

crit, of Attic Greek, of classical Latin, and of English. But a literary language, though gaining in elegance, lost in mobility and vitality. Its tendency to crystallize made it brittle, and once it did it could never be resuscitated. Taking the Latin language as an example the lecturer observed that the loyalty of the great Western Church to its traditions, the diligence of the learned and the zeal of the pedantic did all that could be done to breathe the breath of life again into the nostrils of the language of Virgil, but in vain. It was quite true that from the fallen temple of Latin nearly every nation of Europe had quarried verbal blocks, to be worked, more or less artistically, into the structure of its own language, but no matter how skilful the joining it could always be detected by the philological expert. It was not by such piecing and patching that the Romance languages were formed. They were buds upon the same mother stem. Their growth was stunted by the undue amount of sap which literary Latin drew to itself as long as it throve, but when it dropped from the tree they began to develop their latent powers. The French language then was an offshoot of the Latin, but it was no bastard or corrupt Latin. It was a special variety of that *sermo rusticus* or popular idiom which, as had been well observed, disappeared from the literary surface with Nævius only to reappear with Prudentius, but faint indications of its existence were scattered through the classical literature. Were this all, however, there would be no reason for French being so different from the kindred languages. In the case of Italian, they would find that a knowledge of Latin carried them very far, and that they could at all events guess at the meaning of many sentences without a special knowledge of Italian. With French it was very different. It also was Latin, but it required the eye of an expert to discover the old forms, so completely had they been changed by a chemical fusion, so to speak. French was Latin, but Latin transplanted to a new soil and exposed to new influences. The people upon whose lips it was to live were a distinct stock from the Italians, occupying much the same geographical limits as at present. Like the Irish and the Scotch Highlanders and the ancient Britons, they belonged to the great Celtic family. Everywhere else in the world they had been driven back and back, till at the present day we found them only in remote districts between mountain ranges and the sea. In France they held their ground only by sacrificing their religion, their nationality, and even their language to the conqueror. It was true that in a corner of France the Celtic speech still survived in a debased form, but the great mass of the nation became thoroughly Latinized, and was even proud of its new nationality. Gaul gave to Rome senators, soldiers, lawyers, orators, and poets. Her towns vied in architectural beauty with the most magnificent centres of Italian civilization, and she maintained not only the vulgar Latin of the people, but also the literary Latin of the learned as long as circumstances allowed her to retain literary forms at all. But the great Roman Empire was destined to collapse under its own weight, and when it fell literary Latin fell with it. Then the vulgar speech began to develop itself in France with all the greater vigour, and although a confederation of barbarian invaders overran Gaul, established a dynasty, and imposed their own name upon the country, and even upon the language, French, so-called from the Franks, owed as little to the language of the Franks as it did to the language of the Celts. On a subsequent occasion the lecturer promised to examine more in detail the Celtic and German element in French. For the present he would only point out that the term French was a misnomer, and that what we called French was merely the national development of the original Latin in accordance with fixed philological laws. It never was a jargon like the English spoken by negroes on the American plantations. It never was merely corrupt Latin.

They might as well speak of the English of Shakspeare being corrupt English, because it discarded the dual and neglected to form a dative or a genitive plural after the antique. French discarded inflectional forms, but gradually, and by selecting passages of old French in chronological order the lecturer hoped to be able to give some idea of the process by which it reached its present stage. The lecturer concluded by writing on the blackboard one of the two famous oaths of Strasburg, which Ludwig the German, on the one hand, took to his brother, Karl the Bald, in 842, and which Karl's army took to Ludwig, the German, on the other. The lecturer pointed out that these were the second oldest monuments of the French language in existence, the very oldest being a fragment of a glossary, dated 768, explaining many of the difficult words in the Vulgate in the French of the period, discovered by a fortunate chance in 1863 by M. Holzmann, in a manuscript in the library at Reichenau.

Advertiser

October 10th 1884.

LECTURE ON HAMLET.

A rather large audience attended in the library of the University on Thursday evening, when the Rev. W. R. Fletcher, M.A., the Vice-Chancellor of the University, delivered before the members of the University Shakespeare Society, a lecture on Hamlet. His Honor the Chief Justice (the Chancellor) took the chair, and his Lordship Dr. Kennion, Professor Boulger, Professor Lamb, the Rev. D. Paton, M.A., and the secretary of the society (Mr. G. S. Bowyear, B.A.) occupied seats on the platform.

The CHIEF JUSTICE, in introducing the Rev. Mr. Fletcher, expressed the pleasure he felt in observing the interest manifested at the University Shakespeare Society, for it was apparent that their enthusiasm was not quenched by the weather that was so beneficial to the country, though unpleasant for pedestrians. After the exceedingly able lecture they had from Professor Boulger some time since, he thought they would all agree with him that it required a very courageous and able lecturer to follow him, but he was pleased to say that both those qualities were combined in the vice-chancellor of the University. Mr. Fletcher was going to present them that evening with a study of Hamlet's character, which was as real and substantial as that of any personage in history, or perhaps that of any of their friends whom they were in the habit of meeting daily. There had, however, been more controversy on the character of Hamlet than of any other of Shakespeare's creations, and although he supposed they could not expect Mr. Fletcher to set all these controversies at rest, yet he was to be congratulated upon having got away from some aspects of modern thought, which he had been treating in an exceedingly able manner of late, and launched into the very much pleasanter field of literature, and he felt quite certain that Mr. Fletcher's lecture would assist them very greatly in understanding the character of Shakespeare's masterpiece.

The Rev. Mr. FLETCHER then delivered his lecture, which was listened to with the greatest interest, and at its conclusion he was warmly applauded. We hold over a full report of the lecture owing to pressure on our space.

His Lordship Dr. KENNION said he had an exceedingly pleasant duty to perform in moving that a vote of thanks be accorded to the vice-chancellor for his lecture. The Rev. Mr. Fletcher had certainly stimulated their thoughts in the direction of the study of Shakespeare, and he felt certain that they had obtained considerable information from his remarks. He congratulated the society