

T H E S I S .

Subject, Value of Ancient Literature.

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We value literature just in the measure that it elevates man. That which in all ages and throughout all countries has assisted man to higher plains of thought and life is of incalculable value.

The best literature of the ancients even now lives in the hearts of all nations. This, of itself, shows its value. Take the Grecian literature, for instance, and consider how it has done to mold and broaden and uplift the thought of other nations. Leave out everything but the productions of the Greek poets, and what a rich mine we have of golden treasure to enrich the lives of men.

Literature in its broadest sense comprises the written productions of all nations in all ages. In its literary productions a nation bequeaths to posterity an ever speaking record of its inner life. The history of literature traces the progress of the human mind from age to age by land marks erected by the mind itself.

Beginning with the most distant we find a very valuable literature in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and, China as early as 2000 B.C. 100 B.C. was the era of great epics. The epic, or narrative poem, was simultaneously brought to perfection by the Greeks and Hindoos. Homer's Iliad and Odyssey were

paralleled by two great Indian poems, the masterpieces of Sanscrit. "To these all dazzling with Oriental splendor, the epics of the Greek land may yield in luxuriance of fancy and gorgeous imagery but in power of description, sublimity of thought and simplicity of expression, Homer was without an equal."

Until 800 B.C. the epics constituted the bulk of Hellenic literature. Then began a transition to a poetry more natural on themes that kindled love, anger, hatred, grief, hope, and for three centuries "lyrics echoed throughout the land."

Turning to Rome we find that she long displayed an

appreciation of Grecian genius. About the middle of the third century B. C. she gladly appropriated the foreign treasures held up before her eyes. Virgil's epic, the Aeneid, as remarkable for beauty as Homer's Iliad for grandeur, secured to its author the first place among Latin poets and next to him stands Horace.

The value of the world of letters is showed by the way nations are brought in contact with one another in thought and feeling. The master pieces of literature of a nation are appreciated by all people of the civilized world, else we would not find in

the libraries of the world
the literature of all countries,
and men of great minds
pouring over these works in
search of more knowledge.

He truly lives who gives to
the world great thoughts.

Those who write for a day
write in vain and yet there
are thousands who are vain
workers whose work to-day is
valued high but to-morrow is
nothing. The value of lit-
erature is great only as it lives
to be a blessing to mankind.

Bibliography:

History of Ancient Literature
Inackmbas.