, may be of interest and value to the individual, just as ability to shoot well at clay pigeons may be of interest and value to him; but it ranks no higher, unless it finds expression in achievement. From the standpoint of the nation, and from the broader standpoint of mankind, scholarship is of worth chiefly when it is productive, when the

scholar not merely receives or acquires but gives.

Of course there is much production by scholarly men which is not, strictly speaking, scholarship; any more than the men themselves, despite their scholarly tastes and attributes, would claim to be scholars in the technical or purely erudite sense. The exceedingly valuable and extensive work of Edward Cope comes under the head of science, and represents original investigation and original thought concerning what that investigation showed; yet if the word scholarship is used broadly, his work must certainly be called productive scientific scholarship. General Alexander's capital "Memoirs

¹ *The Medieval Mind*. By Henry Osborn Taylor. Macmillan & Co., New York.

The Life and Times of Cavour. By William Roscoe Thayer. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.

of a Confederate" show that a man who is a first-class citizen as well as a first-class fighting man may also combine the true scholar's power of research and passion for truth with the ability to see clearly and to state clearly what he has seen. Mr. Hannis Taylor's history of "The Origin and Growth of the American Constitution" and General Francis V. Greene's history of the American Revolution could have been written only by scholars. Such altogether delightful volumes of essays as Mr. Crothers's "Gentle Reader," "Pardoner's Wallet," and "Among Friends" may not, in the strictest sense of the word, represent scholarship, any more than the "Essays of Elia" represent scholarship; but they represent more than scholarship, and they could have been written only by a man of scholarly attributes. The same thing is true of Mr. Maurice Egan, now our Minister to Denmark—who so well upholds the tradition which has always identified American men of letters with American diplomacy—in his essays in Comparative Literature, named, as I think not altogether happily, from the first essay, "The Ghost in Hamlet." Mr. Egan writes not merely with charm but as no one but a man of scholarly attributes could write—and, by the way, his dedication to Archbishop John Lancaster Spalding is a dedication to a man whose lofty spiritual teachings have been expressed in singularly beautiful English. In its most perfect expression scholarship must utter itself with literary charm and distinction; although, I am sorry to say, the professional scholars sometimes actually distrust scholarship which is able thus to bring forth wisdom divorced from pedantry and dryness. As an example, Gilbert Murray's "Rise of the Greek Epic" not only shows profound scholarship, and the profound scholarly instinct which can alone profit by the mere erudition of scholarship, but is also so delightfully written as to be as interesting as the most interesting novel; and, curiously enough, this very fact, coupled with the fact that Mr. Murray's translations of Euripides and Aristophanes are so attractive, has tended to excite distrust of him in the minds of worthy scholars whose productions are themselves free from all taint of interest, from all taint of literary charm. Professor Lounsbury's extraordinary scholarship has been fully appreciated only by the best scholars; and this partly because of the very fact of his many-sided development in the field of intellectual endeavor.

But I speak now of works of scholarship in the more conventional sense, of works which show scholarship such as Lea showed in his history of the Inquisition, such as Childe showed in his studies of English ballad poetry.

Mr. Taylor's study of "The Mediæval Mind" is a noteworthy contribution—I am tempted to say the most noteworthy of recent contributions—to the best kind of productive scholarship. His erudition is extraordinary in breadth and depth, his grasp of the subject no less marked than his power of conveying to others what he has thus grasped. He is not only faithful to the truth in large things, he is accurate in small matters also; and where he makes use of any statement he always shows that there is justification for it; although, by the way, I can only guess at his reason for calling Attila a "Turanian"—a word which carries a pleasant flavor of pre-Victorian ethnology, and might just about as appropriately be applied to Tecumseh. As he expressly states, Mr. Taylor is not concerned with the brutalities of mediæval life, nor with the lower grades of ignorance and superstition which abounded in the Middle Ages, but with the more informed and constructive spirit of the mediæval time. There is, of course, no hard and sharp line to be drawn between mediæval time and, on the one hand, what is "ancient" and, on the other hand, what is "modern;" but for his purposes he treats the twelfth and thirteenth centuries as showing the culmination of the mediæval spirit in its most characteristic form; although he also incidentally touches on things that occurred in the fourteenth century, and of course covers the slow upward movement through the Dark Ages (as to which he does rather less than justice to the Carolingian revival of learning) when men were groping in the black abyss into which civilization so rapidly slid after the close of the second century. His mastery of the facts is well-nigh perfect, and he handles them with singular sympathy. In such chapters as "The Spotted Actuality" he makes it evident that he has constantly before his own mind the whole picture. The ordinary reader, however, needs to remember that it is no part of Mr. Taylor's purpose to present this whole picture, but merely to make a study somewhat analogous to what a study of the intellect of the nineteenth century would be if it dealt exclusively with the thought of the various universities of Europe and America and of circles like that of Emer-

son at Concord and Goethe at Weimar. Indeed, this comparison is hardly accurate, for the universities of the nineteenth century had a far closer connection with the living thought of the day than was true of the universities of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The latter (like their feeble survivals in the Spanish-speaking countries) much more closely resembled the ordinary type of Mohammedan university of the present day, such a university as the big Mohammedan University at Cairo, than they resembled any modern university worth calling such, or, indeed, any ancient university of living and creative force.

The schoolmen of the Middle Ages and the universities in which they flourished are well worth such study as that which Mr. Taylor gives them, if only because they represented what regarded itself as the highest spiritual and intellectual teaching of the time, and because they symbolized the forces which manifested themselves with infinitely more permanent value in that wonderful cathedral architecture which was one of the two culminating architectural movements of all time—the other, of course, being the classical Greek. But the greatest mediæval effect upon the thought of after time was produced, not by the schoolmen, but by works which they would hardly have treated as serious at all—by the Roland Song, the "Nibelungenlied," the Norse and Irish sagas, the Arthurian Cycle, including "Parsifal;" and modern literature, on its historical side, may be said to have begun with Villehardouin and Joinville. None of the leaders of the schools are to-day living forces in the sense that is true of the nameless writers who built up the stories of the immortal death fights in the Pyrenean pass and in the hall of Etzel, or of the search for the Holy Grail. There are keen intellects still influenced by Thomas Aquinas; but all the writings of all the most famous doctors of the schools taken together had no such influence on the religious thought of mankind as two books produced long afterwards, with no conception of their far-reaching importance, by the obscure and humble authors of the "Imitation of Christ" and the "Pilgrim's Progress." In the thirteenth century the spiritual life in action, as apart from dogma, and as lived with the earnest desire to follow in the footsteps of the Christ, reached, in the person of Saint Francis of Assisi, as lofty a pinnacle of realized idealism as humanity has ever

attained. But among those who, instead of trying simply to live up to their spiritual impulses, endeavored to deal authoritatively in the schools with spiritual and intellectual interests, the complementary tyranny and servility in all such spiritual and intellectual matters were such as we can now hardly imagine to ourselves. The one really great scientific investigator, Roger Bacon, who actually did put as an ideal before himself the honest search for truth, was imprisoned for years in consequence; and this in spite of the fact that his avowals of abject submission to theological authority and unquestioning adherence to dogma were such as we of to-day can with difficulty understand.

At first sight such an attitude in the intellectual world seems incompatible with the turbulent and lawless insistence on the right of each individual to do whatever he saw fit in the political and social world, which characterized the seething life of the time. But, as Mr. Taylor points out, the minute that a man in the Middle Ages began to be free in any real sense he tended to become an outlaw; and, moreover, the men who were most intolerant of restraint in matters physical and material made no demands whatever for intellectual or spiritual freedom. The ordinary knight or nobleman, the typical "man of action" of the period, promptly resented any attempt to interfere with his brutal passions or coarse appetites; but, as he had neither special interest nor deep conviction in merely intellectual matters, he was entirely willing to submit to guidance concerning them. The attitude of the great baron of the highest class is amusingly shown by a conversation that Joinville records as having occurred between himself and King Louis the Saint. Among the questions which King Louis one day propounded to Joinville, in the interests of the higher morality, was whether Joinville would rather have leprosy or commit a mortal sin; to which Joinville responded with cordial frankness that he would rather commit thirty mortal sins than have leprosy. Now, in addition to being a most delightful chronicler, Joinville was an exceptionally well-behaved and religious baron, standing far above the average, and he was very careful to perform every obligation laid upon him by those whom he regarded as his spiritual advisers. The fact simply was that he had no idea of the need for spiritual or intellectual independence in the sense that a modern man has need for such independence,

because he took only a superficial interest in anything concerned with intellectual inquiry. To harry a heretic or a Jew was not only a duty but a pleasure, and no effort whatever was needed to refrain from intellectual inquiry which presented to him not the slightest attraction; but leprosy was something tangible, something real, and the instant that the real came into collision with even the most insistent supposed spiritual obligation the rugged old baron went into immediate revolt.

The whole way of looking at life was so different from ours that only a thoroughly sympathetic and understanding writer like Mr. Taylor can set it forth in a manner that shall be sympathetic and yet not revolt us. One of his most delightful chapters is that on "The Heart of Heloise." The qualities that Heloise displayed are those which eternally appeal to what is high and fine in human life; as for her lover, Abelard, it is possible to pardon the abject creature only by scornfully condemning the age which imposed upon him the rules of conduct in accordance with which he lived.

Mr. Thayer's "Life of Cavour" is another first-rate example of productive scholarship. It is much more than a mere biography. The three greatest and most influential statesmen, in purpose and achievement, since the close of the Napoleonic epoch were Lincoln, Bismarck, and Cavour; and any account of either of them must necessarily be an account of the most vitally important things that happened to mankind during the period when each was playing his greatest part. An adequate biography of either must therefore be a permanent addition to history; such a biography could be written only by a scholar and writer of altogether exceptional attainments; and such a biography has been furnished by Mr. Thayer. Mr. Thayer is already well known as the author of various volumes dealing with Italy, all of them representing work worth doing, and all of them leading up to and making ready the way for the really notable history which he has now written. There are other books which should be read in connection with it; the younger Trevelyan's brilliant studies of Garibaldi and the

Italian revolutionists of 1848 and the dozen years immediately succeeding, and De La Gorce's profoundly interesting histories of the Second Empire and the Second Republic in France, which contain the most powerful presentment of the period from the anti-revolutionary standpoint. Cavour not only did more than any other one man for Italian unity and independence, but he symbolized the movement as neither Garibaldi the Paladin, nor Mazzini the Republican, nor even King Victor Emmanuel symbolized it. As Mr. Thayer describes Cavour's career it is not only of interest in itself, but it is of interest as showing that vast and complex aggregate of contradictory forces through whose warring chaos every great leader who fights for the well-being of mankind must force his way to triumph. Cavour had to contend against foes within just as much as against foes without. He had to hold the balance between the unreasoning reactionary and the unreasoning revolutionist, just exactly as on a larger or smaller scale all leaders in the forward movement of mankind must ever do. Mr. Thayer has set forth in masterly fashion the task to which the great statesman addressed himself and the manner in which that task was performed; his book is absorbingly interesting to the general reader, and should be of profit not merely to the special student but to every active politician who is in politics for any of the reasons which alone render it really worth while to be a politician at all. Mr. Thayer is devoted to his hero, as he ought to be; and he is a stanch partisan; but his obvious purpose is to be fair, and the principles of liberty to which he pins his faith are those upon which American governmental policy must always rest—although it is not necessary to follow him in all his views, as when he suddenly treats free trade from the fetishistic standpoint instead of as an economic expedient to be judged on its merits in any given case. Every man interested not only in the realities but in the possibilities of political advance should study this book; and, in addition to its intrinsic worth and interest, it is an example of the kind of productive scholarship which adds to the sum of American achievement.